

A 143 units. Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general, a unity due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition.

Reality, in the pure concept of understanding, is that which corresponds to a sensation in general; it is that, therefore, the concept of which in itself points to being (in time). Negation is that the concept of which represents not-being (in time). The opposition of these two thus rests upon the distinction of one and the same time as filled and as empty. Since time is merely the form of intuition, and so of objects as appearances, that in the objects which corresponds to sensation is ^{the} the transcendental matter of all objects as things in themselves (thinghood,² reality). Now every sensation has a degree or magnitude whereby, in respect of its representation of an object otherwise remaining the same, it can fill out one and the same time, that is, occupy inner sense more or less completely down to its cessation in nothingness (= 0 = *negatio*). There therefore exists a relation and connection between reality and negation, or rather a transition from the one to the other, which makes every reality representable as a quantum. The schema of a reality, as the quantity of something in so far as it fills time, is just this continuous and uniform production of that reality in time as we successively descend from a sensation which has a certain degree to its vanishing point, or progressively ascend from its negation to some magnitude of it.

The schema of substance is permanence of the real in time, that is, the representation of the real as a substrate of empirical determination of time in general, and so as abiding while all else changes. (The existence of what is transitory³ passes away in time but not time itself. To time, itself non-transitory⁴ and abiding, there corresponds in the [field of] appearance what is non-transitory in its existence, that is, substance. Only in [relation to] substance can the succession and coexistence of appearances be determined in time.)

¹ [Reading, with Wille, *nicht die* for *die*. This seems, on the whole, preferable to taking, with Erdmann, the second part of the sentence as: "that in the objects [as things in themselves] which corresponds to sensation is the transcendental matter . . ."]

² [*Sachheit.*]

³ [*des Wandelbaren.*]

⁴ [*unwandelbar.*]

Adrian Piper's artwork, over the course of her fifty-year career, has been critical in shaping how we think and talk about contemporary art and the role of the artist. Through her best-known and most frequently written-about works—*Food for the Spirit*, of 1971; *Funk Lessons*, of 1983–84; *Cornered*, of 1988—the questions of how perception, racism, and human interaction may be approached through art, and what the effect of such art might be on viewers, have been made infinitely deeper and more complex.

The essays in this volume broaden the thinking about her work, tracking her development from first-generation Conceptual art, in the mid-1960s, through her early performance works of the 1970s, her participatory works of the 1980s, the provocative identity-based works of the 1990s, and finally to her recent lecture-based meta-performances. They place Piper's multivalent work amidst current discourses in aesthetics, Kantian philosophy, critical race theory, and theories and histories of Conceptual art, and bring updated scholarship to a radical reconsideration of her work.

With essays by:

Diarmuid Costello, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick and former Chair of the British Society of Aesthetics

Jörg Heiser, Editor-at-Large of *Frieze*; Professor of Art Theory, Criticism and Interdisciplinarity; and Director of the Institute for Art in Context at Berlin's University of the Arts

Kobena Mercer, Professor in History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University

Nizan Shaked, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History, Museum and Curatorial Studies at California State University Long Beach

Vid Simoniti, the inaugural Jeffrey Rubinoff Junior Research Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge University

Elvan Zabunyan, art critic, Professor of Art History, and Director of the Curatorial Program at Rennes 2 University, France

With an introduction by Cornelia Butler, Chief Curator, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and David Platzker, former Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

**ADRIAN
PIPER**

ADRIAN PIPER

A READER

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK**

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READING THE WORK

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1

Adrian Piper: A Reader has been four years in the making. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965–2016*, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and its attendant exhibition catalogue, it has been commissioned and edited in close collaboration with the artist. The six essays contained in this volume situate Piper's multivalent work amidst current discourses in aesthetics, Kantian philosophy, critical race theory, and theories and histories of Conceptual art. They function as a companion to the nearly fifty years of visual production surveyed in MoMA's retrospective exhibition, and they complement and amplify the exhibition catalogue. These two books, taken together, bring new thinking and updated scholarship to a radical reconsideration of her work.

As a writer, thinker, and maker of visual art, Piper is one of the most important and influential cultural figures of our time. Writing has always been central to her practice; in 1996 she produced *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, a two-volume set of her own writings in art criticism and meta-art, from 1967 through 1992. Where those two volumes anthologized Piper's previously published and unpublished texts, this book exponentially expands a critical dialogue about the artist, joining the robust essays in catalogues from her midcareer exhibitions, including Jane Farver's *Adrian Piper: Reflections, 1967–1987*, of 1987; Maurice Berger's *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective*, of 1999; and Sabine Breitwieser's *Adrian Piper since 1965*, of 2004.

Piper's career as an artist has helped shape contemporary art-historical discourses, including those initiated by Minimal, Conceptual, and feminist art, and more recent conversations about identity and public engagement. A chronology of her life and career, assembled by the artist over the course of six previous retrospectives and published in the MoMA exhibition catalogue, describes a full life informed by a privileged education, intellectual encounters, political engagement, significant and influential alliances with major artists, and formative and often fraught relationships with academic, artistic, social, and governmental institutions. Her voice has remained, throughout this time, indefatigable in its critical rigor, in its anticipation of major cultural shifts, and in its extraordinary ability to transmit both urgency in response to contemporary issues and a remarkable sense of hope. Even as her works declare "Everything will be taken away," Piper continues to dance and engage in the public arena, as she did in the 1960s and still does (in *Adrian Moves to Berlin* [2007]). To know Piper's work is to read along with the artist and to encounter the complexities of the contemporary world. The essays in this volume challenge the reader to work within new and different paradigms for thinking that diverge noticeably from those typically deployed up to now. We encourage readers to consider this book as a kind of communal interpretive mural project, in which successive authors add intricate details, overlaying interpretation from text to text with new, incisive views on Piper's work.

One of the challenges of a retrospective exhibition and catalogue is how to bring together, for both a general audience and a scholarly one, the breadth of an artist's practice and, in Piper's case, its remarkable development. The consistency with which she has revisited certain themes in her work, from before 1970 up to the present—in increasingly complex and nuanced ways as her own scholarship has developed—suggested to us the topics and structures of these texts. We felt it was imperative to knit together her evolution, from early sound and text-based pieces and works on paper to work in photography and photo-text, media installations, videos, performance, and meta-performance, and then on to her work of the last decade, which moves from immersive installations and object-based pieces to publicly engaged works that exist, finally, in the mind and memory of the viewer.

The essays track the artist's development from strict conceptualism, in the mid-1960s, to the incorporation of her own body as a subject as she investigated subjectivity, in the early 1970s; the move into participatory intersubjective dynamics in the 1980s; the provocative identity-based works of the 1990s; and finally to her recent lecture-based meta-performances, through which Piper directly addresses her public. Jörg Heiser, Editor-at-Large of *Frieze*; Professor of Art Theory, Criticism and Interdisciplinarity; and Director of the Institute for Art in Context at Berlin's University of the Arts, considers the continuity in what the artist has humorously called the "three hats" of her life: her art, her philosophy, and her yoga practice. Nizan Shaked, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History, Museum and Curatorial Studies at California State University Long Beach, considers how Piper's earlier works reconcile opposing typologies of Conceptual art and test, as propositions, the idea of context. Kobena Mercer, Professor in History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University, focuses on the turning point in Piper's oeuvre, in 1970, using the radical analogy of "discrepant embodiment"—the merging of personhood and objecthood. Diarmuid Costello, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick and former Chair of the British Society of Aesthetics, closely examines the relation between Piper's interpretation of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and the ideas of xenophobia and stereotype. Elvan Zabunyan, art critic, Professor of Art History, and Director of the Curatorial Program at Rennes 2 University, in France, considers the convergence of Kantian philosophy, yoga, and Vedic philosophy in Piper's study of consciousness, self-knowledge, and the way we relate to the world. Vid Simoniti, the inaugural Jeffrey Rubinoff Junior Research Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge University, proposes that what connects Piper's early performance-based conceptual pieces with her later antiracist installation works is not their subject matter but their methodology, the way they scrutinize the viewer's consciousness in the act of looking.

Although Piper emigrated from the United States in 2005, moving her life and base of operation to Berlin, her work has

continued to resonate with the American art world, and she has been championed in Europe and internationally. In addition to her rigorous schedule of philosophy lectures and yoga practice, the artist, along with her works, has regularly been a towering presence at international exhibitions of contemporary art. Artists two and three generations younger cite Piper's work as critical and foundational to their own, and her resistance to our contemporary political reality has kept her keenly aware of the entrapments of a too-reductive discourse around race, identity, citizenship, and personhood in the West.

In *Thwarted Projects, Dashed Hopes, A Moment of Embarrassment*, one of her most resonant and prescient recent projects, Piper retired from being black. This appeared in the form of a declaration on her website, on September 20, 2012, her sixty-fourth birthday, accompanied by a professional-seeming tinted photographic portrait of Piper, smiling, her skin tone darkened. This work uncannily engages with our current, dangerously binary national conversation about racial identity, which was precipitated by the killing of Trayvon Martin on February 26 of that year, just nine months before its appearance. Piper, in her declaration, suggests that to identify oneself with any one ethnic group based on percentage of ancestry, appearance, family tree, or any other such measure is not only futile but also absurd, given the infinite information available on the Internet and the increasingly public performance of racial identities. She thus boldly moves herself into a realm beyond identity politics, openly questioning the idea of occupying a specific gender, ethnicity, or race. The challenge issued by her work is ahead of its time, as it has been throughout her career. It is our hope that through the writing contained in this volume, the extraordinary complexity of her body of work will be made more accessible to an audience ready to face the problems and challenges it presents.

We thank the authors for their insightful and engaging texts on Piper's work, and we are very grateful to Gregory Miller, who allowed us to publish the previously commissioned essays by Diarmuid Costello and Jörg Heiser. MoMA Editor Emily Hall worked with the essayists to hone their contributions. Tessa Ferreyros, Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Drawings and Prints; Hannah Kim, Senior Marketing and Production Coordinator; and Marc Sapir, Production Director in the Museum's Department of Publications Department tirelessly coordinated all aspects of the production of this publication.

Our thanks go also to Christophe Cherix, The Robert Lehman Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints, Christopher Hudson, Publisher, and Glenn D. Lowry, Director, The Museum of Modern Art, who championed this publication from its inception. We are also, of course, deeply indebted to Adrian Piper and her continued commitment to the exhibition, the catalogue, and this book.

ADVENTURES IN REASONLAND

JÖRG HEISER

Introduction

Adrian Piper has done completely crazy art stuff: taking photographs determined by arbitrary time intervals to document her space-time location at home or on the street; stuffing a towel in her mouth and riding a bus; going to public places and events dressed up as a working-class man of color and muttering a mantra made up of quotes from her diaries; gathering viewers in a claustrophobically small room wallpapered with news reports of various atrocities and making them listen to a monologue anticipating their likely rationalizations upon being presented with such material in an art context.

Adrian Piper has done perfectly sane philosophy stuff: exploring Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as it relates to metaethics, the inquiry into the nature of ethical properties; establishing a clear distinction between Humean and Kantian conceptions of the self—David Hume's of the self as structured and motivated by desire, and Kant's of the self as structured and motivated by a "theoretical rationality that secures its internal unity";¹ exploring the significance of the latter for understanding the mechanisms of xenophobia; teaching and researching the history of ethics in both Western and Vedic (ancient and classic Indian) philosophical traditions; and so on.

Some people think of this as a contradiction: artists, they might say, should refrain from delving too far into rationalist discourse if they don't want to stifle their creative impulses; philosophers are not supposed to do that kind of oddball stuff if they want to be taken seriously. I think that viewpoint is wrong, and it usually bespeaks—in addition to specific habits of and myths about art making, academia, and the relation between disciplines—larger myths about social identity and the connection (or disconnection) between intellect and bodily experience, all of those larger myths related to stereotypes of class, gender, and race. My argument is that there is no contradiction but rather a logical, if complementary, connection between Piper's artistic oeuvre and her philosophical work. The "crazy" stuff is not so crazy after all, if we accept that it was consciously and rationally developed to test the limits and potentials of what is at the center of Piper's philosophical enquiry: the cognitive self and its relation to others and, thus, to ethical behavior.

Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?

Piper's artistic work has often been understood to be driven by political agency, even political rage, although many of her supposedly aggressive works remain poised in tone. It is also understood to be founded in her identity and biography. Such demonstration of firmness of and pride in one's marginalized identity and biography seemed inevitable in the tense climate of the culture wars of the 1980s, in the Reagan-Thatcher era, which were largely a backlash against the civil-rights achievements of women and minorities of the 1960s and '70s. This may have

1. Adrian Piper, "Two Conceptions of the Self (1984)," *Philosophical Studies* 48, no. 2 (September 1985): 173–97; reprinted in *Philosopher's Annual VIII*, 1985, pp. 222–46; and Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA) website, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/Website2ConceptionsOfTheSelf\(1984\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/Website2ConceptionsOfTheSelf(1984).pdf).

made it hard to see and acknowledge—even for those sympathetic to her work—Piper’s underlying philosophical questioning of what identity and biography are in the first place.

Not that Piper, and her work, were unpolitical. Nor did she lack a reason for such a political slant, given the persistence of racism and social inequality in the United States and elsewhere, and the stigmatization connected to skin color, gender, sexual orientation, class, and education. But to designate Piper as a proponent only of political art—in the sense of art as a vehicle for broad-brush agitation and instruction—is wrong, perpetuating the very stigmatization that Piper’s work comes up against. It reduces the work to that which it is then readily accused of. Whether the designation is meant to applaud or condemn the artist, it causes the work to appear as a mere outpouring of what is assumed to be Piper’s racial and psychological makeup, rather than an expression of decisions freely made by an artist and intellectual. The typical condensed version of the progression of this mindset, as has been evidenced frequently over the years, goes more or less like this: first, speculation about Piper’s psychological state, depicting her as emotionally insecure to the point of dissolution, and therefore putting forward political rigor in order to regain some sense of artistic sovereignty, lashing out at the viewer;² or, conversely, as being possessed of a rigid, cold, conceptual/didactic attitude, resulting in aggressive agitation that shocks or targets the viewer.³ Structured as a self-fulfilling prophecy, this kind of reasoning functions only by blocking from view any aspects of the work that don’t fit (such as its sardonic humor or its internal logic), thus reducing it to its assumed political stance or to Piper’s assumed psychological makeup. Proponents of this kind of reception ironically do precisely what they—implicitly or explicitly—accuse Piper of: they reduce the richness of art to a polemical caricature, and not even a good one at that.

To identify Piper’s work predominantly, even solely, as political art is to designate as causative that which is effected; it is to say that her political agency, defined by her social identity, causes the art, instead of that her experimental and analytic explorations—of how individuals interact, of how racist or sexist behavior manifests itself—effect the political agency. The dialectic dance between artistic experiment and political stance is reduced to a one-way thrust toward the latter. This misapprehension proves Piper’s very points about the distortions that stereotypes produce.

Against this background, it seems important to explore how Piper’s work has been situated from the beginning, at the crossroads of conceptualism, music, spirituality, and philosophy, and has never ceased to be so, and how this transdisciplinary practice is not incidental to her exploration of how people interact but key to it. The usual preconception of what motivates such a cross-genre approach—an approach

2. See Donald Kuspit, “Adrian Piper: Self-Healing Through Meta-Art,” *Art Criticism* 3, no. 3 (September 1987): 9–16.

3. See Jan Avgikos, “Adrian Piper: John Weber Gallery, Paula Cooper Gallery, Grey Art Gallery,” *Artforum* 31, no. 4 (December 1992): 91. In a more complex argument about the relation between Piper’s personal life and her art, Adam Shatz has also claimed there were “shock tactics” in place. Shatz, “Black Like Me,” *Lingua Franca* 8, no. 8 (November 1998): 52. Laura Cottingham, in an interview with Piper, cited “comments I have overheard verbatim such as, ‘You can’t just throw away all of Western culture’ (from a gay male painter) . . . or ‘Who does she think she’s talking to, I’m no racist’ (from a white female gallerist), or ‘It really does irritate me and doesn’t seem necessary to say that we all have some black blood’ (various artists, critics and gallery workers).” Cottingham, “Adrian Piper,” *Journal of Contemporary Art* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 88.

coalescing with a general questioning of boundaries and the specific methodological openness of conceptualism of the 1960s—is that the more arbitrary earmarks of identity are transcended by creative and intellectual qualities such as the ability to recognize the as-yet-unknown as such, and to not shut down upon encountering it, be it a stranger or an artwork, to instead keep your sensorial apparatus open. This, in turn, requires the assumption that human beings, despite differences between them, share the mental tools (the innate potentialities of intuition, understanding, reason) not only to communicate and understand each other properly when discussing these encounters but also to act rationally upon them, in accordance with ethical principles.

Piper is not purporting to “cover” everything in philosophy or art. Nor is hers a jack-of-all-trades strategy of producing for several markets (the art market, the market of academic credentials, etc.) at once: she has proved many times that she’d rather get by without much of a market at all than make false compromises. Her practice is a hands-on laboratory in which she develops the potential of what she has come to call in her philosophical work “transpersonal rationality,” which she does precisely by testing its limits, as if she were a scientist saying, “Let’s see what happens to transpersonal rationality if I ride a bus with a towel stuffed in my mouth.” And the limits are where the politics come into play. Piper’s political agency is rooted in her artistic and intellectual striving for free expression and exchange and her incessant inquiry into what factors stand in its way. Her political criticality is rooted in her individual will to thrive creatively, as well as in her empathy, a rationally verifiable imaginative and emotive capability of understanding and anticipating others. This empathy, as I will try to demonstrate, and the conviction that proper communication is possible are detectable in Piper’s discreetly abstract works as well as in her politically confrontational ones. And it is all spelled out clearly in her philosophical writing. Even though her work in these two distinct disciplines does not necessarily directly correlate, the resonance of Piper’s philosophical work with her artistic work needs to be more closely discussed than it has been so far.

Are Piper and her work to be understood predominantly in relation to her status as a woman who openly acknowledges her African as well as European ancestors (a mix that, according to research in population genetics, holds true for large parts of the population of European descent, whether they are ready to acknowledge it or not)?⁴ Or is it to be understood predominantly in relation to her having practiced yoga since she was sixteen? Or loving Bach’s fugues as much as Bootsy’s funk? Or being a soul mate of Sol LeWitt and a first-generation member of the Conceptual-Minimalist school of thought, in relation to her persistent study of the writings of Kant? Or her disciplined yet open mind? Or her cats? Her preference for complexity and

4. “Almost All Southern Europeans Have Inherited 1%–3% African Ancestry.” P. Moorjani et al., “The History of African Gene Flow into Southern Europeans, Levantines, and Jews,” *PLoS Genetics* 7, no. 4 (April 21, 2011).

individuality over simplified categorizations of race and gender seems obvious. But living under circumstances of legally institutionalized discriminations inevitably forces you to confront stigmatization as an existing fact, unless you're not willing to admit that fact to yourself and others. The "one-drop rule" in the United States, which was—and is—used to secure white domination, holds that any fraction of black ancestry renders a person automatically black.⁵ And the suppression or refusal to address this fact is obviously part of the problem, not the solution. But the question is whether the inevitable-seeming parameters of conventional or stigmatized identity should stop us from striving to transcend them. Why is it not enough just to hope that we all get along? This is the question that Piper's work as an artist and philosopher has explored and to which it holds answers, with spiritual underpinnings and musical overtones as crucial factors along the way. In this essay, I will bring all these factors into relation with each other.

5. On the contemporary persistence of the "one-drop rule," i.e. the concept that a person with even just one ancestor of Sub-Saharan African ancestry would be racially categorized as black, see Arnold K. Ho, Jim Sidanius, Daniel T. Levin, and Mahzarin R. Banaji, "Evidence for Hypodescent and Racial Hierarchy in the Categorization and Perception of Biracial Individuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100, no. 3 (March 2011): 492–506.



1. *LSD Couple*. 1966

Fast Forward

Between 1965, at sixteen years old, when Piper discovered yoga, read the Beat writers, and started a series of psychedelic paintings, and a decade later, when she made her first audience-oriented performance, *Some Reflective Surfaces* (1975–76), and the multimedia installation *Art for the Art World Surface Pattern* (1976), her work continuously and radically transformed, and it has continued to do so. Some critics may argue that a good artist should dig in her heels, should spend longer periods exploring the specificity of a medium, and that a flexible approach such as Piper's merely bespeaks the uncertainty of a young, searching artist. I don't think so: Piper does dig in her heels, not with a specific medium but rather with a set of ideas—mainly concerning the question of how the self is structured—and from the outset she has done so with a determination very unusual for someone in her teens and early twenties.

In the mid-1960s San Francisco artists such as Victor Moscoso and Wes Wilson were adopting Art Nouveau-style ornamental patterns and saturated, starkly contrasting colors for their psychedelic posters and album covers. These were largely inspired by LSD-influenced sensory experiences, but they also bore similarities to Technicolor cartoons such as Walt Disney's 1951 *Alice in Wonderland* (think of the violet-and-pink-striped Cheshire cat). It may have been common for hipsters in 1965 to try LSD, but the psychedelic movement, with its peculiar mixture of experimental rock sounds and instant pop appeal, didn't become widely popular until 1966 and afterward. Nevertheless, by 1965 Piper had already started a series of paintings based on her LSD experiences (including *LSD Bloodstream* and *LSD Void*, both in 1965), using just such saturated colors and stark contrasts (fig. 1). In a triptych from 1966, dedicated to *Alice in Wonderland* (p. 133), Lewis Carroll's heroine falls down the rabbit hole, attends the Mad Hatter's tea party, and is assailed by a pack of cards, all in silhouetted, Gustav Klimt-like figures surrounded by paisley patterns and "cosmic," hypnotically undulating wave forms in strong color combinations (red and orange with blue, pink and orange with pale blue, lavender and yellow with mint). There is an allure to these works' sheer contrast with Piper's later clear-headed confrontational and aesthetically stripped-down work, but to emphasize the contrast would be to underestimate the continuity between them. For if the paintings are seen as documentation of an experimental delimitation of experience, of a venture into expanding the mind—expanding into anomaly, from the perspective of conventional cognition—they form a logical precursor to Piper's later work, which dealt with the same venture:

The paintings are very much about what it was like for me to go beyond the surfaces of things—to concentrate so intently on

the fine detail and structure of a meditational object—on any object, really, any perceptual reality—that all of its surface sensory qualities, its conventional meanings and uses, its psychological associations and conceptual significance, all begin to move, breath, vibrate, break up, and fall away.⁶

What is at stake here is the ability to open up the sensory apparatus and recognize the as-yet unknown, which also explains a possible continuity between misconceiving this kind of psychedelic work and misconceiving her later, more explicitly political work:

In recent years I've encountered so many individuals in positions of power now who watched the sixties from the sidelines: didn't march, didn't protest, didn't take drugs, didn't experiment with alternative lifestyles, didn't form consciousness-raising groups—nothing. . . . It may be that the art establishment has ignored this kind of work because they just don't understand it—didn't understand it then and don't understand it now. In that way the art establishment's reaction to psychedelic art may be a lot like its reaction to political art: many of these people just can't relate on a gut level.⁷

In that sense the LSD paintings document the activation of cognitive equipment as a precondition of—or balance to—the activation of social and political consciousness.⁸ Just as her later “actual” conceptual work followed the artist through a self-prescribed instruction (“Take LSD and paint what you see”) and her documentation of the process and outcome.⁹

In a playful biographical timeline, included in the catalogue of Piper's 1999 exhibition *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective*, organized by Maurice Berger at Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland (and touring), the year 1957, when Piper was nine, lists, “Reads Lewis Carroll; becomes Alice in Wonderland (through 1979).”¹⁰ The joke of becoming and ceasing to be Alice, of course, hints at a truth: in 1979 Piper began an assistant professorship in philosophy at the University of Michigan (and by that time had more than once encountered “the full force of the racism of the academy”).¹¹ That same year she completed her Political Self-Portraits series (figs. 2–4): images of herself as child or young woman superimposed with text recounting formative incidents of discrimination in her personal and family history, told in unsentimentally clear prose—for example, being called “pale-face” by black kids in Harlem, in New York City, and having white kids in her downtown private school ask their parents to guess her race. Stopping being Alice means being bereft of a dream, being thrown out of Wonderland, or at least out of the forest “where things have no names.”¹² Piper did not naively wander through the years up to 1979 without realizing the crass symptoms of racism and sexism around her—quite the

6. Piper, in Matteo Guarnaccia, “Tele dal gusto acido alla scoperta della realtà,” *Alias (Il manifesto)* 6, no. 14, (April 5, 2003): 4–5; and APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/Over_the_Edge/inter-view.shtml.

7. Ibid.

8. In her interview with Guarnaccia, however, Piper also talked about the dangers of taking LSD: “We really didn't understand until much later how dangerous LSD, and other psychoactive drugs could be when not used in a controlled and careful environment, until some people took psychedelic trips and just never came back. I'm very, very lucky not to have ended up as a vegetable. I knew some individuals who did.” Ibid.

9. “At the time, the group of people I was involved with saw themselves as undertaking a serious and quite strict perceptual and cognitive investigation into the spiritual.” Ibid.

10. Piper, “Personal Chronology,” in Maurice Berger, ed., *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Fine Arts Gallery, 1999), p. 185.

11. Piper, “Passing for White, Passing for Black,” *Transition* 58 (1992); reprinted in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 280.

It was in third grade that I started having real trouble, with math, with gym, with everything. That was when I began to get sick almost every day, and had to be sent home from school. The reason was that there was a girl in my class named Claudia who made me wish I were dead. Claudia looked a lot like me. We were both skinny and had long brown hair, which we wore in braids, and large brown eyes with long eyelashes. Claudia was much prettier than me. But she was envious of me because Julie was at that time my best friend, and Julie was the most popular girl in the class. Julie was a tomboy. She was also very smart. She read the New York Times every morning and discussed its contents with her father over breakfast. All the girls wanted to be like her and all the boys really respected her. Soon after the term began, Julie started ignoring me. In fact, all the girls in the class ignored me. When I said something to any of them it was just as though I weren't there. Except that they would all sit together at lunch two or three tables away from me and whisper to each other and stare at me and giggle. I didn't understand what was going on. I felt miserable all the time. I cried a lot and stopped doing homework and daydreamed in class and couldn't think. At home I watched TV constantly, and played sick so I could stay home and listen to radio soap operas like "Our Gal Sunday," and "One Man's Family." I read comic books and novels and made up a best friend who was a tomboy named Corky. To be in school was a nightmare. Then one day a really crazy boy in the class threw a tantrum and injured me by hitting me in the stomach with a chair. I started to cry. Julie came over and apologized to me for how she had acted, and everyone else followed her and confessed what had been going on. Claudia had started a N.H.A. Club with all the girls in the class. "N.H.A." stood for "Hate Adrian." The rules of the club were that everyone had to swear to ignore me; to pretend to be whispering bad things about me to each other when I was around; to make nasty jokes about me that I could hear; and to recruit as many boys as possible into the club. The membership of the club was growing rapidly when they decided to dissolve it. But by fourth grade Julie and Claudia were best friends anyway. I was mostly home being sick and not around to sustain our friendship. Lizzy and I became best friends around sixth grade. She was also very popular, and very pretty. She had already seduced one of my boyfriends, Michael, away from me. But it hadn't bothered me since I hadn't cared for him much anyway. Our friendship lasted until I discovered that after swearing all our mutual friends to silence, she had been dating my current boyfriend Robbie behind my back for a year, while I had been confiding in her about wanting to break up with him but not wanting to hurt his feelings. After I found out the truth Lizzy turned all the girls in our crowd against me. I stopped being invited to their houses. I stopped going to their parties. I ate lunch with the "unpopular" girls and no one asked me why. After that I largely turned outside school for my friends. My next best friend was Marie, whom I met when my parents moved to Riverside Drive. Marie was part black, too (although she told everyone she was Italian and Venezuelan), and very interesting and exotic-looking. She introduced me to a Puerto Rican gang in the neighborhood with whom we were hanging out together. I rejected her boyfriend Jimmy when he made advances to me, but she never really trusted me after that. She began to seriously dislike me when we went to camp together and I became involved with Jon, a handsome counselor who had a distant crush on me. She conspired with the other girls in my tent to put my bed outside in the rain while I was off with Jon necking in the treehouse. After that my best friend was Cynthia, a beautiful Japanese girl I met when I was fifteen. We took drugs and drawing classes together, and got illegal jobs as discotheque dancers at the same time. Cynthia did fashion photography and I modelled for her. For a long time she had a crush on me, but then later, after we'd taken lots of drugs together, she began to hate me because she thought I was a witch. That I had cast a spell on Manny, a gay Hispanic spiritual medium with whom I was completely involved. She convinced Manny that I was an evil spirit and both of them ostracized me. There are at least four more recent cases: Mary, Mary, Jamie, Annell, and Gabby, all following the same pattern: I am rejected, ostracized, or doublecrossed by a woman whom I'd thought was a close friend, because of her interest in a man or men. In many of these cases I have been doubly betrayed by my own prior willingness to forego my interest in a man for the sake of my friendship with the woman. The only women friends of mine with whom this has not happened are either lesbians, or straight women who have had a stable relationship with the same man for at least three years. When I am around these couples I cannot relax. I have to be very careful about how I look and act. I am impersonal, assertive, almost bitchy with women, and I have to be polite and genial, but also to exhibit a special interest in the man. I barely look at him, and make sure I do not appear to be listening too intently, or whatever he has to say. I never address my remarks to him alone. I feel uncomfortable and resentful at having to go through these contortions. But it seems to be necessary in order to get the woman to trust me. For I see now that most of my women friends will probably always subordinate our friendship to their relationships with men in various ways, and this forces me to do the same. I see why it is that friendship with another woman is so important to me, yet so fragile. It is because we have not yet learned genuinely to trust one another, in spite of all that the women's movement has achieved.

My folks had to send me away to camp when I was five because they both had to work overtime that summer and didn't want to leave me alone in that hot apartment. It was a girls' camp for the children of practicing Protestants called Camp Good Hope. I had a friend named Karl who was sixteen and came from the boys' camp across the lake. He played catch and volleyball with me and took care of me and I adored him. I told someone that he was my big brother (I'm an only child) and she said But that's impossible; Karl's white and you're colored. She said Colored. I didn't know what she meant. Karl and I were pretty much the same color except that he had blue eyes. A few years later my mom thought it was time I started going to and from school by myself instead of her taking me on the bus. The school was as far away because it was not a local public school but rather an expensive progressive prep school called New Lincoln where there were lots of rich mediocre white kids and a few poor smart white kids and even fewer, poorer, even smarter black kids. But all I knew then was that there sure was a difference between where most of them lived (Fifth Avenue) and where I lived (Harlem). Anyway I started going to school by myself and the neighborhood kids would waylay me as I was walking the two blocks from the bus stop to my house and would pull my braids and tease me and call me Paleface. By then I knew what they meant. No one at school ever called me Paleface. Once I was visiting one of my white classmates at her big fancy apartment house on Central Park West where there were four doors into the house with a doorman standing at each and two separate elevators with an elevator man for each and only one apartment on a floor and a cook and a maid and a cleaning woman and a governess (!!!). She said to her little brother I bet you can't guess whether Adrian is white or colored. He looked at me for a long time and very searchingly and said White. And she said You lose, she's colored, isn't that a scream? I thought it was really a scream. I was afraid of the black kids on my block because they bullied me and I was afraid of the black kids at school because they made cutting remarks about my acting too white. But I wasn't afraid of the white kids because they were so stupid. Later when I was in fifth grade and getting sick and hating school I had a teacher named Nancy Modiano who really bullied me. Once we all went on a hike and I became very thirsty and she wouldn't let me get any water. Then we went back to school and she forced me to follow her around the school for four hours while she did her errands but wouldn't let me stop at a water fountain for some water. When my mom came to pick me up I was almost fainting. In conference with my parents she once asked them Does Adrian know she's colored? I guess she must have thought I was too fresh and uppity for a little colored girl. My folks were very upset and wanted to transfer me in to another class but it was too near the end of the term. Nancy Modiano was one of the few whites who overtly bullied me because of my color. The only others were white philosophy students later when I was in college who hated me and said You don't have to worry about graduate school; a black woman can get in anywhere, even if she looks like you. But as I got older and prettier white people generally got nicer and nicer, especially liberals. I was very relieved when my folks moved out of Harlem when I was fourteen, and into a mixed neighborhood on Riverside Drive because there we weren't so conspicuous, and besides the boys in my old neighborhood were no longer pulling just my braids when I passed them on the street. In my new neighborhood I hung out with a Puerto Rican gang that accepted me pretty well and taught me to curse in Spanish. I didn't see New Lincoln people very much because they were turning into boring and neurotic people and were really getting into being rich. But I made other friends when I started going to the Art Students' League and Greenwich Village. I noticed that all my friends were white and that I didn't have much in common with the children of my parents' very light-skinned, middle class, well-to-do black friends. They seemed to have a very determined self-consciousness about being colored (they said Colored) that I didn't share. They and many of my relatives thought it a scandal that I went out with white men. I felt just as alienated from whites as blacks, but whites made me feel good about my looks rather than apologetic. When someone asked me why I looked so exotic I would either say I'm West Indian (my mother's Jamaican) or if they looked really interested I would go on at length about my family tree: how my mother's family is English, Indian from India and African, and how there's a dispute about my father's family which my grandmother told me about before she died because there are now two branches of the Piper family, the rich ones who now live in Chicago and founded the Piper Aircraft Company and the poor ones, i.e. us; how they were originally a single English family who settled in the South but at some point split up and disowned each other (i.e. the rich ones disowned the poor ones) because the poor ones publicly admitted to being partly descended from the slaves who worked on their plantation and the rich ones didn't want to acknowledge any African blood in the family; but how for the poor ones it was a matter of honor after the Civil War not to pass for white. But I would never simply say Black because I felt shyly and as though I was coopting something, i.e. the Black Experience, which I haven't had. I've had the Gray Experience. Also I felt guilty about unjustifiably taking advantage of justified white liberal guilt. But I would never deny that I am black because I understand how it can be a matter of pride and honor for my folks to positively affirm their heritage and I don't want to deny a part of myself that I'm proud of. But sometimes I wonder why I should be caught in this bind in the first place; why I should have to feel dishonest regardless of whether I affirm or deny that I'm black; and whether I, my family, and all such hybrids aren't being victimized by a white racist ideology that forces us to accept an essentially alien and alienating identity that arbitrarily groups us with the most oppressed and powerless segment of the society (black blacks) in order to avoid having that segment gradually infiltrate and take over the sources of political and economic power from whites through the defacto successful integration of which we hybrids are the products and the victims. When I think about that I realize that in reality I've been bullied by whites as well as blacks for the last three hundred years. And there is no end in sight.

Adrian Piper

Political Self-Portrait #2

© Adrian Piper June 1978

To Mother's Dad, Christmas 1978 Love, Adrian

3. Political Self-Portrait #2 (Race). 1978

For a long time I didn't realize we were poor at all. We lived in that part of Harlem called Sugar Hill, where there were lots of parks and big houses that had once been mansions but had then been converted into hotels or funeral homes. When I was little it was nice. Boys didn't start loitering in the hallway of my building singing four-part harmony until I was around eight. After that it got seedy very quickly. Around the same time many of the girls in school started wearing shoes from Papagallo's and coats from Bonwit Teller's. Suddenly I began to notice that they all had maids and doormen and lived in apartments bigger than my whole building. I hadn't noticed it before because it hadn't determined who was popular before. Before it had been how smart and nice and good at sports you were. Nobody had talked about where they bought their clothes, or how many servants they had. It was difficult, but because I was an only child, my parents could keep up with a lot of this. My mother had a very good, steady job as a secretary at City College, and my father had a very unsteady real estate law practice in Harlem, where people paid him for defending them against unscrupulous landlords by mending his shirts or cooking things for him or fixing his car. My parents spent all their money on me. They put me through twelve years of New Lincoln (a fancy private prep school). They gave me ballet and modern dance lessons at Columbia University. I took piano lessons first from a neighbor, and later from a teacher at Juilliard. I got art lessons from the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Students' League. Once I even got a coat from Bonwit Teller's. Although my mother normally took me on shopping trips only to places like Macy's or Gimbel's, I dressed as well as anyone else in the class and was invited to all the parties and had cute white boyfriends. But I became ashamed to invite people over or have my boyfriends pick me up because I lived so far away and my neighborhood and everyone in it seemed so alien and sinister next to my rich white New Lincoln friends. I could have stood not having had any servants if we at least had had a big apartment in a large building with an awning and a doorman. At least an awning. The final blow came when I was eleven. I had been too embarrassed by my house and neighborhood to give a party although all the other popular kids in my class had. So I had started noticing all the advertised vacant apartments on Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, and Central Park West as I came home from visiting my friends who lived there. And one day I said to my mother, "Why don't we move?" I just saw a sign for a lovely twelve-room apartment at Fifth Avenue and Eighty-Sixth Street, and it's so small and dark and crowded here. My mother laughed a very angry and bitter laugh and said, "Get that idea out of your head right now. We don't move to Fifth Avenue because we don't and never will have that kind of money. I was shocked and didn't believe her at first. I thought she was just in a bad mood the way she always was when I asked her for new clothes, and that she was that way because she just didn't want me to have them. But when I brought it up again, carefully, a few days later, she saw that I really didn't understand. So she explained very patiently and carefully that we lived where we did because we had to, not because we wanted to. She explained about Daddy's deciding to serve his community and getting paid in apple pies and embroidered shirts when he got paid at all, and about how many weeks of a secretary's salary a coat from Bonwit Teller's cost. I was stunned. I became very depressed. Reality began to look very different after that. I started becoming more and more estranged from my school friends. I saw that I would never be able to keep up with them economically and was almost relieved to drop out of the race. I realized that all along, they had inhabited a world which I had never in fact had access to. It disgusted me to think that I had tried so hard to emulate them. I began dressing arty rather than junior miss, and to spend time at home listening to classical music and reading novels rather than going to school parties. I found that I didn't miss those parties at all. I spent a lot of my free time in libraries and museums. I became reflective and started to keep a journal. That was when I began to understand the choices and sacrifices my parents had made in order to educate me, and the inner resources they had insisted that I develop. Those resources became a refuge for me now. I learned to be self-sufficient, and to revel in my solitude. But by that time my self-image had been too strongly affected and formed by my school associations, as much as by the complexities of my total environment. I still have tastes I can't afford to satisfy except by getting into debt, which I do, and then feel simultaneously guilty and frustrated for having them. My standard of living seems to me excessive for an artist and an academic, even though I know I would find anything less barren and depressing. I dream unrealistically of the political and economic purity of the ascetic's life, and of the revolution which will redistribute the wealth my classmates so undeservedly enjoyed. I fear having more money because I know my taste for books, records, art, clothes, and travel will increase, leaving me with none of the extra cash I now give to support that revolution. I watch with detached anxiety as I sink further into the morass of proliferating material desires at the same time as I ascend the ladder of material affluence. And my radical political sentiments seem cheap for the asking by comparison.

opposite. But there was a logic of successive confrontations with disillusion at work, culminating in 1979—as in a drug-induced hallucination in which one falls out of a frame into reality, only to realize that reality is in fact yet another frame, followed by another frame, into infinity—which the ironic biographical entry demarcates.

Infinity and Intuition

In 1967 it had indeed been Piper's realization of infinite potentials—of frames deframed into endless series—that shook her view of art making. As a student at New York's School of Visual Arts, she came upon a show of Sol LeWitt's *46 Three-Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes*, at Dwan Gallery (p. 110). In a 2007 obituary for LeWitt, Piper wrote,

It opened my mind, and revolutionized my practice as an artist. By presenting an ordered series of objects as exemplars of a personal but highly logical system of permutations, Sol demonstrated the potentially infinite number of ways in which reality could manifest. I remember as vividly as if it were yesterday the power of those austere white, four-foot high square columns of steel cubes, stacked in threes and set in rows of six, advancing toward me in direct frontal formation, each shaded slightly differently from the next, all displaying simultaneously the rigor of system and the playfulness of idiosyncrasy, filling the space with their authority.¹³

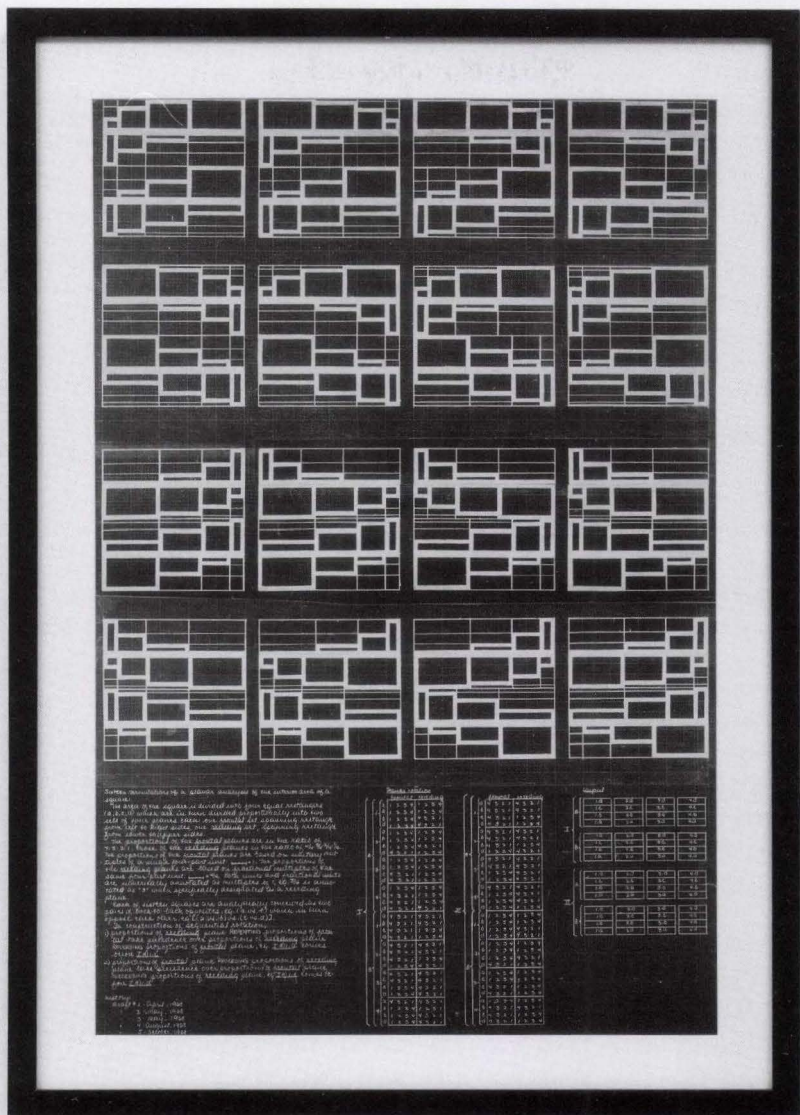
What registered with Piper's own artistic sensibility was LeWitt's "wonder at the infinite variability of the geometrical foundations of perception," and so she went on to create her own permutational systems.¹⁴ These, however, were not purely derivative of LeWitt's concepts, but rather introduced their own particularities. *Sixteen Permutations of a Planar Analysis of a Square* (1968) (fig. 5), for example, involves rectangles distributed across a square along two main horizontal axes, following a strict distribution of possible combinations. The system is played through and explained in the form of an elaborate drawing, as well as in a three-dimensional paper model. The piece, inspired by LeWitt's cube variations, seems a missing link between Piet Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism, of the 1920s, and Tetris, the 1980s computer game, accelerating and complicating the number of possible permutations.

Where is the self amidst such geometrical scenarios? The received wisdom about Minimalism and Conceptual art is that they simply do away with the psychologically "deep" self, so that nothing stands in the way of the relationship between object and viewer, idea and realization. However, as Piper argued in 1967 in "A Defense of the 'Conceptual' Process in Art," this does not mean that the artist's self is not involved:

12. Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (London: Macmillan, 1871).

13. Piper, "Sol, 1928–2007," APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/sol.shtml.

14. Ibid.



Any kind of objectivity—whether in the formulation of a concretized system, a rational decision-making method, conceptual clarity—can serve only to facilitate the final emergence, in as pure a form as possible, of the artistic idea, which is almost always basically intuitive in nature. It is only when one subordinates the original intuition to the subjective distillations and limitations of one's own personality that one need be finally confronted with a kind of mirror image of one's egoistical conflicts as an end product.¹⁵

What is crucial here is Piper's point that the self remains involved—not as the generator of narcissist or genius pretensions but as an abstracted locus of intuition, although the notion of intuition remains vague here. In her later philosophical work Piper thoroughly explored the notion of intuition in the subject-object relation, both with Kant and Vedic philosophy in mind:

In intuition, the subject and object thus related [i.e. put in unmediated contact] . . . are the metaphysical kind of thing we can physically grab—or, in the case of particularly vivid objects of imagination or memory, that can grab us.

And:

Contemporary artists are both blessed and also cursed by their willfully insufficient indoctrination in . . . conventional empirical concepts. . . . An artist's knowledge of the empirical object he creates is not propositional, but neither is it necessarily practical in any full-blooded sense. Rather, it is intuitive. That means that it is conscious and reflective, but nevertheless nonconceptual.¹⁶

There remains, however, a dilemma: following Kant, we cannot enjoy intuition and understanding at the same time. It's a dilemma that may sound abstract but in fact is known to anyone involved in creative activity. It is the asynchrony between intuition and understanding, arguably based on the way the mind works; not only is the ability to freely associate, to let things "spring to mind," located in a different part of the brain than the ability to recognize and formulate the significance of these associations, but there is also a kind of wall or gate mechanism in place between them.¹⁷ In other words, ideas pop up as if an invisible sparring partner were giving you hints by slipping them under or throwing them over that wall or gate.

In creative activity, therefore, there is always a kind of alternation going on between states of heightened concentration and states of heightened relaxation or release, and people develop different rituals and strategies to make that alternation work (by taking a nap or a walk, for example, or by meditating or doodling on their guitar between periods of concentrated work). This also explains why some Minimalists and Conceptual

15. Piper, "A Defense of the 'Conceptual' Process in Art," 1967, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 3.

16. Piper, "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic," 2006, in F. Halsall, J. Jansen, and T. O'Connor, eds., *Rediscovering Aesthetics* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008); and APRA, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth\(2006\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth(2006).pdf).

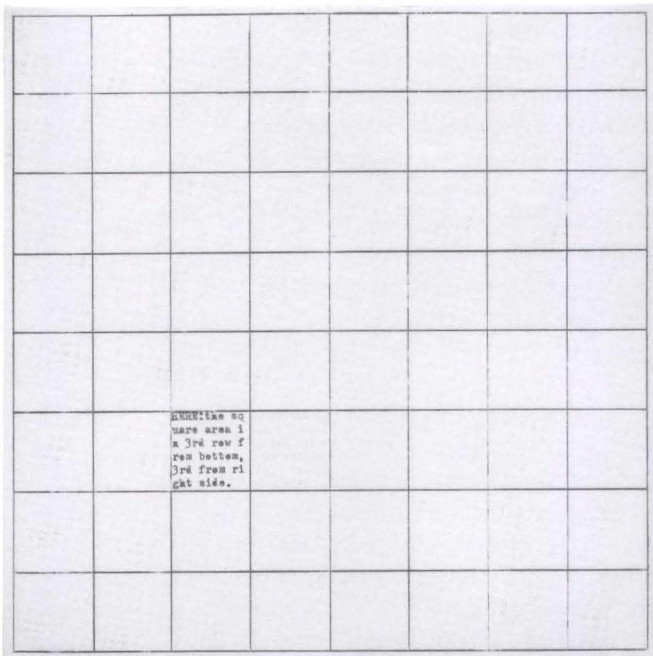
17. See Scott Barry Kaufman, "The Real Neuroscience of Creativity," *Scientific American* website, August 19, 2013, blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/the-real-neuroscience-of-creativity/.

artists of the 1960s, in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, thought of doing away with that alternation; to their way of thinking, the process of the archetypical Abstract Expressionist painter, alternating between boozy delirium and genius intensity in front of the canvas, had become a real-life tragicomedy, a cliché. Doing away with the alternation thus meant to delegate it to the object or process itself or to others, to performers, for example, or to passersby employed in a theatrical situation without being aware of it.

Although that strategy doesn't resolve the dilemma of asynchrony between intuition and understanding, it does change the perspective, from a therapeutic focus on the expression of the subject to a structural analysis of the interaction between subjects and objects (or subjects and subjects, or objects and objects). The notion of intuition that Piper had in mind back in 1967 was already an intuitive version of this, as well as an anticipation of what LeWitt had in mind when in 1969 he stated as the first of his "Sentences on Conceptual Art" that "conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."¹⁸ The leaping here covers the difference not only from science but also, crucially, from earlier modes of art making, an action that bypasses the therapeutic process of expressing the ego.

Another way of understanding this abstraction of the artistic self from the hermeneutics of psychic content is via what Piper calls the "indexical present," in which the self is firmly situated in heightened awareness of the immediate here and now,

18. Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," *O TO 9*, 1969; and *Art-Language* 1, no. 1 (May 1969): 11.



registering action and reaction.¹⁹ In her works of the late 1960s this is evidenced in terms of purely spatiotemporal parameters. *Here and Now* (1968) (fig. 6) is a unique artist's book consisting of sixty-six loose square sheets in a portfolio-style box, sixty-four of which are divided by grids of sixty-four one-inch squares; one of the squares on each of these pages is filled with a neatly typed sentence such as "HERE: the square area in 2nd row from top, 4th from right side," explaining exactly where it is positioned; the only exceptions are on the second page, which contains Sudoku-like suggestions for how the sixty-four pages could be systematically arranged, and the first, which reads, "Adrian Piper, November 1968." That first and second pages also contain, in brackets in their lower-right corners, the statement "Not here," implying that these two leaves are the only ones in this unique artist book for which the typed language does not exclusively and directly refer to its own actual, physical position.

This kind of logical clarity and strictness of execution was equally present in the Hypothesis series (1968–70) (pp. 140–43), in which Piper turned herself into an object, occupying time and space that was very much here and now. She registered her position in her studio with snapshots, taken at random or scheduled intervals, showing whatever she happened to be looking at: a television commercial, a chair, the view out of the window, the street. She then plotted the groups of photographs onto simple diagrams that laid out the time-space relationship among them, accompanied by a meticulous analytical description. The cognitive self emerges with Kantian purity, as Piper breaks down her sensory consciousness into a representation of its most basic delineations, dismantling it with disinterested precision.

Such deadpan literalism was crucial to both Minimalism and Conceptual art: statements of physical and conceptual manifestations rather than allegorical fussing about. Other artists were working in similar veins: Hanne Darboven devised coded indices of calendrical dates registered meticulously on graph paper, and On Kawara simply noted, on a tourist postcard of whatever place he happened to be, the exact time he got up. For Piper the question of registering the here and now would take on further, increasingly radical mutations.

Facing the Other

The Hypothesis series was still concerned purely with the singular, if abstracted, self of the artist, considered as an object. *Bach Whistled* (1970) altered the perspective toward the other. In this audiotaped performance Piper whistles along to recordings of three Johann Sebastian Bach concertos for forty-five minutes without pause; inevitably, her initially precise intonation becomes weaker, more "like plaintive cheeping."²⁰ Although mastering such a complicated score in a whistle requires technical discipline, Piper's rendition lends Bach's mathematical

19. See Piper, "Two Kinds of Discrimination," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6, no. 1 (1993): 25–74; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, pp. 245–52, 255–74.

20. Piper, "Bach Whistled (1970; 00:44:07)," APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/vs/sound_bach.shtml.

exactitude a playfully fuzzy, lighthearted touch. Whistling, especially if done in a state of absorption, can be understood as an imaginary evocation of pleasant company, whether of a good-humored friend or a mating bird; if done more in a more pronounced manner, it is a calling, an appeal to others. Imagine an unexpected encounter with this privately recorded, karaoke-like endurance test—the piece was originally conceived for an outdoor installation in Tompkins Square Park, New York—and it becomes a universal signal of unexpected encounters.

In that same year, however, Piper's performative take on encounters with the other—the you, the audience—unfolded with anything but gestures of conviviality. For *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City*, in April of 1970, she demonstratively deprived herself of any sensory input for the duration of a performance that took place at what was arguably the most important hangout for the New York art scene at the time (fig. 7). Wearing long leather gloves and a sleep mask and with her ears and nostrils blocked, she positioned herself as a passive object in an environment that thrived on social networking and power games. Doing so meant questioning, or even rejecting, the worthiness of such interaction and, by remaining passive, actively demonstrating her autonomy. "My objecthood became my subjecthood," Piper later noted.²¹

If blocking sensory input in an artist hangout can be (mis-)taken for an artist's attempt to save her cognitive self

21. Piper, "Untitled Performance for Max's Kansas City," 1981, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 27.



7. *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

from having to register contradictory and often unpleasant sensations in professional encounters with others, the *Catalysis* series radically did away with the “blocking,” the “saving,” and the “professional.” Rather than shielding her own sensory organs in an art environment, Piper, in *Catalysis I* (1970), challenged the sensory organs of others in public places—an anonymous “external audience”—by soaking her clothes in vinegar, eggs, and cod-liver oil for a week and “then [wearing them] on the D train during evening rush hour, and while browsing in the Marlboro bookstore on Saturday night.”²² This and other appearances elicited reactions informed by their being unannounced and taking place amid the unaware, thus bypassing the unwritten contract of an “official” art or theater event, in which the understanding between artist and audience that the event is framed, announced, and legitimized as art by institutional parameters of time and/or space. But Piper was also threatening to breach, more generally, the conventions of public behavior.

None of Piper’s actions involved a direct violation of law, such as indecent exposure. Still, to go shopping wearing a shirt soaked in fresh white paint and a “wet paint” sign (*Catalysis III* [1970 (fig. 8)]); or to ride the bus, subway, and Empire State Building elevator with a bath towel stuffed into her mouth, cheeks bulging (*Catalysis IV* [1970 (fig. 9)]); or to appear in public with Mickey Mouse balloons stuffed under her clothes and attached to her teeth and hair (*Catalysis VI* [1970]

22. Piper, “Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object,” 1970–73, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 47, 42.



8. *Catalysis III*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

and an untitled work [1971]) was to declare herself, in the eyes of unsuspecting passersby, a seriously nutty person. The premise was not, however, to present Candid Camera-type bait and provoke irritation for the sake of entertainment. This was not about turning passersby into involuntary protagonists of a spectacle but about engendering a real catalytic process in those directly involved in a human confrontation.

Piper compared her *Catalysis* works to conventional art experiences, noting that the situation as art offers “aesthetically a more complete viewing experience” in that it is not “fragmented by projections in time or hypothetical constructs about the nature of the work.”²³ Although her aim was to effect catalysis on the part of the audience, the reactions of viewers have largely been undocumented (save a few published photographs, which show passersby eyeing Piper both suspiciously and curiously). This, however, seems to cohere with the concept of “eliminating as many decision-making steps, procedures, and controls as possible” and thus preventing a preplanned and retrospective framing of viewers’ reactions.²⁴ As a result, the only catalytic experience on which we can do more than just speculate is Piper’s own: in October 1971 she noted that “one result of doing these works was the experience of complete and intense alienation from my audience.”²⁵

What had triggered this transformation, within a few years, from the conceptualist art idea and the production of what Piper, in 1970, called “discrete forms” to the insinuation

23. Ibid., p. 34.

24. Ibid., p. 45.

25. Ibid., p. 47.



9. *Catalysis IV*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

of “art into nonart situations”?²⁶ In a text from January 1973, Piper asserted that there had been three impasses or catalytic crises in her work. The first, occurring around 1966, marked her turn from figurative toward Minimalist work; the second, around 1968, toward conceptualism. These two impasses had been resolved with methods and tools that had become increasingly acceptable in an art context, but the third questioned the adequacy of that context altogether, in light of political events occurring at the time: United States President Richard Nixon’s announcement, on April 30, 1970, of the invasion of Cambodia; the killings by state forces of six unarmed student protesters at Kent State University, Ohio, and Jackson State University, Mississippi; and the nationwide student strikes in reaction to these events, one of which took place at City College of New York, where Piper was enrolled as a philosophy major. Another important event for the artist was the rise of the feminist movement. All of these together formed an “invasion by the ‘outside world’” of Piper’s “aesthetic isolation.”²⁷ She reacted with a one-person invasion of that outside world; using her own body, armed with stinking clothes or Mickey Mouse balloons, she stepped out of line in the busy city life that was going on as always, despite the art, despite the movements, despite the war.

Behind the Lines

Of course the political factors of the “outside world” had permeated the structures of the art context well before 1970. What seemed to be the purely art-related concerns of Minimalism and Conceptual art had always been implicitly treated as the domain of white men. In the introduction to *Out of Order, Out of Sight* (1996), a two-volume collection of her writings, Piper describes the bitter irony of entering that environment with “the sense of entitlement of an upper-middle-class heterosexual WASP male, the pampered only son of doting parents,” and of writing in such a way that unself-consciously expresses that sense, assuming the “voice of objective universality.”²⁸ Instead of rejecting that sense of entitlement, however, Piper has continued to embrace it, though with a heightened consciousness of the consequences for laying bare the mechanisms of racism and sexism: “When a young colored woman talks in this voice, she is apt to get put in her place, very quickly and very rudely.”²⁹

This further impasse wasn’t Piper’s alone; rather, it belonged to Conceptual art and Minimalism themselves: the artist’s subjectivity, look, or personality was officially not supposed to be of any significance for the understanding of the work; in reality, however, people tended therefore to assume that the subjectivity, look, and personality must be those of a white male. So it might have occurred that a work by a certain Adrian Piper was, say, sent to an exhibition in Europe and presented with nothing more than the artist’s name and maybe nationality. When people then found out that Adrian Piper was

26. Ibid., pp. 36, 38, 37.

27. Ibid., p. 33.

28. Piper, “Some Very FORWARD Remarks,” in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1., p. xxxiv.

29. Ibid.

not a pipe-smoking fellow with a predilection for measurements and for making cracks about his WASP father's quirks, but was a young lady of color, there were two kinds of reaction. One was in the vein of LeWitt's, upon his first meeting her in 1967: Piper has recalled that he was surprised that the person who had written him a detailed letter in response to his work and with whom he had made an appointment turned out not to be a man—but he then happily went for a beer with her anyway, discussing Bach and Samuel Beckett, and, in ensuing years, with the gentle modesty of a true friend, went on to support her as an artist ("Without my knowledge, he chatted up my work to all of his friends in the art world. I have no idea how many doors he opened for me").³⁰ The other, more typical reaction was of a more devastating, marginalizing kind—that of being put in her place: of being disinvited to submit articles after magazine editors learned they were on, or by, a woman and a student; of critics and curators ceasing to promote her work upon learning that Adrian Piper was a woman of color; and of "dealers and promoters who thought my true destiny was to be an outstandingly creative gallery receptionist."³¹

Piper had been brought up as "an only child in a family of four adults devoted to creating for me an environment in which my essential worth and competence never came into question," an environment in which "political argument and analysis (of McCarthyism and racism in particular) were the dinnertime conversational norm."³² Her father encouraged her to challenge him in debate, so that she grew up believing that even for a child "reasoning rationally and logically was the best way to command attention, authority, and respect."³³ Against this background, Piper might be assumed to have felt a terrible sense of betrayal, to have felt let down by a social context not living up to its own intellectual standards: in conceptualism, arbitrary personal factors were not meant to determine the reading and value of the work; in philosophical or art-theoretical debate, only analysis and argument were supposed to count. But at the time Piper still walked in the forest where things have no names. She later noted, "I didn't realize I was being marginalized"; too "drunk on abstract conceptual metaphysics" and anyway feeling an "increasing alienation from the promotional art market," she thought that "the universe simply cooperated in my decision to drop out."³⁴ Piper's nonacknowledgment could be interpreted in terms of the deferred structure of trauma, but maybe that's too schematic, not taking into account her actual, freely determined art actions at the time.

One might see the conflict between Piper's self-conception and her actual treatment as analogous to Kant's Third Antinomy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which presents the seeming contradiction between the thesis that free will exists and the antithesis that—because all causal determination takes place according to the laws of nature—it does not. Kant's resolution is

30. Piper, "Sol."

31. Piper, "Some Very FORWARD Remarks," p. xxxv.

32. Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black," p. 279.

33. Piper, "On Wearing Three Hats," presentation at "Who Is She?: Conversations with Multi-Talented Women," Third Annual Tillie K. Lubin Symposium, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Boston, March 17, 1996; APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/docs/Website/NGBK3Hats.pdf.

34. Piper, "Some Very FORWARD Remarks," pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

that both are true, but they belong to different realms: the thesis belongs to the realm of transcendental reason, whereas the antithesis belongs to the realm of the spatiotemporal, empirical world. We need to understand the former as distinct from the latter to be able to assume what he calls the “absolute spontaneity of action”: we can only act freely if we understand our actions as instantiations or realizations of rational ideas, which are not subject to spatiotemporal determination—otherwise we’d be merely driven.³⁵

The irony is that when I really act on the assumption that my idea of something causes me to act accordingly, I’m already proving that very assumption. My idea of being able to act freely, as fractured and hampered by self-rationalization as it may be, ultimately relies on my willingness to admit to that very state of fracturedness and hamperedness, that “split between behavior and moral self-assessment”;³⁶ it is only then that I seem to realize that there *are* imperatives that I *am* trying to act upon (even if failing).³⁷ It is only when I realize my tendency to rationalize the kind of behavior that is merely driven (say, by my desire to not get into trouble) that I understand precisely what distinguishes a moral principle from my empirical rationalization of it: the moral principle is *not* determined by such empirical rationalizations. Or, *ex negativo*, as Kant put it in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*:

There arises a natural dialectic, that is, a propensity to pseudorationalize [*vernünfteln*] these strict laws of duty—to call into doubt their validity or at least their purity and rigor, and where possible to make them more accommodating to our wishes and inclinations; that is, basically to corrupt them and destroy their entire dignity, which in the end even ordinary practical reason itself cannot approve.³⁸

The skeptic in me asks: is this kind of pseudorationalization a warranted defense mechanism against mere self-flagellation, which itself functions as a kind of internalized Sadean Kant, an inner teacher who sadistically enjoys seeing us fail to live up to the impossible moral demands imposed? Only if we confuse a mechanical command that relies on a clear division between master and servant with the more complicated intrapersonal idea of a maxim projected toward a moral principle; in Piper’s words, referring to Kant, “If a command expresses our conception of a law as requiring but not ensuring our compliance, a categorical imperative expresses, in addition, our conception of ourselves as *unpredictable variables whose compliance with the law is in question* [italics mine].”³⁹ So in order to overcome the Sadean rule of command as desire—external causes, such as the corrupted cruelty of a father figure or the state or the church, internalized as “my” desire—*true freedom means to submit to my internal ideals in order to prevent myself from submitting to*

35. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1781/1787, A 445/B 473.

36. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, *A Kantian Conception* (2008; Berlin: APRA, 2013), www.adrianpiper.com/rss/docs/PiperRSSVol2 KC.pdf., p. 365.

37. *Ibid.* The book was formally accepted for publication by Cambridge University Press in 2008, but, as Piper explains, after the publisher’s marketing department asked her to cut each volume by one hundred pages, after it had already been extensively peer-reviewed, Piper refused and instead published the two volumes on her website. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

38. Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785, Ak 405. English translation by Piper, in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 287.

39. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 367.

external causes (including internal desires insofar as they are determined by external causes). In other words, this Kantian concept of freedom (in my reading of Piper's reading of it) does admit to submission being a factor in the struggle between the internal and external parameters that define our actions, but this is precisely what differentiates it from the Sadean internalization of command as desire. Let's put it this way: rather than glossing over the sadistic command to perform according to impossible demands with a hazy, esoteric-liberal "Let's all try to be good," this concept responds with a more sober idea, of submission to a potential intrapersonal consensus achieved through self-study.

Piper's performance in her street actions introduced a fissure into reality, a "crazy" marker of the "absolute spontaneity of action," the signifying of the rational through the seemingly irrational. Introducing the seemingly impossible into the realm of what generally is accepted as possible proves that every external limitation—if you're able to see it for what it is—contains new possibilities for action. Every setback contains an opportunity. This is reflected in the stripped-down logic of conceptualism, and of performance in its wake.

Kant and the Mythic Being

Piper's earlier work attempted to save the process that leads from idea to realization from being hindered by psychic filters (such as egoist interests). Now, in the 1970s, her main concern was keeping the viewer's perception from being hindered by filters of institutional framing. She established the indexical present first through an abstract, objective procedure, using only language and signs (such as diagrams and documentary photographs), and then through a concrete, subjective encounter employing her physically altered appearance. In both ways, at opposite ends of the spectrum, what emerged was a concern with the basic parameters of the relation between I the artist and You the viewer, which led Piper to an intensely heightened self-consciousness that moved beyond the regulatory questions of Conceptual art and threw into relief more fundamental questions of how perceptions, emotions, and actions are regulated and connected in the self. For Piper, the answer was Kant's.

Alice's adventures in Wonderland, being thrown—and throwing herself—into increasingly bewildering and frightening situations, begged for a time-out, a hiatus of clarification. Piper prescribed herself this hiatus when, throughout the summer of 1971, she did nothing but study Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, practice yoga, and fast; she didn't see anyone and only went out for walks and basic errands. "I could think of nothing else and became obsessed with Kant's thought," Piper wrote in 1981.

My friends became seriously alarmed when they called me up and all I could do was babble incoherently about space, time, and

the transcendental self. Often, the effects of Kant's ideas were so strong that I couldn't take it anymore. I would have to stop reading in the middle of a sentence, on the verge of hysterics, and go to my mirror to peer at myself to make sure I was still there. . . . To anchor myself in the physical world, I ritualized my frequent contacts with the physical appearance of myself through *Food for the Spirit*.⁴⁰

40. Piper, "Food for the Spirit," *High Performance* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1981); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 55.

This became the title for a set of fourteen photographs that Piper took of herself standing in front of the mirror (fig. 10). As she did with the *Catalysis* street actions, Piper performed a signification of the rational through the seemingly irrational, though this time, while mentally confronted with Kant's thought, she physically confronted only herself. By documenting her physical presence with photographs, she defined herself on the verge of "crazily" taking literally the rational idea of a transcendental self (taking literally being a method not only of conceptualism but also of comedy and tragedy). She behaves in the photographs as if reading Kant offered the opportunity for spiritual abandonment of the physical world for good, a permanent entry of the *entire* self into the realm of pure reason. Obviously Piper wasn't presuming that Kant was a guru of ascension, offering discount summer trips to Nirvana. Nevertheless the *idea* of disembodiment emerged from the combination of reclusion, yoga, fasting, and Kantian transcendentalism. The way Piper made the photographs is significant: in all of the prints we see the artist facing



10. *Food for the Spirit* #3. 1971

the mirror, in most of the images partly or fully naked, with a small pocket camera held in front of her stomach—not the eye, so that her face is left visible, her gaze seeming either fully absorbed by thought or else totally blank. The images are black and white, grainy, and underexposed, some to the extent that the figure of the young woman nearly becomes ghostly and transparent. She thus made use of the specificity of the medium of photography, which in itself has a ghostly quality in how it registers but at the same time conjures an event—how it freezes an instant from the past but hits you in the now.

Just as the sensory deprivation of the performance at Max's Kansas City was flipped in the sensory onslaught of the Catalysis series, the retreat and partial nakedness of *Food for the Spirit* was switched into the dressing up and going public of the Mythic Being (1973–75) (fig. 11). Here, Piper radically altered her appearance, into that of a man with a moustache, an Afro wig, and reflective sunglasses, at times smoking a cigarillo. In preparatory notes for these works Piper occasionally considers—prior to turning herself into the Mythic Being—encounters with people who don't fit the conventions of public behavior: a seemingly mentally handicapped girl on the subway laughing hysterically; a man with untrimmed beard and bloodshot eyes talking to himself in the park, who when asked for spare change answered, "How can you take some cents from a man who got no sense? . . . No cents is nonsense, right brother?" In response to the latter incident, Piper noted that it made her think

of the piece I'd done about a year and a half ago where I moved slowly down the street holding a continual, semicoherent monologue and making any passerby the object of my talking without altering the subject matter or style of my delivery. My piece suffered by comparison. This man's performance seemed poetic; divinely inspired, in contrast to my own dry, overintellectualized effort.⁴¹

What Piper was admiring here was a confused-seeming man suddenly revealing himself to be sound, sovereign, capable of smart wordplay. His Haiku-like comments ("No cents is nonsense") considers not only his own poverty but the perversity of how wealth is distributed in general. The man revealed, in an instant that appeared effortless, the qualities her series of works had brought forth with great thoroughness, though that is precisely the quality of those works: they make us fully conscious of what we might otherwise easily take for arbitrary ruptures in everyday public life. Foraying "into the psychosexual terrain of street people, the homeless, and third-world masculinity," as she wrote in 1996, Piper picked up on the signs and plays of deviation from normalcy and conventions of (non)interaction between supposedly civilized strangers, and on what they revealed about the norms, and on their connection to concepts of self and other.⁴²

41. Piper, "Preparatory Notes for *The Mythic Being*," 1973–74, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 92.

42. Piper, "Some Very FORWARD Remarks," p. xxxvi.

With the Mythic Being, Piper employed a less-is-more Minimalist-Conceptual ethos to condense a complex set of preparations into simple acts and text-image combinations. There was the outfit, and there were the utterances, what the artist called “mantras,” which were entirely based on quotes from her diaries between 1961 and 1972, from teenage years through adulthood, picked according to a strict but aleatoric, permutational system (a choice from September 1961 followed by a choice from October 1962, then November 1963, and so on). These mantras deliberately reveal incongruities between their source and the male, working-class appearance of the utterer: the first one, for example, from September 21, 1961, was, “Today was the first day of school. The only decent boys in my class are Robbie and Clyde. I think I like Clyde.”⁴³ In September 1973 the Mythic Being was sent on his first road tests:

43. Piper,
“Preparatory Notes
for *The Mythic Being*,”
p. 109.



11. *The Mythic Being: Getting Back*. 1975

Wore my witness disguise to the Lincoln Center Film Festival to see Straub's *History Lesson*. . . . When I was waiting for the subway, I found myself deliberately aping more "masculine" body movements and behavior to be convincing. I deliberately contemplated a sexploitation film ad for a few minutes. . . . Got really paranoid at times, once when I thought one of the neighborhood men who periodically whistle at me recognized me, once when I saw some familiar faces from the art world. . . . When I was leaving the film someone asked me something and I answered with the mantra.⁴⁴

44. Ibid., p. 104.

A working-class man of color in an art-house movie is only incongruent if we take for granted that art-house movies naturally only attract the privileged, and the mantra uttered signifies a further incongruence: the alien status of the Mythic Being in any environment.

Piper also ran, over the course of seventeen months, a series of ads in the gallery section of the *Village Voice* (fig. 12): a mug shot of the Mythic Being accompanied by a cartoon-style

Continued from preceding page
among other things, making his the most elegant of conceptualists. There are no doubts of philosophy in his work and his works are just about as subtle as can be.

THE VETERAN TV artist Nam June Paik is treating us to a TV set at home 17 West 5th Street. A viewer's view takes up the side of the television set. From it, a view of the television set, placed about face, up but not quite. Almost all are

looked into a Paik tape called "Global Colors," the notion of which seems irrelevant, devoid, experienced, relevant, conceptual, etc. The collage of the tape reveals the only of the combined television message. Overall has been faded with and suggests placed to distort. Can it image occur for an overall of similar image?

"NINE ARTISTS, COINTEDES 52,12," at the downtown Whitney 58 West Street, is a complex 10

to show of works by artists who at one time or another lived in Connecticut. Chatterbox slip itself is only a black box and the building complex that houses the downtown Whitney has been replaced a small ensemble of cheap artists' shacks, built and used by Charles Blasser, Robert Johnson, Lenore Tassery, Ann Wilson, Elizabeth Kelly, Adria Marini, James Rosenquist, Jack Youngerman, and Fred Mitchell in the '50s and early '60s. Each artist is represented. Stand-out are Indiana's "The Mythic

Triumph," the two Renaissance paintings, and John's "Classical." Indiana's use of stenciled letters seems to date back to the time he moved into a loft on Coenties Slip that contained some commercial stencils, otherwise the work has not much to do with the lower Manhattan environment. Documentary photographs emerge in well-selected show, organized around the accidents of time and place. It all seems in charming and remote. Some bits went for \$10 months, way back then.

Children's Paintings

Paintings by Renaissance children are being exhibited at three Manhattan libraries. All were done by students from a school in the village of Villeneuve-Argey in children ranging from eight to 15 years old. The paintings are at the Webster Library, 1460 York Avenue, through February 4, at the Yorkville Library, at East 86th Street, at February 28, at and at the Jefferson Market Library, 65 West Avenue, on April 3.

Galleries

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130 Spring Street, N.Y.C.
212-674-6800

SCULPTURE BY PAINTERS
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This Feb 22
HOMER'S COINTEL GALLERY
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Hours: 7-10:30 PM

Art Gallery - Shred 31 Ltd.
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1250 Canal Street, 2nd floor
1250 Canal Street, 2nd floor
1250 Canal Street, 2nd floor

CHRIS WILMARTH
Renaissance
24 East 80
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JAMES
JONES
JONES
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JONES

CHANGALL
Original (signed, numbered)
Color Photographs
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1250 Canal Street
1250 Canal Street

A PAINTING FOR THE CUBICULO
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Jan. 31, Feb. 18

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OF HUMAN FORM
JAMES H. HALL (1912)
LIVES CULLED IN TIME AND SPACE
JAMES HALL (1912)

Judy Negrón
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at JAPAN HOUSE
350 East 47th Street
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The Figure
8 ARTISTS
James - Capul
Camille - Fendall
Manicard - Georges
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1250 Canal Street

MARJORIE STRIDER
new york gallery
new york gallery
new york gallery

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"TRIBUTE TO DALI"
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1250 Canal Street
1250 Canal Street

FOUND-OBJECTS PLACES-EVENTS
JAN. 29 - FEB. 18
GALLERY
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1250 Canal Street

Nam June Paik
Galeria Bonino
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until Feb 2

BARANIK
LERNER-HELLER
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AM SACHS
29 W 57
JOHN CIVITELLO
NEW PAINTINGS
Opens Saturday

ARTISTS 32
Annual Exhibition
Site Sculptures, Water
Colors, Painters' Graphics
Jan. 16 to Feb. 24, 1974
Sculpture January 16th

Henry Gasser
Watercolor 1:30 PM
Vincent Ginsky
Portrait Sculpture 7 PM

National Academy Gallery
100 Fifth Ave at 86th St.
New York City

thought balloon featuring a quote chosen as the mantra of the month, such as, "I really wish I had a firmer grip on reality. Sometimes I think I have better ideas than anyone else around, with the exception of Sol LeWitt and possibly Bob Smithson, whose ideas I really respect. 4.12.68." It was not the first time Piper had used classified ads as an artistic medium—in 1969 she had done the *Area Relocation Series* works in the same paper—and other artists, such as Dan Graham, had also used them. But apart from the fact that in most of the Mythic Being ads there is no mention of the artist's name, what distinguishes them is the use of the iconography of popular culture: simplified and exaggerated signals of masculinity associated with so-called Blaxploitation movies—at the time, around 1972–73, at their height, with films such as *Super Fly* and *Black Caesar*—combined with cartoon imagery. The quotes placed in the thought bubbles, however, don't conform to that iconography but instead, taken together, are an allusion to the originator of the image being a woman and an artist. At the same time they amount to a continuous dispersion of intimate thought into the public realm, even if taken out of context and, thus, coded. It is as if Piper was consumed by the Mythic Being, which in turn was consumed by Piper's thought.

In the film *The Mythic Being* (a seven-minute excerpt from Peter Kennedy's documentary *Other Than Art's Sake* [1973]), we get a rare glimpse of what has otherwise been documented only in writing, photographs, or collages of photographs and drawing: Piper in full Mythic Being drag, smoking a cigarette, repeating another diary-quote mantra, this time about mum buying cookies and a young girl's intent to fast. Then we see the Mythic Being on a New York street. The camera changes the situation substantially, its presence immediately turning what otherwise would have been an unannounced appearance into a spectacle announced by the presence of the film team. A small kid looks dumbfounded; an older lady asks, "Movie?!"; a group of passersby follow attentively, obviously surprised by the androgynous appearance of a male figure with a female-sounding voice, repeating the odd cookies mantra over and over, like a cracked record. The presence of the camera turns the Mythic Being into a would-be celebrity, which may explain why Piper chose *not* to make elaborate film or video documentations of her appearances. Her intent was to experiment with how far she could go with slipping into a persona without losing her sense of self. While Piper had feared her physical self would dissolve into Kant's *Pure Reason*, she now consciously tested—facing xenophobia and sexism, exploring being in drag—whether she could somehow lose her mental self to the Mythic Being. The intention hence was to create not a theatrical event, a spectacle, but something inserted seamlessly into normalcy that nevertheless ruptures it, as part of the ongoing exploration of the boundaries and structures of the self of the artist and intellectual Adrian

Piper, as well as the boundaries and structures of self of anyone happening to be stopped in their tracks in confrontation with that very exploration.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Dance Lessons

The preparatory notes to the *Mythic Being* works contain a very interesting passage about dancing, which holds a lot of significance for works that Piper went on to realize in later years. In the mid 1960s Piper had worked as a disco dancer—or go-go girl, as it was also called at the time—in a New York nightclub, which involved her and other women dancing in cages suspended above the club's floor. In April 1973 Piper reenvisioned the experience:

I really love dancing in that cage . . . the music and my own rhythmic responses to it overwhelm me to the point of inducing a trance state in me. Although my eyes are open and I am smiling slightly—Danny, the manager, has nicely requested that I stop looking as though I was meditating on the tripartite division of the soul while dancing—I see nothing, and in a sense hear nothing because I have become the music.⁴⁵

Dance music (soul, funk, disco) is derided as vulgar and cheap by those who feel threatened by rhythms and sounds, predominantly produced by musicians of color, that connect the effeminate and the sexualized. But for Piper it's great music to dance and move her body to, and it's also actually trance music; her ironic-seeming remark about the contemplation of Plato's tripartite division of the soul is not strictly ironic but rather accurately describes her preoccupations as a philosophy student at the time (she was to begin her doctoral program at Harvard the following year). The blunt objectification of bodies displayed in glass cages can't keep an individual dancer from feeling a sense of empowerment at having gained control of her bodily movements to such an extent that they have become effortless, automatic. But then something happens:

This changes when I suddenly become aware of my reflection in the wall-length mirror opposite the glass cage, over the bar. . . . I see that motion of my body at the moment is loosely that of a belly dancer. . . . I falter, because I suspect, self-consciously that I've been performing that figure too long, so I switch abruptly into a modified lindy. . . . As I watch I become critical of my dancing: It is too repetitive.⁴⁶

Piper identifies this moment as crucial for her understanding of the tension—which had been important for the transformation to the *Mythic Being*—between being absorbed by a situation, effortlessly in control, and feeling a heightened self-consciousness, of being “thrown out” of it. She identifies this tension as the one

between the spectator and what the spectator observes, a tension between self and others—but also *within* the self:

I seem to have really hit on something when I initially saw myself in the mirror and then faltered. The point at which I FALTERED indicated something fairly significant about my transition in and out of self-consciousness. . . . When I was dancing at first . . . I had abdicated conscious control, and somehow I felt more control than ever before. . . . My sudden critical self-consciousness divided me and enervated me. . . . There seemed to be a war inside me that was very tiring. The war was between a spectator who evaluated and tried to determine the contingent movements of my body, and the part of me that had abandoned control of my body, *to* my body and its instincts. The war was, that is to say, between the audience and the object of perception, both aspects of my consciousness.⁴⁷

This recalls Sigmund Freud's allegory of the psyche as a house (or is it a nightclub?) in which unconscious excitations bustle about in an anteroom, and the superego as a bouncer at the threshold to the reception (V.I.P.?) area, admitting or denying entrance to where the ego resides. The moment Piper describes as "faltering" is the bouncer's intervention not running smoothly, thus becoming achingly noticeable for the ego.⁴⁸ However, while the internalization of norms and ways of behavior may be understood to be regulated by the interaction between id and superego, it can also be accompanied by a critically reflective process of self-evaluation. Kant calls this the faculty of "reflective judgment"—the habit of arriving at judgments by looking for the principles that underlie habits. The whole therapeutic process of psychoanalysis would make no sense without assuming the possibility, despite the pitfalls of self-deception, of such reflective judgment.

The dancer in front of a mirror, in front of an audience—the triangular relationship among performer, performer's self-reflection, and spectators—emerged as a model scenario for this reflective process. In this vein Piper realized the complex choreography of *Some Reflective Surfaces* (fig. 13), her first performance in front of an art audience.⁴⁹ Merging her persona as a disco dancer with that of the Mythic Being—long hair, sunglasses with silver reflective lenses, black clothes, face whitened but with a painted, pencil-thin mustache—she stepped into a single spotlight in an otherwise darkened room and performed the dance routine from her 1971–72 work *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* (which she had choreographed for Franklin's version of the 1965 song "Respect" and then learned so thoroughly that she could perform it without the soundtrack playing, for example while waiting at a bus stop). As she danced, her voice, playing over a sound system, narrated the story of how she worked at the nightclub, dancing in the suspended cage, and eventually, with

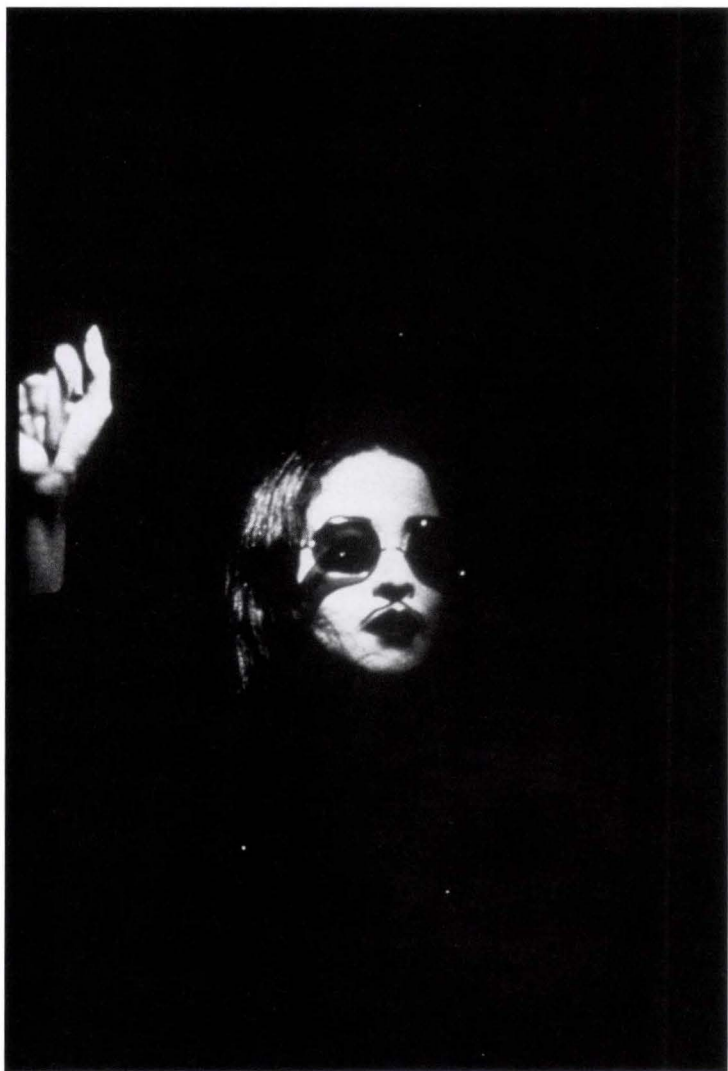
47. Ibid., pp. 97–98.

48. Sigmund Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, 1915–17. English translation as *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. Joan Riviere (1943; New York: Pocket Books, 1975), pp. 305–6.

49. The discussion of the piece is based on the sound recording, Piper's writing about the piece, and one portrait photograph of her during the performance.

two other dancers, decided to develop a polished routine, wearing the same outfits and doing the same steps in unison, giving them a sense of pride they hadn't had while dancing separately. After the narrative ended, Piper continued to dance as a film was played of her and some of her Harvard graduate student classmates dancing to "Respect," the song now blasting over the speakers and Piper syncing her movements to those in the projection, which in turn were imitated by the other dancers in the film. A male voice barked instructions such as "Loosen up in the hips!" and "Easy on the legwork!" Eventually film and sound were cut off, leaving Piper dancing silently, with the image of her whitened and bespectacled face transmitted live via a video monitor, until her voice came up again: "I know you're out there. . . . You can tell by my movements that I'm aware of you. . . . You know this is all for you. . . . But this time I don't mind so much."⁵⁰

50. Piper, "Some Reflective Surfaces I," 1975, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 152.



13. *Some Reflective Surfaces*. 1975–76

There are similarities here with the performative multi-medium works of Graham: the reflective disassociation between action and reaction, live bodily presence and recording technology, performer and co-performers or audience, time and space. Piper's piece puts much more emphasis on the popular music content (Graham, although sharing her interest in pop music, did not make use of it in his works until the 1980s) and on understanding performance as a "gesture of brazen shamelessness" that she has also defended against "a certain variety of prude" feminism: "*Voluntary self-objectification*," she has argued, "can be an act of political defiance" that "exposes the cowardice and hypocrisy of the disapprovers for what it is: an attempt to eradicate from consciousness their own uncontrollable outlaw impulses (think of Bess before Porgy reformed her [*italics mine*])."⁵¹

Some Reflective Surfaces deals with the formation of a liberating, shared feeling of defiance, which the up-tempo Franklin song expresses so energetically: "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me." But with Piper standing alone in the spotlight, the work also testifies to the isolation and alienation of the individual in a moment of direct confrontation with reality and with the other. In terms of this tension it marks a turning point, a pivotal moment in Piper's oeuvre, from which two equally important strands developed: one culminated in *Funk Lessons* (1983–84) (p. 145), which explores the possibility of instructing, enlightening, and involving viewers in a musical—even spiritual—experience, and the shared willingness, despite and in defiance of the reality of discrimination, to be seduced by great music and convinced by a good argument; the other is exemplified in *Cornered* (1988) and other works, which confront the viewer with a well-argued attack that preempts as well as retraces concrete manifestations of racism and sexism. These two strands do not constitute, of course, an exhaustive catalogue of Piper's work. The *Vanilla Nightmares* series (1986–89) (p. 146) of drawings on pages from the *New York Times* visualizes the gloomy fears and wet fantasies about race, and especially the black man, that lurk underneath the veneer of cultured liberalism that the paper stands for. This is in the more provocative whistleblowing vein of the latter strand, but it also maps the libidinal territory that destabilizes its civilized argument. In Piper's more recent work there is a sublation of the thesis-antithesis structure of those two strands, resulting in works that are partly holistic, partly abstract in character (notably the *Everything* series, discussed below).

Funk Lessons began with Piper's observation that while Pop art had encouraged the import of popular music into the realm of fine arts, a mixture of puritanism and persistent class and race prejudices have prevented black music from being seen as a legitimate source of it. Piper launched a series of collaborative performances at art schools and universities in which

51. *Ibid.*, p. 154. One can't help but think here of the big controversy over Lynda Benglis's ad in *Artforum* in November 1974 (about a year before Piper wrote down this observation), which in the following month's issue was denounced by five of the magazine's associate editors, in a statement to readers, not only as being "an object of extreme vulgarity"—which was little more than stating the obvious—but also as picturing "the journal's role as devoted to the self-promotion of artists in the most debased sense of that term"—that is, accusing Benglis of portraying the connection between artist and critic as economically and thus morally corrupt.

she instructed the audience in how to dance to funk music, and in its sociopolitical and musicological importance: its polyrhythmic complexity, its influence on rock 'n' roll and New Wave. By breaking down the moves of funk into basic components (the two step, the shoulder shrug, the head nod), she made it accessible even to those who had believed the persistent myth of these moves being purely spontaneous and particular to black people, and that by virtue of biology white people can't dance. In a documentary video of a 1983 performance of *Funk Lessons* at Berkeley, the mixture of humor and exuberance prompted by Piper's take on the music effects a kind of power transference between teacher and students, diffusing the inherently patronizing-seeming aspect of being instructed and eventually allowing everyone to simply get down and party. The piece did, however, depend on the participants' willingness and ability to overcome their inhibitions and preconceptions. Some of Piper's notes about various performances of the work attest to the persistence of these inhibitions and preconceptions, usually evidenced as ironic or sarcastic stabs at the legitimacy of the music, and at its being taught at all.⁵²

Identity Lessons

By that time, Piper had learned to be prepared for the smug remark. *Art for the Art World Surface Pattern* (p. 144), her reentry into the white cube of the gallery after about six years, boldly manifested her readiness in an installation. The interior of a freestanding white cube, a claustrophobically small room, was wallpapered on the inside with newspaper reports on atrocities and struggles from around the world, with the words "NOT A PERFORMANCE" stenciled in red across the articles in various places. A continuous monologue played over hidden speakers:

Hmmm . . . "Thai Leftists Rally Crushed in Frenzied Violence" . . . "Rickshaw Wallahs . . . Tortuous Life at Five Cents a Mile." Oh, I get it, this is social conscience art, right okay. . . . Christ, I really get enough of this stuff in the papers. . . . Jesus, is this stuff supposed to be expanding my consciousness? I thought art was supposed to show me different ways of seeing the world. . . . "Sprouts and Frozen Yogurt Attract Customers to Bloomingdale's Ten Carrots Salad Bar." . . . What??? Oh, I get it, it's a JUXTAPOSITION. . . . Yeah, right, I see, look at all these trivial Western concerns when people in Turkey are starving. . . . Wow, how long ago was THAT first done? What a really TIRED old trick! Man, it's embarrassing. . . . I'm really amazed. . . . Rauschenberg would be bored to tears, he'd really laugh . . . or leave, he'd probably leave."⁵³

52. See Piper, "Notes on Funk I–IV," 1983–85, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 195–216.

53. Piper, "Art for the Art-World Surface Pattern," 1980, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 162–63.

Here, with satirical panache, Piper apes the defense mechanisms of a typical art dude upon being presented with politically virulent material. There is a certain heat in having one's own possible reaction preempted, and the tension that arises is the

one between being in on the joke and simultaneously admitting to being its butt.

The anticipation of stereotypical utterances, or of possible reactions to them, was something Piper had been developing for some years, perhaps inevitably given the environment in which her private experiences of racism had become public material in her work as an artist and intellectual, which in turn provoked further private experiences, all of them culminating in *Cornered*. In "Passing for White, Passing for Black," a brilliant essay from 1992, Piper discusses the painful reality of a racist society that forces members who do not identify as white to consider whether they should try to pass—whether they should suppress their knowledge about their black ancestry. In the essay's opening passage she tells the story of how at a reception for new graduate students at Harvard in 1974, the most prominent member of the philosophy department walked up to her and, without introducing himself, said "with a triumphant smirk, 'Miss Piper, you're about as black as I am.'"⁵⁴ It's hard to speculate on what he might have considered clever about that remark; in any case, despite her shock, Piper answered, also smiling, "Really? I hadn't known that about you." This, whether said semiautomatically or actually intended as a retort, cut right to the chase: who was he to make a judgment about her racial identity, as if appearing white meant to be white? What if he indeed had black ancestry and, counter to Piper, simply didn't know about it or had even suppressed the knowledge? He wouldn't have been the first to do so. Maintaining the veil of ignorance over the truth about many "white" Americans—according to a 2004 study, the DNA of about thirty percent of all white Americans contains between two and twenty percent African genetic admixture—is of course very much in the interest of white supremacy and self-deception.⁵⁵ The famous philosophy professor's implication was that Piper shouldn't have benefitted from the department's commitment to affirmative action; this in turn implied that anyone with a light-skinned appearance such as Piper's was, in his eyes, either to be considered purely white or else as someone who could have easily passed for it, and thus shouldn't have identified as black.⁵⁶

The famous philosopher, with his remark, might have been one of the people who unknowingly contributed to *My Calling* (Card) #1 (1986–90): little business card–style printouts that Piper handed out at dinners or receptions to people making or laughing at or agreeing with racist remarks—that is, people assuming that Piper was white and thus implicitly sympathetic with such remarks. The card, in a very courteous manner, states that Piper is in fact black, and although she prefers not to announce that in advance, she distributes the card when it becomes necessary to let others know (p. 146). The card's last sentence reads, "I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me." There is an

54. Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black," p. 276.

55. Frank W. Sweet, "Afro-European Genetic Admixture in the United States," *Essays on the U.S. Color Line* website, backintyme.com/essays/?p=5.

56. Affirmative action is the concept—introduced around 1972 and thus relatively new in 1974, the time of the incident—of improving, through institutional actions, the representation in a professional field of groups that have been historically discriminated against.

inverted irony at work here, inverted in the sense that a statement Piper is aware will be taken as ironic (for why should *she* have to regret causing discomfort?) is delivered with total deadpan, so that it's not ironic at all. She does, in fact, want to prevent a confrontation from disrupting an entire social situation.

In an equally courteous and factual manner, *Cornered* (fig. 14; p. 148) addresses "you." The installation setup is a monitor literally cornered behind an upturned table, as if someone has had to duck behind it to avoid stray bullets; on each side of the monitor, hung on the wall, are two framed, authentic birth certificates for Piper's father, one identifying him as white, the other as colored (p. 149). Piper appears on the monitor in a static talking-head shot, dressed in an elegantly conservative way and wearing a pearl necklace, like a high-class secretary or newscaster. It takes a moment before she starts speaking, longer than you would expect, and the first thing she says is, "I am black." After a short pause she continues with an argument that effectively anticipates possible reactions to that statement by an imaginary but realistic viewer who self-identifies as white:

If you feel that my letting people know I'm not white is making an unnecessary fuss, you must feel that the right and proper course of action for me to take is to pass for white. Now this kind of thinking presupposes that it's inherently better to be identified as white.



14. *Cornered*. 1988

About a third of the way into the single-shot, sixteen-minute monologue, as the argument is unfolding with the precision of a Swiss clock, Piper says,

If someone can look and sound like me and still be black, then no one is safely, unquestionably white. No one. In fact, some researchers estimate that almost all purportedly white Americans have between 5% and 20% black ancestry.

It's at this point, at the very latest, that the very identity of the "you" that Piper is addressing in the piece becomes unstable, and not because we don't know who "you" is—it could in fact be me—but because the self-identification as white of "you" has deteriorated due to the power of the argument. The "entrenched conventions of racial classification" of the United States identify as black anyone who has black ancestry, and toward the end of the video Piper says, "So if I choose to identify myself as black whereas you do not, that's not just a special, personal fact about me. It's a fact about us. It's our problem to solve. Now, how do you propose we solve it? What are you going to do?"

Cornered rejects the idea that the "one-drop rule" was the problem only of those being identified, or identifying themselves, as black, and not *just as much* the problem of anyone (and in the United States that does mean almost anyone) who might be in that position without knowing it. The monologue may come across as sardonically confrontational, deepening the race barrier, but its punch line is that those who appear to be on different sides of that barrier in fact need to realize that they *share* a problem. And accordingly, after the screen has gone black for several seconds, white letters appear, saying, "Welcome to the struggle." If, however, in a kind of preemptive defensive reaction, you have shut down by then—if you have jumped to the conclusion that you are being attacked, assuming that you are on the other side of the barrier—you can only understand that welcome as aggressively ironic rather than as a straight and factual statement. It becomes clear that if you have grown up in an environment where, as it is the United States, the "one-drop rule" is largely still taken for granted, you are likely to miss that point altogether.

Beyond Illusion

In comparison with *Cornered*, *Funk Lessons* seems almost utopian in its commitment to a shared, possibly joyful experience, and to the potential of this experience as a means of solving the problem. The years between the two works seem marked by a disillusionment with that possibility, thanks to the sheer persistence of racial stereotypes and xenophobia.⁵⁷ *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance* (1987)—"meta-performance" being Piper's term for lectures during which she invites the audience to debate about a "direct" performance, which Piper introduces

57. See Piper, interview with Jörg Heiser, in *Funky Lessons* (Vienna: Bawag Foundation; Frankfurt: Revolver Verlag, 2005), p. 90.

through video documentation—exemplifies how the desire to transcend barriers between races and individuals by exploring those barriers can never be fully resolved because of what will follow any attempt: there will always be another odd question bespeaking resentment and stereotyping, another illusion of woolly consensus, more turning of the screw (as well as occasional comic relief). Against this background, the point was perhaps to find some consolation in what underlies that perpetual unresolvedness: *Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago* (2004) (p. 151) was a performance (with meta-performance elements) in which Piper showed *Funk Lessons* along with various examples of scenes from mainstream contemporary movies of the 1990s and 2000s that negotiate the fantasy (and sometimes reality) of social divides being bridged by dance; after getting the audience to dance and delivering the lecture, she answered questions. In her elegant juggling of these elements, Piper expanded the trajectory of *Funk Lessons* forward into the contemporary specificities of hip-hop culture and sideways into a wider understanding of dance and music as universal languages that work around the limits of actual language—around verbal and written words and concepts.

All these aspects make *Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago* a sort of appendix to Piper's Color Wheel Series (2000) (p. 150), a cycle of works based on the Pantone color system, which distinguishes 1,012 different colors, and on the Vedic idea of appearances being layers that conceal the true self. Piper combined, in these works, an image of a statue of Shiva (the god of yoga and dance who is also known as the Destroyer of Illusion) and three figures whose skin color changes in every one of the 335 individual silkscreen prints that make up the series. Piper has thoroughly elucidated the work's parameters: Western philosophy traditionally defines color as a secondary quality, one not inherent in the object (unlike the primary quality of geometric form) but rather variant according to an individual's perception; referring to the five Vedantic *koshas*, or sheaths that conceal the true self (nutrients, breath, cognition, reason, intelligence), the eighth-century Indian philosopher and mystic Shankara, in "Self-Knowledge," asserted, "Because we associate the true self with various limiting aspects, we superimpose such ideas as caste, color, and status upon it just as we superimpose flavor, color, etc. on water."⁵⁸

That Piper quoted this passage in the context of this series suggests that it is in Vedic philosophy that she finds an early example of true awareness of the issues of race and identity. She conceptually extends the work from that point: "I assign to each specific viewing occasion (per exhibition or per published reproduction) a different set of specific individual works unique to that occasion. So any published reproduction from this series effectively constitutes an artist's pagework."⁵⁹ In other words, the combination of colors from the Pantone cycle was unique in

58. Adi Shankara, *Atma Bodha*, 8th century CE; quoted in Piper, "The Color Wheel Series," APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/docs/2004TheColorWheelSeries.pdf.

59. Piper, "The Color Wheel Series."

each manifestation of the work as it was shown over the years. More than just a conceptual idiosyncrasy, this reflects the two ideas mentioned above: the Western philosophical understanding of color as inherent to the perceiver rather than the perceived and the Vedic philosophical understanding of color, like social status, being something superimposed on the soul. One doesn't need to be Hindu to see that if color becomes a playful, random, nonessential variable—even if random only within the precise rules conceived by the artist—it is defetishized, losing its determining power over the individual.

The course Piper's oeuvre has taken through the decades makes even more apparent the connection with her philosophical work and leads clearly toward her recent work. The representation of the self blissfully perceiving pop colors and forms, in her LSD works from the mid-1960s; the exploration of permutation, serialization, the grid, time-space relations, and the position of the self in them, in her early Minimalist and Conceptual works; her philosophical and meditative enquiries into transcendence and detachment; the experiments in action and reaction, in street performances; the probing of stereotypical ways of looking at art, politics, and the realities of xenophobia, in her installations, videos, and performances—these aspects seem to be subtly present simultaneously in a set of works that in one way or another are connected to the single sentence “Everything will be taken away.” One imagines a landlord posting such a statement, that all bulky items will be removed, in the entrance to an apartment building—an accidentally profound statement about the transitory nature of mundane things. And, in fact, for *Everything #8* (2006) (fig. 15), an installation in Copenhagen, Piper used a mirrored outdoor vitrine (the kind normally used as a freestanding shop window) with that sentence stenciled on all of its sides, so that anything reflected in the mirrors—bicycles, cars, items in nearby shop displays, whole buildings, people—could be considered objects to be taken away.

In the *Everything #2* works (pp. 152, 153), first realized in 2003 and later shown in 2015, at the Venice Biennale, what is taken away are the faces in photographs of private studies and living rooms: Piper photocopied the images onto graph paper, erased all facial features with sandpaper, and then overprinted the sheet with the same sentence in typewriter style. In most of the images people are huddled together for a couple or group snapshot, so it seems likely that they're friends, family, or at least colleagues. Although Piper doesn't give any names, it is safe to say—as her own silhouette appears in some of the shots—that these are pictures of personal significance, and that the connotations of such erasure are highly charged: the fading of memories, the failure or estrangement of personal connections and bonds, the actual loss of people who have died. *Everything #21* (2010–13) (p. 162), also shown in Venice, consists

of four blackboards that, although edged by wooden frames, are reminiscent of school blackboards, not least because they are covered with that same sentence, rendered twenty-five times on each board in childlike handwriting. Of course, what is evoked here is a classic school punishment, but it's as if the imposition has turned on itself, not enhancing obedience but ratifying an ultimate detachment from it all.

Obviously “Everything will be taken away,” depending on the context, takes on different meanings, but it is always with the same clear underpinning: that destruction is always going on, but that there is also a sense of relief at being able to let go of attachments. The cycle of works conveys both utter shock and the alleviation of having recognized the factum. Such existential detachment doesn't mean that we should ignore suffering, but that we should see the larger picture: letting go of attachments can mean opportunity and liberation as well as tragedy.

In the animated *Unite* (2005), the first part of *The Pac-Man Trilogy* (p. 158), a set of black and white dots moves smoothly, silently, against a red background underneath a blue grid. At first the dots seem to be bustling about randomly, but it turns out that some of the black dots are gradually turning gray and then white; eventually the white dots form a cluster, the black ones form a smaller cluster, and then suddenly—as if they were forming a space ship emitting photon shots—the white cluster



15. *Everything* #8. 2006

fires small yellow bits at the black one, making the black dots turn white, until only one black dot remains and is destroyed. And then the cycle starts again. And again. After a while, you notice that those last destroyed dots are not replaced, and eventually only a few remain; after about forty-five minutes all that is left is a single white dot solitarily roaming the red-and-blue field, finally disintegrating in the same spot where all the black dots were destroyed. This is an abstracted allegory of the mechanisms of xenophobia, an “anti-pack-mentality deprogrammer,” that emphasizes the sheer persistence and absurdity of such mechanisms, their coldly mechanical path toward destruction.⁶⁰

The second part in the trilogy, *The Spurious Life-Death Distinction* (2006), envisions the endless cycle of order and entropy as gray dots that move gracefully, like a school of fish or soap bubbles, as they slowly grow and dissolve and transform themselves into smaller dots, which then grow to become bigger dots, and so on. The third part in the trilogy, *Bait-and-Switch* (2008), presents a black dot and a white dot in a “continuously recycling two-person minuet,” which captures the basic mechanism of desire and desperate confusion being provoked in a person’s mind through alternation between instantaneous stimulation and elongated withdrawal.⁶¹ Taken together, the animations of this trilogy, with their continuous PacMan automatisms, are characterized by a silent playfulness that—given the harsh realities and stubborn processes of action and reaction they portray—is cathartic and serene. Despite this serenity, they point to the way individuals experience repetitive patterns as traumatic and thus, precisely because of this traumatic character, as dramatically unique.

The Three Hats and Me

So has everything finally been resolved, sublated into elegant abstractions, “taken away”? Yes—and no. Yes, because indeed Piper’s work has now entered a phase in which all the methodologies developed are at hand; all the earlier phases can be summoned like the voices of a virtual choir. No, because the reception of Piper’s work, the enquiry into the intricate connections between her different activities—and the significance of these connections in the wider scheme of things—has only just begun. In concrete terms, this means that what Piper discussed in her essay “On Wearing Three Hats,” of 1996, needs to be read as instructions for putting into relation all the different disciplines and forms in which she is engaged. The three hats in question are those of the artist, the philosopher, and the intense practitioner of yoga. The problem for Piper is not that of accommodating these three practices within her sense of self; to the contrary—as anyone can attest who has experienced the childlike pleasure of switching intuitively or habitually between activities in the privacy of his or her imaginary or actual realm—such simultaneity is precisely how a true sense of self can be

60. Piper, “Unite (2005; 00:39:00. Part I of the PacMan Trilogy),” APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/vs/video_pmt1.shtml.

61. Piper, “Bait-and-Switch (2008; 00:04:48 endless loop. Part III of the PacMan Trilogy),” APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/vs/video_pmt3.shtml.

achieved: when one isn't constantly being reminded of the self's assumed limits but only of its actual ones ("It's the only time I feel completely free to be who I am").⁶²

The problem, rather, is the institutionalization and conventionalization that any discipline produces, and the hindrance they create: reservations toward competing fields, toward their methods, analytic and cognitive accentuations, and the arbitrary habits of expressing them. This problem is exponentially increased by the wider sociopolitical institutionalization and conventionalization of prejudice and inequality that permeates the discipline, which in turn—as Piper has so eloquently and vividly shown in her art and writing—inevitably leads us back to the narrow one-on-one and one-on-many interpersonal distortions and violations produced by our incapacity to transcend discrimination and xenophobia. So there we are, back at square one. What makes Piper feel completely free is precisely that which provokes others who, for whatever reason, feel they need to defend their fields—and their own reluctance to stray beyond its limits—to play her activities against each other (along the lines of, "How can she be a serious philosopher if she goes about doing that pretentious conceptual art crap?"), even if deep down they know it's unjustified. Such defenses are also afflicted by, or else are full-fledged rationalizations of, more deeply seated resentments against women and people of color, especially in the fields of philosophy and Conceptual art, both of which are considered by white men to be among their most natural habitats, with logic and powerful rhetoric being their lion's roar.

What to do? For Piper, the answer is certainly not to give in. Just as she's not intending to pass for white or, for that matter, to change her sex, she's also not willing to dissociate herself from any of her three main activities. This would be to dissociate herself from a crucial part of her self, and thus from her sanity—which in turn raises the question of how sane it is to specialize and move up the ranks in one field and suppress the passion for any other activity in order to do so.

This is not to say that Piper doesn't see—and live with—the limits of her three disciplines, or that she doesn't make compromises. She has in fact been the first to admit to them: "I have learned to blend in professionally with each [field], by temporarily suppressing my interests and involvement in the others"; and: "When I am in the art, philosophy, or yoga communities, I mostly just shut up about the other ones. This benefits others, by reducing the conceptual anomaly I would otherwise represent; and it benefits me, by allowing me to focus fully on the task at hand."⁶³ This strategy is also in line with the idea that to boast of one's activities in other fields could easily be seen as egotistical. Piper has also conceded that there may be reciprocal effects between her methodological approaches in each field: "One philosopher friend has attributed my 'purist' attitude toward philosophy to my having other outlets for my 'creative'

62. Piper, "On Wearing Three Hats."

63. Ibid.

and 'experimental' tendencies. I think there's some truth to that."⁶⁴ The question of opposing tendencies suggests a real conundrum for the multidisciplinary inclined: Why are certain fields restricted to certain tendencies? Why not allow creative and experimental tendencies within philosophical enquiry? And what about purity within art? Piper herself has asserted the dynamics at work:

Because philosophers are trained to navigate the highways of abstract logical reasoning, and to clear away the underbrush in order to pave new ones, the best tend to have a comparatively high tolerance for logical complexity and conceptual unfamiliarity. But philosophers also tend to have a correspondingly low tolerance for sensory stimulation and perceptual anomaly.⁶⁵

Whereas contemporary artists

are trained to seek out, discern, and transmute perceptual anomaly. So the best tend to have a high tolerance for sensory stimulation and unfamiliarity. But many artists also tend to have a correspondingly low tolerance for those uncharted highways of abstract logical reasoning that post no directional signs or geographical markers.⁶⁶

Which I read as a diplomatic way of putting what Duchamp had in mind when he referred to the phrase, "Bête comme un peintre" (Dumb as a painter).⁶⁷ In another diplomatic turn, Piper doesn't deny the yoga community's "intermittent anti-intellectualism," observing,

From the perspective of art and philosophy, the yoga community seems protected, isolated, and unworldly; rejecting of interrogative dialogue, resistant to moral complexity, and overly respectful of authority. On the other hand, the yoga community offers a perspective from which the art and philosophy communities seem so preoccupied with chasing transient and illusionary goods that they seem simply to miss the basic point of being on the planet in the first place.⁶⁸

Among these reciprocal reservations, Piper—even if she were only confronted, in all directions, with tolerant and open members of these three communities, which she is not—has to negotiate for herself some common ground. This is what I, as a writer trying to understand her art not only from within itself but also in the light of her other activities, have to do as well. I am trying to emphasize not so much what distinguishes her art from her other two hats but how it is motivated by similar concerns or else approaches the same concern from a different angle. The problem is, of course, that I can't possibly reflect on all three competences to the same extent. As a longtime art

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Marcel Duchamp, "The Great Trouble with Art in This Century," interview with James Johnson Sweeney, 1946; reprinted in *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

68. Piper, "On Wearing Three Hats."

critic, I think I'm pretty competent when it comes to art, and I did a master's degree in philosophy. Yet here is where the problems start: I have read Piper's two-volume, thousand-page *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, the culmination of thirty-five years of philosophical work. But to study it would require that I also master all or at least the majority of the sources it discusses. Which in turn would necessitate not only that I catch up on my Kant, which admittedly (typically for a critic, I guess) has so far focused mainly on the *Third Critique* (of Judgment) and not so much on the *First Critique* (of Pure Reason), the latter of which is more pertinent for Piper (as well as the *Second* [of Practical Reason], the *Prolegomena*, and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*); I would also have to catch up on a lot of Anglo-American philosophy of the twentieth century, which, with a few exceptions, such as John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971), has not been the focus of my interest (generally speaking I was drawn more to French and Frankfurt School philosophy).⁶⁹ In short: I'm not as competent as I should probably be to fully convey, much less critique, Piper's magnum opus.⁷⁰ But Piper's philosophical writing does provide some succinct entry points, so it's certainly possible, at least for the purposes of this essay, to discuss some of her central arguments in relation to her art.

When it comes to yoga (and its Vedic context), however, I must admit I'm pretty hopeless. I've occasionally done some light, recreational yoga, and I actually like it. But I have also so far remained hesitant to engage further, especially in light of Piper's description above. In Germany I have certainly encountered the inclination to "intermittent anti-intellectualism," the rejection of "interrogative dialogue," and, especially, the tendency to be "overly respectful of authority." But in general my skepticism is not about the Indian tradition of yoga but about the Western, exoticist, escapist, and dumbed-down esoteric adaptation of it in the wake of the New Age movement. In many Western countries this adaptation has at times tapped into the dark tradition of crass misrepresentation and appropriation of Indian tradition carried out by the far-right-wing (post) theosophists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One such movement, the neosannyas, was very present in West Germany in the 1980s. The members of it I encountered probably had next to nothing to do with the philosophical ideas of their own guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and less still with the kind of yoga and Vedic philosophy with which Piper engages. Still, their brainwashed presence—with their uniform orange clothes and generic smiles, running businesses such as discotheques and organic restaurants—made it hard for me to embrace yogic spiritualism. I'm mentioning all this not to discredit Piper's spiritual concerns but to explain my fractured position, which is simply not one from which to make any big claims. How can I truly *understand*, rather than just paraphrase, Piper's spiritual concerns and their significance for her art?

69. In fact I think it would be very well worth exploring in depth which resonances and dissonances exist between Piper's notion of transpersonal rationality, Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of intercorporeality, as well as Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics—yet another expansive enterprise that this essay cannot possibly encompass.

70. Philosophers sometimes have a tendency to boast that they are ignorant of some cultural field simply by declaring it irrelevant, but even when they do, few would openly admit to glaring gaps of knowledge. There is a fantasy of completism at work in the trade that would lead those philosophers to gloss over the gap with some derivative, and probably deriding, remark about that field of competence. I choose, rather, to admit to the gap.

Maybe I can't, though I can of course understand their importance as such, and I can at least clarify my own perspective on this aspect of her work. The angle I think I can take is indirect, and it has to do with the spiritual dimension of music, and with Christopher Isherwood.

It's Got a Backbeat You Can't Lose It

In her lecture at the Chicago Art Institute in 2004, Piper talked about musical pulse as a life force, as an underlying tissue of waveform, of rhythm, permeating all life. Like breathing, like the heartbeat, it is something totally concrete and simple, and at the same time universal and profound. Rhythmic dance, as she convincingly argued, is also the point where our very concrete particular subjectivities, on the one hand, and the abstract concepts we have to engage with, on the other, are allowed to rest. It's that "Yeah, fuck it" feeling of really good dance experiences: when the heightened feeling of self-display gradually and then suddenly gives way to a feeling of being absorbed into a social bond one might not even have known existed. I think this is what the acid house and techno scenes of the 1980s and '90s were after, helped along by Ecstasy, a substitute for the kind of "real" ecstasy of hypnotic dancing that is hard to achieve without the necessary dedication or training. You don't need to be versed in Vedic philosophy to understand that, and you can also understand it in terms of the Dionysian/Bacchanalian *vibe*, at the other end of which spectrum is the Apollonian *air*. In Hindu cosmology, Shiva conjoins both aspects. That air is what Bach and Brian Wilson have in common: the unfolding of a set of harmonic and melodic tensions and tension releases, held together by a relatively steady but subtly modulated pulse, which can be described in terms of mathematics but is too fuzzy in its logic to be so easily imitated, much less outsmarted.

African-American music, which conjoins *vibe* and *air* in hybrid mixtures that continuously change shape, was one of the most innovative cultural achievements of the twentieth century. The soul and jazz music of the 1950s and '60s were the pinnacle of this development, and they presented a radically different model of universal bonding from the kind presented by the marching armies of totalitarian regimes. I follow Klaus Theweleit, who has argued that in order to understand the difference between those two bodily experiences, you only have to handclap along to Chuck Berry's 1957 song "Rock and Roll Music"—with its syncopated accentuation of the offbeat, "It's got a backbeat you can't lose it"—and then to "Rosamunde," also known as the "Beer Barrel Polka," a *Schlager* (hit song) of the 1930s, which is all about the straight, marching emphasis on the on-beat.⁷¹ Piper has obviously and continuously tapped into the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic complexity of jazz and soul music, while never diminishing its pop appeal. In addition to *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* and *Some Reflective Surfaces*, as well as

71. Klaus Theweleit, conversation with Thomas Meinecke, Hebbel am Ufer Theater, Berlin, September 24, 2009. Theweleit is the author of a groundbreaking study of Fascist consciousness and bodily experience. Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Roter Stern; Basel, Switzerland: Stroemfeld, 1977–78). English translation as *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Funk Lessons, music also appears in the mixed-medium installation *The Big Four Oh* (1988) (fig. 16). The main elements of this work are an open journal with handwritten text; jars containing blood, sweat, tears, urine, and vinegar; forty baseballs; and fragmented pieces of a suit of armor, all scattered around a monitor showing a video in which Piper dances to funk music continuously and elegantly for forty-seven minutes, mostly with her back to the camera. Dance, in this work and others, is a way of plugging into the pulse of an intuitive understanding, of opening up a pipeline to the universe, preempting or transcending the failures of intellectual communication that these works nevertheless do not give up on. In them, dance is not anti-intellectual but rather a co-presence of body and intellect, of *vibe and air*: occasionally, in the video, Piper turns around to reveal her Kant T-shirt.

Piper realized another endurance-dance piece on March 26, 2007, entitled *Adrian Moves to Berlin* (p. 164). What we see in the video is not her relocation to Germany—a drastic change for an artist who had spent most of her life in the United States—but its celebration: Piper, smartly dressed, wearing sunglasses and in-ear headphones, dances energetically in the middle of Alexanderplatz to an hour's worth of upbeat, uplifting dance tracks, all of them by German artists such as Nina Hagen, International Pony, and Ian Pooley.⁷² In bright sunlight, against the background of buildings including Berlin's iconic television tower and with the moderate bustle of Germany's capital unfolding around her (trams passing in the background,

72. The all-German soundtrack was Piper's intent; in fact one of the tracks is her own, substituted in when permission to use another of the songs was denied.



16. *The Big Four Oh*. 1988

passersby moving on, paying little or no attention to the dancing woman), we see Piper move with the grace and effortless routine of a clubber; one of the lines she joyfully shakes and tiptoes to is “I got to know what you want from me, what is it? I got no time for your jealousy, what is it?”⁷³ As much a goodbye to the United States as a celebratory invocation of Berlin’s culture and night-life, the work is half wistful (perhaps recalling people dancing by themselves in New York’s Central Park) and half defiant. Piper’s biography on her website tells us that “for her refusal to return to the United States while listed as a Suspicious Traveler on the U.S. Transportation Security Administration’s Watch List, Wellesley College forcibly terminated her tenured full professorship in philosophy in 2008.”⁷⁴ Against the background of the issues looming at the time of the video’s recording, the liberating ease of dancing in public comes to seem hard-won.

When I first visited Piper in preparation for this piece, in 2009, we discussed, in connection with the notion of romantic conceptualism in reference to artists such as Bas Jan Ader, as well as with Piper’s *Food for the Spirit*, the question of whether there might be any leverage in a similar-sounding but ultimately different term, “spiritual conceptualism.”⁷⁵ Maybe the conceptualism of measurements and stern statements, with its pretensions to unassailably cool, closed systems, could be offset not only by the fractured, ironic-romantic open systematics that artists such as Ader so perfectly employed but also by an even broader, holistic take? Especially in the vein of Berry’s offbeat emphasis, I could see the benefit of that. The term “spiritual,” however, implying a connection to a transcendent dimension of the world, as well as a person’s exploration of that connection, is global, encompassing, vague. So how to approach the spiritual if you didn’t have much experience with it, especially in light of Piper’s own—anything but vague—experience with the transcendental and Vedic philosophy? Piper recommended I begin by reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, translated into English by Isherwood with his teacher, Swami Prabhavananda. Isherwood’s *Berlin Stories* (1945), which parodied, in deft prose, the grotesque, libertarian, sexualized underworld of pre-1933 Berlin, and the even more grotesque, paranoid, oppressive reality of post-1933 Berlin, is as good an antidote as any to dubious German right-wing appropriations of Hinduism.

Isherwood, Piper

In the work’s introductory scene, congenially brought to life in Isherwood’s translation, the archer Arjuna, on a battlefield, questions the good brought by slaying his opponents, some of whom are his kin. He calls for Krishna, who challenges him to shake off his cowardice. Arjuna describes his doubts about the consequences of the battle; Krishna tells him his words are wise but that his “sorrow is for nothing.”⁷⁶ Krishna goes on to remind Arjuna of Atman, the godhead within every being who has no

73. Acrylite, “What Is It?” musical track, remixed by Justus Köhncke (Blaou Sounds, 2002).

74. Piper, “Biography,” APRA, www.adrianpiper.de/biography.shtml.

75. Heiser, “Emotional Rescue,” *Frieze*, no. 71 (November–December 2002). See also Heiser and Ellen Seifermann, eds., *Romantischer Konzeptualismus/Romantic Conceptualism* (Nuremberg, Germany: Kerber Verlag, 2007).

76. *Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God*, c. 5th–8th century BCE, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (1944; Los Angeles: Vedanta Press; New York: Signet Classics, 2002), p. 36.

attributes (“Cannot be manifested to the senses, or thought about by the mind”) and whose wonder has been experienced only by some. “He who dwells within all living bodies remains forever indestructible. Therefore you should never mourn for anyone.”⁷⁷ In the face of the eternal, Arjuna’s caste duty as a warrior is not to be doubted. He shall realize that “pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, are all one and the same”⁷⁸ Up to this point it’s not only Arjuna who has doubts, but also me: I can’t help but read this as an ideology that legitimizes dogmatic adherence to duty and disregard for the consequences. But then the text takes a turn, moving away from the battlefield, toward a much deeper question of how to achieve detachment from desire, whether by the path of selfless action, as Arjuna does, or the path of contemplation; either way, one is “forced to act, by the *gunas*”: *sattwa* (quest for knowledge), *rajas* (hunger for action), and *tamas* (the quality of darkness and delusion).⁷⁹ One aims to transcend all three and rest in the inner calm of “the Atman, regarding happiness and suffering as one.”⁸⁰ The Gita continues,

If in your vanity, you say: “I will not fight,” your resolve is vain. Your own nature will drive you to the act. For you yourself have created the karma that binds you. You are helpless in its power. And you will do that very thing which your ignorance seeks to avoid.⁸¹

The question has thus become bigger than the battle. There are the passages about yogis who have chosen the contemplative path. My doubts may remain about the historical, ideological context of this argument: does it, despite being balanced with other paths, approve rigid, soldierly adherence to duty, overriding compassion? I do, however, see the beauty of the argument about self-deception: “Do that very thing which your ignorance seeks to avoid” sounds a lot like an ancient anticipation of Freud.

Having read Peter Parker’s monumental biography, *Isherwood* (2004), I couldn’t help but notice some striking parallels between Isherwood and Piper: both have been, obviously, drawn to Vedic philosophy (Isherwood studied with Swami Prabhavananda and, between 1943 and 1969, was closely involved with *Vedanta and the West*, the official publication of the Vedanta Society of Southern California). Both have felt, although coming from different trajectories, the entitlement of white male privilege and have been targets of resentment for not fulfilling its parameters (for being African American and female; for being gay). Both have thus had to confront the question of complicity brought forth by passing (as white, as heterosexual). Both have written on this in published essays and private journals, striving for meta-self-reflection on their own subjectivity. For both, the questions of identity and inter-social tension have prevailed at points in their work, but still they haven’t allowed these issues to completely take over

77. Ibid., p. 38.

78. Ibid., p. 39.

79. Ibid., p. 44.

80. Ibid., p. 109.

81. Ibid., p. 129.

playfulness and aesthetic concerns. Both have felt drawn to Germany, and to Berlin (Piper because of its philosophers, and the way the country is coming to terms with history and atrocity; Isherwood, at least initially, for the sexual subculture and freedom). They share, to an extent, the experience of exile and repudiation by their home country, in Piper's case, because of the Suspicious Traveler list; in Isherwood's, because he and his friend W. H. Auden, having left London for California before the onslaught of the Blitz, were accused of cowardice during the war. Finally, both have seriously engaged with yogic practice: Piper has been a *brahmacharin* since 1985; Isherwood, although he had tried and failed to lead a monastic life, remained devoted to the Vedanta Society. Neither ever left their artistic and intellectual vocations behind, never became dropouts.

Isherwood interpreted Krishna's question of caste duty in terms of his vocation as a writer, thus offering a flexible reading that doesn't adhere to the literal content of the story (so that it is interesting not only for archers riding chariots, or even only for Hindus). He read it structurally and poetically in the context of a philosophical quest for the best possible principles for leading one's life and dealing with death. Piper fulfills a similar dharma by exploring these principles in her artwork and her Kant work. Both Isherwood and Piper were betrayed by surface appearances—and were forced to go beyond them.

Rationality and the Structure of the Self

Piper's ambitious and accomplished *Rationality and the Structure of the Self* attests to this exploration, this going beyond. The first volume examines the role Anglo-American analytical philosophy, following Hume, has assigned to rationality and motivation as they relate to the structuring of the self, and the ethical concepts it has thus legitimated. The second volume explores and champions a Kantian countermodel (fig. 17). In short, the Humean conception asserts that what ultimately moves or motivates the self to act are not its rational faculties but its beliefs in what best satisfies its desires. Rationality is merely the capacity by which actions are structured toward maximizing satisfaction. In many social sciences, such as economics or psychology, this twofold model—belief-desire plus utility-maximizing rationality—is taken for granted, whether optimistically (if each individual strives for his or her benefit, we all benefit from it), dispassionately (we need to negotiate how we prevent harming each other in our satisfaction-maximizing actions, so we can still, ultimately, pursue our interests), or pessimistically (we are all beasts).

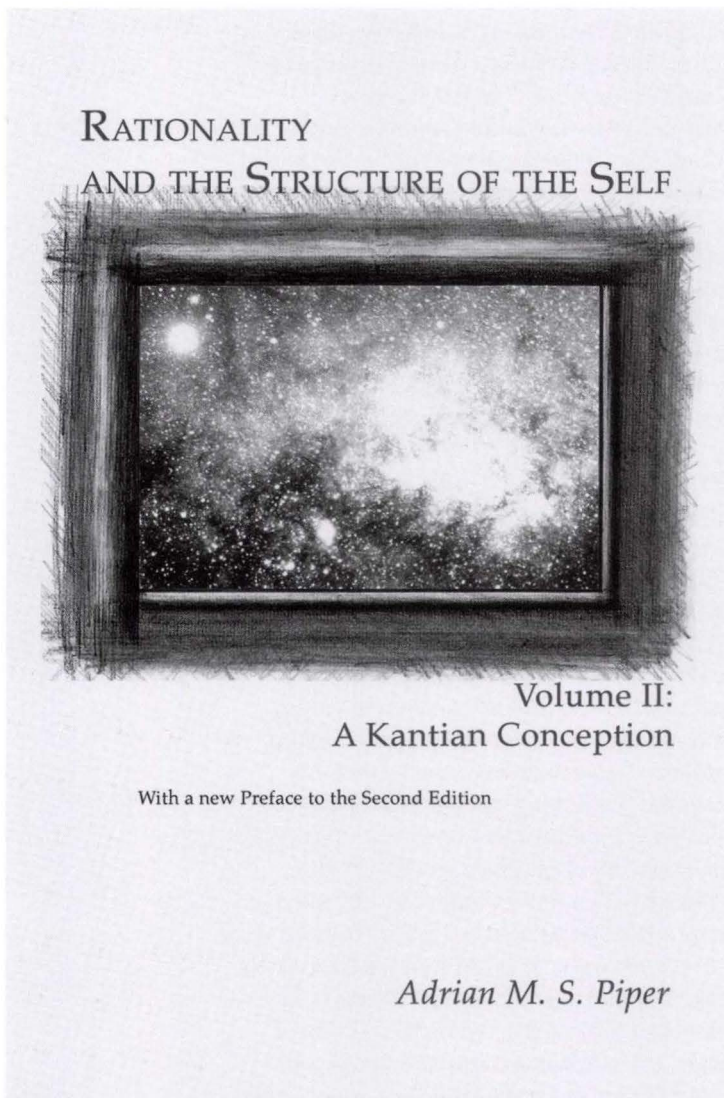
Piper discerns a contradiction in the Humean conception, in the very fact that philosophers bother to argue about it:

By insisting on desire as the sole cause of human action, the Humean conception . . . diminishes our conception of ourselves

as rational agents, by failing to recognize or respect the ability of transpersonally rational analysis and dialogue . . . to causally influence our behavior, even as it deploys and depends on them in philosophical discourse.⁸²

Nevertheless, some philosophical models deploy the basic Humean conception as the precondition for sophisticated moral theories, and Piper pays them due respect. Along the way, she delivers comprehensive characterizations of the basic denominations of social-contract theories, from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke through contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. She dissects in detail the flaws in Rawls's explanation for why anyone would accept his two principles of justice and the constraints they imply; Rawls claimed that people will consent, for

82. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 1, *The Humean Conception* (2008; Berlin: APRA, 2013), www.adrianpiper.com/rss/docs/PiperRSSVol1HC.pdf, p. 34.



17. Front cover of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, *A Kantian Conception*. 2013

example, to the inclusion of mechanisms to redistribute wealth to the most disadvantaged because they believe that in the long run it will serve their own ends—that is, for *instrumentally* rational reasons. But what if, Piper asks, “in the long run” doesn’t work out, at least not during their lifetime? Are they then free to reject the just society as noninstrumental?⁸³ Or, more radically, what if they do not even consider justice itself to be instrumental in the first place? Piper asserts that Rawls implicitly assumed a “*desire for or interest in justice*” and evaded the problem with instrumentalism for a long time.⁸⁴ Only in later revisions did he explicitly favor a more purely deductive procedure for establishing justice, secured by a “wide reflective equilibrium” (a procedure involving many viewpoints, sometimes opposing, in order to arrive, as in collaborative scientific enquiry, at better—truer—results).⁸⁵ Piper asserts that it is this later metaethical justification, “as the outcome of a collaborative and transpersonally rational procedure of deliberation,” that keeps the overall concept from being fallible to instrumental rationality.⁸⁶

In the second volume of her book Piper thoroughly establishes the relationship between Kantian transpersonal rationality and metaethical concerns: a conception of the moral self would not rely on Kant’s moral writings alone but would be built on the basis of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁸⁷ She states that if “a person’s freedom to act on her impulses and gratify her desires is constrained by the existence of equally or more powerful others’ conflicting impulses and desires, then she will need the character dispositions of transpersonal rationality to survive; and will assign them value accordingly.”⁸⁸ There are many implications of this, on both idealized and practical-reality levels.

On an idealized level we may assume that the Kantian view of rationality as the capacity that enables us to have a coherent self—enables us to make sense of our perceptions and intuitions, objects around us, and the environment—at the same time ensures our freedom to act (as we have seen in the discussion of the Third Antinomy). The horizon of this freedom to act is a “disposition to literal self-preservation,” such that our basic rational capacities themselves have survival value; crucially, the “disposition to literal self-preservation must be presupposed by any desire an agent has because it must be presupposed by motivationally effective agency. If it is a necessary presupposition of desire, it cannot be identical to desire.”⁸⁹ Piper’s model proposes a cognitively unified self that is not moved to act by the Humean desire-belief model but by a more basic rationalist capacity, which in turn is necessary for acting coherently on desires in the first place. What follows from such coherence, Piper argues, if it is properly thought through, is that moral standards demand logical consistency, and that if that consistency is absent, the self has a natural tendency to react by at least trying to keep up the appearance of consistency.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 492.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 447.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 436–39.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 463.

87. Namely *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797).

88. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 3.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

This is where the limits of practical reality come in—the rationalizations, the pseudorationalities:

90. Ibid., p. 357.

91. Ibid., p. 350.

For example, take a child who is brought up to believe on the one hand that all human beings are equal, and on the other that some human beings—for example, blacks or women—by their very nature are made for servitude and suffering. Either he must sacrifice the authority of one of these two descriptive principles, or else pseudorationalize them—perhaps by denying full humanity to blacks or women, or rationalizing their suffering as a virtue while minimizing the moral significance of the harm he thereby causes them; or dissociating as irrelevant the requirement of equal treatment, and restricting his conception of equality to equality of opportunity alone—so as to maintain the appearance of their horizontal consistency. . . . *Pseudorationality engenders a need for further pseudorationality; and this ultimately undermines the rational unity both of the self and of external reality simultaneously* [italics mine].⁹⁰

It is of course no coincidence that Piper has chosen such an example. Her model examines the foundations of xenophobia in the basic structure of the human self, as well as the foundations for at least keeping it in check. Logic and rationality play a large part in this—and why, indeed, should these imminent moral questions be left to vague categories of emotional compassion, as if they could be left to our ever-changing moods? The horizon, again, is our cognitive unity, our sanity:

So moral integrity in tandem with freedom in thought and action is a powerful combination: It means acting in unity and inner transparency from drives and motives that lie above and beyond the blinkered perspective of the ego, according to uncorrupted principles and concepts that we deeply believe in and that inspire our action and clarify our perception, and that are unsullied by fear of public disapproval or ridicule or punishment or retaliation or failure. Moral integrity plus freedom in thought and action protects us from this kind of fear because whenever it threatens, we see the trade-off clearly: *each time we capitulate, we break our own spirit, piece by piece, one minor fracture at a time.* We shatter that internal state of grace to which all other goods are subordinate as we navigate through our lives [italics mine].⁹¹

So what is at stake is not just the well-being of others but ultimately our own, because the pseudorationalities in which we would otherwise have to engage would eventually destroy a coherent sense of self. Using this threat of disintegration, Piper thus gives a good explanation for the phenomenon of the whistleblower who thrives on moral integrity, which the Humean conception has had great difficulty explaining: where is the desire if there is no personal gain, only the risk of

reprisal? It is at the same time hard to ignore that the self that is speaking here is one who speaks from experience, one who has blown the whistle herself, both as a political being and a social one, as well as in the form of her artwork, as with her calling cards or *Cornered*.

The conundrum that remains is how the self can preserve its sense of coherence, maintaining conventions and norms that allow it to function smoothly and unify its cognitions, while at the same time reaching beyond the constraints of the xenophobic anxieties that are, as Piper argues, part of the very process of preserving the self's sense of coherence, its difference from others: "The moral of this story is that as crucial and central to the structure of the self as rationality is, it can take us only so far in tempering xenophobia, whether between individuals or among groups."⁹² This becomes even more pressing when what I perceive as violating my efforts at sustaining rational intelligibility, of my idea of how a human being should behave, comes from no one but me, myself. And this is not about merely immoral or self-interested behavior but the kind of anomaly that can't be so easily rationalized:

Of course, like most human beings, I do have the capacity to violate this idea [of what is human nature] in my own behavior—by spending my evenings howling at the moon, or counting blades of grass, or trapping and eating flies, or repeating the word "and" continuously from dawn to dusk, or dunking my clothes in a vat of warm lemon pudding before donning them for work each day.⁹³

In these cases, Piper argues, "pseudorational self-defenses" such as denial, rationalization, or dissociation from one's own behavior would ultimately fail. Even if she purports only to describe rather than to prescribe the mechanisms of cognitive self-maintenance, is she here advocating a strictly conservative understanding of what is allowable as human nature and good behavior, and implicitly condemning anomalous behavior?

The passage above is a coded hint for anyone familiar with Piper's artistic work. She may not have counted blades of grass, but she has counted the moments in which she again and again photographed the same window view, in *Hypothesis #4* (1968); although she may not have repeated the word "and" over and over again, she did so at accelerating intervals with the word "now," in the sound work *Seriation #2: Now* (1968). She did indeed dunk her clothes in a sort of pudding, not a good-smelling lemon one but a vinegar-eggs-cod-liver-oil concoction, for *Catalysis I*, and then wore them on a train during rush hour and in a busy bookstore. So is Piper violating the integrity of her self? The point is, of course, that she did those things purposefully, as part of a self-reflective art trajectory and the self-reflective trajectory of her own self. As Piper wrote in 2006, in "My Kant Work and My Art Work," all of these works "anchored my

92. *Ibid.*, p. 469.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

actual physical behavior in an internal, internally consistent system of thought, through which I made my own behavior rationally intelligible to myself even if it wasn't to external observers."⁹⁴ That she made the acts intelligible to herself doesn't mean that they thus automatically became more intelligible to others, nor that this external unintelligibility made the acts not matter. Quite the contrary: the relation thus established between anomaly and normalcy is the crux: there arises a similarity between the person and the art, which will seem uncanny to those who are not prepared to accept deviation from their narrow stereotypes:

As an African-American woman artist and philosopher who violates the traditional stereotypes of an African, of an American, of a woman, of an artist, and of a philosopher . . . I very often have the experience of being a cognitive and perceptual anomaly that other people can't fit into their pre-set categories. They usually find it hard to make sense of me, hard to pin me down or fix my actual attributes. They often feel assaulted by my very presence, and their best defense against the assault is not to notice or register me in awareness. Because they can't identify me in terms of familiar pre-set categories, they can't identify or recognize me at all. When they apply those familiar categories in order to make sense of themselves, their experiences and their environment, they simply leave me out.⁹⁵

This list of rationalizations reads almost exactly like a list of reactions and nonreactions to genuinely innovative art works: those who feel threatened by them will simply ignore them, not even recognizing them as art—until very much later, deferred, like trauma. What the anomalies that Piper explores in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*—conceptual anomaly in general; experimental anomaly in science; third- or first-person moral anomaly in me encountering you or me encountering me; aesthetic anomaly in encountering artworks—have in common is the challenge of entrenched preconceptions that nevertheless seem necessary to keeping a sense of integrated self. The question is thus whether we are capable of adding “these anomalous, newly discovered properties of objects and events” to our “permanent cognitive repertoire.”⁹⁶ Piper argues that contemporary art and conceptualism after Duchamp do indeed provide a model for testing our capacity to broaden our repertoire, provided that capacity already includes the willingness to do so:

Conceptualism repudiated all remaining traditional restrictions on content and subject matter as well as on medium. And in so doing, it created the possibility of seeing any object as a theoretical anomaly relative to the conceptual scheme within which it was conventionally embedded. Any such object became a potential locus of original conceptual investigation, and all such objects

94. Piper, “My Kant Work and My Art Work,” 2006, APRA.

95. Ibid.

96. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 461.

became potential threats to the conceptual unity of a rigidly or provincially structured self.⁹⁷

Although Piper insists that conscious, self-reflective enunciations of and confrontations with anomaly are precisely what keeps normalcy from tipping into perpetuated pseudorationality, she is not simply celebrating it; rather, she is making a strong argument for why it's not enough to simply hope that we all just get along despite our differences, as if at an eternal carnival. To illustrate this, she takes the example of Alice and the Fawn, from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). Alice and the Fawn walk together through the forest where things have no names, having forgotten that they're supposed to be afraid of each other. But when "they come to the end of the forest, they remember that they are human being and animal respectively, and spring apart, terrified."⁹⁸ Carroll's implication, shared by a number of moral theorists, such as Bernard Williams, is that the problem here is the overconceptualization of moral code, or moral alienation.⁹⁹ Against this idea, however, Piper holds that "without concepts and principles under which others' concrete particularity could be subsumed and rendered rationally intelligible, other people would be strange and cryptic entities" and we would tend to treat them as things.¹⁰⁰ We can easily imagine how the utopian-seeming nonrecognition between Alice and the Fawn could suddenly take a turn toward hostile indifference, like a child abandoning a toy. Piper convincingly argues that "good intentions of moral inclusiveness are not enough," and that what holds more promise is the demanding process of self-reflectively purposeful (rather than mindlessly indifferent) encounters with the as-yet uncategorized in, for example, contemporary art.¹⁰¹

But doesn't that argument ignore contextual reasons—such as the sort of discrimination that Piper detests—that make it harder for some people to develop the capacity for such encounters? The accent of Piper's enquiry is on describing rather than prescribing the faculties of transpersonal rationality, even though, toward the end of her argument, she gives hints of conclusions such as this one (which is faintly reminiscent of Friedrich Schiller's Kant-inspired notion of "aesthetic education").¹⁰² What is more important is her clear emphasis on taking personal responsibility, as opposed to the relief of blaming circumstances (be they economic inequality, the lack of functioning educational institutions, or others). Piper's Kantian perspective does away with blaming structures or traumas not because structures and traumas do not exist, not because they are never to be criticized, but because there is a point in one-on-one agency—the point where we actually *can* act, and *can* fail—when circumstances and trauma no longer function as excuses. Blaming circumstances offers the kind of false relief from responsibility that Piper would be the last to give in to.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 462.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

99. See Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in J. J. C. Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 77–150.

100. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 466.

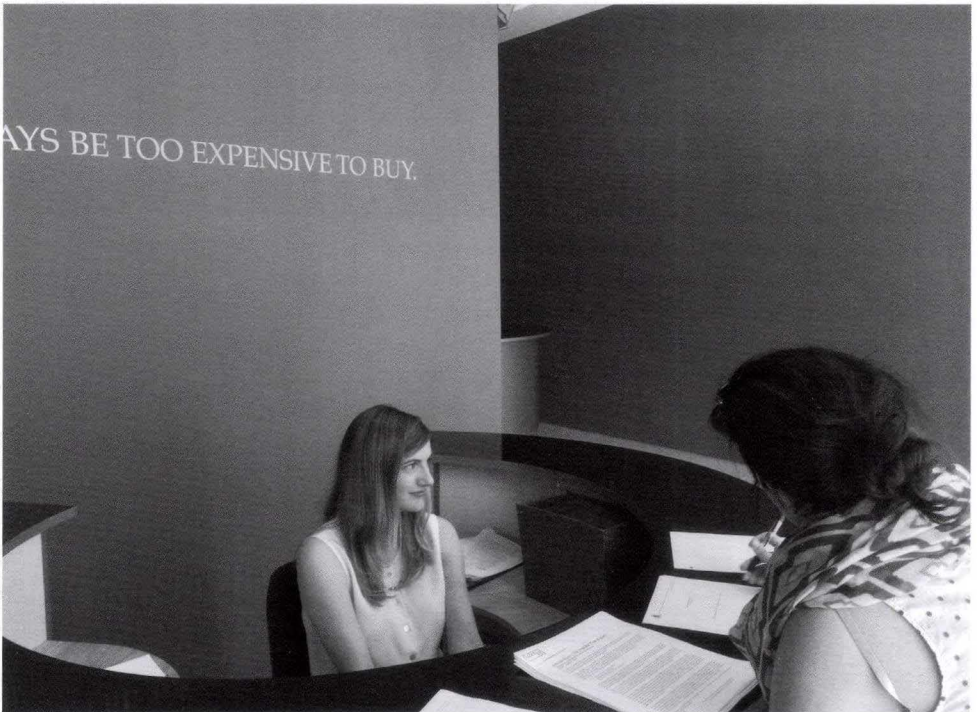
101. *Ibid.*, p. 469.

102. See Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, 1793.

With *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game # 1–3* (2013) (fig. 18; p. 163), which won her the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2015, Piper has created an artwork that firmly builds on her insights and convictions as a Kantian philosopher and political human being. On three slate-gray walls, each with a circular gold reception desk placed in front of it, are emblazoned sentences in gold capital letters. The first states, “I will always be too expensive to buy”; the second, “I will always mean what I say”; and the third, “I will always do what I say I am going to do.” At the desks, visitors can sign a contract to confirm that they are willing to follow through with one, two, or all three of these promises. After the exhibition closes, each signatory receives a list of all the others, but contact information is not provided unless explicit permission has been granted, through the exhibiting institution, to a fellow signatory who has requested it.

This work goes to the core of Piper’s Kantian argument about the relationship between rationality and ethics: your promise is worth nothing if you haven’t first made the promise to yourself. In “Kant’s Two Solutions to the Free Rider Problem,” a paper from 2012, Piper explores Kant’s response to an issue first clearly spelled out in Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651), a book considered one of the founding texts of modern social-contract theory.¹⁰³ Hobbes’s argument, written during the strife of the English Civil War, advances the view that it is in the interest of all parties, if they want to avoid a “state of nature” (war of all

103. Piper, “Kant’s Two Solutions to the Free Rider Problem,” in Dietmar H. Heidemann, ed., *Kant and Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, Kant Yearbook 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 113–42.



18. *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1–3*. 2013

against all), that they abide by certain shared rules, even if they have to make sacrifices in order to do so, and that they will benefit from these rules in the long run. This instrumentalist view presupposes that the purpose of the social contract is to advance the self-interest of its participants, even if that self-interest is sublimated into something that looks like altruism. But that contract encounters a problem if this sublimation is subverted by one party relying on others abiding by the rules while they themselves ignore them. Hobbes called the subverting party the “Foole.” Kant called the one who questions metaphysical beliefs or consensual convictions for lack of empirical proof the “polemicist”; twentieth-century philosophical debate adopted the term “free rider,” from the person who jumps a turnstile in a subway station, thus breaking but still relying on a social contract that requires others to pay their fares in order to finance the service.¹⁰⁴ Such subversion calls into question not only a social contract built on a merely strategic deferral of self-interest but the instrumentalist view in general: it ignores the cognitive precondition of a rational faculty that should be able to observe the ultimately futile nature of the rationalizations employed by the polemicist (or Foole, or free rider) to justify self-interest. Kant’s first solution to this is rational self-critique, which exposes those petty justifications. His second solution posits promising “perfect duty,” meaning a duty that cannot permit “exception to the advantage of inclination”—that is, don’t make promises you can’t keep, otherwise you undermine the trustworthiness of any promise, including the ones you make to yourself. Piper makes a convincing argument that the second solution is ultimately rolled into the first, that if we don’t have the rational capacity to see the importance of abiding by certain rules—communally, and without exception—we won’t see the importance of keeping our promises without exception: “Delinquent inclinations that are unresponsive to Kant’s first solution are, by definition and in fact, beyond the reach of the second.”¹⁰⁵ Kant’s big project of a critique of pure reason is therefore aimed at “bringing human agents in a disordered or unstable social state *to their senses*”; in other words, self-critically exploring the cognitive foundations of reason bears moral consequences, not least for myself, as I may realize the ultimately futile nature of behavior governed by self-interest.¹⁰⁶

Which brings us back to *The Probable Trust Registry*, which tells us that any social contract deserving the name relies on promises that I must first make to myself, if those promises are to elicit trust in others. Why is that so? Because, as Piper argues, to “keep a promise is to do what I have said I am going to do, because I have said I am going to do it. *If I cannot trust myself to do that much*, I cannot expect trust from anyone else [*italics mine*].”¹⁰⁷ But what if others distrust and possibly persecute me because of my breaking one rule (say, keeping a state secret or abiding by traffic laws) in favor of another, more

104. See H. L. A. Hart, “Are There Any Natural Rights?” *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 175–91; and Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, the State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

105. Piper, “Kant’s Two Solutions to the Free Rider Problem,” p. 140.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

fundamental rule (say, pointing out that the state secret violates a constitutional right, or blocking a street in protest against that violation)? That distrust is a sure sign, then, that the social contract has already been undermined by the Fooles and free riders, and that it is in dire need of repair.

At a time when the United States president, Donald Trump, has nominated an oil magnate as secretary of state and a climate-change denier to direct the Environmental Protection Agency—all the while claiming that “the president can’t have a conflict of interest” as his own multimillion-dollar business interests are being pursued in among his meetings and phone calls with international heads of state—we are seeing achingly vivid examples of what Piper described in her 2012 paper as the “trumped-up excuses or self-aggrandizing pseudorational gymnastics” that constitute the defense of such behavior.¹⁰⁸

As I have argued above, to be free is to submit to my internal ideals in order to prevent myself submitting to external causes. In clear anticipation of our present moment—and now all the more true as the social contract seems to be sliding toward the war of all against all—Piper prompts us to exercise that freedom, and in so doing, to opt out of the seeming inevitability of that decline. “I will always be too expensive to buy” is a vow against the manipulations of the free riders; “I will always mean what I say” stands against their pseudorationalizations; and “I will always do what I say I am going to do” is geared against their shameless, opportunistic actions. And it is no coincidence that the installation of *The Probable Trust Registry*, with its gold lettering and sleekly designed reception desks, is reminiscent of the lobby of some corporate headquarters. We can see how these three promises play out on a smaller communal scale as well, but it is through corporate globalized capitalism that the free riders, the oligarchic overlords who say one thing and do another, strive and manage to maintain and increase their influence, and it is that corporate world that concerns the art world inasmuch as the former’s structures have been imprinted on those of the latter. But beyond any empirical instantiations of social contract’s erosion, what Piper’s promises appeal to, despite the probability of our failing to fully live up to them, is our capacity for self-observation and self-reflection. It is from that capacity that any true social contract develops.

Piper and Me

Piper has defined as meta-art “the activity of making explicit the thought processes, procedures, and presuppositions of making whatever kind of art we make.”¹⁰⁹ As it is with making promises, to present an artwork to the public while making explicit the processes that have led to its production means to first employ the capacity of self-critical reflection. In exercising self-critique in such meta-art, the artist inevitably preempts—and possibly frustrates—the main impetus of art critics. And this, I think,

108. Ibid., p. 140. See also “Donald Trump’s New York Times Interview: Full Transcript,” *New York Times*, November 23, 2016.

109. Piper, “In Support of Meta-Art,” *Artforum* 12, no. 2 (October 1973): 79; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, p. 17.

applies to all artists who profess to explicate their motives and production processes in writing, both to themselves and to others; think of Jean-Luc Godard and Donald Judd, for example. It is only since Godard's reclusion and Judd's death that critics (unless they had been ignorant of those artists' writing all along) have felt fully entitled to seriously engage with and question the parameters they established for understanding their work. A critic's frustration is thus perhaps forgivable; what is not forgivable, however, is a critic being led by these circumstances—and this has not usually been the case with Godard and Judd but has been all too often with Piper—to bring out their lowest resentments at nonmale, nonwhite, nonheterosexual artists. To reestablish the dominant order of things, the critic draws on this bilious energy source to inveigh against the artist, to explain the artist's works to us as if they were the products of an idiot savant or noble savage (explanation then often perversely sold as praise).¹¹⁰

What is the function of that ideological figure of the idiot savant/noble savage? Jazz intellectuals such as Thelonius Monk, for example, have often been explained away as a kind of freaky genius, a figure through whom nature rather than reason speaks; when they speak or do the reasonable, then it is nature's noble reason speaking or doing, not their own. In this reading the figure can switch—just as nature can suddenly turn from beautiful to threatening—and bespeak “sickness unto female death”; it is in this situation, incidentally, where sexism and different forms of xenophobia converge, in anxiety about putative mental instability that engenders the belief that the figure can't be trusted.¹¹¹ Compared to an animal's fear, rationalization helps to create more complex forms of fear—such as paranoia, or perceptions of uncanniness—that result in more complex, organized forms of savagery, such as lynch mobs or the burning of witches.

Maybe this explains Piper's modesty in not making overt, direct mention of her artworks when doing philosophy and vice versa, with the exceptions of some coded hints and references in unpublished papers, not so much because it would be conceived as egotistical but because she knows that there are people for whom such cross-references would be uncanny and thus threatening. She adheres as well to the ideals of a civilized code of conduct that rejects the psychologizing inherent to rumination about a person's hidden reasons for being who she appears to be. American conceptualism and philosophy have this in common: both generally prefer an operational self to a psychologically inward “deep” self. When the disregard for subjectivity becomes a disregard for the nonwhite, nonmale—and thus “wrong”—subject, or when the veil of ignorance becomes plain ignorance, or when both philosophy and conceptualism, as social environments, do not live up to their own standards in this respect, then there are two options: one is to say that the

110. The most obvious example being the well-documented exchange between Piper and Kuspit. Kuspit, “Adrian Piper: Self-Healing Through Meta-Art”; and Piper, “An Open Letter to Donald Kuspit,” *Real Life Magazine* 17–18, no. 1 (Winter 1987–88): 2–11; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, pp. 107–26.

111. Kuspit, “Adrian Piper,” p. 10.

analysis is wrong, and the other is to say that it just wasn't done thoroughly enough. Piper's work in philosophy suggests the latter, and further suggests that she will do it thoroughly, at least for herself. Thus Adrian Piper's combined work in philosophy and art effectively strikes through both the idiot savant and noble savage myths that are still so unsubtly-subtly present in commonly held conceptions of artists and intellectuals to this day.

**PROPOSITIONS
TO POLITICS**

**ADRIAN PIPER'S
CONCEPTUAL
PARADIGMS**

NIZAN SHAKED

If we continue our analogy of the forms art takes as being art's *language* one can realize then that a work of art is a kind of *proposition* presented within the context of art as a comment on art.

—Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy"¹

It is at this point that Kosuth's propositional positivism starts to break down. For in his account, an individual work of art—a material object—becomes "a kind of proposition" within "art's language" (rather than an object of aesthetic appreciation or a cultural object of some other kind) only when it is presented within what he calls "the *context* of art." Yet the model of meaning to which the idea of an analytical proposition is tied is resolutely *anti*-contextual.

—Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy"²

I like the idea of doing away with all discrete forms and letting art lurk in the midst of things.

—Adrian Piper, "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object"³

At the Getty Research Institute library, Los Angeles, Special Collections, Harald Szeemann (1936–2010) Archive and Library, bulk 1957–2005, extent: 1,943.28 linear feet (3,798 boxes, 448 flat files, 6 crates, 3 bins, 24 reels), box 1529, folder 8—a card. One standard size 3 by 5-inch prepaid United States Postal Service postcard. An artwork.

On its verso, the card reads:

CATALYSIS I

performed

1. in 3rd car of the first D train to pass the Grand St. station after 5:15 PM/Friday, September 18, 1970
2. in Marboro Bookstore/8th St. between MacDougal St. & 6th Ave., NYC/between 9 and 10 PM/Saturday, September 19, 1970

by Adrian Piper

On its recto: a five-cent green Abraham Lincoln pre-printed stamp; a circular postal-services postmark indicating NEW YORK. N.Y., AM, BS, and the date: 11 Sep, 1970; POSTAGE DUE_____¢; and Szeemann's address handwritten:

1. Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," *Studio International* 178, no. 915 (October 1969): 136. Kosuth elaborates on his claim that all artworks are types of propositions in "Introductory Note by the American Editor," *Art-Language* 1, no. 2 (February 1970): 3, 4. A version of the latter essay appeared as an artist entry in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Information* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), p. 69.

2. Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy," in Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 59. Osborne is referring to Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy."

3. Adrian Piper, "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object," 1970–73, in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 37.

Harald Szeemann
Kunsthalle I
Helvetiaplatz CH 3005
Bern, Switzerland

Evidently the card arrived at its destination; all these years it was in the possession of the recipient, an influential curator, known for his interest in the newest art forms of his time. It is part of an artwork, *Catalysis I* (1970) (fig. 1), in which Piper soaked her clothes for a week in a concoction of intense-smelling substances that included vinegar, eggs, milk, and cod-liver oil and then wore them on the D train during evening rush hour and while browsing in the Marboro Bookstore on Saturday night.

Szeemann's card is but a fragment, a record from one installment in an extensive series of *Catalysis* works. These pieces, mostly conceived to be clandestine, have boundaries deliberately left negotiable or frayed. Consequently, their existence has been trickling into art history since their inception, on occasion arriving in bouts. The works had an audience then, they have an audience now, and in between they have seen various levels of reception and recognition. Yet while their traces are still surfacing, we know two things: their influence is vast, as evidenced by the visible impact of Piper's practice on several generations of artists, and there are many more than we recognize.

Piper's work is part of a major transition in late-twentieth-century art, from a practice based on object making into one whose unity we are still defining. This essay will consider the continuity between the *Catalysis* works and her earlier artworks created according to the paradigm of Conceptual art, in light of the debates about the legacies and definitions of conceptualism.⁴

4. I use the term "Conceptual art" to refer to the New York movement of the 1960s and its European affiliates, such as the United Kingdom-based Art & Language group, and "conceptualism" to designate a more diverse set of tendencies, or when referring to both.

CATALYSIS I

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by Adrian Piper

What makes Piper's work a special case, and is probably the reason for the wide influence of her practice, is the way her work engaged with multiple problems and concerns that synthesize typologies of Conceptual practice which appear to oppose each other. Piper negotiated Conceptual art's drive to undo art's basic assumptions on the threshold of its context, testing just how much a conceptual proposition must depend on an art setting in order to be intelligible.

Invisible Presence Lurking

The extended series of *Catalysis* works took multiple forms, all centering on Piper's use of herself as an art object. Largely happening unannounced and mostly in totally private conditions, they played on the paradox of invisibility—that a thing may be invisible but also must be recognized as such, which echoes Mel Ramsden's oft-cited remark, "Conceptual Art was never quite sure where 'the work' was."⁵ Much of Piper's work destabilizes our sense of where the art is—within the nesting phenomena and discourse that allow it to appear as art in the first place.

The aspiration toward invisibility was not Piper's alone but was common to several threads of Conceptual art, as Lizzie Borden wrote in 1972:

In the last few years, the relation of idea to material has been so modified that what seems desensualized has now become palpable in an expanded art context; for example, absence has been transformed into presence, and actions and noises can be experiences as tangible art forms.⁶

Invisibility thus presented both a philosophical problem and a tool for stepping outside of the context of art to comment on and reflect upon it.

In search of direct impact, Piper began performing art encounters in order to elicit unpredictable reactions from viewers. This was a radical act at the time. These encounters first surfaced in cameo appearances, as hearsay in reviews of other exhibitions, as in a 1971 article by John Perreault in the *Village Voice*:

She has been known to wait in movie lines along Third Avenue wearing vampire fangs, to appear in various bookstores smeared with smelly grease, and to sit in libraries with a concealed tape recording of constant burping. I'm sure any man with male chauvinist pig designs on her would be repulsed as soon as he came within striking distance. Inside the bizarre outer appearance and the conceptual inner workings of these works do I detect some elements of direct protest?⁷

Perreault was reporting from Lucy Lippard's show *26 Contemporary Women Artists* at the Aldrich Museum, in Ridgefield,

5. Mel Ramsden was elaborating on his insight that Conceptual art was "Modernism's nervous breakdown." Ramsden, "Artist's Language 1," *Art-Language*, New Series, no. 3 (September 1999): 37.

6. Lizzie Borden, "Three Modes of Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 10, no. 10 (June 1972): 69.

7. John Perreault, "Art: Women in the News," *Village Voice*, April 29, 1971, p. 31.

Connecticut, in which Piper had attempted to present *Catalysis VIII*, a recorded talk that would have induced hypnosis in viewers (but which was relocated to New York City because public hypnosis was illegal in Connecticut), and where she and two others performed a piece that entailed wandering around the exhibition's opening, occasionally sounding tiny harmonicas concealed in their mouths. Perreault's description of other *Catalysis* works forms a background to his observations about the exhibition, demonstrating how the work's initial appearance on record was already cast as rumor.

Other works in this extensive body included *Catalysis VI*, in which Piper tied Mickey Mouse balloons filled with helium from her ears, nose, front teeth, and hair and then walked through Central Park and the lobby of the Plaza Hotel and rode the subway during rush hour. In *Catalysis VII*, in 1970, she donned a tight skirt and high heels to visit *Before Cortés*, an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum, where she chewed gum, blew large bubbles, and left the remains of the burst bubbles on her face.⁸ In other *Catalysis* works, all performed in public, she filled a purse with ketchup and then dug through it for bus change, a comb in the ladies' room at Macy's, and other items; coated her hands with rubber cement and browsed at a newspaper stand; thought about Aretha Franklin's *Respect* from beginning to end and danced silently to it; resolved disputes with absent antagonists while running errands; and, in several variations, exaggerated some aspect of interpersonal exchange with strangers. Over the course of the series, Piper wrote and published descriptions of and reflections on its various stages, commencing with "Art as Catalysis," in 1970, which were later collected in "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object," in 1973.⁹

The works became well known through photographs taken by Rosemary Mayer, who documented *Catalysis III* (1970) (p. 118), in which Piper went shopping at Macy's wearing a white shirt coated in sticky white paint and a handmade sign declaring "WET PAINT," and *Catalysis IV* (1970) (fig. 2), in which she rode the bus and walked around the city with a bath towel stuffed in her mouth, making her cheeks bulge. This striking set of photographs became iconic—for this series, if not for all of Piper's oeuvre—after they were shown in *Adrian Piper: Reflections, 1967–1987*, a retrospective at The Alternative Museum, in New York, in 1987.¹⁰ As useful as it is to have this visual evidence, however, and as tempting as it is to read the images as emblematic of the *Catalysis* works, it is important to remember that they represent but a fraction of a vast work, most of which remains hidden. At its core it defies iconicity or definitive interpretation.

As a whole the work is dialogic, experimental, in flux—part of an ongoing investigation in which Piper herself was not yet certain of the meaning and consequences of her actions. As is evidenced in her writing and recorded conversations from that

8. These descriptions paraphrase Piper's words in Lucy Lippard, "Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper," *The Drama Review: TDR* 16, no. 1 (March 1972): 76–78; and her descriptions in "Talking to Myself," pp. 42–45.

9. One version is found in Piper "Talking to Myself," pp. 29–53. For a survey of the various permutations of this essay, see John P. Bowles, "Catalysis: Feminist Art and Experience," in *Adrian Piper: Gender, Race, and Embodiment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 162–204, especially pp. 165–67, and 282–83n12–15.

10. The photographs were first published in Rosemary Mayer, "Performance and Experience," *Arts Magazine* 47, no. 3 (December–January, 1972–73): 33–36. See also Jane Farver, ed., *Adrian Piper: Reflections, 1967–1987* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1987).

period, Piper was wrestling with the conundrum of forms being insufficient to convey ideas but ideas alone not being vehicles for art. In the *Catalysis* works she treated the art object as a type of language that mediates between artist and audience. Removing it altogether, by transferring it to the body of the artist, was a stab at the point where the claims of Conceptual artists have run aground, as demonstrated in the quotes from Joseph Kosuth and Peter Osborne that begin this essay. Piper thus extended an essentially Conceptual inquiry to address a constellation of questions: whether art was dependent on a constructed context to be intelligible as art; whether artistic inquiry must be aesthetic at its core; whether ideas needed to be realized, and if so how they traveled between the artist and the receiver, and who determined their meaning—that is, whether the propositions were true.

Starting with the premise of art as a self-referential practice, the art historian Stephen Melville has asked whether such art should be assessed as a movement or a style, and whether it continues or negates modernist concerns. Since conceptualism is not unified by any shared terms, he has shifted the question of style to that of paradigm, examining the nature and relevance of conceptualism considered as a medium. What at first may seem counterintuitive—approaching conceptualism through a formalist lens—in fact shines a light on a common aspect: its invisibility, or as he puts it, “The non-availability of much



2. *Catalysis IV*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

conceptual work—either its appearance only through the detour of documentation or its absolute non-appearance—as a resistance to or refusal of current conditions of visibility.”¹¹ Although Melville has tied this “unavailability” to the crisis of vision and opticality enacted in early-1960s Minimalism, we may infer a broader dialogue than that of the negation of painting (or of the modernist parameters of art in general). Invisibility, as well as being an extension of Marcel Duchamp’s attack on painting, can also be seen as a way to question the dependency of art on its institutional context.¹² Two main solutions emerged from Conceptual art: doing away with context altogether by removing the artwork, which in effect made it invisible; or making context itself the subject and object of the work, as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh described the task of institutional critique in his now-canonical account.¹³ The former solution manifested itself, according to Melville, as a desire for a shared community that was able to communicate telepathically:

To address conceptual work in terms like these is to want to speak of a certain dematerialization of the object; of the emergence of ideas or language or systematicity as a medium for advanced art; of a new relation to philosophy or theory or criticism. All of these will be ways to account for the emergence of an art of invisible features or an art that presents the invisible as something like a dimension of the visible.¹⁴

This search for invisibility, frictionless communication (telepathy), and stark theoretical definitions found answers in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s early work on language, as Melville noted:

There are in Wittgenstein—for reasons deeply linked to his understanding of his own procedures—all the resources for renewing the very dream of a private language his work seems determined to undo, with the result that appeals to his work can seem to offer ways of at once acknowledging and bypassing the conventions that structure our exchanges with art, of imagining the language of art as at once privately and publicly accessible.¹⁵

For all who believed in the conceptualist promise, it was a sobering reminder that any mode of communication will run into some type of friction, and that the fact of friction, whether material or language, inevitably takes a form. It is not as such the formalism of Clement Greenberg, restricted as it was to medium specificity and confined to disciplinary boundaries, but rather a philosophical reassessment of what constitutes form within conceptualist parameters.

Many of conceptualism’s interlocutors have considered it an open-and-shut case, a failure to deliver on a promise.¹⁶ Indeed, invisibility resulted in its opposite, as subsequent generations of artists claimed the stylistic legacy of conceptualism;

11. Stephen Melville, “Aspects,” in Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer, eds., *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), p. 232.

12. Here, I am synthesizing the opposition Melville sets up between two interpretations of Marcel Duchamp: one that focuses on his anti-optical work, and the other on the Dadaist origins of the Readymade.

13. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–43.

14. Melville, “Aspects,” p. 233.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

16. “Indeed, the so-called ‘failure of conceptual art’ has been an arch-theme among many if not most of the retrospective accounts.” Stimson, “Conceptual Work and Conceptual Waste,” *Discourse* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 126.

as the negation of art as commodity ended with a select number of art stars selling conceptual objects; as the idea of seizing the means of art production turned out to be metaphorical; as the critique of the institution became the darling of nonprofit museums; and as the idealistic attempt to reduce art to bare-bones propositions proved impossible without its appearance in some form within an art context. These failures, however, the latter especially, are instructive in parsing where and how contemporary art has widened and deepened the field in politically significant ways since Piper's early work (although that work itself has remained within its own context). The attempts of conceptualists to withdraw their work or to render it invisible thus reconfigured art into a broad sociopolitical context, beyond the narrow framework of traditional institutions and of what they considered to be art, which had bound and defined it up to that point.

Piper, in particular, recognized how modernism's form for form's sake was deeply related to the forms that mediate human interaction. In an important passage in an essay from 1993, Piper observed the self-reflexive character of Sol LeWitt's process, in which form is generated through a conceptual system, thus foregrounding the idea over the medium in which it is realized:

From there it was only a short step to conceptual art's insistence in the late sixties on the self-reflexive investigation of concepts and language themselves as the primary subject matter of art. And since self-consciousness is a special case of self-reflexivity, it was then an even shorter step to the self-conscious investigation of those very language users and art producers themselves as embedded participants in the social context. For Joseph Kosuth and the Art & Language group, this natural progression was from linguistic analysis of the concept of art to discursive Marxist critique of the means of art production; for Hans Haacke, it was from self-sustaining material systems to self-sustaining political systems; in my own work, it was from my body as a conceptually and spatio-temporally immediate art object to my person as a gendered and ethnically stereotyped art commodity.¹⁷

It was in the *Catalysis* works that Piper first used her body this way, moving, over the course of them, from immediate unannounced encounters in art contexts (in museums, for example) to performances in public, in everyday contexts (shopping, riding the bus, walking in the streets); to one-on-one encounters with an unsuspecting audience (as described in the contemporaneous and after-the-fact reflections cited above); and finally to private performances with herself as the audience, the records of which exist only in writing. The work was thus an ongoing investigation that traced the limits of what "immediate" might mean, over the course of which it became increasingly invisible, as Mayer described it:

17. Piper, "The Logic of Modernism: How Greenberg Stole the Americans Away from a Tradition of Euroethnic Social Content," *Flash Art* 168 (January–February 1993): 56–58, 118, 136; reprinted in *Callaloo* 16, no. 3 (1993): 577–78. Melville reflects on the distinction between self-reference and self-reflexivity, considering their varying definitions in art history and dwelling on the ambiguity of the distinction in the work of Kosuth, as a way to think through the mapping of conceptualism as a negation or an extension of modernist concerns. Melville, "Aspects."

There is a second version of the *Aretha Franklin Piece* in which the environment is different. The work is performed in Piper's loft in complete solitude. A piece on which Piper is presently working consists of mimicking two sentences her father spoke in a recent conversation of theirs. Piper attempts to think herself into his identity as he was during that conversation, and simultaneously to think of herself as the object, the other, to whom he spoke. Piper performs this piece in her loft in front of a mirror while dressing in the morning, while eating alone, and between other solitary activities.¹⁸

In another hidden *Catalysis* work, Piper narrates her thinking process and admits to her listener that she has been unable to resolve the problem of immediacy. I will return to this work in order to explore how her definition of the body as a conceptual art object has remained salient. Is posing the body as a conceptual object a type of proposition? If so, then what is the claim? To get to this question we must first map what Piper proposed in her early conceptual practice.

Lurking at MoMA

In The Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York, collection: INFORMATION, series folder: IL.14—a card. Sent from Church Street Station post office on July 9, 1969, to Kynaston McShine, Associate Curator. On the top left-hand side, the typed text reads:

The area on the reverse surface of this card is a 1:114 enlargement of coordinates rectangle (5,6), p. 81, *0 TO 9 Magazine*, July, 1969.

It has been relocated to:

Kynaston McShine
432 Lafayette St.
NYC

McShine's home address is written by hand, as is a scribble by the postal service adding the zip code (p. 134). The other side is empty but for the U.S. Postal Service stamps that specify it arrived, via Cooper Station, on July 11, 1969.

As the card indicates, it is related to the July issue of *0 TO 9*, a mimeographed and staple-bound poetry and art publication edited by Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer (sister of Rosemary Mayer) and active from 1967 to 1969, to which Piper contributed two entries (fig 3; pp. 135–39).¹⁹ McShine received his postcard as part of a work that appears on pages 79 through 81, with a blank space representing its title in the table of contents. On page 79 a system is described.

18. Mayer, "Performance and Experience," p. 35. Mayer's interpretation of Piper's work is informed by their friendship. Although her contextualization of Piper as authentic is more anecdotal than analytic, her record of Piper's work is very valuable.

19. Piper, untitled entries, *0 TO 9*, no. 6 (July 1969): 79–81, 105–9. Piper also provided two entries in issue no. 5 (January 1969): 49, 50–52.

adrian paper

Printed in O-945630-52

1 in complete? # 23, in front, back, ded.

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1. Rectangles are located according to coordinate position on following page.
2. In listing of rectangles, horizontal coordinates precede vertical coordinates.
3. Listing system (below) is based on exhaustion of horizontal coordinates.

This is followed by a systematic list of coordinates, which cover the rest of the page and the next, and a grid on page 81, with twelve columns over thirty-one rows drafted by hand with a ruler, but numbered with a typewriter and then mimeographed. Contrasting two forms of organization and two vehicles for recording information, a work about maps, mapping, communication, and social networks is itself transmitted as a networked object, moving through the city via the United States Postal Service.

Piper made several such works, known as the Area Relocation series, including *Untitled* ("The area described by the periphery of this ad . . .")/Area Relocation Series #2 (1969): an ad in the May 29, 1969, issue of the *Village Voice*, which relocated the "area of the ad from the address of the newspaper headquarters" to "your address," an act of interpolation for general readers, who would presumably understand the art as transferred to their own addresses; select art-world colleagues received an additional bonus in the mail, in the form of actual cards that were blank on one side. For the general readers of the paper's gallery section, for Piper's list of recipients, and, now, for me, the point is that in reality no actual areas have been physically relocated; the work remains ideational in all respects but those of language and communication. It was, and is, up to viewers to try to meditate the relocation of the areas, to perform the work in their minds.²⁰

But something else lurks around the ideas: a card, a physical object. At the time of its making, the card that was relocated from 0 TO 9 to McShine's address was a typical conceptualist artwork: mundane, cheap, ephemeral, and not made from traditional art materials. Over the course of its life the status of this object has changed in two respects: it has been transformed from a means of delivering an idea into a preserved archival item, and from a vehicle of communication into a lasting object. The calcification of this object takes place by means of the art system that has deemed it important, since it is now part of MoMA's McShine archive. It marks the edges of a territory shaped by all those who received the card—a network, the extent of which we cannot see. Like its institutionalized cohorts, the card resides in a chemical-free folder, still lurking. Herein lies the paradox of the invisible work: for the artwork to be recognized it must be seen, but for it to be seen it must be presented by the system—the very

20. Piper has noted that "an area is a two-dimensional geometrical concept without any volume at all. So in fact it is not possible to physically relocate an area at all. When we refer to an area in commonplace parlance, e.g. the 'area' of a playing field or a chessboard, we are actually not referring to areas in the strict sense, but rather to three-dimensional physical objects. So in its ideationality, the work addresses a geometrical reality that extends beyond language and communication." Piper, comment to the author on the first draft of this essay, November 14, 2016.

system that kills the spontaneity for which it lives. Alive while invisible but petrified once seen, the work depends upon museums, publishing houses, art media for its preservation—all those institutions that disable its ability to roam and act as a catalytic agent. In an archive it can only be found by those predisposed to contextual reception. But this, like the presumed failure of Conceptual art, is not the end of the story: the work nevertheless left behind a trace of its passage through the system, illuminating the process by which the series of contradictions play out over time.

In the unresolved tension between the concreteness of the card and the abstraction required to relocate an area to one's own present moment, something remains alive. Sometime in 2013, and again now, I found the coordinates and the rendered square in *0 TO 9* and read it as a map of the one that was "relocated" to McShine's address in 1970.

Piper tested this idea in several works that dealt thematically with the concept of relocating areas or planes from the perceptual and geometrical world into the realm of representation, testing the degree to which communicative mediums and concrete forms push against the movement of ideas. To that end she also "relocated" contexts, destabilizing both the object of art and its means of display and circulation (and, later, the position of the artist as well as that of the viewer). Some displacements consisted of abandoning the art object and substituting it with other forms of communication to make a conceptual work. She used this strategy in works that would be displayed in an art context, as she did with the self-consciously named *Context #7* (1970) (pp. 142, 143), featured in *Information*, McShine's watershed exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art that year; and in the Hypothesis series (1968–70) (pp. 140–43), which mapped the artist's location as an object in space. Piper circulated the various relocation pieces and other works along alternative circuits: publications, mail art, and the *Village Voice* ads. Elements from several works appeared in others; writing came into view as itself, in Piper's reflections on her practice in essay form; or as parts of conceptual works, in texts typewritten on 8½ by 11-inch pages. A draft of a statement written for Terry Atkinson, the artist and cofounder of the collaborative Art & Language and the journal *Art-Language*, reappeared as an untitled statement in the notebook *Nineteen Concrete Space-Time-Infinity Pieces* (1968–69) (fig. 4); another text from the suite appears in the unnamed second piece Piper published in the July 1969 issue of *0 TO 9* (on pages 105–9).²¹ In this way, works reverberated between being stand-alone conceptual works and parts of other works—published as *Village Voice* ads, as poetry or art, or as metareflections in and of themselves. These utterances never appear all at once, but rather emerge as a network of fragments; any single piece of writing may be a work or a work's context, thus destabilizing the viewer's predisposition to its meaning.

21. Piper, "Space, Time, Language, Form," 1968, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 11–13.

My present work is involved with the general nature of time and/or space. In any specific form, there is an infinite amount of information that can be conveyed about it, and an infinite number of permutations of it. These possibilities are obviously suggested only by the structure of the language used in dealing with or identifying its general character, and not through direct perception. One could continue to supply verbal information about it indefinitely. Therefore, it seems most logical to allow the physical boundaries of the specific form used to limit how much is stated about it. Another way of imposing limitations is to have the person to whom I'm giving the piece arbitrarily decide a) whether they want the piece to exist in time or space (thus deciding the nature of the medium used); b) the number of units of that medium they want the information carried to.

At the moment, I'm working on a book composed of pieces that use standard 8 1/2 x 11" paper as a medium. The people who own the pieces will in effect decide the length of the book.

In addition to geometrically defined area or spaces and surfaces of paper, I have also utilized mobius strips, photographs, lengths of masking tape, encircling an object or space, maps, lengths of recording tape, telegrams, speech, and film and slide proposals.

4. *Untitled Statement ("My present work is involved . . ."). 1968*

An announcement published in the gallery section of the March 13, 1969, issue of the *Village Voice* stated simply, “ADRIAN PIPER,” and “From March On.” Each part of Piper’s *Three Untitled Projects [for 0 to 9]: Some Areas in the New York Area* (1969), which was conceived as a mail-art show and produced and published by 0 TO 9 Press, is a bound booklet dealing with the codification of space and scale. Piper treated these as her first “solo” exhibition: she sent them to a list of addressees (artists, critics, and other art professionals connected to the Conceptual art circuit in the United States, Europe, and Canada) that she titled *Exhibit Locations*; each recipient’s copy of the list was marked with a red dot next to their name, signaling that the exhibition’s sites were considered to be all the locations of the works’ reception.²² She also applied for copyright for the booklets with the Library of Congress, thus placing a tentacle into another institutional circuit, in which they have since been secreted away for posterity.

Piper has worked with the idea of relocating actual spaces, as in *Utah–Manhattan Transfer* (1968), in which she exchanged a square inch from a topographical map of Dugway Proving Ground (a top-secret U.S. Army site for testing nerve gas) with an inch of the area around Times Square taken from a map of the New York subway system. *Here and Now*, an artist’s book of 1968 (p. 23), calls upon the viewer to work with ideational space, starting with a series of suggested systematic arrangements, detailed in numbered grid legends, for the pages that follow; their provisional status implies that any and all other arrangements are also possible. These are followed by actual gridded pages, each including a rubric that narrates its own location on its own grid, in words surrendering to the confines of the box:

Here, the square area in 4th row from top, 4th from right side.

The notion of “here” can thus be understood as a mapped location existing in a “space” that does not correspond to any real-life location (if “here” is indeed just a square on a page); as a declaration that exists irrespective of any referent (“here” as an abstract proposition); or as a directive addressed to the reader, a call to locate his or her consciousness on the grid at the moment of reading. In any case, the acts of mental comprehension and physical locating are deliberately parsed and laid out so that the viewer can contemplate the distinction. Between 1968 and 1972 almost all of Piper’s works dealt with one or several modes of pulling apart, comparing, equating, or merely baring

22. An example exists in the Lawrence Alloway papers, 1935–2003, Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, accession no. 2003.M.46; box 13, folder 6; and Harald Szeemann papers, Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, accession no. 2011.M.30; box 1529, folder 8. Certificates for the registration of a claim to copyright are held in file 2 at the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA). Perreault mentions the project and the list of “exhibition locations,” in “On the Street,” *Village Voice*, March 27, 1969, p. 17.

for observation the mediating signifiers that render experience or knowledge, showing us how those factors are formed by the ways we measure and record existing phenomena.

In *Relocated Planes I: Indoor Series*, 6/69 (1969) and *Relocated Planes II: Outdoor Series* (1969) Piper devised and then applied systems of designating and relocating space, first to photographs and then to sheets of paper collected in notebooks (figs. 5-10). For each series the system is described in typewritten texts and diagrams, beginning with an overall introductory text and a section that specifies a schema for the hypothetical reduction of space into photographs, thus that "planar areas which originally existed at the designated locations in space and time have been photographically reduced to an area of 9 sq." For each series, twelve of these reduced planes have been divided into three groups of four, and each group has been further reduced, based on the distance of the imagined plane from the camera's eye: from 1 foot to 1 inch for a plane of 9 square feet; from 1 foot to 2 inches for a plane of 36 square feet; and finally from 1 foot to 3 inches for a plane of 81 square feet. Thus the reduction has been doubled, as Piper first designated a theoretical plane through the diagram and description, separating it from the rest of the visible space, and then captured it with a camera and "reduced" it to a photographic image: the artist is hypothetically cutting away a piece of the world and shrinking it into a photograph. The overall diagrams and texts are followed by a specific diagram for each series that renders the way the indoor planes are sited relative to the space of the room and the outdoor planes relative to the ground; the tips of the grid coordinates in *Outdoor Series* are marked with infinity signs, indicating a theoretical extension out into space. In each notebook a final section, introduced by a title page, contains specific descriptive principles for each photograph, some of which repeat the principles specified in the introductory text, as well as a description (time, date, original location); each group of four is assembled on a single page, and each group has its own title page as well. These are followed by the original twelve photographs, reduced to 3 by 3-inch photographs set within a grid; facing each image, on the previous page's verso, is the corresponding caption information, closely cropped and mounted on opaque 8½ by 11-inch black backing paper otherwise left blank. It is significant that explanation and captions precede any pictorial material.

Thus each series sets down rules for reducing transparent planes (the three-dimensional space of the real world) into photographs in order to proportionally locate them on a grid according to a specified ratio, and then illustrates how each photograph relates to a 8½ by 11-inch page, so that "each reduced plane has been relocated to the center of a reduced opaque plane which has no specific locations in space and time." The "opaque plane" is a standard 8½ by 11-inch American letter

page, a prototypical conceptualist material—utterly commonplace but representing, in its standardized features, a unit in a large social machine, the fact of standardization itself—the invisible ways in which our daily lives are always already organized and mapped into grids. An act of translation from reality to page is taking place, in which the photographic image, forced into dimensions dictated by standardization, plays a part.

In these works Piper describes the process of photography from an alternate vantage point—as a new set of means, toward a different end. The usual capturing of optical phenomena and translation of them into indexical images has been transformed into the movement from a transparent plane to an opaque one:

The reduction in scale of each transparent plane corresponds exactly to the reduction in scale of the accompanying opaque plane. The unit of measure (as indicated by the overall grid) is identical for both.

Both planes occupy the same homogenous surface, one occupying area within the other.

But the standard 8½ by 11-inch page is not reduced in reality: its dimensions are fixed. It is the reduction of space that is captured in a photograph that has been twice rescaled to fit into the schema. The change of scale is not an outcome of the photographer's moving farther away from her subject/object/landscape, hence making it appear smaller; rather, it is emphasized as the cause, not the effect, with the movement of the photographer subordinated to the desired outcome, serving not the image but its schematic ratio. The action determining the process is rendered not as the will or agency of the photographer but as an outcome of objects, space, and a system set in place to produce the work. This action corresponds to one of conceptualism's most quoted observational directives: Sol LeWitt's foundational statement that "the idea becomes a machine that makes the art."²³ And tucked away in a folder at the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation, among envelopes of preparatory work for the Area Relocation series, is a fascinating and significant historical document: an image of Piper's Hester Street loft with, perched on a dresser, a model for *46 Three-Part Variations on 3 Different Kinds of Cubes* (1967) (p. 110), a paradigmatic work by LeWitt, Piper's friend and then downstairs neighbor, whose practice should also be understood as an entity bigger than its visible parts.²⁴

Historians and critics have usually considered LeWitt's practice in contrast to that of Joseph Kosuth, another founding figure of Conceptual art. Alexander Alberro, for example, has written,

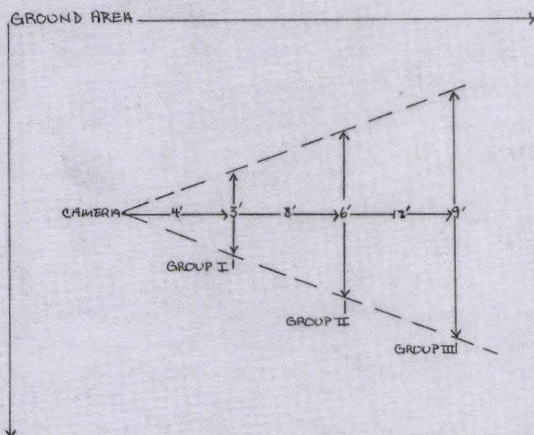
23. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967): 79.

24. As Juli Carson has put it, "For *Incomplete Open Cubes* is not a discrete work of art, but an amalgam of notes, doodles, working drawings, photographs, and sculptural maquettes that as a process supports the 'actual' work: 122 incomplete skeletal wooden cubes generated from a paradoxical plan, as Pamela Lee puts it, to present a 'complete investigation into how one might not complete the form of the cube.'" Carson, "Conceptualism and the Single Work of Art: Review of Nicholas Baume, ed. *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes*," *Art Journal* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 110–11. Carson is citing Lee, "Phase Piece," in Nicholas Baume, ed., *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 49–82.

RELOCATED PLANES, INDOOR SERIES
 RELOCATED PLANES, OUTDOOR SERIES

Planar areas which originally existed at the designated locations in space and time have been photographically reduced to an area of 9 sq. ".

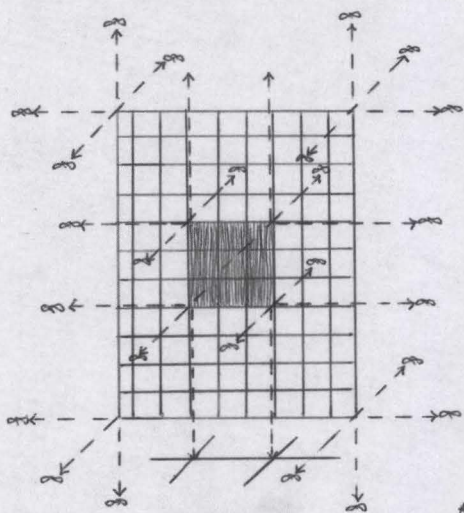
The planes are divided into three groups of four, based on the distance of the plane from the eye of the camera. This distance determines the reduction in scale for each group.



- In group I, the photographed plane is 4' from the eye of the camera. The scale is therefore 1" = 1'; the original plane measures 9 sq. '.
- In group II, the photographed plane is 8' from the eye of the camera. The scale is therefore 1" = 2'; the original plane measures 36 sq. '.
- In group III, the photographed plane is 12' from the eye of the camera. The scale is therefore 1" = 3'; the original plane measures 81 sq. '.

Each reduced plane has been relocated to the center of a reduced opaque plane which has no specific location in space and time.

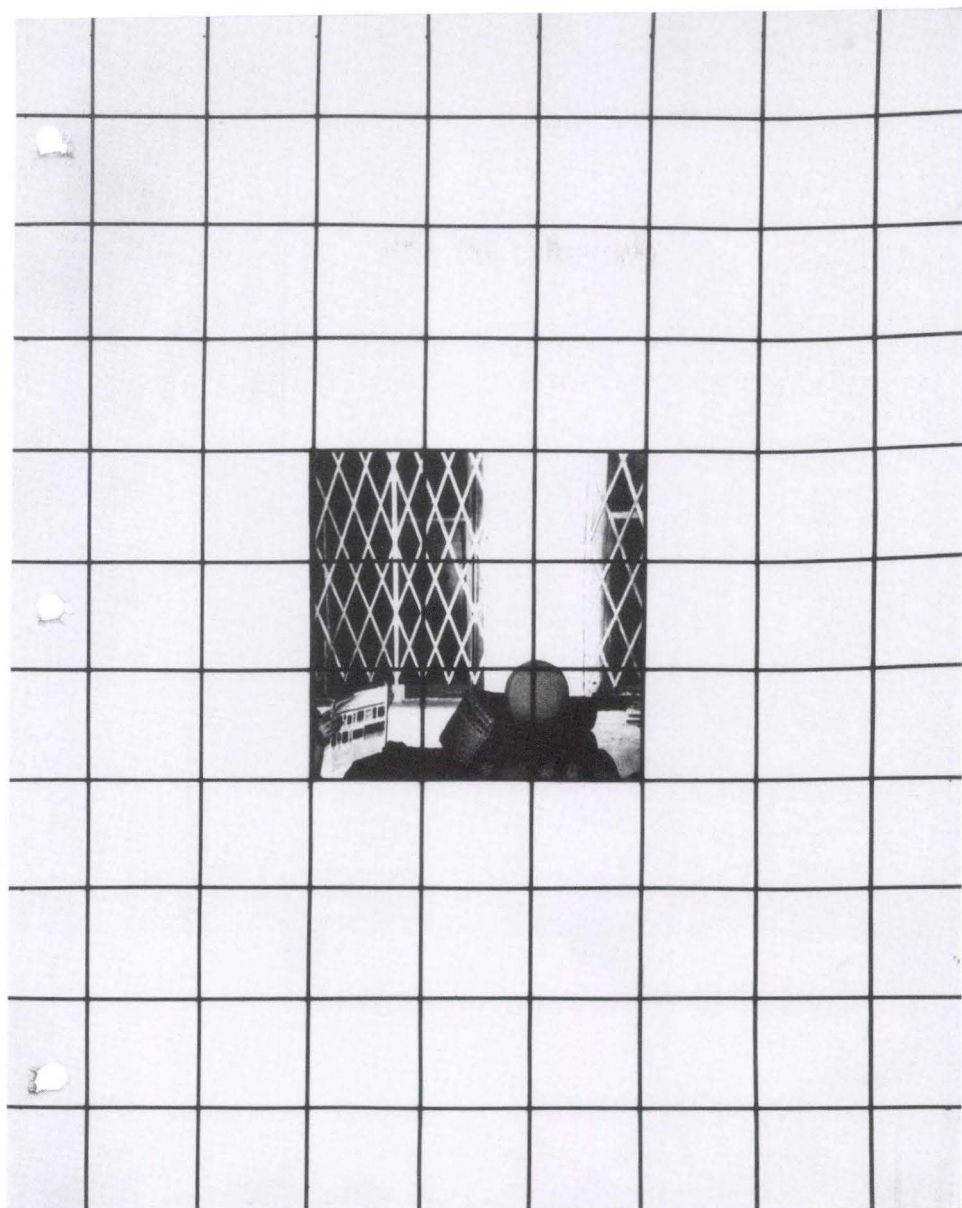
The original size of the opaque plane is determined by the original size of the transparent plane with which it is combined. The reduction in scale and unit of measure (square inches) is identical for both, as indicated by the overall grid.



- The shaded area represents an OUTDOOR SERIES plane at its original location.
- The rectangular gridded area represents an original unlocated opaque plane of unspecified size.
- When reduced and combined with any reduced INDOOR SERIES or OUTDOOR SERIES plane, the total surface simultaneously dislocates the transparent plane from its surrounding environment and locates the opaque plane in that environment.

original location, inner plane: Sunday, June 1, 1969, 1 PM
north half of 4th floor loft, 117 Hester St., NYC
original location, outer plane: none

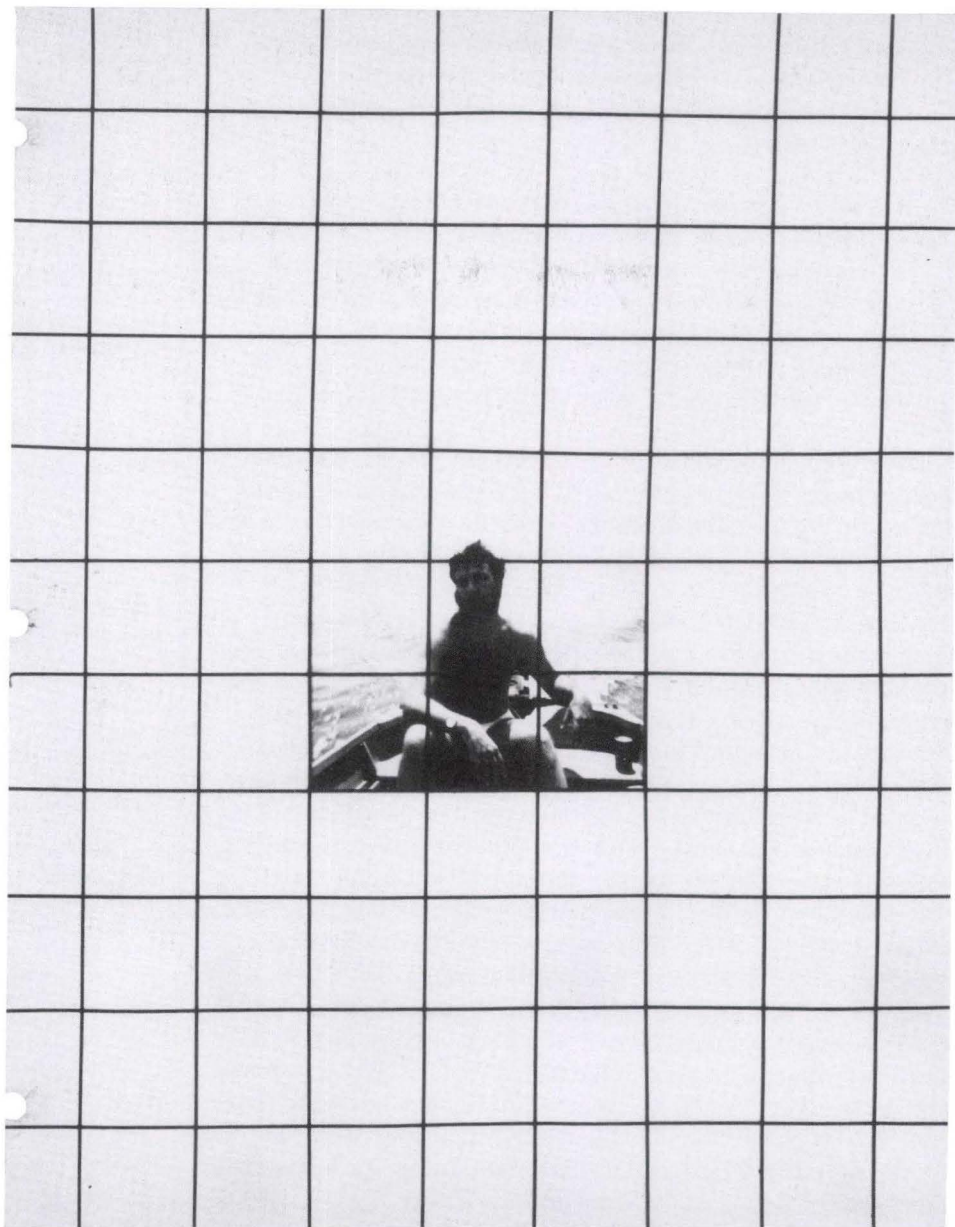
original area, inner plane: 36 sq.'
original area, outer plane: 338 sq.'
relocated area, inner plane: 9 sq."
relocated area, outer plane: $84\frac{1}{2}$ sq."
area of total surface: $93\frac{1}{2}$ sq."



original location, inner plane: Sunday, June 8, 1969, 9 AM
Cape Cod Bay, Provincetown, Mass.
original location, outer plane: none

original area, inner plane: 9 sq.'
original area, outer plane: $84\frac{1}{2}$ sq.'

relocated area, inner plane: 9 sq."
relocated area, outer plane: $84\frac{1}{2}$ sq."
area of total surface: $93\frac{1}{2}$ sq."



But, unlike Kosuth's aesthetic theory, which posits that the idea itself can be considered the art, for LeWitt the process of conception stands in a complementary relation to the process of realization, mutually supplying each other's lack, and thus of equal importance.

Basically, I interpret LeWitt's aesthetic theory as opposed to Kosuth's. Whereas the latter's is characterized by a rational mode of artistic production that affirms the centered and authorial artist—the decisionmaker from beginning to end—LeWitt's theory proposes a mode of production that is opposed to rationalism; the work is produced following a logical sequence that does not require intuition, creativity, or rational thought.²⁵

To LeWitt, then, the artist is not a privileged author, a bearer of meaning that a viewer can either comprehend or not, as is true for Kosuth; the meaning of a work is instead dispersed into multiple and subjective fields of reception. It is in this mode, Alberro has further suggested, that artists such as Acconci and Piper have introduced their bodies yet have decentered the figure of the artist as a measure for the work's meaning. Alberro sees Acconci's *Following Piece* (1969), in which the artist followed and chronicled the actions of an arbitrarily chosen subject as long as the subject remained in public space, as a work that negated artistic interiority, since all decision making was displaced from the artist to the subject of his surveillance. I agree with him, but I insist, as well, as LeWitt did (despite Alberro), that these artists did involve intuition and artistic decision making; they were factors in the works' preliminary stage, during which the artists set the parameters that only later were followed automatically. "This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories," LeWitt wrote, "it is intuitive, it is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless."²⁶ It takes a healthy amount of artistic intuition to conceptualize an idea before it is turned into the machine. On this LeWitt remarked, "The concept and idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter are the components. Ideas implement the concept."²⁷ Subjective choices about the visual outcome of the work are, significantly, eliminated in these artists' practices. But subjectivity is of course retained in the planning stages, when the gauntlet is thrown down in an intellectual dialogue that seeks to undo its own code.

Conceptualism is a map bigger than the territory; Conceptual artists have probably written at least as much text as they have made art. As Ramsden, a member of Art & Language, remarked about this key group of Conceptual artists and their practice,

We have also tried close reading; we tried simply to analyse old texts of Conceptual Art, to annotate them. This dialectical process involves the duplication and proliferation of texts or theory—

25. Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art: 1966–1977," in Alberro and Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p. xx. Osborne, Buchloh, Charles Harrison, and Luke Skrebowski also see the two practices as dichotomous. See Harrison, *Essays on Art and Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001); Skrebowski, "Systems, Contexts, Relations: An Alternative Genealogy of Conceptual Art" (PhD diss., Middlesex University, 2009). See also Buchloh (see n. 13).

26. LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," p. 79.

27. LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," *O TO 9*, no. 5 (January 1969): 3–5; and *Art–Language 1*, no. 1 (May 1969): 11–13.

and this might be quite boring, since we now live in a time of serious theory surplus which has seen a proliferation of secondary commentary.²⁸

Conceptual artists aimed to eliminate the need for art criticism by taking over the role themselves. This action would undo the power of the institution to classify their work for them, with the consequence that they simply displaced one canon with their own version of it. For Piper a shift occurred when she realized the speed with which the subtleties of such inquiries were codified:

I had been in this show at the Cultural Center called "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects." It was organized in a way that made it perfectly clear what categories these artists fit into. Now, that's a bad scene; it's ready for a textbook. All the people who used photographs and descriptive language were together. People who wrote articles were together, and you could see the way things were being defined almost before they happened. Between 1969 and 1970, that "movement" went so fast that I just didn't know what was happening.²⁹

Piper's oeuvre has been variously configured as scholars attempt to classify conceptualism's typologies of practice and fit her into them. Yet, few, if any, of these scholars have examined her practice in enough depth to discover how she has leveraged both the paradox of Kosuth's logical positivism and the traditionalist thrust of LeWitt's insistence on the perceptual object into pragmatic applications of political art: she has navigated her way out of the two dead ends of conceptualism through their synthesis. Another artist who has done so is Mary Kelly; for her, as for Piper, this exit strategy has led to a realm even more difficult to resolve—the subject. The two artists have proposed different models of subjectivity—Kelly's a psychoanalytic subject bound by ideology and desire, Piper's a sovereign agent navigating a xenophobic world order—but both are positioned as an actor on a stage, a component in the equation, rather than an expressive voice of the self or the anthropological being of experience. Many of the historians I have cited have understood this point, but they nevertheless have not dwelt enough on Piper's contribution to extrapolate from it a new taxonomy for contemporary art. Although artists of two subsequent generations—including Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Andrea Fraser, and Renée Green, all of them influenced by Piper—were already implementing this synthesized approach in their work in the 1980s and '90s, its history was also missed by most interlocutors in the debates about identity politics of that era; they overlooked the fact that new definitions of subjectivity's function had arisen out of conceptualist models synthesized as early as the 1970s, and that the analysis of subjectivity was seen as a

28. Ramsden, "Artist's Language 1," pp. 36–37.

29. Piper, in Effie Serlis, "Adrian Piper," in Joyce Kozloff, ed., *Interviews with Women in the Arts*, part 2 (New York: School of Visual Arts Press, 1976), p. 24.

prototypical investigation rather than as a return of modernist individuality.³⁰ Understanding Piper's synthesis of conceptualist paradigms is key to understanding her use of herself as model, which became the basis of her subsequent work.

The photographs at the end of both *Relocated Planes* works were taken in Piper's immediate surroundings. *Indoor Series* contains views of Piper's studio, where familiar works such as *Sixteen Permutations of a Planar Analysis of a Square* (1968) (p. 20), *Nine-Part Floating Square* (1967), *Concrete Space-Time-Infinity*, *8" Square with 8" Square Elaborations* (1968), and some of the untitled map works from *Nine Abstract Space-Time-Infinity Pieces* (1969) can be seen alongside lesser-known works such as *Inflated Plastic Dropcloth Wall Piece* (1967). Looking at the pieces in this incidental inventory while recalling their titles suggests that Piper has positioned her translations of systems and maps in artworks such that language, mapping, photography, sound recording, and the demarcations of actual space may be considered as either abstract or concrete, and she has done so in ways that complicate such a distinction at the site of their inscription in the work itself. The mutual interdependency of the abstract and the concrete continues to surface in the *Catalysis* works, pushing the contradiction of art as proposition by stretching the limits of the art context.

In the *Outdoor Series* binder Piper qualified, "The transparency of the planes have determined the partial recording of these locations behind the planes. They have no actual significance." She considers all the items that have been captured in the image—simply because they are there and appear between the eye of the camera and the designated plane—as visually unimportant. The viewer should presumably then ignore everything in sight beyond the designated plane. The only means of then identifying the "plane" Piper refers to is to calculate the ratio and project it from the image backward to where she stood. If we read the work in its own terms, visibility is subordinated to the rationale stipulated by her instructions. Nevertheless, the outcome is quite compelling. The exercise of calculating and attempting to see only the plane intended by the artist does not simply produce its own aesthetic; it ultimately creates the opposite effect by begging for close looking. The intimate proportions of the book-size work also draw the viewer/reader in.

As a whole the photographs in *Outdoor Series*, most of which seem to be of a small coastal town, add up to an inventory of typologies and examples of pictorial arrangements, including deep Renaissance perspective; oblique Baroque perspective; modern composition, with one large image in the foreground dominating the frame; a midrange portrait of a man steering a boat; the narrow space between two townhouses; and an oceanscape rendered in harmonious golden-mean composition, its elegant employment of the horizon line dramatizing the

30. I make this argument in Nizan Shaked, *The Synthetic Proposition: Conceptualism and the Political Referent in Contemporary Art* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2017).

imaginary two-dimensional slice of the world on the surface of a picture that is a perspectival rendition of the world.³¹ All these images emphasize an action and mechanism that capture the world and codify it in a way that is comprehensible to the human mind.

Propositions

In Osborne's survey of conceptualism he explains,

The idea that works of art function as "propositions" has a rich history: in the late 1950s, Yves Klein called his monochromes "Monochrome Propositions," for example; while in Brazil in the early 1960s Lygia Clark used the term to describe the participatory sculptural forms which emerged to replace her earlier Concretist constructivist work. The notion is implicit in any rhetorical conception of art as a mode of assertion or the carrier of an argument. What is specific to Kosuth is his importation into the art-critical discourse of the logical positivist notion of an "analytical" proposition: a proposition with an ideal, *tautological* content that is true by virtue of relations of meaning alone, and hence provides "no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact." Works of art, Kosuth claimed, *are* analytical propositions. As such, each work of art is "a *definition* of art."³²

Kosuth, by applying a Wittgensteinian insight into how language functions to the theorizing of Conceptual art, arrived at the idea that art should show something rather than say it:

Art, it can be argued, *describes* reality. But, unlike language, artworks—it can be also argued—simultaneously describe *how* they describe it. Granted, art can be seen here as self-referential, but importantly not *meaninglessly* self-referential. What art shows in such a manifestation is, indeed, *how* it functions. This is best revealed in works that feign to say, but do so as an art proposition and reveal the difference (while showing its similarity) with language.³³

The idea was to "bare the device of art's language game." It being its own definition, Kosuth's art eliminates the need for a referent, and since art is a proposition about art, his work becomes a "picture" of the idea of what art is. Here "picture" is not meant in a traditional sense but as the nomenclature Wittgenstein used to describe his concept, like Ferdinand de Saussure calling one side of the sign "sound-image." It seems we always need to speak in optical terms for perspective about the notion of idea. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein elucidates,

31. We recognize the man in the portrait as Piper's boyfriend at the time; he also appears in the work *Meat into Meat* (1968).

32. Osborne, "Survey," in Osborne, ed. *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2002), p. 32.

33. Kosuth, "The Play of the Unsayable: A Preface to Ten Remarks on Art and Wittgenstein," 1989, in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writing* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 247.

4.121 Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. What finds its reflection in language, language cannot

represent. What expresses *itself* in language, we cannot express by means of language. Propositions *show* the logical form of reality. They display it.

4.1212 What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said.³⁴

Because the photographs in the *Relocated Planes* works sit on a grid, we are reminded of Piper's proposition that "both planes occupy the same homogeneous surface, one occupying area within the other." The area of the world, the area rendered in the photograph, and the area of the page are seen as equivalent. We perform the exercise that distances us from the photograph and from the comforting tendency to think that we know how to read images. It brings to mind Wittgenstein's proposition 4.12:

Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—logical form.

In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world.³⁵

It is obvious, though, why the *Tractatus* seemed to be the way to use art to step outside of art. Elizabeth Legge, for example, has written of Michael Snow,

He is closest to Joseph Kosuth, who more recently has argued that Wittgenstein made "object-texts" through parables and language games, to "show" aspects of language that could not be explicitly asserted: his philosophy is a process to be shown. Thus, for Kosuth, art is an important "post-philosophical" activity: a language whose function is to show, not to say.³⁶

Kosuth's attempts to apply these ideas to art have been an ongoing target for criticism, nevertheless they have had a profound influence on the course of contemporary art. Eventually, as a mode of practice, this paring down of art to its very basic definitions drove itself to its own conclusion, even in *First Investigations* (Art as Idea as Idea) (1966–69), Kosuth's famous series of photostats of enlarged dictionary definitions, which inevitably both took a form (quite beautiful pictures of words) and bore referents (art, nothing, information, water, self). The connotations of the words alone, in their complicated relationship to everything we know about art, proliferate poetics in the mind of the receiver, thus functioning not solely as analytic propositions but also as aesthetic objects.

Optics, too, like language, eventually run into friction. As Gregory Ulmer has written,

34. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 51.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

36. Elizabeth Legge sees Michael Snow's work as literal manifestations of Wittgenstein's ideas: "He turns Wittgenstein's study of the problems of representing things in language into representations of the problem." Legge, "Taking It as Red: Michael Snow and Wittgenstein," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 18, no. 2 (1997): 71. Legge is citing Kosuth, "The Play of the Unsayable," p. 247.

Perhaps the most attractive thesis for Conceptualists in Wittgenstein, as noted by Ian Wilson . . . is the suggestion in the *Tractatus* that language is a *picture* of reality, that the logical structure of language *depicts* the facts or the state of affairs in the world. The key to understanding why the linguistic model is attractive to, even a vital stimulation for, the visual arts lies in this proposition, in spite of the fact that Wittgenstein himself later abandoned it.³⁷

In this sense, language can be thought of as concrete, as Piper has suggested in her works since 1968. The concerns juxtaposed in Piper's image-and-text works have consistently been the crux of the intersection of ideas with their manifestations. The visual is not taken for its ocular properties and potential aesthetic pleasure, but rather for its structural condition as a type of language. As Liz Kotz has applied it,

Rather than taking Kosuth's famed tautologies at face value, however, we can instead read the three-part system of *One and Three Chairs* as diagramming the structural specificity of each element—language, object, and photographic inscription—in their radical incommensurability, and as providing terms that permit us to better assess how the use of linguistic materials shifts from performance-based or “performative” modes to explicitly “photographic” models.³⁸

37. Gregory Ulmer, “Borges and Conceptual Art,” *Boundary 2* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 852.

38. Liz Kotz, “Language between Performance and Photography,” in *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), p. 188.



11. Joseph Kosuth
One and Three Chairs. 1965

Kosuth, in works such as *One and Three Chairs* (fig. 11), begun in 1965, contrasts an actual object with its photograph and dictionary definition, and from this Kotz demonstrates how language works provide a basis by which the terms of art's manifestation can be understood philosophically.

The implied directive in Piper's *Relocated Planes* to ignore everything but what she specifies in her description is of course not achievable, but applying propositions to phenomena was never the point. Neither was slicing reality into planes. Instead we come to understand the equivalence between the modes by which we comprehend and arrange the world, observing the types of intelligibility themselves. For this we need both the idea and the effort to implement it, visualize it, as in LeWitt's model of conceptual inquiry. Piper's conceptualist works, in treating language as a material—as a substance—and in showing where the abstract manifests through the concrete, accord more with Wittgenstein's later work, in which he criticized his own early assumptions, as Legge has explained: "In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein addresses the problem of the relationship of things to words, of 'outer' model to 'inner' picture, and of the mental picture to its description in language."³⁹ The gap between internalized and externalized ideas is a significant one in the chain of meaning. It is important here to clarify that the "picture" is inner (idea=mental picture) and language is outer, the place where it appears, i.e., where it comes into friction.

Like the Hypothesis series (1968–70), which included a schema, a diagram, a set of photographs, and an essay detailing the work's propositions, the *Relocated Planes* works also contain an essay.⁴⁰ The first part is titled "Form," the second, "Idea," and it is signed with Piper's name typed on the bottom right-hand side. The essay begins,

FORM

Good ideas are necessary and sufficient for good art. A good idea is too broad in scope to be stated directly; it can only be implied in a given set of conditions. A well-constructed set of conditions allows great breadth of implications in a direction defined by the idea.

In declarative sentences Piper theorizes the subordination of form to idea—the goal to make form as transparent as possible, to limit its parameters, to eliminate all that is unnecessary, to opt for mediums that are intrinsically uninteresting—ends with the declaration that "what constitutes a good idea is relevant to one's esthetic." Aesthetic is here a feature of the idea, not of form. The form, relegated to merely being the vehicle for the idea, is posed as the problem.

Keeping this in mind, we approach the "Idea" section. In a rhetorical reversal it leads with a typological description of how ideas might appear, as either physical manifestations or as

39. Legge, "Taking It as Red," p. 71.

40. Variations of this content appear in "Idea, Form, Context," which is divided into one section for each term and a fourth drawing conclusions, followed by a list of the categories as typologies, which appear with images of works by other artists, offering a theory and taxonomy of Conceptual art. Piper, "Idea, Form, Context," 1969, in Piper, *Out of Order; Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 5–12.

elements of different disciplinary frameworks, theories, and notational systems:

There are two basic kinds of art idea: ideas which use life conditions (e.g. physical forces, material or sensory phenomena), and ideas which use ideas or theories about life conditions (e.g. physics, Gestalt psychology, philosophy, geometry, math).

While both are inherent to the work, Piper tells us, one takes primacy over the other, depending on the kind of practice. One refers to ideas about life, the other applies force directly to life itself, but the goal, in any case, is to broaden an implication beyond the routine pattern of things.

Where ideas meet systems, friction occurs, both pushing at the limits of the notion that a work of art can rely on linguistic proposition alone, and pushing the work beyond the boundary of abstraction by declaring language, like all other modes, to be the same kind of obstruction to the pure idea, which is telepathic. In the *Relocated Planes* works, the object for Piper was the space of the world, and the work points to the narrow gap between interior and shared modes of its own inscription and intelligibility.

With the *Catalysis* works Piper reconfigured her practice, moving away from focusing on self-referential ideas and toward dealing with the “perceiver’s standpoint as a primary concern of the work”: “But now I become identical with the artwork, and the sequence is shortened: as an art object, I want simply to look outside myself and see the effect of my existence on the world at large, rather than first in another secondary object.”⁴¹ Underscoring that the “aesthetic formality and artifice of the work” displace the individuality of the artist, and that the gesture has nothing to do with the idea of life as art or art as life (a point that Piper would emphasize repeatedly), she elaborated on her goal: that the work come into fruition in the most immediate way. For this to happen, the work needed to arrive at the moment of reception as untainted as possible, to be outside the context of art, within which the audience is already predisposed to an aesthetic experience.

Catalysis Resurfaces

In “Talking to Myself,” under the heading “VI. Moving from Solipsism to Self-Consciousness” (September 1972), subhead “Recent work: 3.”:

Around the same time as (1) and (2), I began a series of six tape-recorded dialogues with a psychologist, Dr. Jim Spingarn. The major topics we discussed were my background, history, present occupations, sexuality, and love life, friends, family, and so on, relating all of these to the works I was engaged in at the time. We connect the two areas in terms of motivations,

41. Piper, “Talking to Myself,” p. 35.

habit patterns, aesthetic intentions, and philosophical presuppositions. Although I refused to perform the works before Dr. Spingarn as a “private audience,” I described certain works in great detail and spoke at length about my feelings during these performances.⁴²

The transcripts of some of these recordings are filed at APRA, in Berlin.⁴³ The goal, as it turns out, was for Piper to verify that her actions and her life do not collapse into identity. Her reason for seeking the help of a therapist, she explained to Spingarn, was that she had come to the conclusion that what distinguished her *Catalysis* actions as art, and not as some type of idiosyncratic activity, was that they served no other purpose in her life. Her motivations were solely aesthetic, she emphasized several times, so much so that she easily referred to her motives as “traditional,” a word artists rarely used at the time, employed to show a continuum with her previous (philosophically) formal preoccupations.⁴⁴ Rather than pitting conceptualism against formalism, Piper highlighted the aesthetic dimension of all human interactions by pointing out the aesthetic preoccupation of a work that strenuously avoided any artistic context. This was not a collapse of art and life but a gesture of subjecting life to the rigor of conceptualism in order to isolate its aesthetic dimensions from its psychological ones. In so doing she also indicated a continuity among her art activities that was rooted in disciplinary concerns, much the way a match bears continuity with a game by following a set of agreed-upon rules. This was not a measure of conservatism but of discipline, in both senses of the term, indicating an adherence to a community sharing an intellectual challenge.

As a background to an in-depth discussion with Spingarn about her *Catalysis* pieces and the audience reaction to them, Piper explained the stages of her artistic development. Both she and Spingarn saw the chronicle of her life as an artist—with the socioeconomic factors of her biography most definitely foregrounded and discussed as conditions that shaped her adult consciousness: growing up middle class and black, attending expensive private schools on scholarship, recognizing her difference from her privileged classmates—as a context against which general truths could then be inferred.⁴⁵ Piper’s core agenda was to “abdicate my superego,” as she put it, as consistent with her previous concerns.⁴⁶

Anyway, so all the situations I wanted to see as potentially esthetic ones which meant that they had to have that character about them, that kind of intensity and that, I don’t know, I guess you would say conceptual formlessness. . . . It was once again this thing about transcending my subjectivity which I couldn’t manage to do.⁴⁷

42. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

43. I visited APRA in 2012 with a Visiting Faculty Grant from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service [DAAD]). I thank DAAD for this incredible opportunity.

44. Piper, transcript of taped interview with Dr. Jim Spingarn, February 11, 1972, tape 1, p. 13, APRA.

45. Piper’s approach to her identity is analytic, as if mapping for Spingarn her position on a sociological map: “And then another way is the fact that I’m black, obviously that is not evident at all, but it was in terms of the differences that I found between the cultural life of my friends and my own. My parents are middle class, my mother is West Indian and my father is technically black but they are both very light skinned and they are very middle class in their ideas and their aspirations and the kind of life.” *Ibid.*, tape 1, p. 9.

46. *Ibid.*, tape 1, p. 5.

47. *Ibid.*, tape 1, p. 18.

With Spingarn, however, she came as close as possible to narrowing the distance between the other and her self, and between her action as an object and her self (as other):

Dr. Spingarn functioned as transition point between (1) myself as solipsistic object inhering in the reflective consciousness of an external audience or subject; and (2) my own self-consciousness of me as object, as the object of my self-consciousness.⁴⁸

Myself as art object versus an external audience or perceiving subject. . . . On the one hand there is the object, myself, with my own internal set of rules that supplies inner consistency to my external actions. On the other hand there is a public audience to which my actions appear either meaningless or insane.⁴⁹

If her actions were recognized as insane, she explained, then they were consistent with a typical external category, since only an audience can objectively validate them as a category that must be agreed upon collectively. If the audiences failed to see an outlier in her actions, then only her internal experience could make the work intelligible as such, could identify it as “a work” of art. But Piper discounted internal verification—first because it objectified the public, and second because coherence should be found in the object rather than in the interiority of the subject. The work of art cannot be validated as such by the artist; it needs to be validated through its reception, with Piper’s becoming the object of her audience’s consciousness. The appearance of the artist as the object of her audience’s contemplation, I pose, has profound political implications.

Politics

In a 1972 interview with Lippard, Piper said that she performed the *Catalysis* works two or three times a week. Lippard then asked:

What do you think it has to do with being a woman? Or being black? It’s a very aggressive thing. Do you think you’re getting out some of your aggressions about how women are treated? Is it related to that at all?

And Piper answered:

Well, not in terms of intention. As far as the work goes, I feel it is completely apolitical. But I do think that the work is a product of me as an individual, and the fact that I am a woman surely has a lot to do with it. You know, here I am, or was, “violating my body”; I was making it public. I was turning myself into an object.⁵⁰

The specificity Lippard sought, evidenced also in Perreault’s question of whether he sensed an element of protest in

48. Piper, “Talking to Myself,” p. 50.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

50. Piper and Lippard, in “Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper,” *The Drama Review: TDR* 16, no. 1 (March 1972): 76–78.

Catalysis, positions Piper as a particular referent in the meaning of the work: a black woman. But to follow Piper's approach—evidenced in Piper's answer, which ignores some of Lippard's classifications—is to approach the question of politics from the deep-seated problem of consciousness itself. It is not that the identity of the artist is not significant; it is just that the order of reading the work should follow the sequence of her proposition. Piper begins precisely from the Kosuthian/LeWittian attempt to remove the referent from the object, with the maker as the principal agent in a philosophical work that investigates ideas for which we first need to clear the slate of predispositions and assumptions.

Like *Relocated Planes*, *Catalysis* reverses the order of appearance of form and idea, so that the question of how recognition takes place is not predetermined by context. Piper's work can be read as the machine that makes the art—outside any viewer's predisposition (to art, race, gender), positing the proposition of the act as an artwork. As such, it is a step toward Piper's idea of the indexical present: a demand for a mutual recognition of subject, object, audience, and situation on common ground.

Twice in the conversation with Spingarn, Piper repeated that she was seeking to be with her audience "in the same world," a thread that continues to run through her practice. A connection is made between questioning the shared ground of notational systems and that of a society:

I got the same feeling about the things that I was doing, that . . . somehow in spite of my presence, my altered presence and the actions that I was doing that were kind of out of synch with the rest of the environment, that somehow these were acceptable and other people in responding to what I was doing like on the subway or on the street and accepting what I was doing without turning me in to the police were taking responsibility for what I was doing. This is what I kind of meant when I was talking about abdicating my superego and putting myself in the hands of the public.⁵¹

In the *Catalysis* works Piper advanced objectivity (in its philosophical sense) through radically interior, almost invisible actions, testing the way a sense of objectivity, as shared ground, could function without context. Or, if we could instead posit context as something radically decentered, the unity of which can only be found in overlapping human networks, then interiority, identity, and the self can be thought of as abstractions, precisely in order to bring them around full circle to an idea of a public. Piper gives us a way to think about her particular person as an abstract, even universal, model, and then to think about how a particular group of people might form a universal proposition. Herein lies a model political act, rooted in the

51. Piper, Spingarn interview transcript, tape 2, pp. 12–13.

1960s and continuing to evolve. The idea of fragmenting the self into so many of its components is still as relevant as ever, so that grounds for solidarity can be formed around malleable identifications.

CONTRAPOSITIONAL BECOMINGS

**ADRIAN PIPER
PERFORMS
QUESTIONS OF
IDENTITY**

KOBENA MERCER

Adrian Piper's performance pieces from the early 1970s remain critically compelling to this day—more than half a century after their enactment—because the questions they raise are fully alive and ongoing in our contemporary moment. If “the contemporary” began with the critiques of institutional modernism initiated by Minimalism, conceptualism, and performance art in the late 1960s, then Piper occupies a unique position at the intersection of these paradigm-shifting practices. Our understanding of her work, however, is compromised not only by the reductive terminology that pervades discussions of identity and difference in art but also by a historiographic imbalance that tends to separate Minimalist and Conceptual practices from performance along the lines of a mind/body split. We are suspicious of binaries that simplify the complex and entangled conditions of art's historical becoming, yet the narratives that take us from the dematerialization of art to its discursive turn, when the language of theory was brought into the arts and humanities, often rely on a zero-sum outlook in which the messy materiality of performance is cast as incompatible with the order and logic that render conceptualism and Minimalism all too clean and neat.¹

By looking closely at *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City* (1970), the *Catalysis* actions (1970–73), and *Food for the Spirit* (1971), I will examine how Adrian Piper's embodied performances address identity as a process phenomenon rather than an unchanging property of the self. Her art, I suggest, reveals that our condition of selfhood is always dependent on others, often making identity a precarious affair, one that can be readily undone even as the undoing of self/other boundaries gives us the freedom to transform our lives. By breaking out of the formalist value system of postwar modernism, Piper achieved insights that were certainly disruptive in their moment of emergence, yet the critical ingenuity of her performative turn continues to unsettle the complacencies of present-day identity politics, which cling to the proprietorial notion that a self is a fixed entity that you own.

The year 1970 marked a dramatic shift in Piper's practice, as she turned from making objects to action-events. Up to that moment she had produced recognizable art objects, from the paintings, sculptures, and drawings she made between 1966 and 1969 at New York's School of Visual Arts to typewritten propositions such as *Concrete Infinity 6-inch Square* [*“This square should be read as a whole . . .”*] (1968) (fig. 1) and the scientific-looking graphs of the Hypothesis series (1968–70). She made this move, from material objects to be exhibited for an audience toward actions performed in public spaces, in response to turbulent crisis conditions. “In the spring of 1970 a number of events occurred that changed everything for me,” she wrote. “(1) the invasion of Cambodia; (2) the Women's Movement; (3) Kent State and Jackson State; (4) the closing of CCNY [City College of New York], where I was in my first term as a

1. The gendered character of this imbalance is notable. Mary Kelly includes Adrian Piper and performance art in “Art and Sexual Politics,” 1977; and “Feminist Art: Assessing the 1970s and Raising Issues for the 1980s,” 1981, in *Imaging Desire* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 9, 18. Neither Piper nor performance feature, however, in the account of the critique of modernism that led to the semiotic turn in Victor Burgin, “The Absence of Presence: Conceptualism and Postmodernisms,” 1984, in *The End of Art Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 29–50.

philosophy major, during the student rebellion."² Such was the impact of these events that Piper paused her artistic activity; she later said, of the summer of 1970, "Mostly I did a lot of thinking about my position as an artist, a woman, and a black."³ In narratives of this period, widely understood as Piper's watershed moment of political awakening to sexism and racism, what gets overlooked is the question of why she took the plunge into philosophy, which she studied at CCNY from 1968 to 1974, rather than political activism. This rigorous training was no mere supplement to her art making. It was, from the start, fully integral to the intellectual commitments that set her apart from her conceptualist counterparts who had not studied philosophy or published in philosophical journals, such as Joseph Kosuth, who announced in his influential 1969 essay "Art After Philosophy" that Conceptual art was not just another form of art but a radical calling into question of the entire apparatus in which art was made, exhibited, and discussed; and the Art & Language group, which in their journal *Art-Language* produced essays-as-artworks that were heavily invested in the "techniques of rigor characteristic of logico-linguistic analysis in the Anglo-American manner."⁴ Piper went on to do post-graduate work in Harvard University's philosophy department, from 1974 to the completion of her dissertation, in 1981, and was the only member of her generation of artists to become a professional philosopher. She held two academic appointments,

2. Piper, "An Autobiographical Preface," January 1973, in "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object," 1970-73, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968-1992* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 30. The rise of student activism following the wider admission of African-American and Puerto Rican students is discussed in "The History of the City College of New York: 1969-1999," cunyhistory.tripod.com/thehistoryofcitycollege19691999/id2.html.

3. Piper, "An Autobiographical Preface," p. 31.

4. Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy," in Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 63. *Art-Language* had the greatest impact from 1969 to 1972.

[illegible]

at the University of Michigan and Stanford University, prior to being tenured in 1987 at Georgetown University, all the while producing art alongside her philosophical contributions to the rationalist tradition of ethics and epistemology, in articles in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in edited collections.

While many of Piper's fellow artists espoused activism in response to social upheaval, resulting in, for example, the New York Artists' Strike Against Racism, Sexism, Repression, and WAR on May 22, 1970 (which Piper did not take part in, although she attended the May 18 meeting that planned the call for art museums to close for a day), her decision to philosophize rather than to protest is explained, at one level, by her view that "marching and picketing seemed futile."⁵ Her colloquial description of her younger self in a 1998 interview—"I was your basic apolitical philosophy nerd"—belies something important beneath the wry self-deprecation.⁶ The self-reflexive rigor with which she investigated the power of sexism and racism in shaping one's selfhood—the subject matter that her performances addressed—was, first and foremost, as she put it, a response to the feeling of "being impinged upon by . . . the outside world."⁷ When Piper recalled that "what most affected me was the struggle for open admissions at City College," where "Black students were shutting down the campus," her use of the passive voice, of being affected, of being impinged upon, is congruent with her sense of being invaded and infiltrated in her 1970–73 notes. There, apropos of her transition from object making to performance, she wrote, "The crisis and solution was the result of the invasion by the 'outside world' of my aesthetic isolation," and concluded, "Although I will never be a really political person . . . those forces have managed to infiltrate my awareness and . . . confront me with the politics of my position whether I want to know them or not: I have become self-conscious."⁸

Becoming self-conscious was the highest aspiration for art in the mid-twentieth-century modernism advocated by the critic Clement Greenberg.⁹ But to notice something off-center in the title of Piper's 1970–73 notes—"Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object"—is to acknowledge that in the hands of this black woman artist-philosopher, our conventional dichotomies of subject/object, self/other, doing/being done to are all unsettled from their rigid conceptual duality. The artist's performances enacted a discrepant embodiment, undermining the binary of personhood/thinghood. Whereas Greenberg and others in the formalist tradition presided over an epistemological universe of durable art objects created by artists whose authorship was valued on the basis of originality—making paintings and sculptures to be received by viewers who would, ideally, be detached and disinterested so as to be fully receptive to the work's inherent qualities—the very stability of this triangular formation of artwork, artist, and audience was sent spinning by Piper's performative turn.

5. Piper, "An Autobiographical Preface," p. 31.

6. Piper, in Adam Shatz, "Black Like Me: Conceptual Artist Adrian Piper Gets under Your Skin," *Lingua Franca* 8, no. 8 (November 1998): 45.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Piper, "An Autobiographical Preface," pp. 31–32.

9. See Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 1961, in *Clement Greenberg: the Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 85–93.

When artist and artwork momentarily fuse in enacting a one-time event, the ontological boundary separating creative subject from created object is breached. The term "body art" as used by the art historian Amelia Jones not only entails the artist's body as a medium but also foregrounds the inter-subjective partnering of artist with audience, who thereby act as coauthors of an unrepeatable live event; this, in fact, constitutes performance's contribution to the historic break with high modernism.¹⁰ The art historian John Bowles has insisted that Piper's path as an African-American woman artist can only be fully appreciated once we retrace her steps through the Minimalist, conceptualist, and performance paradigms that decentered the trinity consecrated by institutional modernism. Bowles, moreover, draws attention to a problem that has beset the interpretation of Piper's project from the start: the tendency to conflate the autobiographical material put forward as the subject matter of her artistic investigation with the critical intelligence that is that investigation's agent.¹¹

Such conflation is understandable when artist and artwork are mutually imbricated. In a broader context, however, such biographical reductionism has been a bane for African-American and Black Atlantic modernists, whose work has rarely been bestowed with the privilege of autonomy, being instead subjected to realist readings of their art as transparent documents of social life. What gets blocked from view when Piper as artist is elided with Piper as person is precisely the self-reflexive—better still, self-investigative—thrust of her work: the discrepant embodiment enacted in her performances that has compelled the artist-investigator to shuttle between positions of object and subject, opening up for inquiry whole areas of consciousness, knowledge, and experience that have historically been shut out of artistic exploration by the closure points of high modernism. The ideological effects of biographical reductionism have sequestered black artists in separate art-historical narratives that cut them off from the postwar critique of modernism to which they have contributed. The challenge of making strict distinctions between the artist's "I" (the agent of investigation) and the "me" (whose lived experience is the material to be investigated) is borne out by several contemporaneous articles on Piper.¹² One of the most egregious instances, occasioned by Piper's retrospective at The Alternative Museum, in New York, in 1987, was the critic Donald Kuspit's psychologizing dismissal of her oeuvre as the outpouring of a narcissistic personality. When the conceptual path from philosophy to performance in Piper's practice is thus underplayed, the insights of her 1970s works, which illuminate deep-seated problems still at issue in the politics of identity today, are obscured.¹³

Following Bowles's point that Piper "makes a distinction between autobiography and personal content in her artwork—the former would take the artist for its subject whereas the latter

10. Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and "Survey," in Tracey Warr, ed., *The Artist's Body* (London: Phaidon, 2000), pp. 16–47.

11. John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).

12. See Rosemary Mayer, "Performance & Experience," *Arts Magazine*, no. 47 (December 1972–January 1973): 3–36; Lucy Lippard, "Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper," *The Drama Review: TDR* 16, no. 1 (March 1971): 76–78; and Jane Farver, ed., *Adrian Piper: Reflections, 1967–1987* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1987), pp. 3–53.

13. Donald Kuspit, "Adrian Piper: Self-Healing through Meta-Art," *Art Criticism* 3, no. 3 (September 1987): 9–16. See also Piper, "An Open Letter to Donald Kuspit," *Real Life Magazine* 17–18, no. 1 (Winter 1987–88): 2–11; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 107–25.

provides Piper with the means to address viewers,” I situate *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City* with Piper’s Context series (1970) in the priority given to the viewer rather than the artist.¹⁴ I then consider the interactive character of the *Catalysis* pieces as a starting point for a conception of identity as a two-part process, one in which the putting forward of an appearance on the part of a self is only half of an equation that is completed by an act of recognition by an other. What Piper investigates, I argue, is the hiatus that arises when the second part fails to arrive.

Food for the Spirit was performed in the privacy of the artist’s loft, during a period in which she felt she might disappear into disembodiment through a visceral experience with reading Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this instance the camera and tape recorder that she used to confirm her self-hood played the part of the other who confers identity through recognition. But having heard from a subject who felt invaded, infiltrated, and impinged upon, do we not also see permeability in self/not-self boundaries in Piper’s Hypothesis series, the title of which suspends any guarantee that objective propositions will turn out to be true? As rationalist traditions in Western philosophy mobilize self-doubt to put truth claims to the test, when Piper’s self seems to be pushed to the threshold of disappearance, what does she make visible to us about the material conditions of gendered and racial embodiment? If object and subject do not always remain still, in a fixed dualism, then who is being pushed, and who does the pushing?

Discrepant Embodiment

“I am interested in the elimination of the discrete form as art object,” Piper declared in 1971, in a text for the exhibition *26 Contemporary Women Artists*, at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut.¹⁵ Having described her performance pieces as “defined as completely as possible by the viewer’s reaction and interpretation,” Piper emphasized that “ideally the work has no meaning or independent existence outside of its function as a medium of change; it exists only as a catalytic agent between myself and the viewer.”¹⁶ The participatory character of *Context #7*, exhibited in *Information* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1970, and *Context #8* (both works 1970) had already displaced the autonomous art object by transferring primacy to the viewer. The subtitle of *Context #8—Written Information Voluntarily Supplied to Me during the Period April 30 to May 30, 1970—* summed up the contents of a ring binder of print materials, mostly activist fliers, that had been handed to the artist over the period of a month (figs. 2, 3). The post-Minimalist impetus of the piece lay in the setting up of a structure in which the artist’s role was pared down to that of a recipient of real-world data, thereby imparting to others an active role as coauthors of the artwork.

14. Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, p. 14.

15. Piper, untitled text, in Lippard, ed., *26 Contemporary Women Artists* (Ridgefield, Conn.: Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, 1971), n.p.

16. *Ibid.*

CONTEXT #8:

WRITTEN INFORMATION VOLUNTARILY SUPPLIED TO
ME DURING THE PERIOD OF APRIL 30 TO MAY 30, 1970

HANNAH WEINER

PRESENTS

THE SATURDAY AFTERNOON SHOW
AT

^{maxs}
kansas city

213 PARK AVENUE SOUTH
MAY 2 2-3 PM

VITO ACCONCI
SCOTT BURTON
EDUARDO COSTA
IRA JOEL HABER
DEBORAH HAY
STEPHEN KALTENBACH
ABE LUBELSKI

FRANK OWEN
PAUL FECHTER
JOHN PERREAULT
ADRIAN PIPER
BRIGID POLK
MARJORIE STRIDER
HANNAH WEINER

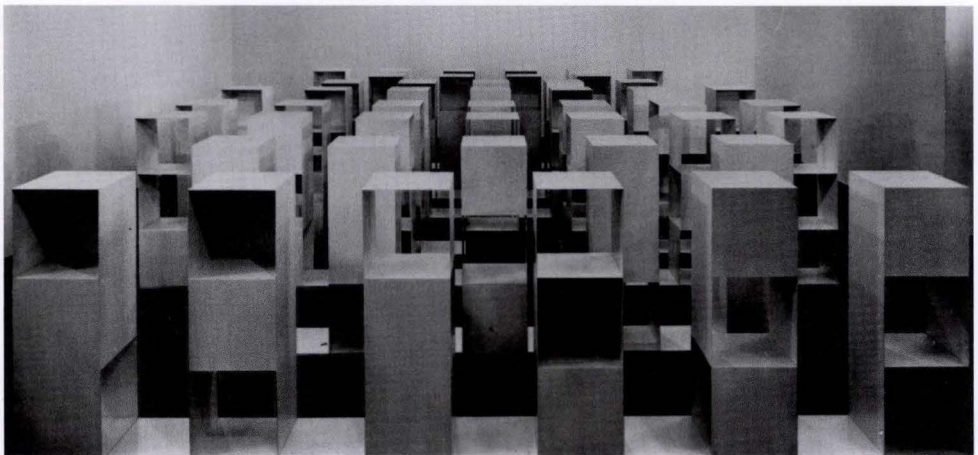
"You (the viewer) are requested to write, draw, or otherwise indicate any response suggested by this situation . . . in the pages of the notebook beneath this sign," read the wall text for *Context #7*, above a table holding seven ring binders that would be filled with page after page of inscriptions from visitors to *Information* who, by virtue of such participation, coproduced a work that eliminated the authorial subjectivity of the artist (pp. 142, 143). In postwar art the decentering of the authorial self was accomplished through strategies of chance operation that undermined the notion of intentionality, which occupies an exalted place at the heart of the liberal-humanist interpretation of art as self-expression. The instructions and event scores used in Happenings, in the 1950s and '60s, elevated the audience's participatory role, dethroning the conception of art having only one author. Piper's early work forged a path into this matrix that was led by the procedural emphasis of Sol LeWitt's Minimalism; the impact of his *46 Three-Part Variations on 3 Different Kinds of Cubes* (1967) (fig. 4) was something she acknowledged at the outset of her career.¹⁷

LeWitt's proposition in this work was, in part, mathematical, as he set out to explore the number of permutations possible in a stack of three-sided cubes. But in its material actualization it was also phenomenological: it revealed the way the intellect's ability to readily grasp geometric permutations can be complicated by the fluctuating conditions of light, shadow, and other such surrounding circumstances that alter and modify how an object is seen and inevitably affect a viewer's perception. "Perception intrudes upon concept," as Bowles has put it, citing a critic who recognized that, in works such as this, Minimalism amounted to a "critique of the visual."¹⁸

As Minimalism began to corrode the modernist tenet of the self-sufficient and autonomous art object, whose stand-alone existence made it entirely independent of the viewer, Piper took two of its precepts into her performative turn. LeWitt's renowned

17. See Piper, "A Defense of the 'Conceptual' Process in Art," 1968, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, pp. 3–4.

18. Jeanne Siegel, "Sol LeWitt: 46 Variations Using Three Different Kinds of Cubes," *Arts Magazine*, February 1968, p. 57; quoted in Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, p. 51.



4. Sol LeWitt
46 Three-Part Variations on 3 Different Kinds of Cubes. 1967

statement that “the idea becomes a machine that makes the art” meant that self-generating rules for decision making eliminated expressive authorship.¹⁹ What Piper valued in such proceduralism was objectivity, which would be the uppermost concern in her subsequent philosophical commitments. In 1968—the year she first read Kant—Piper wrote that “truly good art is always made of broader stuff than the personality of the artist,” and stated, “I think that a greater total involvement in one’s work is possible when one attempts to be objective than when one does not.”²⁰ In a contrary-seeming direction to such rule-based rationalism, Piper picked up on the counterpoint LeWitt staged between eye and mind, between the flux of ever-changing conditions that affect the appearance of things and our rote habits of mind, when the intellect seeks to order sensory impressions by placing phenomena in preestablished cognitive categories. Piper took this angle of inquiry into her performances by turning from the purely geometric toward the messily social.

Up to 1970 Piper’s authorial “I” spoke from an anonymous and impersonal enunciative position. Identity was not an issue, but it subsequently became one as a result of the critical acclaim she won for the conceptualist works with which she made her entrance into the international art world. In 1969 Piper participated in such group exhibitions as *Number 7*, at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; *Language III*, at Dwan Gallery, New York; and *Konzeption/Conception*, at Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen, Germany, and she received notices in *Studio International* as well as the *Village Voice*.²¹ As a result, curators and critics sought out the young artist responsible for such bold and austere innovations, many of them expecting to meet a male artist named Adrian. The nature of their reactions upon meeting, instead, a woman instigated Piper’s performance-led inquiry into the politics of appearance under social conditions in which gender alters and modifies perceptions of embodied identities.

The received narrative of Piper’s trajectory circa 1970 would have us imagine that a political vocabulary came readily to the artist in a before-and-after flash of awakening, but Piper’s words, written more than two decades later, tell of a double-sided entanglement. The disconnect that flared in those moments of encounter was not blatant discrimination but unspoken attitudes of aversion and disavowal. Such moments simultaneously precipitated self-doubt about her identification with the pursuit of objectivity. Describing the shift in attitudes toward her, which arose as she herself began to change her view of the art world, Piper wrote in 1996, “I didn’t realize I was being marginalized.” She went on to say,

19. LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967): 80.

20. Piper, “A Defense of the ‘Conceptual’ Process in Art,” p. 3.

21. See Joseph Kosuth, “Art After Philosophy II: Conceptual Art and Recent Art,” *Studio International* 178, no. 916 (November 1969): 160–61; and John Perreault, “Art: On the Street,” *Village Voice*, March 27, 1969, pp. 15–18.

I didn’t realize it, first, because this interpretation of the events (the flirtatious and derogatory remarks, the articles and interviews that were never published, the invitational shows from which I was excluded) was simply inconceivable, unthinkable

to me at that time. When you are drunk on abstract conceptual metaphysics—in my case, the concrete representational limits of infinity and dimensionality—sociopolitical transactions of power simply do not exist. Second, the events in any case coincided with my own increasing alienation from the promotional art market and considered choice to distance myself from it.²²

Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City (figs. 5, 6) addressed this important turning point in the artist's life and work, and three distinctive features of the performance call for close attention.

Located in New York City, on Park Avenue South at Seventeenth Street, Max's Kansas City was a restaurant patronized in its heyday by celebrated artists: a visitor, in addition to finding a Donald Judd or John Chamberlain work on the walls, might see Lawrence Weiner or Carl Andre in the front room before passing through the bar to the back, where Andy Warhol was often seated with associates from the worlds of fashion, music, magazines, and film.²³ In her site-specific address to the restaurant as "an Art Environment, replete with Art Consciousness and Self-Consciousness about Art Consciousness," Piper walked gloved and blindfolded among the restaurant's diners on a Saturday afternoon in May 1970, with plugs inserted in her ears and nose, having sealed off her senses in order to present herself, in this hour-long performance, as an "art object."²⁴ Piper's action, addressed specifically to the

22. Piper, "Introduction: Some Very FORWARD Remarks," in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

23. See Steve Kasher, ed., *Max's Kansas City: Art, Glamour, Rock and Roll* (New York: Abrams, 2010); see also Mathias Danbolt, "Front Rooms–Back Rooms: An Interview with Douglas Crimp," *Trikster*, no. 2 (2008), trikster.net/2/crimp/2.html.

24. Piper, "Untitled Performance for Max's Kansas City," 1981, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 27.



5, 6. *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City*, 1970.
Photographs by Rosemary Mayer

audience at Max's, conveyed the artist's nascent separation from the art-world context that she had already begun to move away from by studying philosophy. "Object" signifies ambiguously in her accompanying notes, however: ordinarily, an object is inert, nonhuman matter that, in dualistic opposition to a subject, is placed below the transcendental value Western philosophical traditions bestow upon consciousness, mind, and spirit. Seeking to separate her own consciousness from others and to "isolate it from all tactile, aural, and visual feedback," Piper wrote, "I presented myself as a silent, secret, passive object seemingly ready to be absorbed into their consciousness as an object." Such discrepant embodiment as an object went completely against the grain of the word's commonplace definition. As Piper moved, and often stumbled, among the diners, her anomalous presence was an object in the sense of being "not I"—that which cannot be assimilated into consciousness. To be an object in this sense is to resist assimilation into the ego-consciousness of the audience to whom the performance was addressed. By becoming an art object, Piper made a contrapositional move: an elective performance as an "other" within her art-conscious environment.

In notes written in 1981, Piper judged *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City* a failure.²⁵ Yet once we notice critical slippage in the way "object" signifies, it becomes apparent that Piper's discrepant embodiment—her placing herself closer to thinghood than personhood—began to reveal tangible limits to

25. Ibid.



the universalist subject position taken for granted on the part of the anonymous and unmarked authorial “I” in modernist art making. “But I learned that complete absorption was impossible,” she wrote, “because my voluntary objectlike passivity implied aggressive activity and choice, an independent presence confronting the Art-Conscious environment with its autonomy. My objecthood became my subjecthood.”²⁶ Verbs such as “to confront” feature prominently in the *Catalysis* works, as we shall see, yet there is something productively awry about the signifying difference heard in that last line: “My objecthood became my subjecthood.” In unsettling these terms from fixed opposition, *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City* did not just show that object and subject can never be symmetrically interchangeable; it suggested that such asymmetry is foundational to the relations among selves and others in which identity is established (or not).

Second-wave feminism decried objectification in the name of egalitarianism, yet it relied on a liberal-humanist conception that assumed equal rights to be gender neutral, whereas Piper took a position contrary to such stances. Her outlook diverged similarly from the invisibility trope in black-liberation discourse, which assumes that racial inequality affects identities that are already fully formed prior to the social encounter with others. In the juridical sense that the verb “to object” signifies an intervention that carries consequences in legal proceedings, we might follow the poet and theorist Fred Moten, who reads *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City* as the very opposite of failure, given that Piper enacted resistance by “objecting” to foundational rules ordinarily hidden from sight and left unspoken.²⁷ Breaking the rules in order to make their functioning visible provides a model for understanding the work’s third and decisive feature, which was to address the social rules of recognition by theatricalizing their breakdown. To play the part of an object by shutting down one’s senses, to deny oneself sight by wearing a blindfold, is to embody the phrase “I can’t see you.” The action of interfering with the reciprocity upon which looking relations ordinarily depend—when I look at you I expect to be seen by you in return—also enacts the counterphrase “You can’t see me.” The bemused expressions among some of Max’s diners, as seen in the photographic documentation of the event, register a disconnect in what should, normatively, be a reciprocal relation of seeing and being seen. By virtue of her unreadable appearance as an art object, whose unintelligible behavior resists assimilation into commonsense categories, Piper theatricalized a breakdown in the optical rules of mutual recognition. Insofar as the experience of nonrecognition constitutes the work’s subject matter, the investigative intelligence of the artist’s “I” addresses aspects of what Piper’s biographical “me” went through in those moments when she was being marginalized from the art world even as she chose to distance herself from it.

26. Ibid.

27. Fred Moten, “Resistance of the Object: Adrian Piper’s Theatricality,” in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 233–305.

But was there an element of failure? The *Village Voice* critic John Perreault noted that during Piper's performance "See Me, Feel Me" was playing repeatedly on the jukebox, a song from The Who's 1969 rock opera *Tommy*, the protagonist of which is deaf, dumb, and blind.²⁸ This gesture mocked the artist, but could it perhaps have been defensive pushback by someone for whom the anomaly of seeing something utterly resistant to intelligibility was a troublesome threat, warranting an aggressive counteraction? The critic Michael Fried famously objected to Minimalism's "theatricality" on the grounds that art that asked for a response from its beholder violated the modernist rule of detached and disinterested looking, in which the subject who looks and the object to be looked at stay firmly in their binary places.²⁹ If autonomous art objects address their viewers as art subjects—reciprocally mirrored, equally autonomous because of the disinterestedness that suspends purposive looking for the sake of pure contemplation—then the wise-guy behavior at the jukebox acted out what Fried most disliked about the threat of interestedness: when particular interests are introduced into an encounter with art, the beholder cannot rise to a universal position of access to eternal truths about the nature of art and aesthetic value. Further, the unpredictability of other people's behavior also means the "I" is not at the center of things and can never bring the otherness of all that is "not I" under its control, although for an artist such as Piper, instead of being a threat, this is in fact a condition of freedom that opens the way to unforeseeable possibilities.

The *Catalysis* works expanded the line of inquiry that Piper opened up by performing as an art object. In these works, in anomalous appearances resistant to categorization and unassimilable to everyday intelligibility, she took the two-part interaction of the "You can't see me" experience as the starting point for a transactional understanding of stereotyping as a visual power dynamic. Apart from Rosemary Mayer's incredibly valuable photographic documentation and Piper's 1970–73 notes, we have no record of how members of the public—who became witnesses to and inadvertent participants in her actions performed unannounced on the streets of New York—actually reacted to them. Every indication in those sources, however, suggests that unlike in the meddlesome jukebox incident, it was avoidance and disavowal that prevailed as responses to the artist sitting on a subway train in the August heat wearing clothes that had been soaked for a week in vinegar, eggs, cod liver oil, and milk (*Catalysis I*), or riding the bus with a towel stuffed in her cheeks (*Catalysis IV*) (fig. 7). The black experience of being rendered invisible has been decried from a humanist standpoint as a contravention of the ethical principle of reciprocal recognition, but to what extent did Piper reframe matters by addressing not the deformation of an identity that already exists, but rather the experience of going unseen as itself formative of subordinate subjecthood?³⁰

28. Perreault, "Art: Only a Dummy," *Village Voice*, May 14, 1970, pp. 16, 18.

29. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967); reprinted in Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 148–71.

30. The view that racism denies the principle of reciprocal recognition from which identity arises is the central thesis put forward by W. E. B. Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York, Dover, 1994). For an exposition of this view's philosophical foundations in traditions of dialectical thought, see Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Otherness That Goes Unseen

The active voice predominates in Piper's descriptions of the reasoning that led to her *Catalysis* works, the title of which indicates that after she had eliminated discrete forms and decentered expressive authorship, the desire to bring about change was the pivot upon which her shift from object making to performance turned. In an August 1970 note, which reads like a mission statement, Piper wrote,

One reason for making and exhibiting a work is to induce a reaction or change in the viewer. The stronger the work, the stronger its impact and the more total (physiological, psychological, intellectual, etc.) the reaction of the viewer. . . . The work is a catalytic agent, in that it promotes a change in another entity (the viewer) without undergoing any permanent change itself.³¹

In contrast to the passive voice she used to describe the tumultuous events that were felt to have infiltrated, invaded, and impinged upon the self, the outward thrust of Piper's emphasis on confrontation picks up and extends the "aggressive activity and choice" that gave agency to the art object in *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City*. Her August 1970 note states that

the strongest impact that can be received by a person in the passive capacity of viewer is the impact of human confrontation

31. Piper, "Art as Catalysis," 1970, in "Talking to Myself," p. 32.



7. *Catalysis IV*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

(within oneself or between people). It is the most aggressive and the most threatening, possibly because the least predictable and the least controllable in its consequences.³²

Without testamentary evidence from those who witnessed the *Catalysis* actions on the streets of New York, we face the paradox whereby their catalytic impact was registered only by the artist herself (fig. 7). In a 1972 interview with Lucy Lippard, Piper summed up what she had gained in self-knowledge from these works: "I seem to have gotten more aware of the boundaries of my personality, and how much I intrude myself upon other people's realities by introducing this kind of image, this facade."³³ Her unreadable appearance highlighted her agency, drawing attention to the heuristic dimension of the actions, that is, the insight into the permeability of self/other boundaries generated by risk-laden encounters whose outcomes could not be known in advance. Yet in this first of a two-part interaction, for all the active agency the artist wielded—"It is a heady thing, which has to do with power"—the viewer's avoidant reaction, the second part, was the subject of the investigation. It brought to light a vulnerable condition: being in a dependent position in that second part of the process in which, when recognition is not forthcoming or is withheld, one is cast into a state of invisibility in which one's personhood goes unseen.

Piper performed again as an art object in *Catalysis III* (1970), in which she "painted some clothing with sticky white paint with a sign attached saying 'WET PAINT,' then . . . went shopping at Macy's for some gloves and sunglasses."³⁴ Although quite literally embodying a painting (an unfinished one, with the paint still wet), Piper was breaking the modernist canon's established norms for autonomous artworks, in a performance enacting a critique of opticality that did not just unsettle Greenberg's cardinal value of medium specificity but also pushed at the limits of the purely retinal to address sight and vision as a social matter. Mayer's photographs show that as Piper made her way to Macy's, passersby looked away, avoiding eye contact. It is entirely understandable that people would not want to come into contact with such sticky stuff as wet paint (which, although white, is matter out of place and thus counts as dirt), yet in view of Piper's emphasis on the work's catalytic potential—as in her 1971 statement "I define the work as the viewer's reaction to it"—the downcast eyes of the passersby define the very subject matter of the action's investigation.³⁵

I have always been intrigued by the fact that in one of the most frequently reproduced photographs of *Catalysis III*, Piper is surrounded by women of color, none of whom appear to be meeting her eye (fig. 8). It is too readily assumed that in racially structured societies recognition is something privileged whites bestow upon, or withhold from, dependent blacks; here, however, Piper shows that rules of reciprocal recognition

32. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

33. Piper, in Lippard, "Catalysis," p. 77.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

35. Piper, "Concretized Ideas I've Been Working Around," 1971, in "Talking to Myself," p. 42.

apply to all. It is not that our identities are fully formed before acts of recognition take place but that “identity emerges through interactive processes,” as the visual-culture scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has put it.³⁶ The artist was fully in control of her self-presentation as an unfinished painting, but her putting forth of this unreadable otherness elicited responses beyond the control of her intention, revealing the passersby *not seeing*, and their *not looking*, as commonplace reactions to the “not I” phenomenon of that which resists everyday intelligibility. Piper thus demonstrated how the subordinate status of one who is rendered invisible is interactively produced by looks that turn away from, and thus cancel out, any mutual recognition.

To go unseen, unrecognized, is to experience incompleteness in the circuit of looking and being looked at. For this very reason, the trope Ralph Ellison put forward in *Invisible Man*, his modernist novel of 1952, has endured, even though its potency has dulled through overuse. In the introduction to the novel’s 1982 edition, Ellison reaccentuated the stakes: “Despite the bland assertions of sociologists, ‘high visibility’ actually rendered one *un-visible*.”³⁷ It was the paradoxical interplay of this antinomial pas de deux, between the *hypervisible* and the *invisible*, between otherness and going unseen, that Piper went on to explore in her mid-1970s performances as the Mythic Being. While stereotyping (or more exactly, being stereotyped)

36. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 10.

37. Ralph Ellison, introduction to *Invisible Man* (1952; New York: Random House, 1982), p. xii.



8. *Catalysis III*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

is broadly accepted as the subject matter under investigation in those later works, it was the *Catalysis* works that provided their starting point. The artist's biographical "me" had undergone unsettling experiences of misrecognition, when the critics, curators, and editors who had been interested in her work turned away. But the artistic intelligence of the "I" in the *Catalysis* works, investigating the social relations from which such reactions arose, laid bare a broader paradox that had not been addressed in art before: in asymmetrical situations, in which the normative reciprocity of looking and being looked at fails to be completed, the one who looks is empowered not by facing others but by turning away, by *not seeing* the other person.

Both Piper and Lippard chafed at the limits of the language available for naming the stakes made visible by the *Catalysis* performances. Lippard, considering the confrontational aspect of the works, asked, "Do you think it has to do with being a woman? Or being black? It's a very aggressive thing. Do you think you're getting out some of your aggressions about how women are treated?" Given the cathartic implication of the title, the critic intuited a politics of difference, yet she fell back on a humanist model of expressive authoriality, just as Piper, with her reply—"Well, not in terms of intention. As far as the work goes, I feel it is completely apolitical"—registered the limits of the intentionalist logic that thinks of an artwork's meaning as being exclusively under the control of the artist's consciousness.³⁸ Performativity demands we think not in linear geometries but rather with those of a Moebius strip; Piper unsettled the dichotomies of subject/object, active/passive, and visible/invisible in acts of discrepant embodiment that even now have the power to confound our available terms of analysis and comprehension.

To say the beholder is empowered by *not seeing* is to countenance the view that, contrary to the commonplace notion that seeing guarantees knowing, it is *not knowing* that is foundational to the optical politics of social privilege. The *not knowing* that follows from *not seeing* would thus be the prior condition without which neither white nor male privilege would exist. Liberal-humanist critiques of misrecognition have drawn attention to the injurious consequences of going unseen, but Piper was the first to show that invisibility is interactively produced when reciprocity is withheld through the act of *not looking*. Piper's art—by tuning in to the alternative epistemologies opened by performance and operating in the realm of preverbal affect—generated a kind of surplus knowledge that eludes codification in language. We may readily acknowledge that in the social and historical relationship of master and servant the latter actually knows more about the former than vice versa. I would also suggest that Piper's insights into nonrecognition's fundamental asymmetry suggest that social privilege ultimately depends on structures of *not knowing* and *not seeing*, which, in turn, implies that disavowal—the refusal to see what one knows

38. Piper, in Lippard, "Catalysis," pp. 77–78.

to be there—has been the precondition of modern liberal democracies, without which the rules and norms of their everyday functioning would not exist.

At considerable risk to the artist's physical self, Piper's "I" undertook actions in which, by shuttling in a ricochet circuit of object/subject, active/passive, visible/unvisible, the artist generated new knowledge about identity's dependence on the otherness that is "not I." Her *Catalysis* works, which brought a post-Minimalist sensibility to the moments when intellectual categories get confounded by sensorial flux, headed in a converse direction, investigating how identities go unseen when optical data is screened out by the preestablished cognitive categories of everyday stereotyping. In *Food for the Spirit* we meet a third iteration of this contrapositional shuttling in which, by testing the limits of her philosophical commitment to Kant, Piper let her "I" take her biographical "me" to the very edges of the visible.

Appearing, Disappearing, and Unvisibility

Piper devoted June and July of 1971 to studying Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* while fasting and practicing yoga. In a note from 1981 she recalled, "The *Critique* is the most profound book I have ever read, and my involvement in it was so great that I thought I was losing my mind, in fact losing my sense of self completely."³⁹ To stave off this loss, the artist enacted a performance in her Hester Street loft: "I would go to my mirror to peer at myself to make sure I was still there." Piper took photographs of her mirror image with a Brownie camera while recording herself reading the passages that had induced such overwhelming effect; the result is a set of fourteen images gathered in a ring binder along with annotated pages from her paperback copy of the book (figs. 9, 10). Not shown until her 1987 retrospective (after which, in the 1990s, the images were edited by the gallerist Thomas Erben, in consultation with Piper, in large-format photographic prints), *Food for the Spirit* is a pivotal work. It connects Piper's lifelong commitment to Kantian rationalism, the subject of her dissertation and her subsequent multivolume study *Rationality and the Structure of the Self* (2008), with her equally enduring commitment to yoga, which she had first studied at Swami Satchidananda's ashram in New York, in 1966.

Approached in terms of the biographical "me," *Food for the Spirit* is a document of a reader's immersive plunge into the life of the mind. Yet do we not also hear the "I" of an artist testing her intellectual commitment to Kantian rationalism? Questions of embodied finitude make themselves felt beneath the self-deprecating tone of Piper's 1981 note:

The sight and sound of me, the physically embodied Adrian Piper, repeating passages from Kant reassured me by demarcating the visual, verbal, and aural boundaries of my individual self, and reminded me of the material conditions of my mental state, that

39. Piper, "Food for the Spirit," *High Performance* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1981); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 55.

the *Critique* was a book with good ideas in it that I had chosen to study, and not (only? necessarily? really?) the entrance into a transcendent reality of disembodied self-consciousness.⁴⁰

When we run together issues of disembodiment with dematerialization, we notice that Piper had addressed the demarcation of the self's boundaries in the *Hypothesis* works. Such need for reassurance, however, as Conceptual art abandoned material objects in favor of pure ideas, was not confined to Piper but led other artists to body-art performances, such as Vito Acconci's *Trademarks* (1970) and Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971), both of which reasserted corporeality in riposte to the boundarylessness that conceptualism opened up as both promise and threat.

As David Joselit has observed, the propositional form of art as idea led artists in the 1960s and '70s into a wide range of fields, including linguistics, mathematics, and informatics, yet the infinite-seeming range of possibilities brought about by such movement away from the formalist tenet of medium specificity was also felt by many artists to be overwhelming.⁴¹ When Lippard and John Chandler heralded dematerialization in 1968, they saw Conceptual art's pan-medium character as a radical break with Greenbergian modernism, involved as it was with "opening up rather than narrowing down"; still, they framed this "post-aesthetic" moment in terms of the "disintegration of art," as described by the midcentury American artist Joseph Schillinger: an evolutionary abandonment of materiality as a result of art based on "the abstraction and liberation of the idea."⁴² In that zero-degree moment at the birth of Conceptual art, then, in which the contemporary began to emerge from the demise of the authorial subject, the autonomous artwork, and the disinterested beholder at the heart of the modern, the liberatory possibilities for art making amounted to a kind of conceptualist sublime, with new beginnings experienced simultaneously as entropic endings.

Piper evokes this indeterminate condition in "Flying," an essay written in 1987. Although she has often been harshly self-critical in her retrospection, the figurative vocabulary she employed to portray conceptualism as a flight from reality was also used to address her inner life in a poetic manner. In her description of a recurring dream in which she flies—"I am invisible, disembodied, pure sexual desire, and the night holds no fears for me"—Piper represents the double-edgedness of disembodiment as simultaneously ecstatic and entropic, which in turn asks us to pay careful attention, in *Food for the Spirit*, to the contrapositional movement of an "I" between appearance and disappearance (fig. 11).⁴³ It matters, too, in a work that investigates transcendence, or the overcoming of boundaries, that in yogic meditation one's whole being aims, through bodily self-discipline, to calm the intellect by detaching consciousness from the strivings of the ego.

40. Ibid.

41. David Joselit, *American Art since 1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), pp. 167–71.

42. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968); reprinted in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. 47.

43. Piper, "Flying," in *Adrian Piper: Reflections, 1967–1987*; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 224.

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A 143 units. Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general, a unity due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition.

Reality, in the pure concept of understanding, is that which corresponds to a sensation in general; it is that, therefore, the concept of which in itself points to being (in time). Negation is that the concept of which represents not-being (in time). The opposition of these two thus rests upon the distinction of one and the same time as filled and as empty. Since time is merely the form of intuition, and so of objects as appearances, that in the objects which corresponds to sensation is ~~the~~ the transcendental matter of all objects as things in themselves (thinghood² reality). Now every sensation has a degree or magnitude whereby, in respect of its representation of an object otherwise remaining the same, it can fill out one and the same time, that is, occupy inner sense more or less completely down to its cessation in nothingness (= 0 = negatio). There therefore exists a relation and connection between reality and negation, or rather a transition from the one to the other, which makes every reality representable as a quantum. The schema of a reality, as the quantity of something in so far as it fills time, is just this continuous and uniform production of that reality in time as we successively descend from a sensation which has a certain degree to its vanishing point, or progressively ascend from its negation to some magnitude of it.

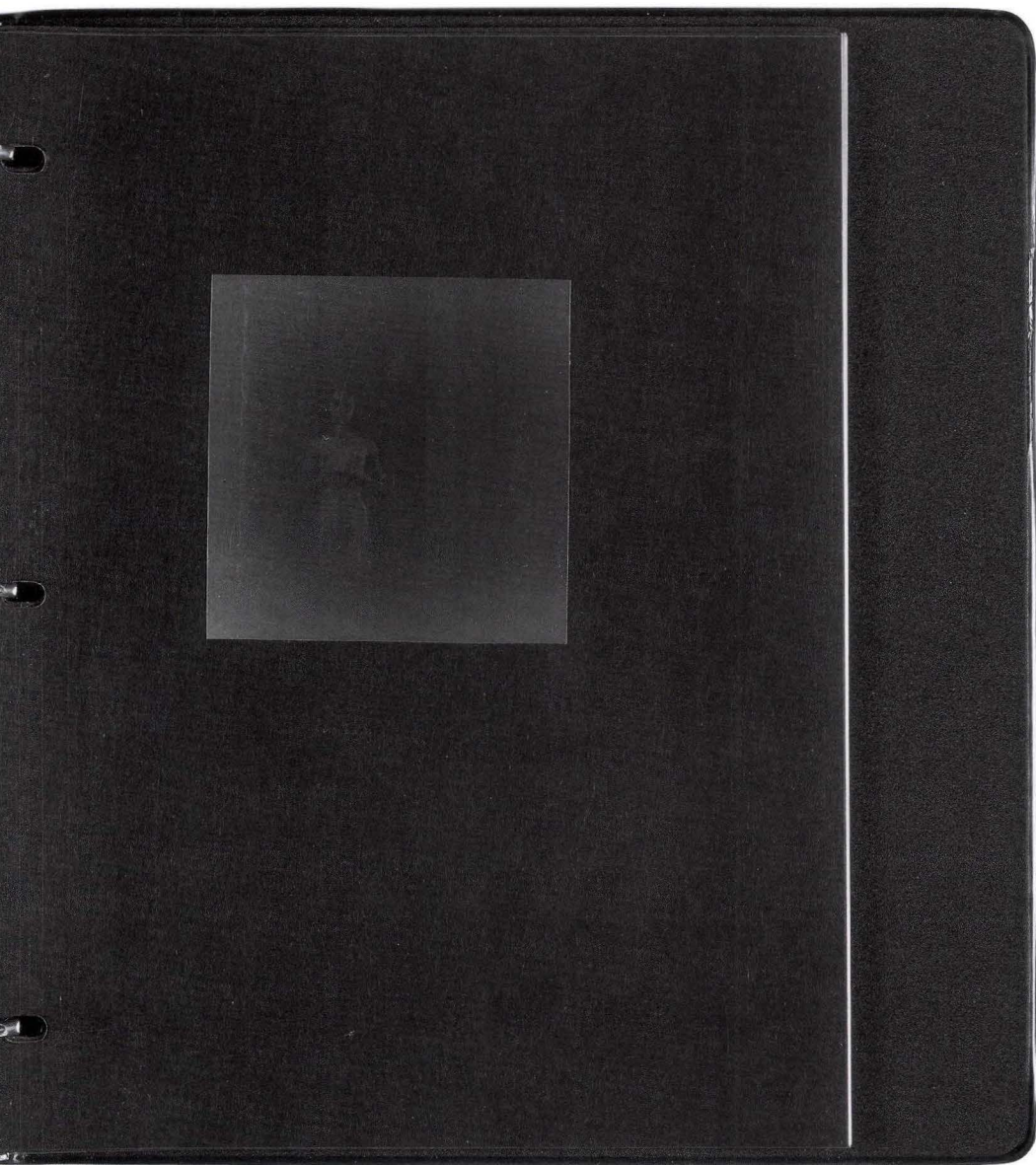
The schema of substance is permanence of the real in time, that is, the representation of the real as a substrate of empirical determination of time in general, and so as abiding while all else changes. (The existence of what is transitory³ passes away in time but not time itself. To time itself non-transitory⁴ and abiding, there corresponds in the [field of] appearance what is non-transitory in its existence, that is, substance. Only in [relation to] substance can the succession and coexistence of appearances be determined in time.)

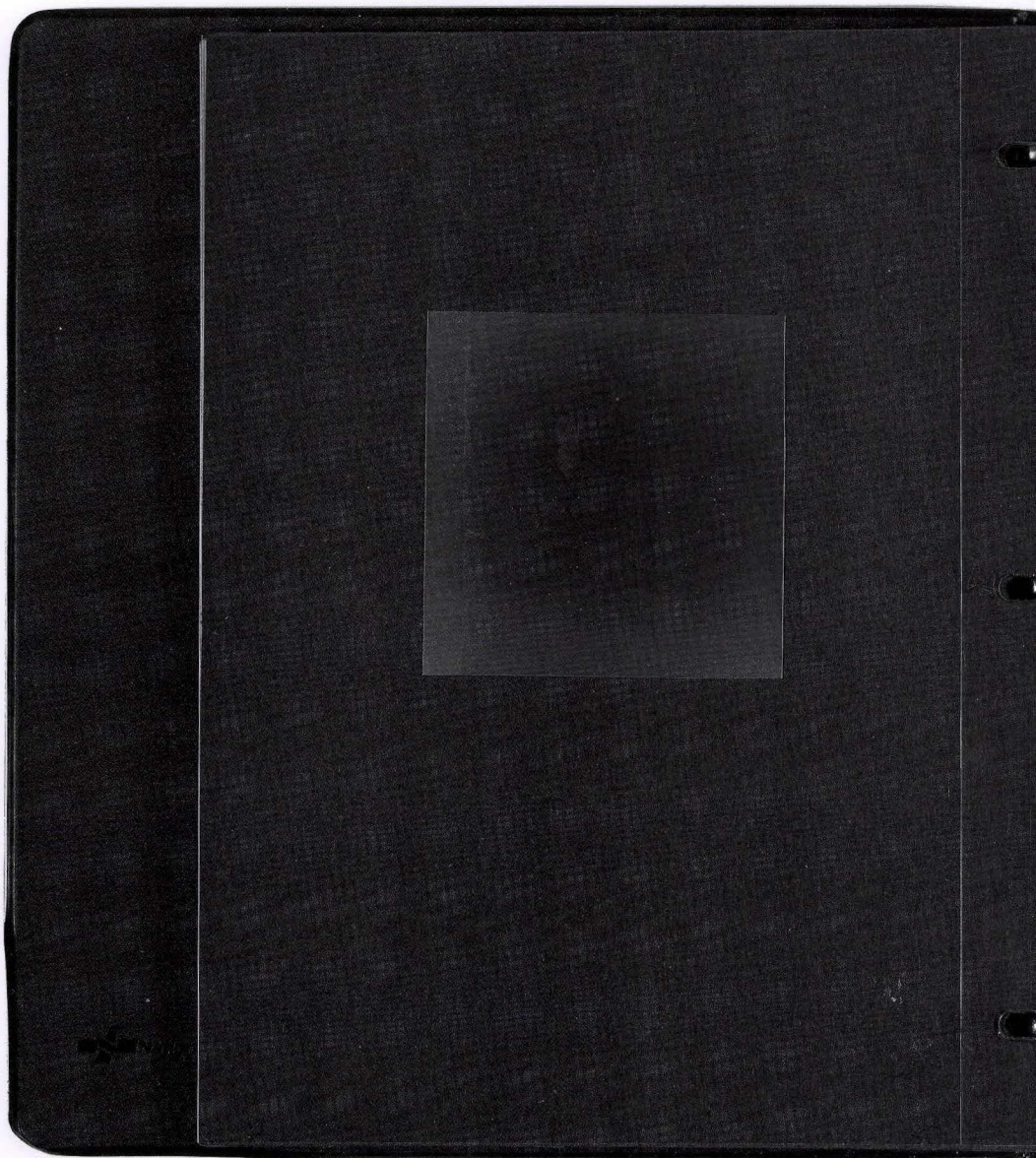
¹ [Reading, with Wille, *nicht die für die*. This seems, on the whole, preferable to taking, with Erdmann, the second part of the sentence as: "that in the objects [as things in themselves] which corresponds to sensation is the transcendental matter..."]

² [Sachheit.]

³ [das Wandelbaren.]

⁴ [unwandelbar.]



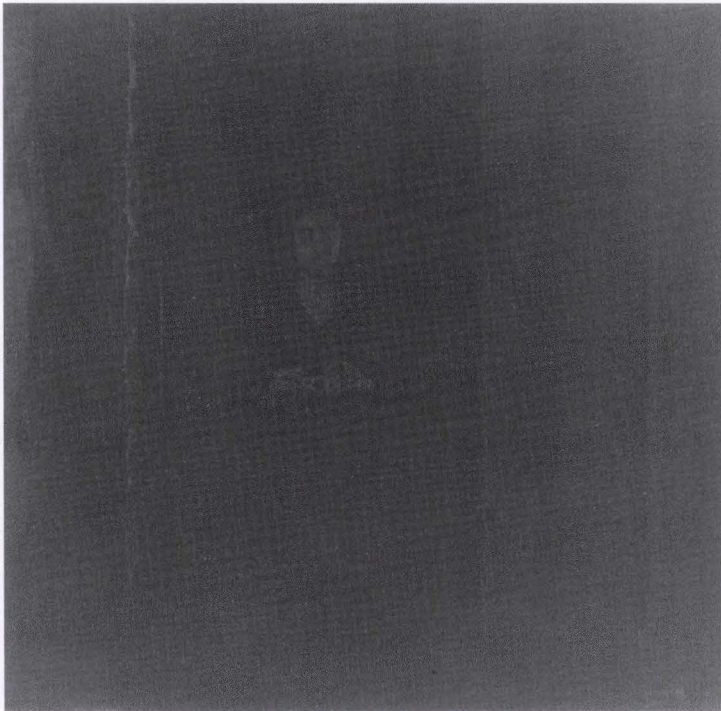


10. *Food for the Spirit*. 1971



Kantian rationalism, broadly speaking, rejects the empiricist view that our knowledge of the world is dependent on our senses; it mistrusts perception and makes the phenomenal world of appearance secondary to the noumenal realm of things-in-themselves. Science attains objective knowledge of things-in-themselves by way of abstract systems such as mathematics and geometry. Their invariant laws exist in the disinterested realm of ideality, whereas the philosopher's role is to tutor the mind's self-reflexive awareness of the a priori categories through which the intellect acquires truthful knowledge, which it does by following rules that will bring order and systematicity to the ever-changing flux of sensory experience. The diagrams of *Hypothesis: Situation #5* (1968) (pp. 142–43) seem to offer objective descriptions of the spatiotemporal coordinates under which acts of perception took place: they map, in ten photographs, viewpoints from which various furnishings in the artist's loft studio were seen, and in keeping with Conceptual art's at times naive investment in scientism, they look highly scientific. Bowles has brought out a feminist subtext of *Hypothesis: Situation #6* (1968–69), in which a trip to the grocery store—like the television soap opera in *Hypothesis: Situation #7* (1969) and the aspirin advertisement in *Hypothesis: Situation #10* (1968)—addresses the gendered character of the domestic spaces and routines in which female roles are conventionally boundaried.⁴⁴ Thus, far from upholding the exalted place held by science in rationalist thinking, the *Hypothesis* works put universalist

44. Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, pp. 69–121.



11. *Food for the Spirit #7*. 1971

claims to objectivity to the test, revealing the paradox whereby “the ideality of space-time is always conditioned, *made possible*, by a specific experience of space and time,” as Moten has put it. He underlines this point, extrapolating, “The objective-transcendental ground of humanity seems inseparable from a certain subjective condition of its possibility.”⁴⁵

But if giving voice to objective propositions necessitates a certain disembodiment, with impartial statements having to be perspectiveless and acontextual in order to be true, was not the sotto voce feminism implicit in this work also asking whether access to the authority of objectivity is conditional on attributes of masculinity and whiteness? In 1969 Piper’s work began to unravel the hidden equation whereby authoritative claims to objectivity made by the anonymous “I” depend, in fact, on being incarnated by particular social bodies, those whose access and entitlement to such a universalist subject position stems from privileges primarily enjoyed, in modern history, by white males. The discursive convention whereby the third-person “I” is disembodied from statements whose truth claims depend on their being spoken in such a mode means that partiality and interestedness are ordinarily disavowed by the structures of authority that regulate modern life. The *Hypothesis* works, with their exaggerated scientism, pose such questions by way of a discrepant mismatch between the third-person “I,” which is everywhere and nowhere in its transcendentalist claim to objectivity, and Piper’s embodied “me,” as a black woman artist whose confidence in her entitlement to speak from that universalist position has rested on her intellectual commitment to the life of the mind but who, in 1970, was thrown into crisis when a visitor to her studio muttered, “Aber sie ist doch nur ein Mädchen!” (But she is just a girl!), thinking the remark would pass uncomprehended.⁴⁶

Solipsism takes the self to be the source of our only knowable reality, but the *Hypothesis* works speak to the opposite quandary, to self-doubt, since, as Bowles has written, “the artist is figured as a hypothesis, whose presence is neither certain nor assured.”⁴⁷ *Food for the Spirit* revisits this problem space. Far from meekly agreeing with Kant, Piper presents the detached pages from her paperback copy of *Critique of Pure Reason* as evidence of an intensely interrogative relationship to the text. She immersed herself in the *Critique* wholeheartedly, but the contents of the *Food for the Spirit* ring binder testify to a struggle, of a “me” who has tested the extent to which the artist’s socially embodied “I” can identify with the Kantian ideal: a transcendental self that overcomes all limitations of time and place in its quest for true knowledge. We have already seen “object,” which ordinarily refers to inert matter, resignified as an active verb of intervention, and in *Food for the Spirit* we meet a further reflection, in which it comes under investigation as the correlate of a perceiving subject.

45. Moten, “Resistance of the Object,” p. 233.

46. See Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, pp. 38–39.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

If “objects are the way things appear to a subject,” as the scholar W. J. T. Mitchell has put it, then the rationalist mistrust of phenomenality, as well as the more general philosophical anxiety that the mind may be deceived by the senses, bring fraught consequences to objectivist claims of representational systems, such as the one-point perspective, built into every camera lens, that places the perceiver’s eye at the geometric center of things.⁴⁸ Unlike things-in-themselves, phenomenal appearances are things-as-seen-by-perceivers, which therefore raises the question of what happens to the world’s reality if no one is there to perceive it. “How are people when you’re not there?” asked Piper in her 1972 interview, and went on to say, “There comes a point where you can’t be sure whether what you are seeing is of your own making, or whether it is objectively true.”⁴⁹ Bearing in mind that the two-part structure of catalytic confrontation may reside “*within oneself* or between people,” we see that in *Food for the Spirit* the artist brought her selfhood to the brink of disappearance in such a way that the question being put to her mirror image, which fluctuates in the work’s images between visibility and invisibility, is not so much a “Who am I?” question about identity as an “Am I?” question about the very limits of human ontology.

Piper’s 1981 note on her intention for *Food for the Spirit* does not indicate that gender or race played a part in the production of this work, yet the photographs that documented the performance present effects that are critical to the phenomenal field in which identity is put forward for visual recognition. Shot in available light and presented sequentially in the binder, such that last of the fourteen photographs is virtually black, the images of the artist’s body in the mirror entail the gradual dissolution of figure-ground distinctions, which are pushed to the very edges of legibility. Piper is fully clothed in three of the photographs but partially or fully nude in others. Although this aspect of *Food for the Spirit* has been overlooked in the literature, the effects and implications are far from arbitrary or incidental in my view. Where there is little or no light, it is impossible to see the epidermal differences that signify race. Likewise, in some of the photographs the figure appears androgynous. Without the chiaroscuro differentiations that mark three-dimensional volume, the shadows that would have indicated the curves of female breasts are absent; this means that gender, too, has become illegible as a result of the contingent happenstance of available light. The antiaesthetic conceptualist handling of photography aside, I find it striking that this performance, enacted in the private space of her studio, logically followed insights that arose from the public *Catalysis* actions she had begun in 1970. In those, the prevalent response to the optical otherness of a self putting forward an unintelligible appearance was *not seeing*, whereas in *Food for the Spirit* we see that the bodily differentiations that make race and gender

48. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 156.

49. Piper, in Lippard, “Catalysis,” p. 77.

intelligible as socially meaningful categories for the intellect are simply unreadable if the phenomenal conditions that permit sight and vision are not met.

The reassuring reality check provided by the recording technology of camera and tape in *Food for the Spirit* is all-important, bringing selfhood back from the brink of disembodiment. But if the “I” is dependent for the confirmation of its existence on the “not I” alterity of magnetic tape and chemical emulsion, then in the two-part transaction for which *Food for the Spirit* was the catalyst, personhood is confirmed by the otherness of the mirror image—a purely specular phenomenon. It is the image in the mirror that stops the self from falling into disembodiment.

The outcome of putting Kantian thought to the test was a strengthening of Piper’s commitment to philosophy, as her subsequent training in the discipline attests. But in all of the works that began Piper’s performative turn, we see an artist willing to put everything at risk, prepared to cast doubt on every taken-for-granted assumption. As she countenanced the possibility of nonbeing during the two-month duration of *Food for the Spirit*—which amounted to a trial, an ordeal, if we take the yoga and fasting into account—Piper took the transcendentalist mindset as far as it could go. In light of the theological connotation of transcendence, the heuristic insight that she snatched from the threshold of disembodiment is that the Kantian rules for gaining access to universal truth lead, when followed to the letter, to an entropic eclipse of the human, who fades out into undifferentiated invisibility. Conversely, when human identities depend on light in order to be visible—since our existence would not be possible without those waves of electromagnetic radiation—the reassuring reality check upheld by the mirror image leads to the insight that it is our embodied finitude, our limitedness and incompleteness, that makes us human. In place of an egocentric worldview, which is tempted to think that the phenomenal world is dependent on a human perceiver, or which aspires to an omniscience that overcomes all boundaries, Piper’s contrapositional shuttling brings us to the conclusion that to accept our condition of finitude is to uphold our dependence on the non-human otherness of light, which is what makes phenomenality possible in the first place.

As I have largely employed the third-person convention in writing this essay, it is only fitting for me to acknowledge the finite and partial character of the interpretive perspective I have brought to my reading of Piper’s early performances. To “take ownership,” as current parlance would have it, of an interpretive standpoint is not to make a self-protective disclaimer announcing that one’s methods hold no guarantee of objectivity; rather, it serves to draw attention to a paradoxical aspect of ekphrasis that Piper’s oeuvre singularly throws into relief.

In reading each of Piper's performances as a two-part process, I have relied on a framework of dialectical thinking, rewriting art's histories in a manner guided by methods from British cultural studies, whose conceptual lineage is wide-ranging but largely derives from traditions of Continental philosophy that include Marxist and Hegelian thought. In dialectics the prime number is two, for the condition of existence of any one identity is that two beings must first meet in an encounter. Strictly speaking, this encounter model is entirely incompatible with the rationalist tradition of Kant, which starts with a unitary subject of consciousness. In an ipsocentric episteme, in which one subject alone looks out into the universe, rule-based procedures for access to true knowledge turn on the systematic pursuit of objectivity and universality, thus making propositional logic, mathematics, and science exemplary models for philosophy to follow. Piper's "allegiance to the objective voice" was hard-won; to overcome the prejudices she met in her Harvard years and in her quest for tenure she fought many battles, as her rights of access as an African-American woman were cast in doubt.⁵⁰ But it has always struck me that the question of which philosophical vocabulary offers the best fit for understanding Piper's position in twentieth-century art presents a puzzle. The insights her art generates seem more vividly illuminated by dialectics rather than by the somewhat dry procedures of rationalist philosophy. In addition to dialectics-based interpretation, ekphrasis is also achieved, even more curiously, by process-oriented philosophies that constitute yet another philosophical tradition, in which dynamic conceptions of "becoming" turn our attention to the flux of ongoing differentiation that is held to exist prior to the either/or dualisms by which the ego and its intellect strive for mastery over materiality.

There is a degree of crossover between Piper's artistic interrogation of opticality and her philosophical articles such as "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism" and "Two Kinds of Discrimination" (in which political discrimination is examined as the outcome of a failure in aesthetic discrimination when perceptions of individuality are foreclosed by stereotyping).⁵¹ Yet Piper's steadfast commitment to Kantianism, culminating in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, puts her diametrically at odds with the poststructuralist paradigm shift whereby the political legacies of modernism and liberal humanism have been subject to far-reaching critique in contemporary intellectual life.⁵² In her performance pieces of the early 1970s Piper raised questions of difference and visuality with which art history is catching up only belatedly. But if I were to situate her interruptive critique of modernist opticality in the epistemological field that Frantz Fanon traversed when, in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952), he addressed the ontological dilemma of blackness as one in which "I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance," then how would I square

50. Piper, "Introduction: Some Very FORWARD Remarks," p. xxxiv.

51. Piper, "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism," *Philosophical Forum* 24, nos. 1-3 (Fall-Spring 1992-93): 188-232; and "Two Kinds of Discrimination," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 25-74.

52. I address Piper's trajectory being at odds with post-structuralism in Kobena Mercer, "Adrian Piper, 1970-1975: Exiled on Main Street," in Mercer, ed., *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press/INIVA, 2008), pp. 146-65.

the discrepant mismatch between Piper's Kantianism and the dialectical traditions of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jacques Lacan with which Fanon engages?⁵³

Untrained as I am in philosophy, I am not qualified to judge *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, but I am alerted to something in need of attention. In a précis offered by Piper's interviewer in 1998, her thesis is summed up as follows: "Piper argues against the Humean claim that we are driven by desire and instinct and that we only use our reason to satisfy these unruly impulses. In Piper's view, Kant was right to stress the power of reason not only to trump desire but to define rational ends."⁵⁴ This thumbnail sketch does no justice to a multivolume study many years in the making, but it pinpoints the problem Kant embodies for postcolonial scholars, namely that his conception of moral freedom depends on a dualistic opposition whereby self-consciousness is a state of self-mastery achieved by overcoming enslavement to passions and interests. Such a binary makes the slave indispensable as a discursive figure in Kantian rationalism. The "not I" is always needed by the "I," or as one scholar has put it, "The individual guided by particular interests and passions, receiving its laws from something external to it, is heteronomous and in bondage. In contradistinction, the ethical subordination of individual self-interest to the moral law constitutes the progressive development, the *Bildung*, of the human race 'becoming enlightened.'"⁵⁵

When Fanon interpreted blackness as a condition of being imprisoned by appearance, by virtue of the way one is apprehended in phenomenal terms—"Look, a Negro!"—he reinflected these foundational binaries.⁵⁶ One of Piper's most attentive critics, Maurice Berger, was the first to pick up on Fanon's importance for an interpretation of the *Mythic Being* works, in which she performs blackness and maleness as semblance, an act of appearing.⁵⁷ Whereas art history aspires to euchronic ekphrasis, in which the source languages that inform a body of work seamlessly match the artist's self-description, it may be the case that the anachronic frisson of juxtapositional differences gives us a better fit for art practices that arise from intersectional contexts. The extraordinary otherness of the *Mythic Being* works still await interpretive resources that will do justice to their aesthetic complexity, and such complexity anticipates the art-historical future of an oeuvre that will keep scholars busy for many years to come. Adrian Piper's singularity comes from questions that had never before been asked in twentieth-century art. For my part, I have suggested that retracing the steps Piper took in making her performative turn brings us to a place in which to better acknowledge her pivotal role in freeing art from "the modern" and leading it to "the contemporary."

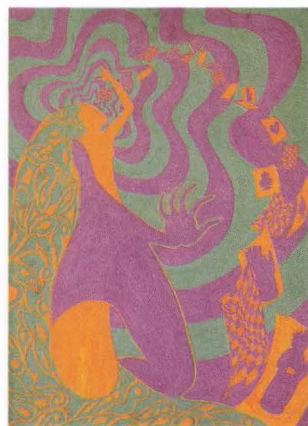
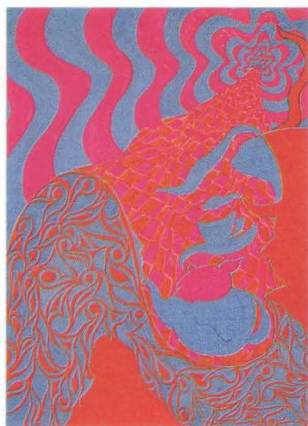
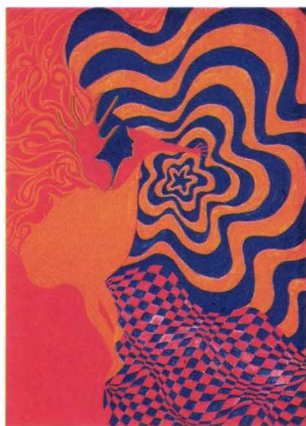
53. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann (1952; New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 116.

54. Shatz, "Black Like Me," p. 54.

55. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 250. See also Robert Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," and "The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances," in Bernasconi, ed. *Race* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 11–36, 284–99.

56. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 112.

57. Maurice Berger, "Black Skin, White Masks: Adrian Piper and the Politics of Viewing," in *How Art Becomes History: Essays on Art, Society, and Culture in Post-New Deal America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 93–113.



LSD Abstraction. 1965

Alice in Wonderland: The Mad Hatter's Tea Party. 1966

Alice in Wonderland: Alice and the Pack of Cards. 1966

Alice in Wonderland: Alice down the Rabbit Hole. 1966

The area on the reverse
surface of this card is a
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nates rectangle (5,6),
p. 81, O TO 9 Magazine,
July, 1969.

It has been relocated to:

Kynaston McShine
432 Lafayette St.
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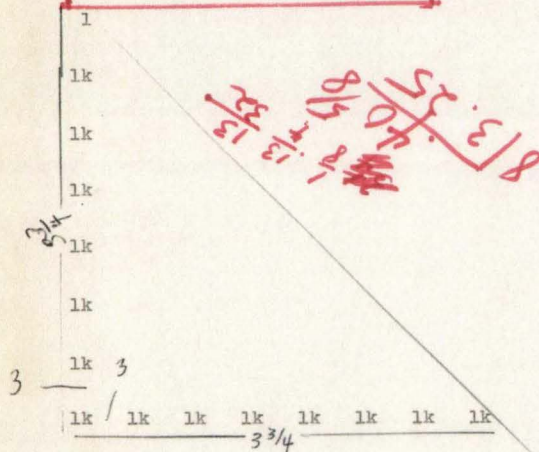
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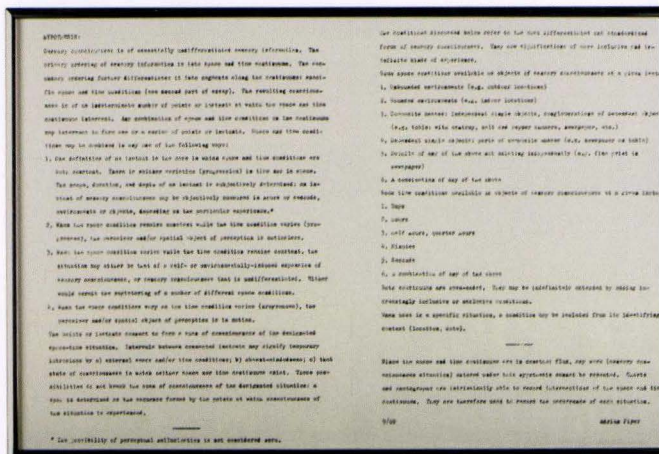
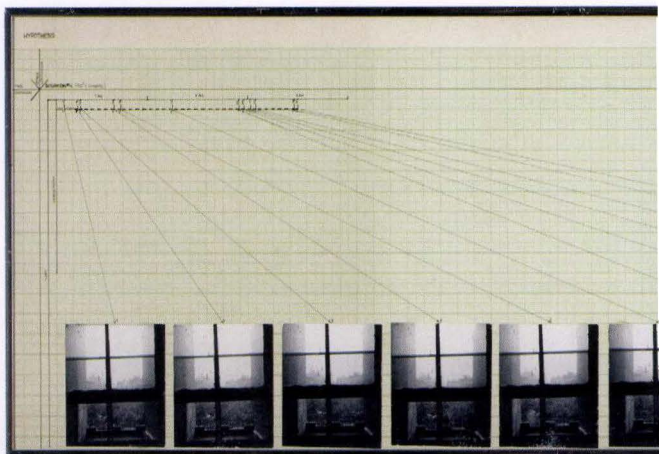
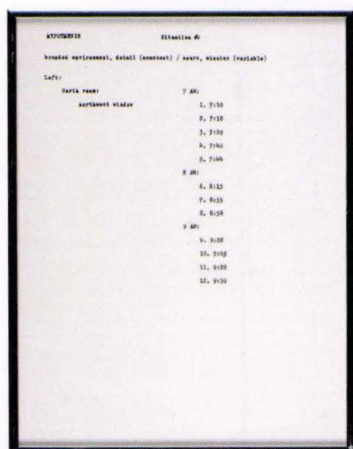
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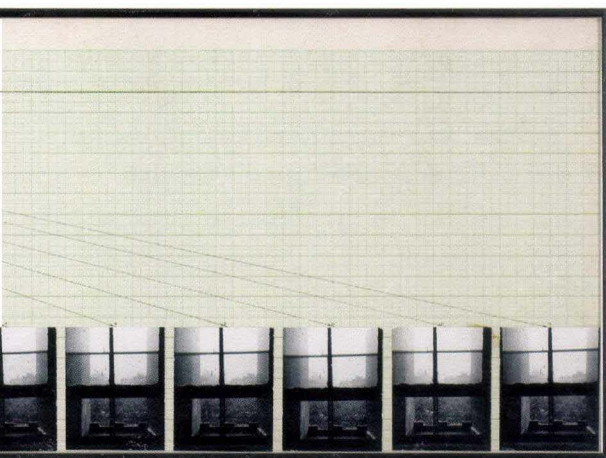
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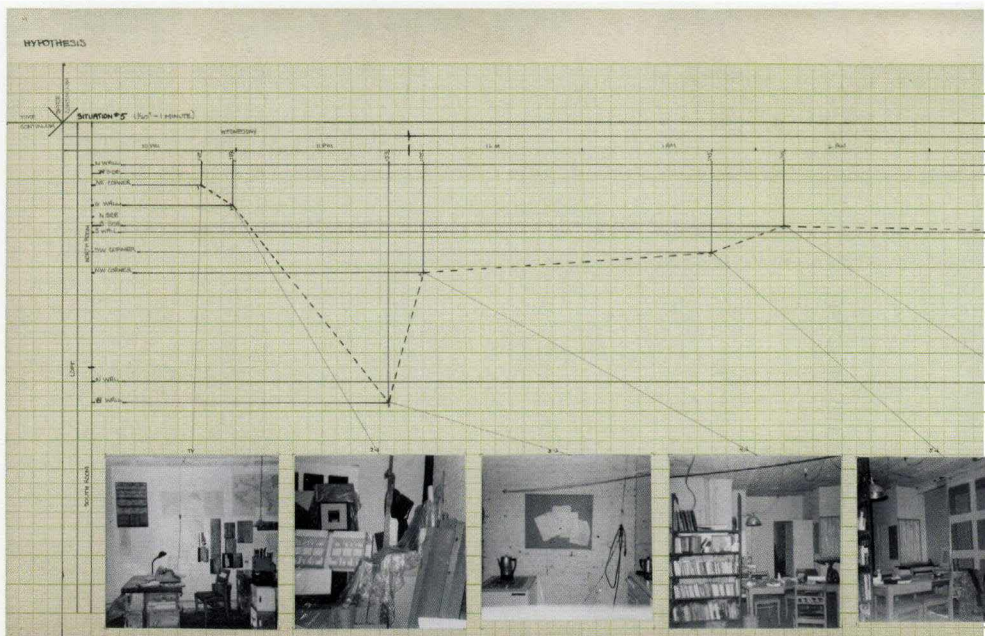
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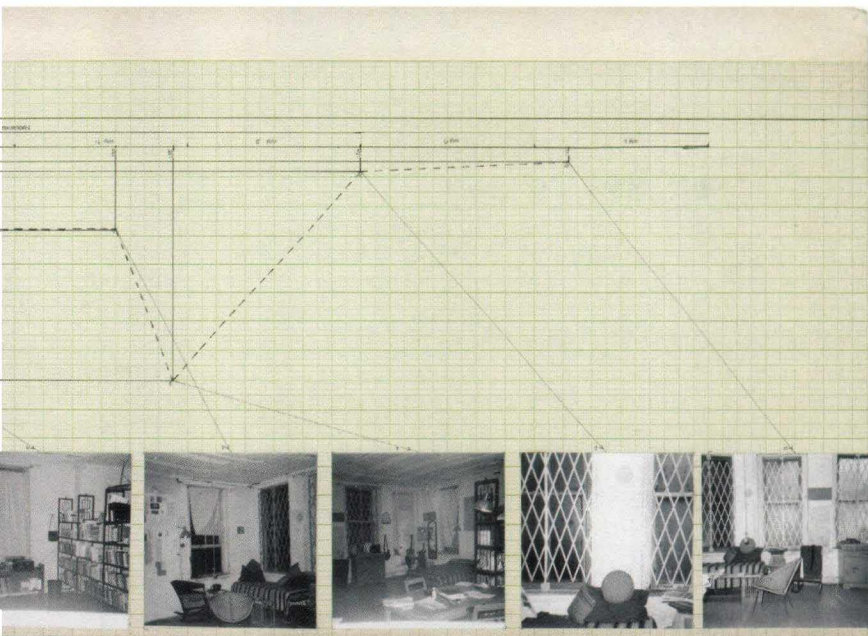




I Love You.

You might not believe me because I'm Black, and you're probably White. But I Love You - Not because of what you've done to me, or for me, or what you will do for me in the future, but because I Love You. Because I want to touch you, and to feel that innermost part of you, and to achieve this, I must first tell you that I Love you, then we must pull ourselves together, and start a new world.

AMM Brother
sister



Art is what we do.
Culture is what is done to us.
—Carl Andre

BOTH PENS
ARE OUT
OF INK.

IT TAKES ME LONGER
TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO
THAN TO DO IT.

Adrian Piper is 2 years
older than I am.

PIECE (for Adrian Piper):

Do something thoughtful &/or violent
with each page of this book after reading
that page. Do not do the same thing
to any 2 pages.

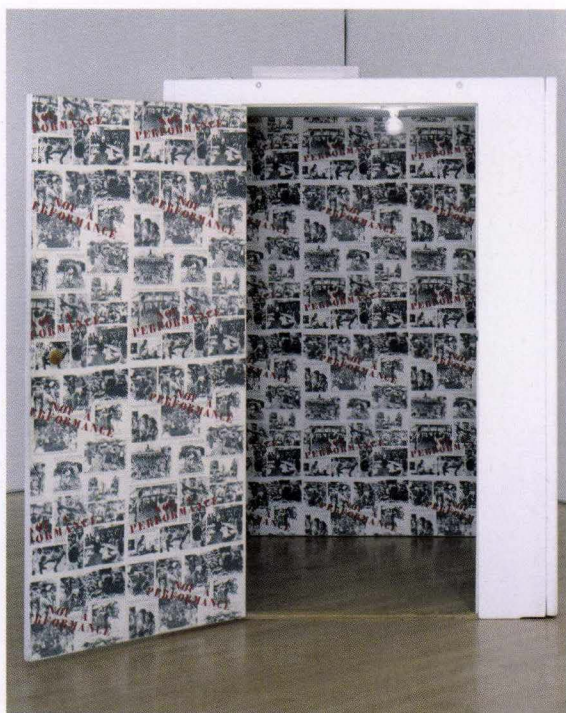
PIECE (for Kayrastra McShine):

Throw every object exhibited in this show
into a pile in the middle of the museum
lobby and have it shipped to The Whitney.

VARIATIONS:

to The Jewish.
to The Guggenheim.
to The Met.

Peter
Frank



Art for the Art World Surface Pattern. 1976
Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma. 1978



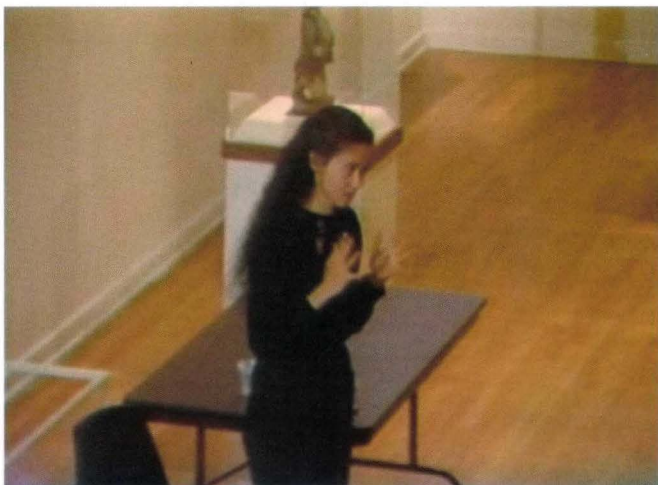


Dear Friend,

I am black.

I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.

I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.





Cornered. 1988
Out of the Corner. 1990

State of West Virginia,  County of Ohio, ss:

Birth Certificate

(In the Clerk's Office of the County Court of Ohio County)

I, RAYMOND J. FALLAND, Clerk of the County Court, in the County and State aforesaid, it being an office of record, and having a seal, do hereby certify that the records in my office show that

Daniel R. Piper was born at Wheeling

in Ohio County and State of West Virginia, on the 5th day of June, 1911

and that the parents' names are as follows:

Father's name Daniel R. Piper Mother's name Beatrice Downs Piper

Sex Male Color Octoroon

as shown by certificate of birth returned by E. A. Hildereth, M.D., and recorded in Birth Record No. 11 at page 318 Certificate filed Year, 1911

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto affixed my signature and official seal at Wheeling, West Virginia, this 13th day of July, 1953

Raymond J. Falland Clerk
mlk

© 1953 WFO

State of West Virginia,  County of Ohio, ss:

Birth Certificate

(In the Clerk's Office of the County Court of Ohio County)

I, RAYMOND J. FALLAND, Clerk of the County Court, in the County and State aforesaid, it being an office of record, and having a seal, do hereby certify that the records in my office show that

Daniel R. Piper was born at Wheeling

in Ohio County and State of West Virginia, on the 5th day of June, 1911

Sex Male Color White

and that the parents' names are as follows:

Father's name Daniel R. Piper Mother's name Beatrice Downs Piper

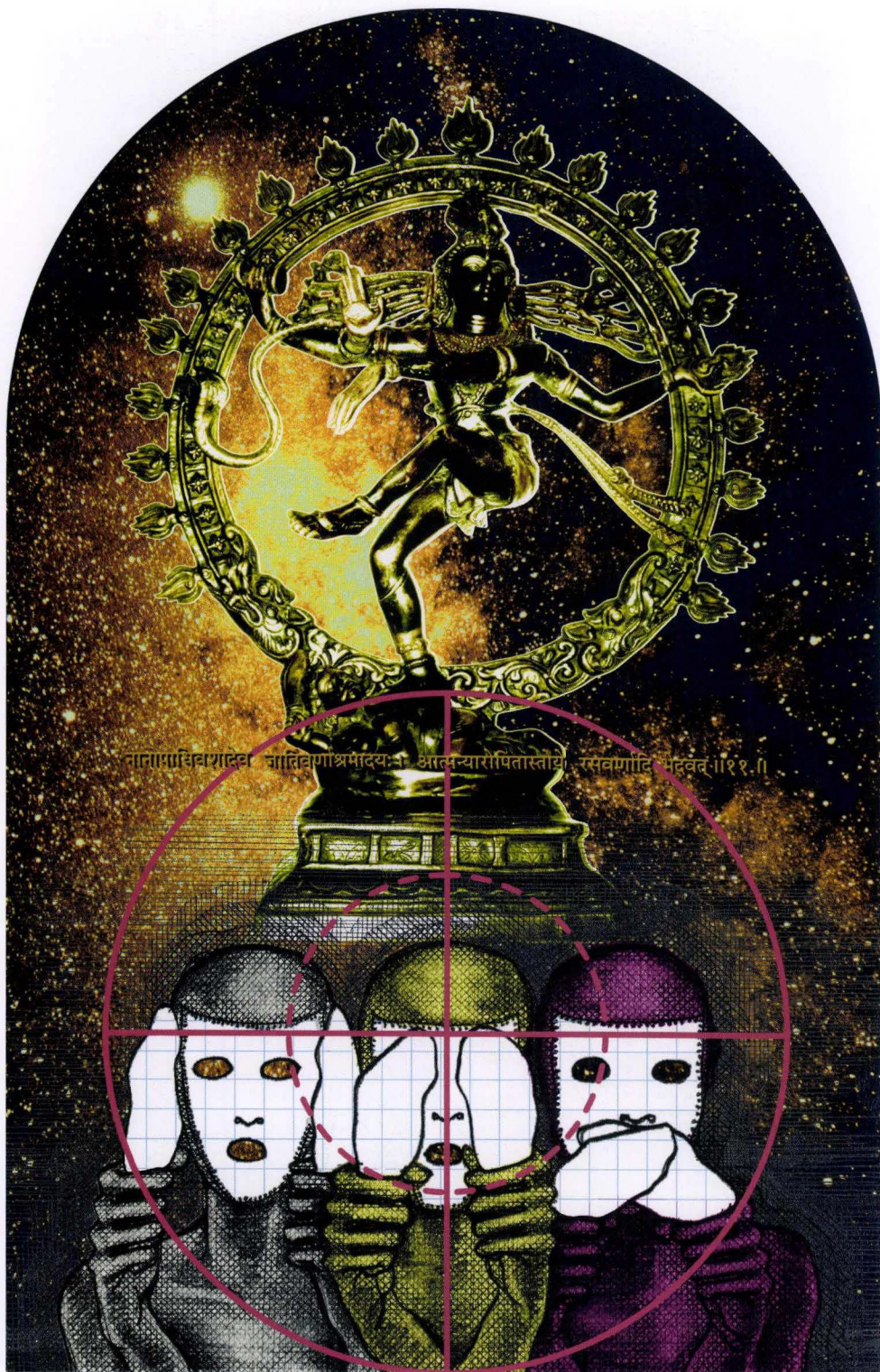
Age of Father 38 Age of Mother 22

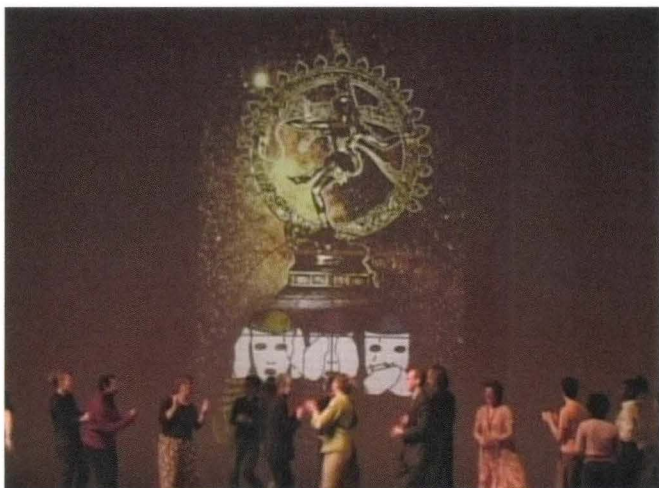
as shown by certificate of birth returned by E. A. Hildereth, M.D., and recorded in Birth Record No. 11 at page 318 Certificate filed June, 1911

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto affixed my signature and official seal at Wheeling, West Virginia, this 12th day of March, 1955

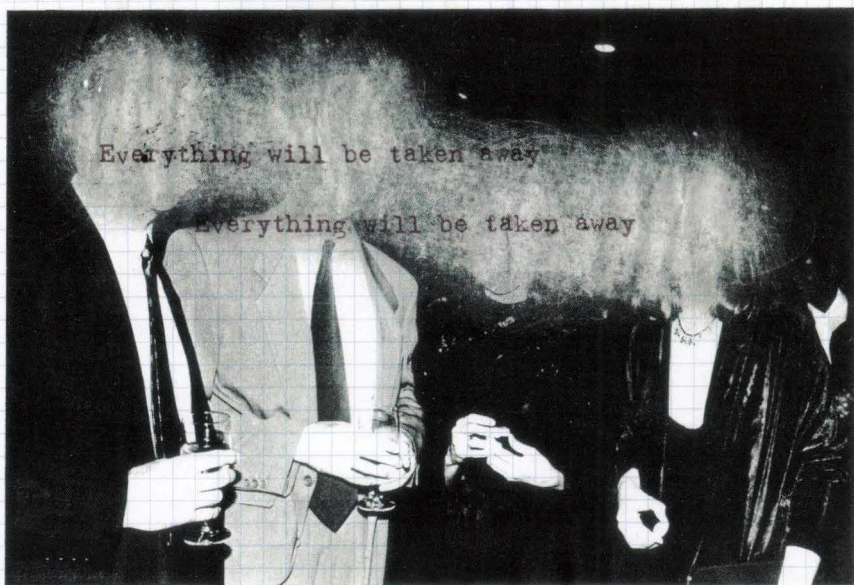
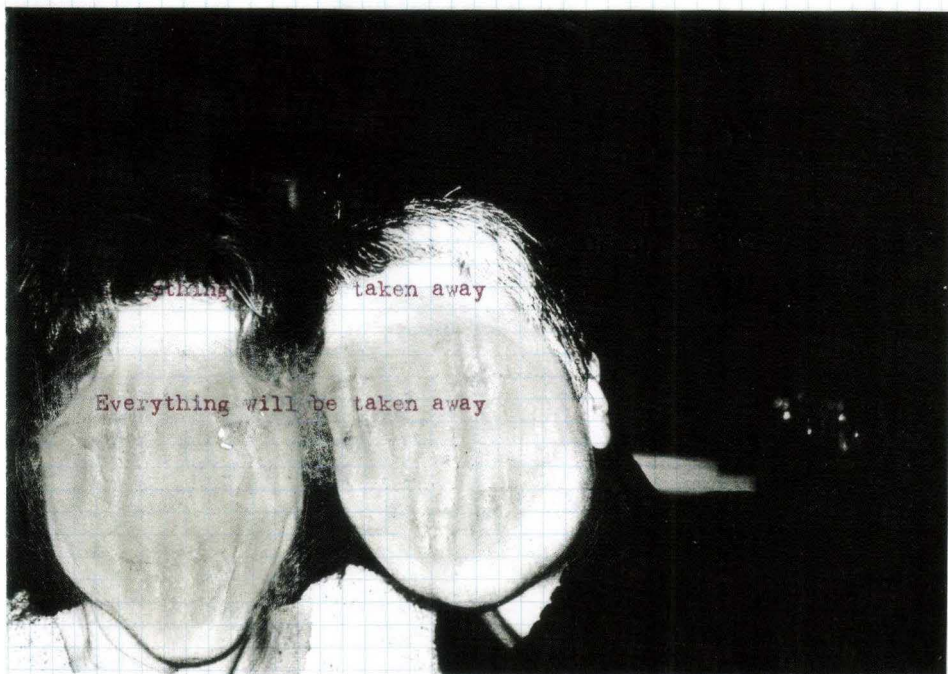
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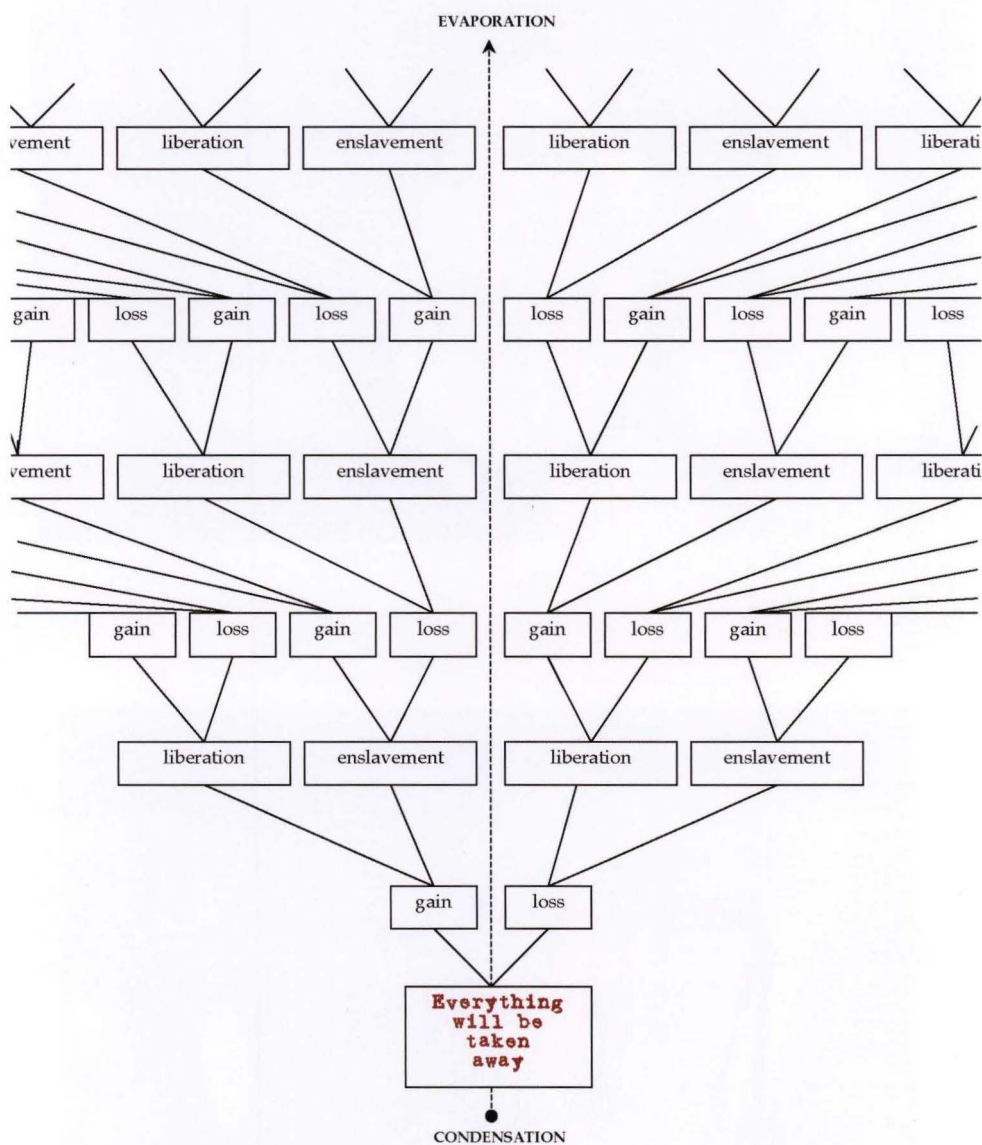
© 1955 WFO







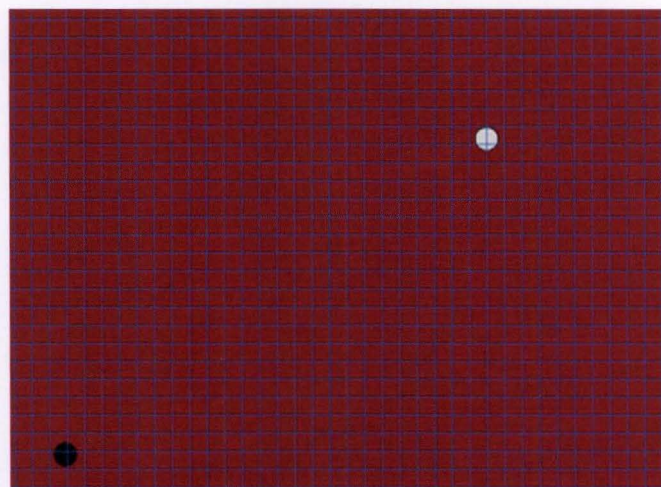
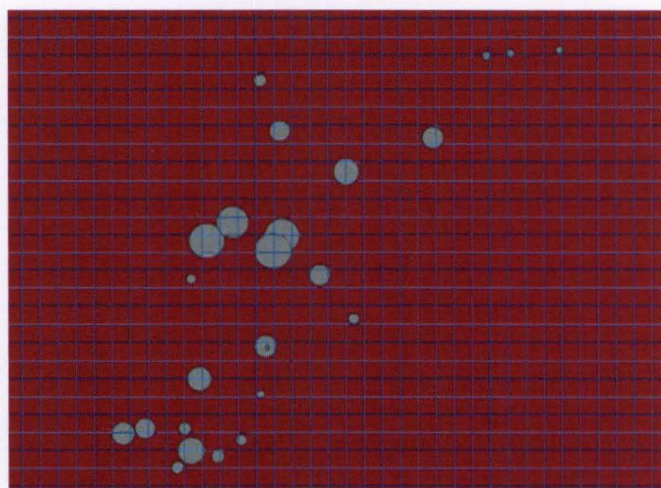
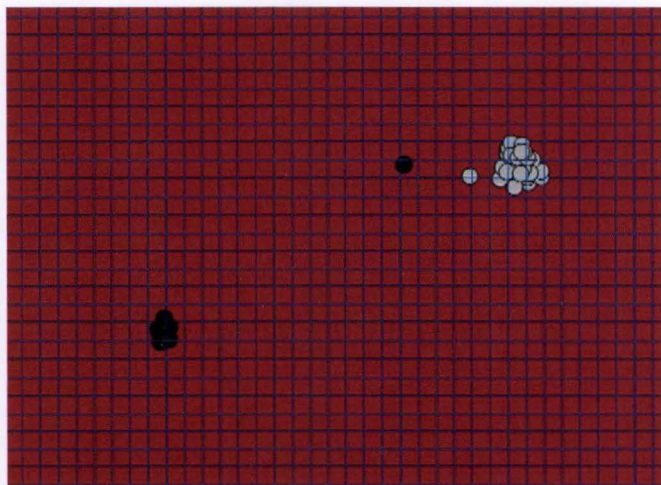










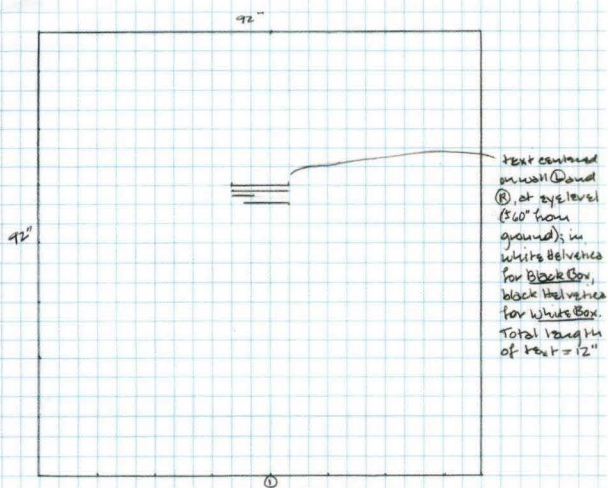


Unite (Part I of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2005

The Spurious Life-Death Distinction (Part II of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2006

Bait-and-Switch (Part III of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2008

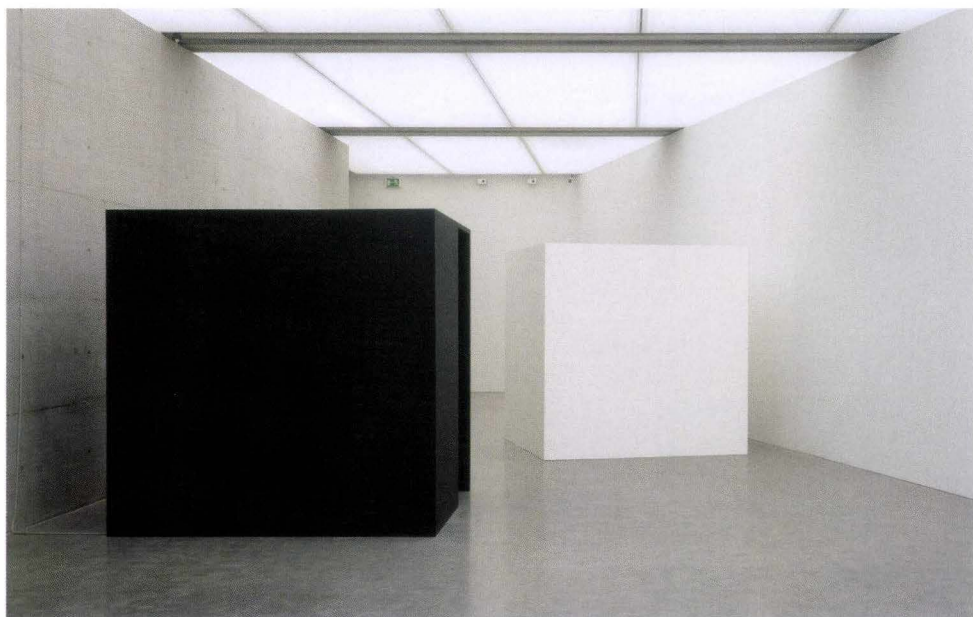
Adrian Piper: Black Box/White Box (6/92)



TEXT: Once you have taken everything away from a man, he is no longer in your power. He is free.

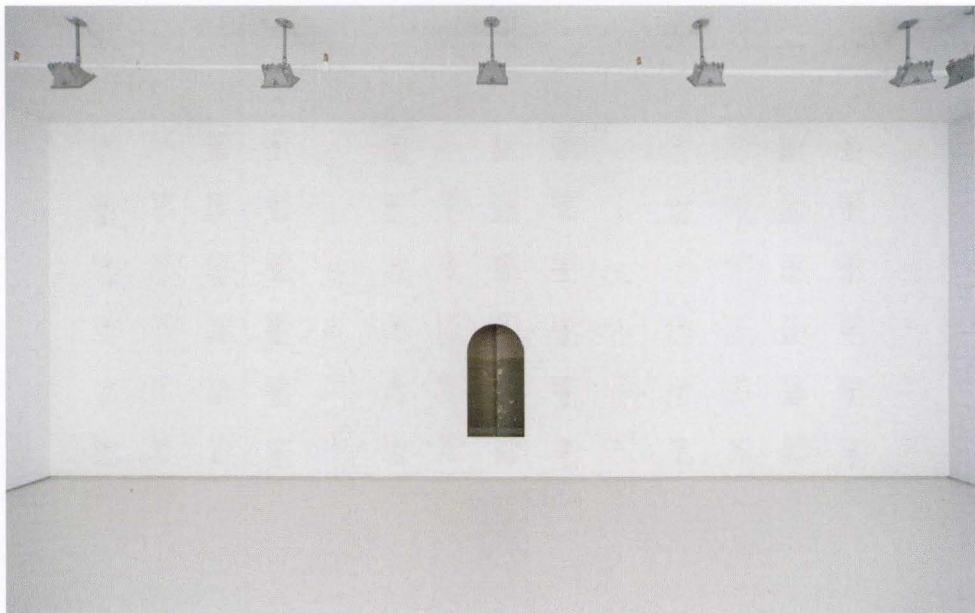
- Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, The First Circle

Black Box AND White Box, Surface ① (W side)

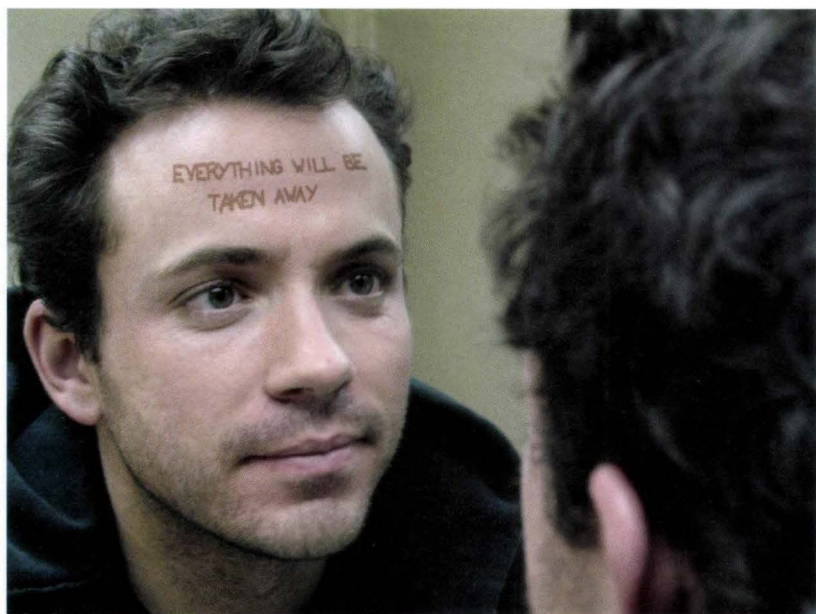


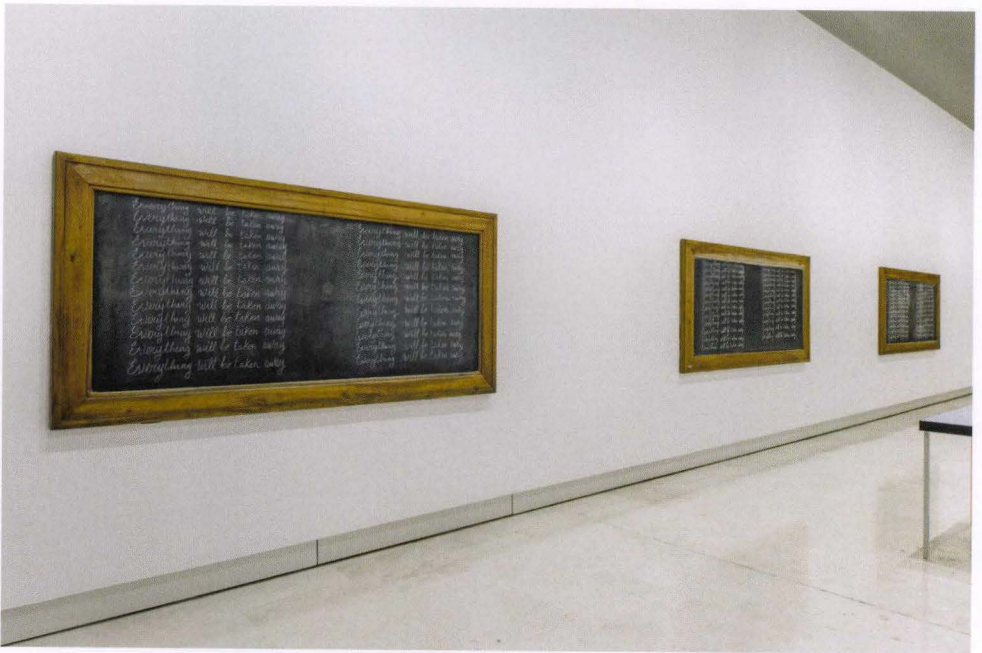
Black Box/White Box, Surface #1. 1992

Black Box/White Box. 1992



Everything





I WILL ALWAYS MEAN WHAT I SAY.





**XENOPHOBIA,
STEREOTYPES, AND
EMPIRICAL
ACCULTURATION**

**NEO-KANTIANISM
IN ADRIAN PIPER'S
PERFORMANCE-
BASED
CONCEPTUAL ART***

DIARMUID COSTELLO

Since I make art that targets racism and xenophobia, [my philosophy colleagues] infer that I must work in this area of research in philosophy as well, which is false (my primary philosophy research is in metaethics and Kant's metaphysics). Or, what is worse, they read into my philosophy research a "subtext" of commentary on race of their own devising, then respond to that rather than to what I actually say.

[My art colleagues] who have intuited the importance of delving into my philosophical research in order to fully understand my art work have distanced themselves from me and my work altogether; or have complained that it is over-intellectualized; or have reasoned that it can't be that significant if it can't stand on its own.

Whereas philosophers tend to suffer from anomalophobia of the senses, artists often suffer from anomalophobia of the intellect. Present one with the creative products of the other and the reaction is usually instant antipathy. That is why I never do so unless asked, and then only with great trepidation.

My artwork has a purifying and strengthening effect on my philosophy work. . . . It's also true that the activity of doing philosophy functions for me as a sanctuary from the issues and experiences I feel compelled to address in my artwork. . . . My work in art helps me to love philosophy for what it is, and not to demand of it more than it can give.

Similarly, doing philosophy removes any temptation to pump up my artwork with large infusions of theory, theorizing, or philosophizing. . . . This frees up my artwork to proceed entirely from intuition. I never try to force it into any preconceived theoretical framework. . . . At the same time, if I had not pursued my philosophical and theoretical interests as a professional philosopher, my artwork would not have had the ethical, political, and epistemological focus it has.

Making Art, Doing Philosophy

The citations above are taken from a single autobiographical text by Adrian Piper, "On Wearing Three Hats," originally written for a symposium on multitalented women in 1996.¹ I recommend it to anyone in search of a one-stop shop for orienting themselves to Piper's complex, multidimensional body of work. The citations I have chosen isolate Piper's experience of working as an artist and a philosopher. They are to that extent unrepresentative of the text as a whole, which concerns Piper's work in art, philosophy, and yoga.

So a word on this first: I do not discuss Piper's "third hat," which comprises her yoga practice and her writings on yoga and

* I would like to thank Adrian Piper for her good-humored response to numerous requests for clarification while this essay was in draft and Emily Hall at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, for her substantial editorial input.

1. Piper, "On Wearing Three Hats," presentation at "Who Is She? Conversations with Multi-Talented Women," Third Annual Tillie K. Lubin Symposium, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Boston March 17, 1996, at Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA) website, www.adrianpiper.com/docs/Website_NGBK3Hats.pdf.

the Vedanta school of philosophy, in any detail in what follows, though it does come up in one of the works that I address. The fact that I do not discuss these aspects of Piper's practice should not, however, be taken to imply that I think they are not relevant to the topic at hand. They clearly are. Indeed, one can point to a variety of direct connections among Piper's work across all three domains. In terms of the relation between Vedanta and her artwork, these include the emphasis on focusing one's attention in the here and now in meditation techniques such as *samyama*, and Piper's stress on the indexical present in the kind of encounter her art seeks to foster. In terms of the relation between non-Western and Western philosophies, they include Piper's interpretation of the notion of *Buddhi* in Samkhya philosophy, which in principle is accessible to human beings, as something like a naturalized version of Immanuel Kant's idea of intellectual intuition. Piper uses this idea in her artwork as a way to understand the creative process as an immediate, spontaneous immersion in ideas, which transcends physical spatiotemporal location.² Such three-way interrelations among Piper's art, philosophy, and yoga are in fact the deep structure underpinning her practice as a whole. As this makes clear, the non-Western—or what Piper calls “non-Euroethnic”—aspects of her practice associated with her “third hat” are far from irrelevant to what I discuss: I do not discuss them myself simply because I have no competence to do so.

Instead I shall take the relation between art and Western philosophy, specifically Piper's Kantianism, as indicated by “On Wearing Three Hats,” as my clue to understanding her practice as a whole. This essay portrays this relation as one of mutual support and clarification for Piper—she speaks of each activity “purifying” the other, such that art is purged of over-theorization and ratiocination by philosophy, and philosophy is purged of the urgent empirical content impinging on and motivating her art—but one of mutual antagonism, confusion, even outright hostility for her colleagues. This difference may seem surprising, but anyone who has tried to work across multiple academic disciplines—let alone across an academic discipline as precise as philosophy and a creative activity as fluid as art—is likely to be familiar with the antipathy and incomprehension of which Piper speaks.

It is hard to know what to say about the deleterious consequences of academic specialization, or perhaps simple human intolerance, to which this points, but the fact that Piper has managed to sustain a respected practice on both fronts is no small achievement, and is no doubt one reason that the sheer fact of her project's existence is of interest to many. I include myself in this description, but my goal here is to do more than merely pay tribute to this relation; it is to dig into its substance in a way that I have not previously seen attempted. Specifically, I want to consider the degree to which Piper's work

2. See *ibid.*; and Piper, “Intellectual Intuition in Kant and Samkhya Philosophy,” 2007, APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/vs/video_pth.shtml. See also Piper, “Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic” in Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen, and Tony O'Connor, eds., *Rediscovering Aesthetics* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 193–209, especially pp. 196, 206–9; and APRA, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth\(2006\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth(2006).pdf).

on rationality and the structure of the self from a neo-Kantian perspective informs or illuminates one of the longstanding goals of her art: to flush out unwitting or disavowed xenophobic responses in the hope of transforming them through a “catalytic” encounter with the work here and now. I will set to one side the counterpart question of how Piper’s art practice sheds light not only on the motivations of her philosophical work but also on aspects of its content.

That Piper’s philosophy is *neo*-Kantian—in part a reconstruction inspired by the spirit but not the letter of Kant’s text, in part an application of a broadly Kantian approach beyond the sphere of Kant’s concerns—is a nuance entirely overlooked in the art world, despite Piper’s being well known within that world, albeit in a vague sort of way, for her Kantianism. Yet having some sense of what makes Piper’s philosophy Kantian, as well as of where her concerns take her beyond the scope of Kant’s own project, is necessary to understanding how her ambitions as an artist are in fact much broader (or perhaps much deeper) than a narrow focus on questions of race, its ostensible first-order content, might lead one to expect. My interpretation of the relation between her art and her philosophy suggests that Piper’s engagement with issues of race and xenophobia is just one instance, albeit a privileged one, of a much broader concern with the unavoidable distortions that accompany processes of empirical acculturation. This is a concern that ramifies well beyond issues of race.

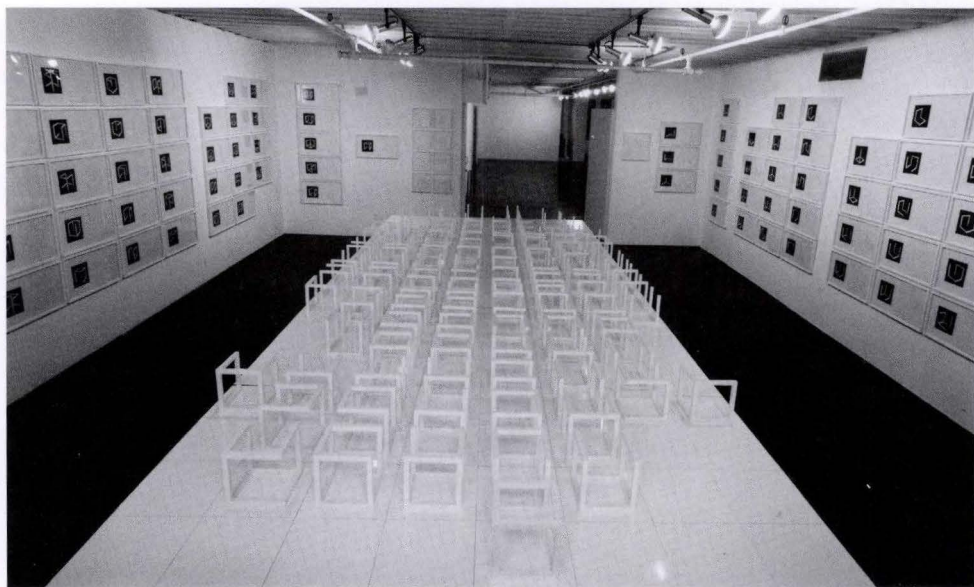
The citations with which I began make it clear that any attempt to uncover the substance of the relation between Piper’s art and philosophy will have to tread carefully if it is to avoid repeating some of the more egregious failures that Piper has already diagnosed. I take some comfort here from a brief as-yet-unpublished text from 2006, titled “My Kant Work and My Art Work.” In it Piper asserts, surprisingly programmatically given the qualifications insisted upon in the earlier text, that “there is a definite connection and exchange between my artistic work and my academic research on Kant, although it is not one that I have consciously intended or consciously try to promote. My philosophical work on Kant supplies the theory, my artwork puts the theory into practice.”³ This might seem to fall foul of Piper’s own injunctions against shoehorning her work into a preconceived theory at the expense of letting it unfold intuitively, were she not careful to stress that she has never set out to make art with such connections to her philosophy. So it would be a mistake to interpret her art as an attempt to illustrate or apply a prior philosophical theory. This is not to say that art cannot be philosophical, but that if and when it is, it is so on its own terms rather than those of philosophy, and hence not by ventriloquizing a philosophical theory that can be articulated independently of the work.

3. Piper, “My Kant Work and My Art Work,” 2006, unpublished manuscript, APRA.

Were this not true, it would render art instrumental—a mere means for communicating an independently specifiable theory—and in doing so raise familiar philosophical worries about paraphraseability: either an exhaustive paraphrase could be substituted without loss for the work, or any work with the same, independently specifiable content could take its place. In either case, artistic form—the fact that the work takes this form rather than some other, or no form at all—would fall away as redundant: one might just as well say what a work means as make it. Of course, it is one of the standard conceits of Conceptual art that the work's form is immaterial or, if not strictly immaterial, then at least significantly subsidiary to its ideational content, but very few artists—including Sol LeWitt (figs. 1, 2), the author of the canonical formulations—consistently maintained such an ascetic position beyond the heyday of Conceptual art.⁴ Perhaps this is only to be expected: artists want to find out how what they are driven to make looks, sounds, or feels. Indeed, there is an obvious sense in which this might be thought to apply to an instruction-based practice such as LeWitt's: were it not the case that seeing the very different ways in which a single set of instructions can in fact be realized offers artist and viewer alike a much fuller insight into the idea those instructions embody, there would be little incentive for the artist to realize the work, or for viewers to see a single instantiation of it, let alone several.

Because it would unwittingly render the form of her own work redundant, it is not credible to suppose that Piper intends "My Kant Work and My Art Work" to be read in this way. In an early interview with Maurice Berger she claimed, much more circumspectly, "For a long time I thought there was not much

4. Sol LeWitt
"Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967); and "Sentences on Conceptual Art," *O TO 9*, no. 5 (January 1969): 3–5; and *Art-Language* 1, no. 1 (May 1969): 11–13; reprinted in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 12–14. See also Diarmuid Costello, "Kant after LeWitt: Towards an Aesthetics of Conceptual Art," in Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, eds., *Philosophy & Conceptual Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 92–115, particularly n. 32.



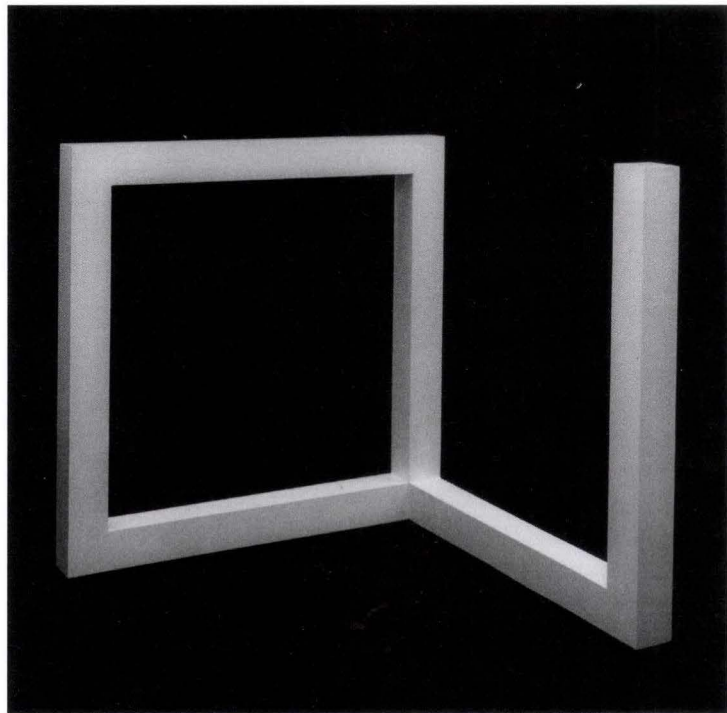
1. Sol LeWitt
All Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes. 1974

of a connection between my philosophy and my art. I'm now starting to see many connections. My philosophy work, in fact, provides the broad philosophical underpinnings for my art. There is a very deep connection."⁵ This strikes me as both much closer to the mark and much less potentially misleading, even if it could still turn out that Piper's art puts Kant's philosophy into practice in ways other than, or in addition to, those that she may be aware of.

Before I say more, a couple of caveats are in order. Piper is a professional philosopher as well as an artist, and this essay is on the relation between her work in these two domains or, rather, on how her work in the former domain may illuminate her work in the latter. This being so, I shall depart from the hagiographic conventions of the standard monographic essay in two respects. First, and most simply, I shall not be taking the connections between her art and philosophy at Piper's word. Many commentators in the art world are obliged to take these connections largely on trust, because they lack the training to do otherwise. This has restricted serious debate about these connections' nature, extent, and true significance for Piper's practice to date.

I hope to do my bit toward rectifying this by submitting Piper's claims about the relation between her art and philosophy to critical scrutiny: proper engagement with the work requires nothing less, and doing so is the standard way that at least one of Piper's disciplines perpetuates itself. Chiefly, I will be concerned

5. Piper, in Maurice Berger, "Interview with Adrian Piper," *Afterimage* 18, no. 3 (October 1990); reprinted in Grant H. Kester, ed. *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterall* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 222; and as "The Critique of Pure Racism: An Interview with Adrian Piper," in Berger, ed., *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Fine Arts Gallery, 1999), pp. 76–98.



2. Sol LeWitt
Incomplete Open Cube 6/11. 1974

with the extent to which Piper can get what she needs to underwrite her philosophical project from Kant, and the extent to which her own philosophical concerns may take her beyond the purview of Kant's philosophy. I will also consider the extent to which her own philosophical project—Kantian, neo-Kantian, or otherwise—illuminates what is at stake in her artwork. My hope is to at least kick-start some debate in this area. In not simply taking these claims and connections at Piper's word, I take myself to be exercising the kind of principles we bring to bear on interpreting one another's actions in everyday life: first-person avowal may be central to understanding intent, but it is less so to evaluating success. It may help to know what I set out to do, but to know what I achieved, you would do better to scrutinize the results.⁶ Artists here, like other agents elsewhere, are apt to make highly motivated witnesses.

Second, I make no attempt to survey Piper's entire corpus, from her early mapping works through various kinds of performance, photo-texts, and audio and video installations to her recent publicly sited works. Many essays do this already, and some do it very well.⁷ My aims are quite different: I focus on a limited set of works with an eye to the intersection of themes from Piper's neo-Kantian philosophy and her performance-based artworks. I reserve judgment as to whether the connections I uncover apply to Piper's art practice as a whole. The works I focus on are those Piper calls "meta-performances": notably *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance* (1987) and *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance* (1987–88). Given that each folds an earlier work within further layers of commentary and encounter in order to constitute a new (or perhaps newly extended iteration of an extant) work, discussing Piper's meta-performances necessarily involves discussing the first-order works to which they refer (*Funk Lessons* [1982–84] and *My Calling (Card) #1* [1986–90]). This narrowed focus, together with the fact that similar themes recur in much later works from unrelated series, such as the lecture-performance *Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago* (2004), suggests that whatever consistent themes emerge will be relevant to a broader range of Piper's artistic activities than those I discuss, but this is not a claim I argue for here. In closing, I hold my account up to a quite different kind of performance work, *Everything #10* (2007). This should offer some basis for judging whether the themes identified apply to the *longue durée* of Piper's performance-based practice, from the early guerrilla performances of the Catalysis series through to the present day.

Performance and Meta-Performance

I focus on Piper's meta-performances in particular because they tend to be written about (if at all) only in passing, and because I first thought I might have something to say about the relation between Piper's art and philosophy when I attended a version

6. I have no reason to suppose that Piper would disagree with this. In her 1990 interview with Berger she remarked, "In general, I don't think artists have a privileged relation to the significance of what they're doing, although they do have privileged access to their intentions in doing it. But even their intentions may be irrelevant to the real significance of the work." Piper, in Berger, "Interview with Adrian Piper," p. 221.

7. The benchmark essay of this kind for Piper's art through 1999 is Berger, "Styles of Radical Will: Adrian Piper and the Indexical Present," in *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective*, pp. 12–32.

of *Shiva Dances* in London in 2004. The latter is part of Piper's Color Wheel series, and is classified in Piper's taxonomy as a lecture-performance rather than a meta-performance, though it does have various features in common with Piper's meta-performances proper. "Meta-performance" is Piper's generic term for works that consist largely of reflection on earlier performance works. They adopt quasi-academic forms of presentation, combining a lecture or talk element with varying degrees of audience participation and discussion. Some instances of *Shiva Dances* have taken the participatory dimension much further, by engaging a large part of its audience in dance, thereby making its relation to its audience more akin to that of the earlier *Funk Lessons* than the more recent *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance*. In the former Piper sought to dispel derogatory stereotypes about funk before teaching various audiences the rudiments of dancing to it. The latter, by contrast, is a more sedate affair, in which she subjects that earlier work to extended second-order reflection in discussion with an audience. In these respects *Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago* inhabits an indeterminate zone between performance, meta-performance, and academic lecture. It also departs from the meta-performances in not consisting solely of second-order reflection on an earlier work. What it has in common with the meta-performances, nonetheless, is that it recontextualizes an earlier work—in this case *Funk Lessons*—within the context of a more recent work, and it does so in part by reflecting on the deep motivations of that earlier work.

Piper describes her meta-performances as "performances about performances, and therefore art about art."⁸ Although it is only surmise on my part, I suspect that one reason these works may have received little sustained attention to date is that they are easily mistaken for second-order exercises in artistic self-analysis and public presentation of that analysis rather than first-order contributions to Piper's artistic oeuvre.⁹ If true, this would make Piper's meta-performance an outgrowth of that process of conceptual clarification and reflection on her first-order activity as an artist that Piper calls "meta-art" rather than "art."¹⁰ Thus construed, the meta-performance would have the same relation to Piper's performance work that meta-art has to her artwork—essentially one of clarifying her first-order activity as an artist; it would be an instance of the genus meta-art. As such, although it would be part of Piper's broader practice as an artist, it would not be art.

I believe that this perception, if it exists, is understandable but mistaken. This is not to say that there isn't room for genuine debate among critics, theorists, and philosophers of art as to whether these are indeed works of art, and if so of what kind and in virtue of what properties, or whether they are perhaps some previously unknown hybrid of art criticism and live commentary. But insofar as contemporary analytic philosophers

8. Piper, letter to the author, December 13, 2010.

9. Berger, to my mind Piper's best commentator, has noted their importance in one of the ways that I also take to be significant. See Berger, "Styles of Radical Will," pp. 30–31. He is also the only one of Piper's commentators I have come across to have devoted sustained attention to her meta-performances. See Berger, "Black Skin, White Masks: Adrian Piper and the Politics of Viewing," in *How Art Becomes History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 93–113, especially pp. 105–9.

10. See Piper, "In Support of Meta-Art," *Artforum* 12, no. 2 (October 1973): 79–81; reprinted in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 17–27.

of art typically aspire to offer descriptive theories responsive to and constrained by informed critical practice in the relevant domain, this debate will be redundant if informed critical practice routinely treats the works as art. At that point the question will be not "Are these works of art?" but "What makes these works of art?" In the present case, unfortunately, the test of critical practice settles little, as there is as yet no established critical practice regarding Piper's meta-performances to which one might appeal.

I hope to show that these works are an integral part of Piper's first-order practice as an artist. One problem the competing view—that the meta-performances are not in fact works of art—immediately faces is to explain why these clarificatory exercises, if that is what they are, have to date taken the form of further instances of the same medium, namely performance, rather than writing, unlike meta-art. If it is meta-art, why not just write it down? After all, this would be a much more expedient way of getting out the news. Were Piper to write it down, however, the result would immediately become meta-art as Piper uses that term.¹¹ So the question is: why does she not just write it down? This question has the merit of focusing attention on the form that Piper's meta-performances take, and what this form offers that writing about her earlier performances, in the spirit of meta-art, does not. What it offers, I believe, is a particular way of engaging with an audience here and now. In this the meta-performances, like the performances on which they are based, partake of the same broad aims as Piper's practice as a whole, though I shall also suggest that they achieve these aims by means that are some respects more consistent with the basic commitments animating Piper's practice as a whole.

The format of the meta-performances is straightforward. There is minimal staging: Piper sits or stands before an audience that understands, I take it, that it is witnessing a performance, and she discusses an earlier work. In the simpler of the two meta-performances I discuss, *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance* (p. 145), this is literally all that happens: Piper shows a video of *Funk Lessons*, as it was staged in 1983 at University of California, Berkeley, to an audience at Chicago's Randolph Street Gallery, and then she discusses the origins and thinking behind the piece.

Funk Lessons may be loosely categorized as a multiply instantiated work of interactive performance art, which takes the form of a participatory class on how to listen and dance to funk music, staged for a variety of audiences around the United States between 1982 and 1984. As performed, it was accompanied by two handouts: a "Performance Hand-Out Summary," which detailed "characteristics of black dance" and "characteristics of funk music," and an abbreviated discography and bibliography. Piper distributed the handouts before addressing various derogatory stereotypes about funk music, such as its lack of structure or complexity. Against such claims, Piper drew

11. These distinctions have, however, become more blurred as Piper's oeuvre has developed, as in *Shiva Dances*.

attention to neglected features of the music's structure, such as its complex polyrhythms, and its content, which according to Piper is self-transcendence through sexual or metaphysical union, with dance functioning as both vehicle and analogue. Piper then took the members of her audience through a series of simple body isolations (two step, shoulder shrug, head nod, and pelvic thrust, among others) before inviting them to put it all together and "let it down and dance" (p. 145).¹²

Funk Lessons is probably one of Piper's best-known and, I think, also best-liked works, and it is worth pausing to consider why that is. I believe it has to do with the gesture of teaching funk as art—that is, with the very *idea* of doing so as a work of art. The poetics of ideas as art—why it is that some ideas hold up, convince, or even inspire as art, while others fall flat or come off as labored or smart arse—is in general a curiously neglected topic in the literature on Conceptual art, despite its obvious importance, and one that I have never seen explored in relation to Piper's practice. I have no idea how one would go about trying to demonstrate that the idea of teaching funk does indeed cut the mustard as art, but insofar as I take judging the success or otherwise of ideas as *art* to be a kind of aesthetic judgment, we are not in the domain of proof in any case.¹³ The fact that merely invoking the language of aesthetic judgment arouses such hostility and skepticism in the contemporary art world—albeit typically for historical and sociological reasons rather than anything internal to the idea of aesthetic judgment itself, properly understood—may explain why this topic is generally avoided.¹⁴ Yet it seems to me that there is an undeniable and invigorating wit to the idea of taking a supposedly lowbrow form such as funk and submitting it to the discipline of the schoolroom, complete with blackboard. Not, it is important to note, with the aim of producing an academic treatise, though there are elements of this internal to the work's rhetoric, but with the aim of helping more people to *get funky*. The humor is in the fact that this needs to be taught; the artistic wit and élan in the fact that its teaching might constitute a work of art; the gentle professorial self-parody in the blackboard and handouts. In the subsequent meta-performance, a member of what seems to be an all-white audience asks Piper, "Do black people really *want* white people to get funky? Is that even desirable?" to which Piper responds, careful to qualify the implied generalization, "Certainly, black people [I know] would like white people to get *genuinely* funky."¹⁵ By which it is clear from the context that she means to get genuinely comfortable with responding bodily to rhythm; to be free of the guilt or anxiety that this constitutes giving in to some base impulse that would be better suppressed, if not transcended altogether; to find themselves at ease with cross-acculturation, as opposed to merely paying it lip service; and so on.

What makes *Funk Lessons* so compelling, the uplifting nature of the music aside, is the wit of embodying all this in

12. See Piper, "Notes on Funk I–IV," 1983–85, in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 195–216. On dance as a means of transcendence and social union in contemporary black culture, with roots in African tribal music and dance, see *ibid.*, p. 195.

13. See Costello, "Kant after LeWitt."

14. See Costello, "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 217–28; and "Retrieving Kant's Aesthetics for Art Theory after Greenberg: Some Remarks on Arthur C. Danto and Thierry de Duve," in *Rediscovering Aesthetics*, pp. 117–32.

15. Piper, *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance* (1987), APRA, at 00:35:40.

the form of a class on funk and thereby indirectly communicating the idea that cross-cultural fear and prejudice might be overcome through the communal experience of something so basic—in the sense of fundamental—as dance. I intend “idea” here in the Kantian sense of something that cannot be fully instantiated in experience (think of ideas such as “freedom” or “justice” as opposed to concepts such as “table” or “chair”), and I shall return to the parallels between the role of indeterminate ideas in Piper’s art and Kant’s theory of art as the “expression of aesthetic ideas.”¹⁶ A more pointed and political reading, by contrast, might emphasize that *Funk Lessons* is less uncomfortable for, and hence more palatable to, most of its white participants/audience than the more overtly confrontational focus on racial politics running through much of Piper’s work, such as those involving the Mythic Being (1973–75) and the Vanilla Nightmares series (1986–89) (p. 146), or installations with voice-overs or audio accompaniment, such as *Art for the Art World Surface Pattern* (1976) (p. 144), *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (1978) (p. 144), *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* (1980) (pp. 245, 246), *Cornered* (1988) (pp. 43, 148), and *Out of the Corner* (1990) (p. 148), among others. I take it that the latter is by now the normative reading of the work, and the work’s humor never gets a look in. But the two readings are compatible; there is no necessity to choose between them: which of the two is emphasized will likely be a mark of the writer’s own investment in the work.

In *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance*, Piper presents the original work as a response to the art world’s dismissive attitude toward black working-class culture, despite that world’s ostensible open-mindedness toward popular culture as a potential resource for high art. As Piper tells it, this attitude presented her with two options: either to stop drawing on funk or to confront it head-on, so as to prevent it hijacking responses to her work. She opted for the latter, and *Funk Lessons* was the result: an attempt to take issue with the derogatory, racially motivated stereotypes (“monotonous,” “structure-less,” “repetitive,” “salacious,” “vulgar,” “sexist,” and so on) that often accompany the rejection of funk music.¹⁷ This tendency comes out inadvertently in the meta-performance, when Piper has reason to query an audience member’s suggestion that George Clinton is parodying himself rather than racist responses to his work.

The point, consistent with that of Piper’s oeuvre as a whole, is to draw her viewers’ (or in this case her audience’s) attention to the xenophobia that often permeates reactions to both her and her work, and to do so within the here and now of those viewers’, or that audience’s, response.¹⁸ Unlike her more confrontational work, however, *Funk Lessons* does not stop at anticipating and precipitating its liberal, predominantly white middle-class audience’s disavowed or unwitting racism. Piper’s voice-overs for such works as *Art for the Art World Surface Pattern* and *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* mimic a variety

16. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* 1790, §49. English translation as *Critique of Judgment*.

17. This is a strong claim, and not one that Piper defends within *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance*. But see my remarks on dance as an Archimedean point from which to shift habitual patterns of thought later in the essay.

18. Xenophobia in its most general sense means a fear of strangers who look or sound or act different. It is in that sense a visual pathology. Piper uses it more specifically, to pick out fear of others as concrete particulars (individuals) who do not conform to the stereotypes or abstract categories through which we try to classify them. See Piper, “Xenophobia and the Indexical Present 1: Essay,” in Mark O’Brien and Craig Little, eds., *Reimaging America: The Arts of Social Change* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1990); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 245–54, especially p. 248. See also Piper, “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism,” *Philosophical Forum* 24, nos. 1–3 (Fall–Spring 1992–93): 188–232; and APRA, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteXen&KantRat\(1991\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteXen&KantRat(1991).pdf). “Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly,” in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, A Kantian Conception (2008;

of stereotypical responses (and rationalizations for those responses), presumably leaving those sufficiently self-aware and self-critical to understand what has taken place—if it has taken place—feeling humiliated and chastened, and those that aren't, either oblivious or self-righteously indignant. *Funk Lessons*, by contrast, aspires to help its audience work through and overcome such prejudices, assuming they have them, in such a way that the artist and audience can enjoy the music together. From this perspective the work's reconstructive animus might be thought more generous, or simply more humane. But this is only part of the story; that *Funk Lessons* uses dance has a deeper significance that I will return to with *Shiva Dances*.

The second work or pair of works I want to discuss are *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance* and *My Calling (Card) #1*. The structure of this meta-performance is more complicated than that of *Funk Lessons*: the “double” in its title indicates a process of iteration whereby a second meta-performance, staged at Chicago's Randolph St. Gallery, in January 1987, becomes the subject of a “meta-meta-performance” staged for a much more racially mixed audience at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, in May 1988. Piper intended to submit the latter to a further “meta-meta-meta-performance” for an all-black audience, but no documentation of this exists, leaving the work available only as a double meta-performance. *My Calling (Card) #1* is one of a pair of works, but I will not discuss *My Calling (Card) #2* (1986) (fig. 3), which targets sexism rather than racism, here. Piper categorizes these two works as reactive guerrilla performances: “reactive” because they are responses to specific acts of racism and sexism; “guerrilla” because they are unannounced interventions in social, non-art situations.¹⁹ Unlike the meta-performances,

Berlin: APRA, 2013), www.adrianpiper.com/rss/docs/PiperRSSVol2KC.pdf, pp. 415–70.

19. Piper, *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance* (1987–88), APRA, at 00:00:30.

Dear Friend,

I am not here to pick anyone up, or to be picked up. I am here alone because I want to be here, ALONE.

This card is not intended as part of an extended flirtation.

Thank you for respecting my privacy.

they are not (art-)audience-oriented performances but a species of street performance whose pedigree in Piper's work goes all the way back to the Catalysis series of the early 1970s, but with the street in question now a dinner or cocktail party (in #1) and a bar or disco (in #2).

Piper, as will be known to readers of this text but would not have been known to recipients of her calling cards, is a woman of mixed racial background who easily could, but never would, pass (for white); indeed, she has written eloquently on the distress and self-immolation that passing for white has caused in her own family history.²⁰ "Passing"—and, more generally, the legacy of slavery in the United States—is one of the major themes of Piper's oeuvre and is the focus of some of her most widely discussed works (notably *Cornered* and *Out of the Corner*). Piper refuses to pass for all the obvious personal and political reasons, and early in her career came to understand what it means to be at the sharp end of racism from the Mythic Being series of street performances (such as *The Mythic Being: Cruising White Women* [1975] (fig. 4) in which she cross-dressed as a hip young man of color and gate-crashed the kinds of social functions and situations at which a hip young man of color was neither expected nor welcome.²¹ Again, the humor is evident, though rarely addressed in the literature. These histories are condensed in *My Calling (Card) #1*: Piper's response to social situations in which a racist remark was made in her presence, presumably on the assumption that there were no nonwhite people there to hear it. Piper reports having given out fifteen or sixteen cards over a four-year period, only stopping when someone confessed

20. See Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black," *Transition* 58 (1992): 4–32; reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 275–307, especially pp. 281–88. Piper fictionalized this family history in the photo-text work *A Tale of Avarice and Poverty* (1985).

21. On September 20, 2012, on the occasion of her sixty-fourth birthday, Piper officially retired from being black. See Piper, *Thwarted Projects, Dashed Hopes, A Moment of Embarrassment* (2012), APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/news_sep_2012.shtml.



4. *The Mythic Being: Cruising White Women*. 1975

to thinking up a racist remark in order to receive one. The card is an unobtrusive 2 by 3½-inch tan business card printed in sans serif black lettering (see p. 146 for the card's text).

The precision and social connotations of Piper's use of language in this and works such as *Cornered* and *Out of the Corner*, and her insistence, even when dealing with highly emotive subject matter, on adhering to nonneutral but highly socially encoded norms of politeness—of a kind that Robert Storr has perceptively characterized as “aggressively well mannered”—is worthy of a paper itself, but it is something I shall have to bracket here.²²

In *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance* (p. 147) Piper glosses the original work as a response to the problem of “how to resolve the question of the ambiguity of my own racial identity, and deal with other peoples' responses to it.”²³ Rather than deciding to let such remarks pass unchallenged, or to generate an uncomfortable public scene, or to take issue with their racism in the abstract (without identifying herself as black), or to self-consciously announce the fact of her blackness in advance, Piper settled on the card. The meaning of the work is generally taken to be transparent, reduced to the propositional content of the sentences printed on the card, but such a reading would obviate the need to make the work or for the work to take the form that it does, which I take to be highly significant. Once again, it is worth pausing to reflect on the work's form, which is the kind of cards people give out, or (pre-Internet) used to give out, as tokens of social exchange and to express the hope, particularly in a business context, for ongoing contact. Such cards are intended, at a minimum, to encourage the recipient to remember the name of their giver. But what is Piper doing by giving a work with such content the form of a business card? Is she ironically declaring that it is (part of) her profession to be black? Or is she declaring that the recipient of the card is unwittingly *making it* her profession? That is, making the previously unrealized and unannounced fact of Piper's self-identification as black into public business again, such that it becomes, willingly or otherwise, her “calling”? Could the card even be the sign of a certain professionalism in taking on the burden, her blackness having once again been made into an obtrusive fact for Piper herself, of delivering the news? Or, taking Piper's designation of the work as a calling card—that faded, gently anachronistic modern-day form of the genteel Victorian *carte de visite*—at face value, is the card intended to announce, albeit belatedly and for the benefit of those who clearly had not noticed, that a black woman has come a-calling? That is, does it announce the sheer fact of Piper's presence under this self-description?

There are other possibilities that I will not run through here; an exhaustive interpretation would in any case be impossible. My point is twofold. First, that this polysemic dimension of

22. See Robert Storr, foreword to both volumes of *Out of Order, Out of Sight*. As I do not discuss this aspect of Piper's work here, I will simply note that Piper's use of language in her art, particularly the way in which tone can be used to inflect attitude toward meaning—or what Gottlob Frege would have called *Färbung* (coloration)—raises complex issues of enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, with respect to both race and class, that might be better untangled in the literature than, arguably, they have been to date.

23. Piper, *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance*, especially 00:05:05–00:06:45; this remark at 00:06:35.

Piper's art and its relation to her work's formal properties could (and should) be better marked than they have been. It is a large part of the function of artistic form to make a range of possible meanings nonexclusively available, otherwise there would be no reason either to make or experience the work. As I remarked of *Funk Lessons*, I believe both that there is no compulsion to choose between such meanings, and that this aspect of Piper's work is well captured by Kant's conception of works of art as indirect presentations of ideas in sensible form. Second, against the tendency to reduce the meaning of *My Calling (Card) #1* to the card's semantic content, "artistic form" as used here should be understood in an expanded sense, to encompass what speech-act theorists would call the entire context of utterance and reception for Piper's reactive guerrilla performances, of which the card itself is just one element.²⁴ For the work consists neither in the propositional content of the sentences printed on the card, nor even in the card itself, but in the *act* of giving out such a card, certain contextual conditions being met—all of which necessarily colors the perceived meaning and force of the card's semantic content. It is for this reason that it is right to classify the work as a species of performance: like *Funk Lessons*, the work is an act or an event rather than (primarily) an object.

Piper remarks in the subsequent meta-performance that for her, one of the benefits of the card was that it allowed her to draw attention to a racist remark, thereby refusing to let it go unchallenged, but to do so discreetly, thereby placing the onus of social disruption on the card's recipient. All of those recipients, as it turns out, declined to assume that burden, and none of them failed to dissociate themselves from Piper thereafter—thereby effectively refusing to accept her "calling card." In the first iteration of Piper's meta-performance this fact gives rise to an impassioned, honest, and, I think, often insightful and revealing discussion among the predominantly youthful audience about what it must feel like to receive—as opposed to give out—one of her cards, and whether giving out such cards is the best way for Piper to achieve her goals. Whom members of the audience identify with or perceive as victim or perpetrator in discussing this piece is instructive. Perhaps understandably, the dominant response seems to be to imagine how it would feel to *receive* one of Piper's cards—I say "perhaps" because it may take more effort for members of an all-white audience to imagine themselves in Piper's shoes. Only after some time does anyone think to ask Piper what it feels like to give out one of the cards, to which she replies, "It just tears me apart because I know that the other person is going to feel terrible, and I'm going to feel terrible because I made them feel terrible—their evening is going to be ruined, *my* evening is already ruined. It's awful . . . but I just don't see any other alternative."²⁵

At this point the video cuts to the middle-aged, much more ethnically mixed audience at the second iteration of the

24. One might contextualize the meaning of these cards in terms of the pragmatic turn that speech-act theory introduced into the philosophy of language by way of Paul Grice, J. L. Austin, John Searle, and, more indirectly, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

25. More fully, she replies, "It's very upsetting . . . when I made up the card I really thought a lot about wording . . . and when I was writing the card I was thinking a lot about how the other person would feel getting it, and trying to recognize their feelings. . . . That part was pretty easy. When I actually give out the card it's just awful, it just tears me apart because I know that the other person is going to feel terrible, and I'm going to feel terrible because I made them feel terrible—their evening is going to be ruined, *my* evening is already ruined. It's awful, it's really awful, but I just don't see any other alternative." Piper, *My Calling (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance*, at 00:31:25–00:32:20.

meta-performance, at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Insistent questioning by a white man—the only white person who appears willing to speak up, apart from a woman who appears to be the man's partner or companion—provokes a heated discussion among Piper, her questioner, and a black woman in the audience. Their exchange ostensibly concerns whether attitudes change when behavior changes or behavior changes when attitudes change. At first it seems that Piper, like her questioner, holds the latter view, but it gradually becomes clear that she takes changing behavior to be at least a necessary condition for changing attitudes. This view is, presumably, internally related to the pointedly polite tone that her work adopts, even when dealing with difficult, potentially inflammatory subject matter. It has always been clear that Piper aims her work at people who would be mortified to be identified as racists, and who would never so identify themselves—people like you and me—though they may unwittingly harbor various prejudicial attitudes; from this exchange, however, it also becomes clear, largely as a result of the female audience member's intervention, that while the calling card allows Piper to target unconscious or disavowed racism, thereby bringing it to self-consciousness, it also allows her to refuse to take on the burden of civilizing her white insulters.

A more general point emerges from this exchange about the form of the meta-performances: it is striking that they are not always comfortable for either the audience or Piper. As well as making individual audience members take responsibility for their views and their responses to one another, on a few occasions they give Piper, who actively solicits audience response, a bumpy ride. This is true, for example, of the moment in *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance* when an older woman claims, drawing on her own experience of running encounter groups, that Piper is “laying a trip” on her audience in the way that she discusses funk music which is likely to frustrate successful realization of her aims, or when a younger woman suggests that Piper inject some humor into *My Calling (Card) #1* as a way of giving its recipients a chance to at least partially redeem themselves from the shame that receiving it must induce. Neither of these responses strikes me as inappropriate, but either way these works clearly involve greater risk, exposure, and accountability for Piper herself, not only for her audience.

This is a risk that Piper's noninteractive works (such as her video installations) avoid, and perhaps for good reason: her oft-stated concern that her presence and behavior might distract her audience from the here and now of their own responses to her works is well documented.²⁶ Nonetheless, Piper's first-person exposure in her meta-performances is arguably more consistent with one of the most basic premises of her methodological individualism as it bears on the subject matter of her art, namely, that in a racist society everyone's attitudes are distorted to some degree. As she notes at The Studio Museum,

26. This is something Piper has often returned to in interviews, and she comes back to it in the closing pages of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*. See Piper, “Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly,” pp. 460–66.

"Racism begins with you and me, and all the interactions that build up out these inter-personal interactions."²⁷ In this spirit the meta-performances might be seen to make Piper accountable for her own attitudes and behaviors in direct, first-person encounters with her audience. If this is right, then although the meta-performances share the same animus to interrogate her audience's attitudes with respect to race as her other work from this period does, they go about it, unlike much of her work, in a way that clearly puts the artist herself on the line. This is something that an inanimate object cannot do. The mode of address of the meta-performances, like that of the earlier performances they internalize, is thus a reciprocal "I/you: you/me," rather than the nonreciprocal "it/you: you/it" relation more typical to encountering works of art. Piper's audience is thereby allowed to answer back in such a way that the work avoids the risk of hubris that attaches to any claim to know what an audience thinks better than they know themselves, irrespective of how often this may in fact be true.

Kantianism and Neo-Kantianism

What relation, if any, do these works in particular and Piper's art more generally have to her philosophical work on Kant? What resources from Kant might help illuminate Piper's practice? This is far from obvious, as Kant is not known for his liberal views on race. But whatever the connections, given the nature of Kant's philosophy they must in any case operate at a much deeper level than would be the case even were one able to point to some overlap between the odd empirical claim in Kant's texts and the antipathy for (racially motivated) intolerance that animates Piper's art. I shall argue that in line with Piper's primary concern with Kant's epistemology, the works target the *structure* of our experience of a consistent, rationally intelligible world—albeit as theorized by Piper rather than Kant.

One way to bridge the gap between such foundational concerns—which pertain to the conditions that must be met for a unified experience of an objective world to be possible—and the much more specific empirical content of Piper's art is to enquire into the conditions of possibility of xenophobia in human beings. This is to ask: what must be presupposed about the nature of human beings for xenophobia to be a possible mode of response to other human beings? Once these conditions have been identified, one can then ask what might be required to overcome them. Approached in this light, one begins to understand some of the strategies employed in Piper's art. These are intended to challenge and, in so doing, transform her viewers' attitudes through a particular kind of encounter, an encounter designed to flush out xenophobic responses in the here and now of their engagement with the work. Where this becomes philosophically interesting is that according to Piper, such responses depend

27. Piper, *My Calling* (Card) #1 Double Meta-Performance, at 00:49:45; see also 00:14:43 and 00:27:10. Piper's account of xenophobia: "Xenophobia is not best understood as a transaction between different groups, but rather as a transaction between individuals in interpersonal relationships. Indeed, the most pressing question a competent analysis of xenophobia must answer is how such abstractions as nation, race, ethnicity, or religion can turn neighbors, friends, couples, colleagues of co-workers into enemies virtually overnight. . . . If we are to understand the behavior of larger groups . . . we need to understand these more elemental interactions first." Piper, "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly," p. 416.

on stereotypes or, more generally, ossified and lazy forms of categorization. This, to return to Piper's relation to Kant's more foundational concerns, would be their grounds in the subject.

Piper's way of taking issue with such prejudicial responses takes two forms, broadly construed. In the better-known form, the work internally mimics such responses by making them part of its own content (*Art for the Art World Surface Pattern, Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma, Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*), thereby bringing them to self-consciousness and, one hopes, fair-minded scrutiny. This vein in Piper's work can be traced back to the Mythic Being series and performances of the mid-1970s, in which she acted out such racial stereotypes. By bringing stereotypical responses to light in this way, Piper aimed to bring her viewers to perceive concrete particulars—in the case of human beings, *individuals*—rather than mere instances of some (pejoratively specified) category or kind. I have said little about this aspect of Piper's practice here, but it is well documented.²⁸

Her second—and in my view more radical—strategy is to refrain from placing her work within an institutional frame, since this is a context that predigests it for what would otherwise be its unwitting participants or bemused witnesses. Although less often commented on in the literature, this strategy is apparent in works from *Everything #10* all the way back to the *Catalysis* series of early guerrilla street performances (figs. 5, 6), in which it features strongly, and includes both *My Calling (Card)* and, to a lesser extent, *Funk Lessons*.²⁹ In these works Piper leaves something or someone (often herself) in the path of others but without forewarning them that they are to view that something or someone through the lens of art. As a consequence, there is no ready-made niche within the conceptual schemes of those others—which, as Piper uses this notion, means roughly the range of empirical concepts that are in principle available to them at any given time and under which any experience may be safely filed away. Such works thereby compel viewers, if that is the right word, to come to terms with an anomalous entity, person, or event in its particularity. The alternative, according to Piper, is to subsume it (or her) safely under some preexisting concept, as an instance of a more general kind (“avant-garde performance art,” “your average downtown weirdness,” “nut case,” etc.). That is, to take it as an instance to which all the traits of the relevant concept evidently apply and to which no further thought need therefore be given—and in this way to fail to thematize for oneself what is under one's own nose. To translate this strategy into the terminology of Kant's aesthetics rather than his epistemology, it amounts to compelling her work's viewers (though “witnesses” might be a better term) to cognize what they are experiencing *reflectively* rather than *determinatively*. That is, instead of presupposing some prior set of categories, concepts, or kinds under which

28. Indeed, Piper comments on it herself in the concluding pages of “Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly”: “Take, for example, *mimesis*: a work of art may incorporate into its subject matter these very pseudorationalizations [habitual responses that impose politically discriminatory stereotypes] as an ironic commentary or distancing device. . . . Hearing or seeing them echoed back to one by an impersonal art object can make it clear . . . that these habits of reasoning are not uniquely one's own, but rather crude and common slogans that short-circuit the hard work of self-scrutiny. Thus *mimesis* can be an effective way of distancing oneself from such pseudorational slogans, and of illuminating their stereotypical character and function.” Piper, “Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly,” p. 463.

29. On this strategy as it pertains to the *Catalysis* works, see, for example, Piper, “Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object,” 1970–73, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 37 and 42.

such particulars can be immediately subsumed, they actively seek out and, if necessary, invent the concepts that might best illuminate whatever it is they are experiencing. And doing so by reflecting upon the similarities and differences between particulars discovered in experience.

The distinction between Piper's two ways of taking issue with defensive categorization and the shopworn stereotypes on which it turns is not as clear-cut as my presentation of them implies. And this is not surprising: the point of the former strategy was to prevent Piper's audience immediately bringing stereotyped racial categories to bear on her works' subjects. For doing so would be just another way of subsuming them under prejudicial concepts, thereby avoiding the responsibility and difficulty of encountering them in their particularity. And this is what the latter strategy, the refusal to signpost her art, works to short-circuit at a higher level of generality. That is, where the former gives us reason to reflect before applying habitual categories to an artwork's content, the latter gives us pause to reflect before we are able to so much as identify whatever we are confronted by as art, if indeed we are then able to so identify it. It is in this respect that the second strategy may be regarded as more radical: before we can respond to a thing's content as a work of art, we must first recognize that it is indeed art—something structured by intentional content—to which we are being asked to respond.



5. *Catalysis IV*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

As her philosophical work makes clear, Piper views stereotypical racial categorizations as a psychological defense mechanism triggered by the threat presented by people who look or act contrary to one's expectations.³⁰ In Piper's account, derogatory stereotypes are deployed to shore up whatever (more or less partial) conception of persons that one is invested in, particularly insofar as this conception underwrites the honorific stereotypes through which one understands oneself, and hence ultimately one's positive self-conception.³¹ In effect, resorting to xenophobic stereotypes to demonize others is an attempt to preserve, unquestioned, one's own self-esteem. Piper's artwork short-circuits this process in one of two ways: either by engineering situations in which an audience encounters the work in as non-*preconceptualized*, non-*precontextualized* a manner as possible (the *Catalysis* works (figs. 5, 6), *Everything #10*) or by confronting its audience with precisely those preconceptualizations it is most likely to resort to, in such a way as to render viewers self-conscious (*Art for the Art World Surface Pattern*, *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*). This raises a number of questions. What is philosophically significant about our tendency to resort to stereotypical identifications, and how does Kant's epistemology help Piper to address this? And how, if at all, do the ways in which Piper addresses such problems philosophically shed light on her art?



6. *Catalysis III*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

30. See Piper, "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism," especially pp. 209–12.

31. Piper's formal definition of a stereotype runs as follows: "To impose a *stereotype* on someone is to view him as embodying a limited set of properties falsely taken to be exclusive, definitive, and paradigmatic of a certain kind of individual. I shall say that a stereotype: (a) equates one contingent and limited set of primary valued properties that may characterize persons under certain circumstances with the universal concept of personhood; (b) restricts that set to exclude divergent properties of personhood from it; (c) withholds from those who violate its restrictions the essential properties of personhood; and (d) ascribes to them the primary disvalued properties of deviance from it. Thus a stereotype identifies as persons those and only those who manifest the primary valued properties in the set ((a) and (b)), and subsidiary ones consistent with it. . . . Call this set the *honorific stereotype*, and an individual who bears such primary valued properties the *valuee*. And reciprocally, the honorific stereotype by implication identifies as deviant or anomalous all those who manifest any properties regarded as inconsistent with it ((c) and (d)). Call this second set of primary disvalued

Over the past forty years, Piper has published numerous articles on metaethics, a subject to which she brings a thorough grounding in Kant's epistemology, in academic philosophy journals. Most of these articles have now been incorporated, in reworked form, into the second volume of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*. There is no way to summarize a body of work of such complexity here—the volume comprises eleven substantial chapters and more than four hundred pages—but a few broad points can be made. The first is that the goal of Piper's project is to demonstrate the superiority of the Kantian conception of the self over its various Humean rivals in contemporary moral philosophy and theory of action.³² To this end Piper takes issue with what she regards as the overplayed distinction between theoretical and practical rationality (that is, between theory of knowledge and theory of motivation) by seeking to ground both in the same basic requirements of transpersonal rational consistency. These requirements are an extrapolation rather than an application of Kant, since they are not found in Kant's work in the form they take on in Piper's.

Piper stresses Kant's theory of knowledge as a corrective to the tendency to downplay the relevance of his epistemology in recent work in Kantian moral theory. In Piper's reconstruction of Kant's moral philosophy we are *naturally disposed* to do or believe whatever preserves the rational unity and coherence of the self. It is a basic requirement of the self, internal to its nature, that it render its experiences rationally intelligible to itself; anything that is admitted (or internalized) by the self that is in conflict with the demands of rational intelligibility will put pressure on the self's rational unity. Piper conceives the preservation of rational intelligibility as the self's "highest order disposition to literal self-preservation" and, correspondingly, anything that conflicts with the demands of rational intelligibility as a threat to the ongoing existence of a unified self.³³ Nonetheless, rational intelligibility is always at risk of being perverted by limited self-understanding or various forms of self-interest and self-deception, which lead it to disavow or disassociate conflicting aspects of its experience.³⁴

This brings me to a point about which Piper is explicit in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*: namely, that she is offering a neo-Kantian account inspired by Kant's writings rather than an interpretation of Kant's own views. This is just as well, given that Kant's philosophical concerns come to an end well in advance of whatever aspects of experience threaten our empirical self-understanding and the psychological defenses we mobilize to deflect them. Kant's account operates, for the most part, at the level of what must be presupposed a priori for coherent experience of, and rational agency in, an objective, causally determined world to be possible; the psychological pressures that may or may not threaten the veridicality of various forms of judgment or experience a posteriori fall largely beyond its scope.

properties the *derogatory stereotype*, and an individual who bears such primary disvalued properties the *disvaluee*." See Piper, "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly," pp. 430–31.

32. For a summary statement see Piper "Two Conceptions of the Self," *Philosophical Studies* 48, no. 2 (September 1985): 173–97.

33. Piper, "Literal Self-Preservation," in "How Reason Causes Action," *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, pp. 190–96; and "First-Person Anomaly," in *ibid.*, pp. 317–53.

34. Piper has pointed out to me that incorporating various forms of mimesis into her art practice brought her to the analysis of pseudorationality in her philosophical work, c. 1980. Piper, letter to the author. See Piper, "Ideology, Confrontation, and Political Self-Awareness: An Essay," *High Performance* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1981).

That said, certain kinds of all-too-human pseudorationality (such as exempting oneself from the nonnegotiable demands of reason) do still impinge on the form taken by Kant's moral philosophy to combat such tendencies.³⁵ Whether such pressures, as Piper understands them, may be dismissed as merely psychological is a question I shall return to; in order to assess it, I first need to say more about Piper's Kant.

Piper's reconstructions of Kant are intended to describe the kind of pseudorationality that comes into play whenever we are moved to reject anomalous empirical data—data that confounds our particular conceptual scheme and thereby threatens our empirical self-conceptions—through various mechanisms of rationalization, denial, or disassociation.³⁶ Stereotyping (particularly xenophobic stereotyping) is an extreme example of such a mechanism, given that it amounts to a refusal to modify, in light of disconfirmation by the empirical evidence, a preconception about how bona fide recipients of the full moral status accorded to human beings should look or behave. Rather than modify a mistaken empirical generalization, the holder of a prejudicial stereotype recasts as less than fully human anyone who looks or behaves other than that limited conception requires, and hence not as a genuine counterexample to that conception after all.³⁷ This preserves the appearance—but only the appearance—of rationality: it is pseudorational because it is an illusion. The psychological mechanisms employed to create such illusions are instances of theoretical irrationality arrayed across a broad spectrum, from everyday rationalization to outright denial of the facts.

This account of the failings of all-too-imperfect human rationality may be persuasive, but part of the difficulty of gaining a firm grasp of what Piper's neo-Kantianism owes to Kant, and what it owes to Piper, is that Kant spends much less time cataloguing or analyzing the empirical failings of rationality than Piper does.³⁸ As a result, Piper's Kant is necessarily reconstructive. In fact, Piper's Kant is heavily reconstructive in some parts, yet quite orthodox in others. Consider first what is perhaps its most orthodox aspect: Piper endorses, albeit in her own terms, the distinction between phenomena and noumena that underwrites Kant's Transcendental Idealism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the idea, simply put, that finite, imperfectly rational beings such as ourselves can never know how things—including ourselves—truly are in themselves, but only as they appear.³⁹ This is because our experience is doubly constrained: on the side of sensibility (our passive receptivity to sensory input) by space and time as a priori forms of intuition; on the side of understanding (our active spontaneity of mind) by the need to organize that sensory input under various categorial structures or "pure concepts of the understanding," such as cause and effect or substance and attributes, so as to experience it coherently. Being abstract thought structures, however, such categories still need

35. See, for example, Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785 Ak. 405 and Ak. 424, English translation as *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. I owe the latter reference to Piper.

36. See Piper, "Pseudorationality," in Amelie O. Rorty and Brian McLaughlin, eds., *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 297–323; reworked as "Pseudorationality," in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, pp. 289–316. See in particular the section "Three Pseudorational Mechanisms," pp. 291–92. On the origins of this analysis, see Piper, "Ideology, Confrontation, and Political Self-Awareness."

37. For Piper's account of xenophobic stereotyping, see Piper, "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism"; reworked in "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly."

38. In fact Piper associates her own notion of pseudorationality with a brief interlude in the argument of *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Ak. 405) in which Kant flags up the deformations of reason occasioned by our tendency to try to accommodate the a priori demands of reason to those of our empirical desires and interests, rather

to be schematized—temporalized and, implicitly, spatialized—in order to be applicable to objects of experience given in space and time. Putting all this together: the synthesis (or bringing together) of a spatiotemporal “manifold of perception” (a given perceptual array as it appears to the perceiver) under schematized pure concepts of the understanding is the prerequisite for any coherent, unified, rationally intelligible experience or agency at all. As such, the fulfillment of these conditions gives us the world of everyday experience with which we are familiar, but we must remain agnostic as to whether the world as we experience it corresponds to the world as it is in itself, since we are unable to step outside the constraints on human knowledge in order to find out. To experience the world as it is in itself would be to experience it independently of the constraints of space and time, pure concepts of understanding, the need for synthesis, and so on, and this is not a possible experience for us (fig. 7).

My goal is not to reconstruct or defend Kant’s epistemology but to bring out the ways it may illuminate what is at play in Piper’s practice as an artist. According to Piper’s argument in “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism,” an early formulation of material more fully worked out in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, accepting Kant’s distinction between phenomena and noumena means that we can never know others (or indeed ourselves) as they (or we) are in themselves. Take the implications of space and time as forms of intuition for finite rational beings: space is the a priori form of external intuition, time the a priori form of any intuition, internal or external. That objects are locatable in space is a condition of our ability to experience them as outside us; if they were not, we could have no such experience of them. By calling this an a priori form of intuition, Kant means that space must be presupposed as the structure of any possible sensible encounter with external objects. That objects and events appear in time, by contrast, is a necessary condition of our ability to experience them at all—internally or externally. Objects and physical events are thus located in both space and time, but our own thoughts, representations and other mental events are located only in time. We cannot pick them out in space. Anything that we conceive of as existing independently of both time and space (such as God) is, by contrast, not a possible object of experience for us for just this reason. We may entertain an *idea* of God, but the object of this and other ideas (freedom, immortality, and so on) are not possible objects of experience for beings such as ourselves, whose experience is spatiotemporally constrained.

Given these constraints on our apprehension of the world, ourselves, and others, even our direct introspective intuition of ourselves (self-acquaintance) will necessarily be experienced in time and, as such, is an intuition of our empirical selves as we appear to ourselves rather than an intuition of how we are in ourselves, which is beyond the bounds of what finite rational

than vice versa. See “Realities” in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 252.

39. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* 1781/1787, A236–60/B295–315. English translation as *Critique of Pure Reason*. The A and B designations refer to pages in the standard German Akademie Ausgabe versions of the first and second editions. All English translations carry the standard German-edition pagination in their margins.

beings can know or experience.⁴⁰ This is not to say that the way we experience ourselves could not be the way we are in ourselves but, rather, that we cannot possibly know whether it is. In Kantian terms, we may *conceive* of but not *know* the personhood in our own person: by employing our reason (our capacity, according to Kant, for conceiving what outruns the limits of what we can know empirically, and to which we are driven in trying to account rationally for what we do know empirically) we may form an *idea* of ourselves as, say, rationally unified selves who manifest their rationality in action, but we may never finally *know* ourselves as such within experience.⁴¹

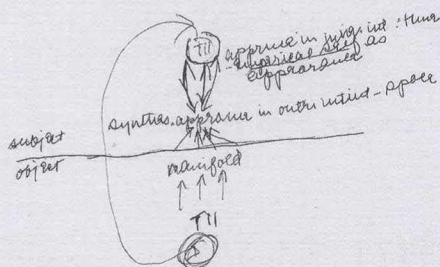
40. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A34.

41. I am drastically summarizing Piper's account. See in particular Piper, sections 3–5 of "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism." See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B69; and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 407.

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problem of transcendental philosophy: how are synthetic a priori judgments possible? When in a *a priori* judgment we seek to go out beyond the given concept, we come in the *a priori* intuitions upon that which cannot be discovered in the concept but which is certainly found *a priori* in the intuition corresponding to the concept, and can be connected with it synthetically. Such judgments, however, thus based on intuition, can never extend beyond objects of the senses; they are valid only for objects of possible experience.



So we go wrong if we take ourselves to have privileged access—in our own case, introspectively—to the personhood in our own person, and go on to generalize what we find in our own case to others. Xenophobia, as Piper conceives it, would be one possible consequence of this mistake. It is a false generalization that arises when we take our own, necessarily limited self-conception as a basis for understanding personhood per se, and in so doing turn that self-conception into a norm for what we are prepared to countenance as a person in the full sense. For Piper, the threat to our empirical self-conceptions created by experiencing what is *prima facie* another person as nonetheless contrary to whatever conception of the self we are implicitly invested in is a special case (theoretical anomaly) of the more fundamental cognitive inconsistency of encountering anything that conflicts with one's conceptual scheme at any given time (conceptual anomaly).⁴² This is exacerbated when the anomaly takes the form of a person (or people) who do not look or behave as our self-conceptions and our more or less limited conceptions of persons leads us to believe they should. Given the psychological importance of our conception of what counts as a person, such anomalies put pressure on our own self-understanding. Nonetheless, as the reflection of limited empirical assumptions, they can in principle be socially corrected, though not eradicated once and for all: the less prejudiced our education and upbringing, the more cosmopolitan and sophisticated our sense of self and others, the less rattled we should be by people who do not behave as we do.⁴³

So far so good: the foregoing reconstruction provides a clear rationale for Piper's interpretation of Kant. But does it show her appeal to Kant to be necessary? That is, does it show that anything of substance in her theory would be lost were all reference to Kant to be dispensed with? This question goes to the core of the relation between Piper's Kantianism and the theory from which it draws inspiration. But one needs to tread carefully here. Piper's claim, in its strongest form, is that conceptual anomalies threaten the very coherence or rational intelligibility of experience itself: this is why they trigger a variety of pseudorational responses designed, in the service of literal self-preservation, to explain them away. But a lot turns, both for the coherence of Piper's theory taken on its own terms and for the nature of its relation to Kant's, on precisely how we are to understand the idea of literal self-preservation: does it pertain to the intelligibility of empirical experience or, more strongly, to the constitutive fabric of the self—those conditions, whatever they may be, by virtue of which we are even capable of coherent experience at all?

This question seems to raise a dilemma for Piper. The latter would certainly lend weight to Piper's appeal to Kant's epistemology, which concerns the conditions for a unified self that must be met for experience to be possible. The problem,

42. See Piper, "Conceptual vs. Theoretical Anomaly," in "Pseudorationality," in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, especially pp. 258–59: "I shall . . . describe as a *conceptual anomaly* an event, object or state of affairs that fails to satisfy the consistency conditions enumerated in Part I. . . . I refer to an event, object or state of affairs that is anomalous relative to one's theory of one-self or the world as a *theoretical anomaly*. Theoretical anomaly is a species of conceptual anomaly. . . . A conceptual anomaly is a threat to the rational integrity of the self and to the rational intelligibility of an agent's perspective; whereas a merely theoretical anomaly puts pressure primarily on the agent's morally inflected self-conception or theory of the world."

43. For Piper's account of the correlative but ineradicable nature of xenophobia, see Piper, section 6 of "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism"; and "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly."

from a Kantian perspective, is that it is not clear how the intelligibility of experience in this stronger sense *could* be under threat. For had the conditions for intelligible experience not already been met, there could be no coherent self to experience or therefore feel threatened by the conceptual anomaly in the first place. Conversely, if taken in the weaker sense, we risk reducing the notion of rational intelligibility to the vagaries of different people's psychologies, some of which are—for whatever empirical reasons—more cosmopolitan than others. That is, it runs the risk of psychologizing Kant's theory.⁴⁴

This worry goes to the heart of Piper's philosophical project as it bears on Kant and xenophobia, and it is of central significance for her art. Xenophobia, as presented by Piper, is a fear arising from a provincial empirical conception of others. But if xenophobia is a defensive response to empirical others a posteriori (and thus dependent upon experience), it would seem to presuppose the unified structure of the self that is having the experience. From a Kantian perspective the worry would then be how such a defensive response could put pressure on the unified self that having the response in the first place would seem to presuppose. So the question is whether Piper's Kantianism blurs the boundary between a strictly a priori account of the conditions that must be met for a unified experience of an objective world to be possible, and those local empirical conditions (education, upbringing, socialization, and the like) which may or may not be met in a particular case—and, if met, may prevent unfamiliar others from presenting a psychological threat to the integrity of our more or less parochial self-conceptions. But the latter conditions, according to Kant, can only come into play on the assumption that the former have already been secured: absent the former's fulfillment, any unsettling experiences associated with the latter's nonfulfillment would not even show up as such. So it looks as if either nothing will be experienced—the conditions for coherent experience not having been met—in which case a xenophobic response will be neither required nor triggered, or else something will be experienced, in which case the deep structures of rational intelligibility cannot really be under threat—since they are required for the anomalous other to show up as such in the first place.

Now, given the breadth and the depth of Piper's writings on Kant, the detail of which I have barely indicated here, it would be surprising were Piper guilty of this conflation—not least because she has written on the distinction between transcendental and empirical concepts herself.⁴⁵ So what we need, to frame it first in Kantian terms, is some account of how any event arising within experience could constitute a threat to the conditions of coherent experience that the event's mere appearance would seem to presuppose.⁴⁶ Abstracting from Kant's account, this does not seem implausible: one can readily make sense of the idea that events could be so distressing (war,

44. A response to this worry might be Piper's distinction between theoretical and conceptual anomaly in "Pseudorationality." It's not immediately clear, however, whether doing so addresses the worry in question, given that Piper claims that the former is a special case of the latter: where the former is a threat to whatever theoretical self-conception one is invested in, the latter constitutes a threat to one's conceptual scheme itself. So understood, both may initially seem a posteriori in Kantian terms, because both are in principle capable of modification in light of further experience: one can modify one's more or less parochial self-conception and one can expand one's conceptual framework through wider experience, reading, learning, and socialization. In fact, things are more complex than this suggests, once one distinguishes between the fact that coherent experience requires a unified conceptual scheme and whatever concepts constitute that scheme at any given time. Whereas the latter is open to revision, the former is a necessary requirement of intelligible experience.

45. See, for example, Piper, section 3 of "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism." "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic" is also

genocide, persecution, torture, rape, natural disaster, or even bereavement being obvious examples) as to put one's sanity—the very intelligibility of experience itself—at risk. This is where the more reconstructive aspects of Piper's interpretation of Kant, which I have so far left to one side, become important. So far I have been relying largely on an early but important text that lays the groundwork for *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*. In part this is pragmatic, given the latter's complexity. But even in that relatively early text Piper was clear about the respects in which her Kantian Rationalism Thesis, or KRT (later Kantian Type Theory or simply Theory K), departs from Kant. We now need some sense of these departures.

Piper's opening move in the second volume of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self* is to dispense with Kant's architectonic of "pure concepts of the understanding" and follow P. F. Strawson's influential critique of Kant in retaining only the subject-predicate relation, from which Kant derives the "relational category" of substance and accidents, as a properly transcendental judgment form, or what Piper calls an "innate" cognitive condition for the possibility of coherent experience.⁴⁷ Piper recasts this as the only logical structure underwriting Kant's categories, without which coherent experience would not be possible, hence the only such structure always presupposed by experience and, as such, not revisable in light of further experience. Piper grants the law of noncontradiction ($\neg[p, \neg p]$) the same standing. This law entails, for example, that one cannot assert both that the book is and is not on the table, or that it is both red and not red, without undermining knowledge. For if one claims to know that the same book at the same time is both red and not red or both on the table and not on the table, then one knows nothing. This much is already clear in "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism," even if it receives more substantial treatment in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*.

In the second chapter of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, Piper elaborates these basic retentions into a full-blown account of what she calls the "horizontal and vertical consistency" of the entire set of an agent's occurrent concepts—where "occurrent" need not mean conscious but simply in use or entailed, whether implicitly or explicitly, at any given time.⁴⁸ Her development of this account is the foundational move of the second volume, and everything else follows from it. Piper's basic idea is that at any given time the intelligibility and rational coherence of the subject's experience is sustained by the mutual compatibility, both horizontally and vertically, of her set of concepts and the judgments that make use of them—horizontally consistent in that "my cat is on the mat" cannot be held simultaneously with "there are no mats" or "I have no cat," and vertically consistent in that "my cat is on the mat" entails various higher-order concepts such as "mammal" or, more generally, "spatiotemporally located things," and so cannot be

informative on the distinction between transcendental and empirical conditions.

46. Piper considers such a case in Piper, "Test Case #1: Encounter on West Broadway," in "Pseudorationality," pp. 296–99.

47. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1991); Piper "Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism," p. 189.

48. Piper, "Horizontal and Vertical Consistency," *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, pp. 84–93.

held simultaneously with the belief that “there are no mammals” or “the universe consists solely of abstract mental entities.” A subject’s experience is rationally intelligible if and only if all the concepts it comprises at any given time are both horizontally and vertically consistent in this sense. And this is why, to answer a question I left hanging, it would be misleading to describe the resulting account as “merely psychological.” For while the question of which concepts occupy the set of any given person at any given time may be a matter of empirical psychology, subject to all manner of historical, cultural, and social determinants, that there must be such a set, and that it must be both horizontally and vertically consistent, is a necessary condition of coherent experience. That experience requires such a set is not open to revision, even if what makes up the set at any given time or for any given person is. In Kantian terms, horizontal and vertical consistency would count as transcendental, rather than merely psychological, constraints on the intelligibility of experience.

Piper’s conception of the minimal conditions of rational integrity, though anchored in Kant’s conception of reason as a faculty that seeks out ever-more-comprehensive explanations of experience, is designed to be both weaker than Kant’s elaborate constraints on experience in the first *Critique* and more agnostic about how much of our cognitive architecture is hardwired, and how much in principle is open to revision over time.⁴⁹ But how does Piper’s rejection of Kant’s “table of categories” help with the problem at hand? In the following respect: even in my rough-and-ready sketch of Piper’s neo-Kantian theory of rational consistency, it should be apparent that anomalous data, such as people who do not correspond to one’s more or less limited conception of bona fide moral agents, will threaten the coherence and rational intelligibility of one’s world. Why? Because the rational intelligibility of experience is supported by nothing but the mutual compatibility of those concepts either explicitly in use or implicitly entailed at any given time. Given, in this slimmed-down Kantianism, that the consistency of this set is all that secures the rational intelligibility of one’s world, the conceptual dissonance that would be introduced into the set by recognizing some stretch of human beings as such while simultaneously withholding the full set of predicates that ought to follow from that identification—because those beings do not conform to one’s limited conception of persons—will put pressure on the integrity of one’s experience. It is to cope with the cognitive inconsistency thereby generated that various pseudorational strategies of dissociation, rationalization, and, if necessary, outright denial are deployed.⁵⁰

Even so, one might worry that the problems that arose previously, in the full-fat version of Kant’s epistemology, would simply recur in Piper’s slimline version of the same. Namely: how, if the rational integrity of one’s experience depends on the consistency of one’s occurrent set of concepts, can a conceptual

49. Kant derives his “table of categories,” or judgment forms, by way of some tinkering, from Aristotelian logic, and many of even the most orthodox Kantian commentators have been dissatisfied with the resulting account.

50. This may speak to the worry regarding transcendental and empirical conditions in a further sense. Once all one has to orient oneself is a revisable set of horizontally and vertically consistent concepts there may no longer be a strict analogue to the distinction between a priori/a posteriori conditions on experience, as Kant would have understood this. If one’s conceptual framework is the only ground one has on which to make sense of experience, it is in that sense an a priori condition of doing so, yet if its contents are also modifiable in the light of further experience, it is in that sense a posteriori. That said, any threat to the coherence of the set, given that the set is all one has, will on this conception constitute a threat to the rational intelligibility of experience and the self.

anomaly even show up and be experienced as such? Why wouldn't the inconsistency entailed by its acknowledgment render it external to the set that can be entertained or endorsed by the self at any given time? It may be in response to a worry of this kind that Piper makes a move that is both psychologically perceptive and crucial to her own project but that arguably takes her reconstruction of Kant beyond the purview of Kant's own epistemology, full-fat or otherwise. Piper suggests that Kant's account of the rational intelligibility of experience in the 1781 (A) edition of the Transcendental Deduction opens up something like the logical space for an unconscious. Given this, something can be both experienced and yet not self-consciously experienced, or experienced but simultaneously denied, because it is cognitively anomalous to the consistency of the subject's conceptual scheme at a given time. In A112, a passage to which Piper often returns in her philosophical essays, Kant claims,

51. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.

In original apperception everything must necessarily conform to the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness, that is, to the universal functions of synthesis, namely, of that synthesis according to [pure] concepts. . . . Without such [synthetic unity of appearances according to concepts] no thoroughgoing, universal, and therefore necessary, unity of consciousness would be met with in the manifold of perceptions. *These perceptions would not then belong to any experience, consequently would be without an object, merely a blind play of representations, less even than a dream* [italics mine].⁵¹

Without getting waylaid by the more technical aspects of Kant's epistemology on display in this passage, we can grasp the central idea that without a rule-governed synthesis of intuitions (that is, absent subsumption of sensory input under the pure concepts of the understanding), nothing could enter consciousness and thereby qualify as an object of experience. This is hardly sufficient for empirical experience in the Kantian account, but it is at least necessary. Translated into Piper's terminology: nothing can be experienced that is not vertically and horizontally consistent with the rest of an agent's cognitive set. So far, so consistent with Kant, but Piper wants to argue that the last line of this passage allows something further: that whatever fails to conform to the conditions of knowledge need not therefore go by entirely *unexperienced*; instead, even something that does not show up consciously may yet register unconsciously, and so be causally effective for the self after all (fig. 8). In this reading, rather than whatever fails to conform to the conditions of knowledge simply failing to show up in our world—which is the world of everything that does meet these conditions—Kant's account leaves room for something like unconscious experience.

Here it is worth asking whether, for Kant, unconscious experience could be any *particular* person's experience. That

is, could such experience be attributed to a particular empirical person, as Piper's rational-consistency reading requires? There seems no problem with this in principle: until such time as an event or experience can be made rationally consistent with a person's conceptual scheme, by revising that scheme accordingly, it cannot be acknowledged. But once the right concepts enter the set, it can be. That it can be acknowledged—self-consciously endorsed—suggests that one may have been cognizant of it, in some sense, all along. In chapter two of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, Piper gives an intriguing example of how this might work in practice: she discusses a

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intuition experience
relating of these appearances in empirical intuition is alone possible. In other words, appearances in experience must stand under the conditions of the necessary unity of apperception, just as in mere intuition they must be subject to the formal conditions of space and of time. Only thus can any knowledge become possible at all. *experience intuition*

4. Preliminary Explanation of the Possibility of the Categories, as Knowledge a priori

intuition concepts
There is one single experience in which all perceptions are represented as in thoroughgoing and orderly connection, just as there is only one space and one time in which all modes¹ of appearance and all relation of being or not being occur. When we speak of different experiences, we can refer only to the various perceptions, all of which, as such, belong to one and the same general experience. This thoroughgoing synthetic unity of perceptions is indeed the form of experience; it is nothing else than the synthetic unity of appearances in accordance with concepts.

synthetic unity of perceptions
A 111
Unity of synthesis according to empirical concepts would be altogether accidental, if these latter were not based on a transcendental ground of unity. Otherwise it would be possible for appearances to crowd in upon the soul, and yet to be such as would never allow of experience. Since connection in accordance with universal and necessary laws would be lacking, all relation of knowledge to objects would fall away. The appearances might, indeed, constitute intuition without thought,² but not knowledge; and consequently would be for us as good as nothing. *transcendental ground of unity*

experience
The a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience. Now I maintain that the categories, above³ cited, are nothing but the conditions of thought in a possible experience just as space and time are⁴ the conditions of intuition for that same experience. They are fundamental concepts by which we think objects in general for appearances, and have therefore a priori objective validity. This is exactly what we desired to prove.

¹ [Formen.]² [gedankenlose Anschauung.]³ [Reading, with Erdmann, oben for eben.]⁴ [enthaltien.]

friend's bed shaking violently in the night, which the friend only retrospectively "remembered" once she learned that her area had, atypically, been subject to an earthquake on the night in question.⁵² Until such time she had no way to make sense of the anomalous experience, because she had no way of locating it consistently with the rest of her conceptual scheme—for example, that beds are not given to shaking for no reason, and that since there was no reason for her bed to shake it could not have done so, and so on. Only once the event could be subsumed under the explanatory concept "earthquake," rather than the anomalous category "beds that shake violently in the night for no reason," could it (retrospectively) be *consciously* experienced and thereby made sense of. Until such time, it may have been "experienced" in some sense—though not consciously.

None of this strikes me as implausible, and empirical evidence from psychotherapy and psychology might well bear it out, but there is a real question as to whether such an account can be derived from Kant. For Kant, such experiences cannot be self-ascribed. According to A112, they would fall outside the "unity of apperception" by virtue of which I can in principle ascribe experiences to myself as my own, as I must be able to do for those experiences to count as mine.⁵³ Such a "blind play of representations, less even than a dream" would be bereft of the necessary—if typically implicit—"I think" that must in principle be capable of accompanying all my representations, and which is required by Kant for claiming those representations (or thoughts) as my own. As a result, they could not belong to any particular empirical person.

That this is so makes clear what Piper stands to gain from her more minimal requirements for rational consistency: it allows her to explain how something that conflicts with the consistency of one's conceptual set—the minimal condition of intelligible experience—could nonetheless impinge on the self, to the extent of prompting either a pseudorational response to the threat to one's beliefs and self-conception, or a recasting of those beliefs to forestall cognitive disarray. But this explanatory gain comes at the cost, if that is the right way to put it, of taking Piper's version beyond the purview of Kant's, full-fat or otherwise.

Recall the thumbnail sketch of Kant's epistemology that I offered in introducing Piper's Kantianism above, specifically the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves: that is, the distinction between things as they are and things as they appear to us given the constraints on human knowledge. According to Kant, sensibility's receptiveness to a spatiotemporal manifold is a necessary but not sufficient condition of experience: necessary because it allows us to receive input from a world outside ourselves; insufficient because, absent the subsumption of such input under schematized pure concepts of the understanding (transcendental synthesis), the fact that we are

52. See "Reason in the Structure of the Self," in *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, pp. 77–79.

53. This is what Piper calls the "self-consciousness property"—the property that any experience must have to count as mine. See Piper, "Reason in the Structure of the Self," pp. 81.

so affected will pass us by. More accurately, there is neither a unified objective world nor a coherent self to cognize it—it being the burden of Kant’s two attempts at a transcendental deduction to establish this. So that while we are affected by what Kant calls the transcendental matter of things-in-themselves, it is always as mediated by the categorial structures of the understanding. Thus, although we are affected by things-in-themselves (how we and the world are in ourselves) it is neither in ways that we can experience directly nor (therefore) ever make sense of. So far as experience that we can make sense of goes, categorial mediation goes all the way down. Whatever the status of this dead space—this “blind play of representations, less even than a dream”—it cannot count as a possible experience for us.

According to Piper, by contrast, whatever we experience affects us insofar as it coheres with the internal unity of our set of empirical concepts—as structured by the subject-predicate form of judgment and law of noncontradiction. These minimal constraints on rational consistency allow, unlike Kant’s more maximal requirements, that we may come to understand conceptual anomalies that currently confound us. This is because the only a priori requirement of experience is the possession of a consistent set, whereas the concepts constituting that set are a posteriori and as such may vary among different people at the same time and with respect to the same person over time. This allows that we may come into contact with, and so be affected by, an object, person, or event that we do not presently possess sufficient conceptual flexibility to make sense of, without this entailing that we could not make sense of it once we possessed the right concepts with which to integrate it into our conceptual scheme, and were willing to modify our other beliefs accordingly. This presentation of the self’s education and reformation has more than a passing resemblance to Thomas Kuhn’s account of how scientific knowledge advances: once prevailing beliefs are presented with sufficient counterweight—anomalous data, confounds, and other counterexamples—such that they can no longer be explained away or accommodated by ad hoc extensions or fixes to prevailing theories, those beliefs or theories have to be overhauled on pain of failing to explain the empirical phenomena under investigation.⁵⁴ Until such time, the experience of perceptual or social contact with something or someone that one cannot make rationally intelligible to oneself will be akin to one’s bed shaking violently in the night—a disorienting shock that one will be hard pressed to understand or acknowledge.

In effect Piper reformulates, within the terms of her own project, Kant’s “blind play of representations, less even than a dream” as the picking out of anomalous experiences rendered *contingently* unconscious by the constraints on rational consistency. Despite differing with respect to how they conceive such constraints and what it would be to fall foul of them, Piper and

54. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Piper briefly recruits Kuhn in this spirit. See Piper, “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism,” p. 194.

Kant nonetheless agree that the constraints on intelligibility leave open a wealth of undetermined empirical particularity that is in principle knowable by us once we hit upon the right empirical concepts with which to understand it.⁵⁵ Piper's version sets out the psychological (and social) costs of approaching, or failing to approach, this undetermined space with an open mind.

Art after Philosophy, Philosophy after Art

By this point one might be wondering how the abstract and general philosophical concerns of Piper's neo-Kantianism connect with the concrete and specific concerns of her politically engaged conceptual art. The question itself points to the first thing that needs to be said: if Piper's philosophical concerns do bear on her art, and I think it is clear that they do, it must be in ways that not only make sense of the specific phenomenon of xenophobia, as one of her art's most prominent themes, but also, as befits a philosophical account, situates xenophobia within a broader philosophical analysis of what makes distortions of empirical acculturation possible—the question of what makes xenophobia *possible* being central to any account that takes its inspiration from Kant. Seen from this perspective, xenophobia comes into focus as an extreme expression of a tendency to which we are naturally disposed: to protect our preferred conception of the world, no matter how skewed, in the interests of an honorific self-conception until such time as the costs to the self of doing so (from mere rationalization, at the more benign end, to psychosis, at the extreme) begin to outweigh the gains.

Piper's interest in dismissive attitudes toward working-class black dance culture (*Funk Lessons*) or presumed differences of appearance and behavior that are not then forthcoming (*My Calling [Card] #1*) may thus be seen as part of a more general interest in pseudorational mechanisms of conceptual exclusion as they apply to individual or collective others. This is what I meant at the outset when I claimed that seen in the light of her philosophical work, the underlying animus of Piper's art turns out to be much broader than the questions of racism in terms of which it is standardly discussed, even if her personal experience of racism may be its proximate cause. Properly understood, Piper's target is distortions of empirical acculturation in general.

From this perspective her antics in the early *Catalysis* works—dancing in public places to an Aretha Franklin soundtrack playing silently in her own head, standing in a shirt covered in wet paint on a crowded thoroughfare, traveling on buses and browsing in bookstores with a towel stuffed in her mouth or wearing foul-smelling clothes, standing stoppered and blindfolded in a downtown bar—can be seen as attempts to put something or someone (in this case herself) for which there is as yet no space in her perceivers' notions of what counts as rational behavior (or even fully human) under other people's noses. Taking place unannounced in public places, these guerrilla

55. Kant's account of empirical concept formation as an instance of reflection judgment in the two introductions to the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* is one explanation of how we are able to do this.

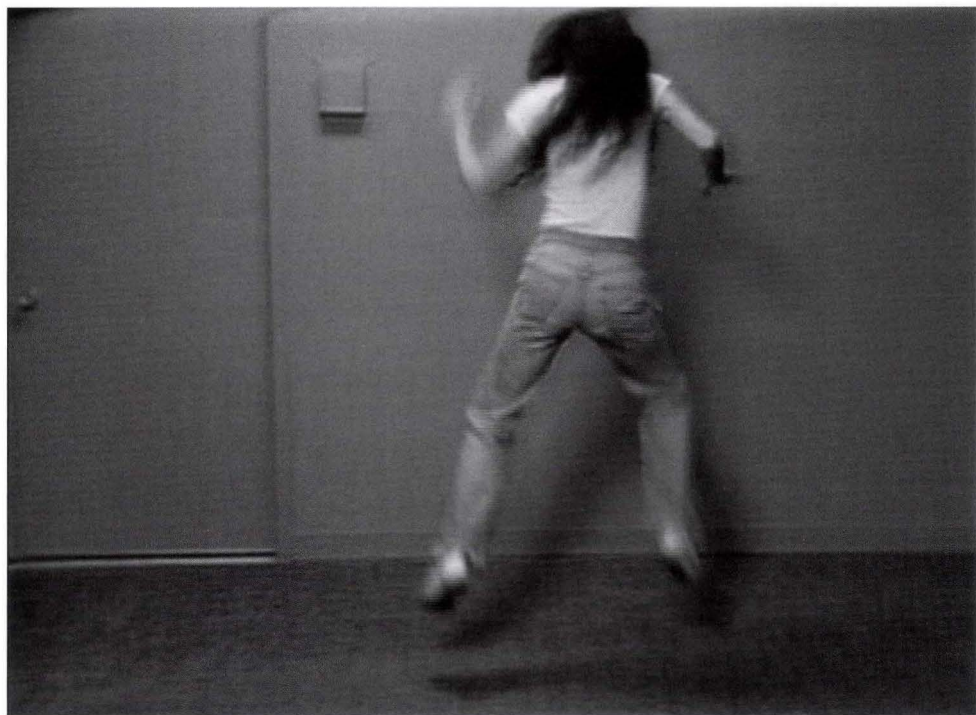
performances are aimed at bemused witnesses who are in no way primed to understand what they are seeing; this allows Piper to turn herself, in the terms of her later philosophical work, into a theoretical anomaly in such a way as to test the defensive reactions of others.

By contrast, the Mythic Being series of street performances—cruising white women in the town square, mugging unsuspecting passersby at a local park, crashing chichi cocktail parties, art openings, and other private gatherings, or repeating mantras excerpted from her personal journals on a crowded shopping street—play with the stereotypes in which white American society tries to cast those they fear, because they instantiate some pejoratively specified kind, beyond the civic and private pale.⁵⁶

By putting pressure on such conceptual laziness, Piper's art, and contemporary art more generally, might be thought of—at least *in potentia*—as a kind of training ground for xenophilia: a safe domain in which to test and stretch our unnecessarily stunted empirical conceptions of self and other. Anomalous entities, persons, and events thus become spurs to the refinement of our understanding of some stretch of experience, notably our experience of other human beings who look or behave differently. In this way, contemporary art might encourage a xenophilic disposition to inquiry and curiosity instead of defensiveness and hostility toward what is unexpected or anomalous relative to some limited empirical standpoint (fig. 9).⁵⁷

56. John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*, serialized in *Sepia* magazine in 1960 and published by Houghton Mifflin in 1961, remains one of the most damning first-person testimonies of this process, and one that earned Griffin (as an undercover white man) the abiding hatred of racist white Southerners for betraying "his own."

57. Piper discusses art as a potential corrective to xenophobia in the closing pages of "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly."



9. *The Big Four Oh*. 1988

This is the most basic sense in which the spirit of Piper's practice as an artist, both before and after the philosophical writings I have discussed, coheres with the spirit of her philosophical work; if the diagnosis of her philosophy is that distortions of empirical acculturation and attendant false generalizations lead to prejudicial categorizations of large sections of the populace, then her art offers a series of concrete attempts to short-circuit this process through various strategies such as humor, parody, mimicry, repetition, overdetermination, undercontextualization, conceptual estrangement, and defamiliarization.

These strategies are evident to different degrees in those works I have already discussed, and I have also suggested that the relatively unknown meta-performances should hold a special place in Piper's oeuvre in that, consistent with her methodological individualism, they put the deformations of her own empirical acculturation on the line. But does the account I have offered also speak to Piper's more recent work? In order to test this I shall discuss two further examples—*Shiva Dances* and *Everything #10*—one from each of two of Piper's more recent series. This should provide some idea of the extent to which the themes I have identified permeate Piper's oeuvre more generally and should also make good on several promissory notes concerning the roles of dance and ideas in Piper's art practice left in passing. Not surprisingly, I shall suggest that each may be approached by means of further resources in Kant's philosophy, in this case his accounts of schematism and aesthetic ideas, respectively.

Piper's designation of *Shiva Dances* (p. 151) as a lecture-performance rather than a meta-performance suggests that it shares a performative dimension with the meta-performances, but with a more academic flavor. And this is true: as befits a contribution to an endowed lecture series called "Hip-Hop and Global Culture," Piper gives an overview of aspects of Vedanta cosmology associated with the god Shiva and reflects on the functions of dance in non-Western cultures before connecting these to the global appeal of hip-hop. But the designation is potentially misleading: given that Piper manages to coax a large part of the audience up onto the stage to dance, it can hardly be said to be a typical academic-lecture experience. As Piper makes clear at the outset, she wants the event to be a multisensory experience, and to this end she suggests a number of "tools for listening," comprising simple body movements (nodding, clapping, gentle bouncing). The allusions to *Funk Lessons* are self-evident, and an excerpt from *Funk Lessons* is the first of several clips that Piper shows. The rest is a succession of dance scenes from the movies *Honey* (2003), *Save the Last Dance* (2001), *Bulworth* (1998), *Bringing Down the House* (2003), *Head of State* (2003), and *The Guru* (2002). What they have in common—aside from a surprisingly benign view of American race relations (surprising, that is, for Piper rather than for Hollywood film), as

well as lashings of Hollywood schmaltz—is a depiction of dance as a means of overcoming inhibitions, stultifying social convention, and, most important, the suspicion of strangers or groups with whom one does not identify on class, ethnic, or racial grounds. Taken together they suggest that Piper sees dance as a force capable not only of undercutting mutual suspicion, but perhaps also of reprogramming or realigning—in a sense to be explained—norms of behavior and interaction in ways that enable people who might otherwise be too wary of one another to participate in a shared experience. This recalls the presentation of dance in *Funk Lessons* as a means of undermining stereotypical reactions to others based on fear. The interesting question, in light of Piper's philosophy, is what makes this true of dance, assuming that it is true. I take this to be the point of the lecture Piper goes on to deliver, even if one needs some sense of Piper's philosophical orientation to fully appreciate it.

After the movie clips but before the lecture, Piper shows the video *Shiva Dances*, from the Color Wheel series (p. 150). The series takes its inspiration from Vedanta cosmology, specifically Shiva's role as the ascetic Hindu god of yoga and dance and Destroyer of Illusions—in particular the *adhyasas*, or illusory projections of the ego by means of which we navigate the world of everyday appearances. Shiva's dance represents the rhythm and movement of the world spirit, a unity of energy and consciousness that is supposed to underlie this illusory reality. I shall largely abstract from the work's cosmological background here, for the reasons already given, and instead focus on the light it may shed on themes already introduced.⁵⁸ I will say, as it is necessary in order to appreciate what is at stake in this work, that Piper understands each work in the series as a tool for the kind of spiritual training required to penetrate this illusory world of name and form (or, in Piper's terms, conceptual categorization).

The video shows a still image of the god Shiva dancing on the back of the demon Apasmarapurusha against a background of the cosmos, the vitality of which his own dance sustains. Shiva is encircled by a fire wheel and is depicted above three Acting Heads, shown in poses associated with the Three Wise Monkeys (hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil). The heads are seen through what look like the crosshairs of a rifle, suggesting that the human tendency to turn a blind eye to falsehood is the work's target. The only change in the image is the succession of Pantone colors that cycle rapidly through the clothing worn by the three heads. The piece, which lasts for approximately seventeen and a half minutes, is accompanied by a soundtrack that begins in a meditative tone, with synthesizers and voice, and then, about five minutes in, becomes percussion driven and rhythmic; and it is during this latter part that Piper, clapping and dancing alone on stage, dwarfed by the projected image, encourages audience members to come up onto the stage to

58. In Hindu cosmology the gods are embodiments of energy and consciousness. That Shiva dances is important: Shiva's dance is the essence and embodiment of rhythm; it is an expression of the underlying rhythm and pulsation of the universe. As such, Shiva embodies vitality, or life, and—as Destroyer of Illusions—truth. See Piper, "The Color Wheel Series," APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/docs/2004TheColorWheelSeries.pdf. On the many interesting relations between Vedanta cosmology and the metaphysics of Kant's Transcendental Idealism, see Piper "Intellectual Intuition in Kant and Samkhya Philosophy" and "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic."

dance. By the end of the lecture the stage is full: this is something to behold, and it provides as vivid a demonstration as one could ask for of those aspects of dance thematized in the film clips that preceded it.

After the video and accompanying sound track come to an end and the audience members have returned to their seats, Piper gives a lecture on the role of dance in important civic functions in non-Western cultures (marking important events and festivals, facilitating group decisions, cementing community bonds, and so on); she stresses that the kind of dance that interests her is not a carefully choreographed, highly stylized, or conventional art form, but rather the basic impulse to dance in ways that are grounded in the body's natural rhythms. In doing so, she characterizes dance as a "rule-governed, regular, habitual, rhythmic bodily sensation" capable, in principle, of transporting individuals beyond themselves, their inhibitions, and, most important, the abstract categories through which they navigate their everyday lives. As such, dance is one of the few remaining socially sanctioned domains for tapping into and taking pleasure in the many basic human experiences of rhythm. In most so-called advanced Western cultures, tapping into such rhythms has been shorn of the civic functions retained in traditional cultures and has been reduced to a commodified domain of entertainment, display, and copping off. Piper takes issue with this trivialization, focusing instead on what allows dance to have these important civic functions in non-Western cultures, and what having such functions enables dance to achieve.

Consistent with claims she has made throughout her career, Piper notes in the lecture that whether dance is likely to have civic significance in a particular context or for particular individuals will depend, empirically, on whether those individuals come from a culture (or subculture) in which rhythmic music and dance is commonplace.⁵⁹ If not, an invitation to dance is likely to produce estrangement, but if so, it is capable of producing an important social bond, a bond that Piper claims may even be a necessary condition of major breakthroughs when faced with seemingly intractable problems, whether of international, domestic, political, social, or economic nature. This is a bold and, on the face of it, rather implausible-seeming claim, and it is not clear how its truth could be demonstrated. Why does Piper believe it? Baldly put, Piper believes that dance, particularly the collective experience of dance, allows individual human beings to attune themselves to a shared, prelinguistic, preconceptual impulse or repository of feeling.⁶⁰ I will not dwell on the possible connection of this thought to Kant's notion of *sensus communis*—roughly, a capacity both for shared feeling, and for judging that one's feeling is shared—but I believe that such a case could be made.⁶¹

In *Shiva Dances*, such a prelinguistic, preconceptual repository of feeling should be understood as part of the energy or

59. See, for example, Piper "Notes on Funk I–IV," *Funk Lessons*, and *Funk Lessons Meta-Performance*.

60. This process is open to corruption: Facism tapped into similarly basic human capacities for communal identification in its pageantry, and one arguably sees analogous processes at work in rock stadiums and sports crowds. The latter in particular exhibit some of the most ugly and intolerant features of human behavior, and the mass consciousness of the former is distinctly unsettling, however apparently benign.

61. This gnomic notion and its role (constitutive or regulative?) in the third *Critique* would take us too far from what I do want to focus on here, but see Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §§20–22, 39, 40.

consciousness that Shiva's dance sustains; indeed, Piper claims that the experience of dance brings the empirical self (or "ego") into attunement with the more basic human and, ultimately, sub- or prehuman natural rhythms that underpin life. The 4:4 rhythm shared by most forms of traditional drumming would thus be a mechanism for grounding the self in these more fundamental, universal rhythms, forging a connection between the individual and something of cosmological significance that—so the argument runs—grounds the individual self. In Vedanta cosmology this would be the undifferentiated energy or consciousness associated with Shiva's dance, but what would it be in Kantian terms?

In Kantian terms, it could only be the thing-in-itself: an unknowable, supersensible substratum or ground that transcends the constraints of all possible sensibly embodied experience yet underpins both knower and known, human being and world. Something that, as we have seen, affects us, though not in ways we could possibly make sense of as *finite* rational beings—that is, as imperfectly rational beings whose knowledge is constrained by what can be sensibly experienced. Piper does not go on to present dance in relation to this aspect of Kant's philosophy, presumably because Kant and Vedanta part company as to whether one could, in principle, have experience beyond such constraints.⁶² Nonetheless, although Piper never mentions Kant by name in *Shiva Dances*, her most philosophically suggestive characterization of dance recalls a central tenet of Kant's theory of knowledge; she presents rhythmic dance as something that mediates between two extremes: the unique (and thus, strictly speaking, ineffable) concrete particularity of all entities, ourselves included, on the one hand, and the generality and repeatability of the conceptual structures through which we try to make sense of these entities on the other. By conceiving of dance as partaking of both, that is, by conceiving of dance as both repeatable (or rule-governed) action and a domain of irreducibly specific (and hence nonrepeatable) bodily sensation, Piper is effectively attributing to it a schematizing function. This function turns on rhythm, which can be understood as the application of regularity to bodily sensation or, better, as the subsumption of bodily sensation under patterns of lawlike regularity in time. By patterning bodily sensation in time, rhythm renders it repeatable and hence communicable—capable of being shared—rather than private and brute.⁶³ In effect: *rhythm formalizes sensation*.

Piper's way of characterizing dance is, I think, clearly intended to echo Kant, given Kant's conception of schematism as the crucial cognitive process that renders abstract, highly general, nonspatiotemporal thought structures (the pure concepts of the understanding) applicable to empirical intuitions given in space and time. For Kant this entails temporalizing those thought structures to produce schemata (rules

62. See the concluding pages of Piper, "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic."

63. Just as, it bears remarking, grounding judgment in *sensus communis* is supposed to render mere feeling communicable—that is, shareable—rather than private in Kant's aesthetics.

or templates for unifying the perceptual manifold), by means of which we are able to judge whether some particular encountered in experience does or does not fall under some concept.⁶⁴ Like so much in Kant, what exactly he is claiming about this cognitive function, and whether it is successful—or could be successful—remains contested. But there is no need to get waylaid by fine-grained debates in Kant scholarship here. All we need to grasp is that according to Kant's theory, schemata are required in order to mediate between intellect and sensibility, the twin roots of human knowledge. By partaking of both the lawlike, rule-governed regularity of the categories and the spatiotemporal nature of sensibility, schemata are supposed to explain how the nontemporal, nonspatial categories could—possibly—get a grip on sensible intuitions given in space and time.

That Kant's conception of schematism may be used analogically to model her conception of dance suggests that for Piper, dance has the mediating role of bringing together our intellectual and sensuous natures. It does this by drawing on the whole person, both in its spontaneity and in its receptivity, but at a foundational, protoconceptual level. This would be the deep significance of dance for Piper's art: by patterning mere sensation (in Kantian terms always the idiosyncratic matter rather than the shared form of experience) in space and time, rhythmic dance is capable of infusing sensation with thought (making sensation think) and thought with sensation (making thinking sense). It brings thought and sensation together as feeling: something prior to and less determinate than thought proper, but more articulate and reflective than mere sensation. By fulfilling a role that is (in Kantian terms) a condition of the subsumption of particulars under universals, and doing so by bringing individuals into alignment or harmony with the feeling of others, Piper's gamble may be that the experience of dance can realign, so to speak, our empirical conceptions and the judgments that accompany them.

This—by which I mean both my interpretation and the project I am attributing to Piper, if my interpretation is right—is highly speculative. Note that it would not seem possible on strictly Kantian grounds, because the categories that schematism renders spatiotemporal are themselves timeless—universal and necessary conditions of human experience for all eternity. But given Piper's more minimal commitments to how much of our cognitive architecture should be conceived as hardwired, and her belief that the only thing sustaining the rational intelligibility of experience is the horizontal and vertical consistency of an agent's conceptual set at any given time, there is much more scope for the particular beliefs and concepts that secure the intelligibility of experience to shift over time. Dance, as Piper employs it in her art, may be one Archimedean point from which to shift lazy, stereotypical, and defensive patterns of thought, through the shared experience of lawlike (rhythmic)

64. For a fine-grained analysis of schemata in terms of perceptual rules that guide perception in its interpretation of sensible data, see Henry E. Allison "The Schematism of the Understanding and the Power of Judgment," *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, rev. ed. (1983; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 202–28.

bodily sensation in time. If this reading has legs, it makes dance a privileged means of circumventing or shifting the ossification toward which conceptualization naturally tends. It would also provide an explanation, grounded in the deep structures of subjectivity, for why dance can have the powerful effects that it does, and this in turn would explain Piper's ongoing use of dance, from *Aretha Franklin Catalysis* (1971–72) through *The Big Four Oh* (1988) to *Shiva Dances*. Returning to Vedanta cosmology, it might also explain why Piper takes *Shiva Dances*, as demonstrated in Chicago, as a tool for the kind of spiritual training required to penetrate the illusions of “name and form”—or what Kant might call subsumption and synthesis.

If the foregoing account, speculative as it is, is along the right lines, it not only brings out some fundamental connections between Piper's art and philosophy but also locates her recurrent use of dance in relation to the themes and motivation of both. What has yet to be fully demonstrated, however, is how individual works could embody the breadth of Piper's philosophical concerns. For these go well beyond the specific issues, such as racism and xenophobia, in terms of which her art is typically discussed, to encompass both more general failures of rationality and the conditions of possibility of those failures in the constitution of the self. Now, it may well be that Piper's art practice, being concrete and specific, cannot engage with such issues with the breadth that philosophy, being abstract and general, allows. But the last work I shall consider, *Everything #10*, should give us pause, since as an individual work of art, if not as part of a series, it makes no reference to racism or xenophobia at all. In singling out this work I want to use it as a basis for considering how ideas function in Piper's art more broadly.

Together with my account of how her philosophical work may be used to illuminate what is at stake in her art, this is where my reading of Piper's art departs from most others that I have read. If I had to distill what I find lacking in these other readings, it is what I would call their “rush to content.” It is undeniable that Piper's work often deals with urgent and emotive subject matter. But the self-evidence of Piper's subject matter can often mislead. Her work's deeper significance, as distinct from its explicit subject matter, is not nearly so obvious or determinate. I am not convinced that Piper's works even have determinate meanings that may be neatly paraphrased—and this is a good thing, for the reasons I set out at the beginning. In the last analysis, this is a consequence of the ways in which Piper's art embodies the ideas that it presents. Once again, I believe this can be best illuminated by resources in Kant, albeit this time his aesthetics rather than his epistemology or moral theory.

Everything #10 is, as the title suggests, part of a series. What each work in the series has in common is that each incorporates the legend “Everything will be taken away.” Otherwise they are made in a wide variety of mediums and take a wide

variety of forms. These include a whited-out video of two brief CNN reports about the abduction, sexual abuse, rape, and torture of Megan Williams, a twenty-year-old African-American woman, by six white Americans over a week in September 2007, together with a wall text from the *International Herald Tribune* reporting the case (*Everything* #19.2 and #19.1 [2007 and 2008], two of a series of works on this case and the failure of most major U.S. news agencies to report it); a wallpaper made from whited-out photographic portraits of assassinated civil rights leaders, both black and white (Abraham Lincoln, Medgar Wiley Evers, John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy [*Everything* #6 (2004) (pp. 156–57)]); a wallpaper made from the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights (*Everything* #18 [2007] (p. 160)); various more personal works, including obscured or partially obliterated photographs of what seem to be family and friends and various domestic settings; and an installation that brought together these and other, more sculptural works (a mirror, a small dumpster, a cut-away section of a gallery's interior wall) shown in 2008 at Elizabeth Dee Gallery, in New York (fig. 10). In each case the legend appears prominently in red capital letters, often as an overlay, within the works themselves.

Here I am going to focus on *Everything* #10 (p. 161), which I take to be the most open-ended work in the series. It was commissioned, together with work by other artists (including Gelitin, Spartacus Chetwynd, Jonathan Monk, and Javier Téllez) for *Six Actions for New York City*, a series of performances and events sponsored by Creative Time in 2007. Piper's work consisted of the same five words painted in henna on the foreheads



10. Installation view of *Everything*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, March 1–April 19, 2008

of volunteers but with the text reversed from left to right, so that it only scanned easily when read in a mirror. Piper provided specific instructions to the participants:

- (1) Paint the phrase backwards on your forehead using a durable henna stain;
- (2) wear it until it finally fades, and for the duration, check your reflection in a mirror at least three times a day and write down your thoughts;
- (3) archive these notes for a minimum of one year, then reread them.

The henna was applied by professionals provided by the event's organizers. The properties of henna as a stain are such that, by participating, Piper's volunteers were effectively committing themselves to wearing the reversed legend in plain view on their foreheads as they went about their daily business, whatever that might be, for several weeks.

Everything #10 shares some of its elements with earlier works in the series. *Everything #3* (2004) and *Everything #8* (2006) (p. 47), for example, were both publicly sited. In the latter the legend appeared on the mirrored glass of a large vitrine on a busy street in Copenhagen. But in the former it was worn around the streets of Brooklyn, printed on a sandwich board, by another volunteer-participant, this time the curator Jacob Fabricius.⁶⁵ *Everything #10* is nonetheless unique in that, unlike both, it is the only work from the series in which the legend appeared reversed in this way—a fact that can hardly be insignificant. By involving live performers, *Everything #10*, like Piper's meta-performances—but perhaps even more so—created a feedback loop that put pressure on the beliefs and assumptions not only of the work's audience but especially of the performers themselves. This is made clear by the journal entries that participants were required to make three times per day on looking at their reflections in a mirror. And this is where the mirror-reversal of the text becomes telling: it suggests that the primary audience for the work was whoever could most easily read its script, which would typically be its wearers, looking at themselves in a mirror. The fact that they were required to do so several times a day and record their feelings adds weight to this reading. The work is classified—not inappropriately, though perhaps with unintended irony—as a “durational performance for an unspecified number of participants” in Piper's archive, the unintended irony being that the performance turned out to be, for most of its participants, an experience to be endured. It is without doubt the most potent work in the series. In fact, I think it could be taken as a distilled statement of Piper's artistic project as a whole.

65. This may be an oblique reference to a notorious scene in the film *Die Hard with a Veengeance* (1995), in which the character played by Bruce Willis is forced to stand on the corner of Amsterdam Avenue and 138th Street in Harlem wearing a sandwich board reading “I HATE NIGGERS,” until he is rescued from angry gang members by a local repair-shop owner, played by Samuel L. Jackson. During filming, on location, the board was apparently left blank, with the legend added in postproduction. See Timothy Shary, “1995: Movies, Teens, Tots, and Tech,” in Chris Holmlund, ed., *American Cinema of the 1990s: Themes and Variations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), p. 140. In an adaptation produced for television, the legend reads, instead, “I HATE EVERYBODY.”

The artists participating in *Six Actions for New York City* were asked to devise works which had a passing relationship to the street, meaning, one assumes, transitory, leaving neither mark nor trace. "Passing," of course, is a word with highly particular connotations in Piper's corpus, and the range of meanings that attach to the term may function as well as recessed leitmotif of Piper's contribution. "Passing" denotes the disavowal of one's black ancestry for the sake of assimilation into the white community—that is, pretending to be something you are not out of shame or fear, or for the advantages it conveys in a racist society. In a way that it is hard to pin down precisely but that comes out in the participants' journal entries, *Everything #10* seems to put its performers in a strangely analogous position: putting them on show, so they are constantly scrutinized and surveyed, uncomfortable in their own skins, subject to pervasive stress. What the journal entries reveal is the extent to which most of the work's participant-performers underestimated the feelings of estrangement that would result from being marked out in this way. Most, but not all: at least one participant regretted that the stain faded as quickly as it did. The rest, marked not by themselves but by someone else, could not even claim ownership of the difference that marked them out but were instead made to suffer it. As was true for Piper in my reading of *My Calling (Card) #1*, the sheer fact of their existence was made an issue for them by others.

What does this suggest about the work's meaning? Piper's choices never seem arbitrary, though this need not mean that they are self-consciously willed. Does the use of henna, for example, provide any sort of clue? That henna stains the skin, and that Piper takes racism to be an essentially visual pathology—a defensive reaction to how others look and behave—is surely relevant here. But are there more specific connotations of henna at play? Henna has a surprisingly rich and varied history, which can be traced back to the Bronze Age, including its uses as a medicinal herb; an antifungal ointment; a preservative; a pesticide; a perfume; a dye for hair, fabric, and leather; and a means of female bodily adornment on important personal occasions (for example, as a sign of fertility on the wedding day), not to mention various civic and religious celebrations. As a source of adornment, it is typically associated with good luck, joy, and beauty, and it has been used as such by a wide range of cultures and religions; Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians, among others, in regions where the plant is native, have celebrated a "night of henna." Besides being widely used in Western cultures as a hair dye, it is perhaps most commonly associated with the mehndi designs worn on the hands and feet of women of Hindu and Muslim descent for weddings and religious festivals. And it is these latter uses that strike me as closest in spirit to Piper's own. Given the dye's associations with the Hindu and perhaps especially Muslim diaspora, and given the resonance of the

phrase “Everything will be taken away” in post-9/11 New York City, it is hard not to think that these words, written in this way and in this context, call up the so-called War on Terror. And it is true that they did seem to take on such a meaning for some of the participants and some of those who encountered them.

In her first diary entry Lisa Kellner, one of Piper’s volunteers, wrote, “I went into Strand [Books] and checked my bag. The bag check guy looked at me with extreme suspicion and angst.” Two days later she mused, “The funny thing is that with the state of our world and our politics, I already feel like everything has been taken away. Everything that is important anyway: lives, freedom, acceptance, peace.” Tess Korobkin, another volunteer, recorded her guilt on being complimented for her individuality by a stranger: “He gave me way too much credit. This is not a display of brave individuality but of group-think. I am one of fifty branded with a message that is not my own. I am a fundamentalist. I am the card reader who reveals a future reflecting what you fear.” Korobkin was evidently ambivalent about her new sense of anomalousness:

I am enjoying having so many people look into my face. I love that first moment of openness, but then dread fills me as they begin to decipher the message. I didn’t choose it—I carry it—but it is what I have to offer them. . . . I am the one in the subway posed at the top of tall stairs shouting “Repent! The end is near!” I carry a small doom with me.⁶⁶

Such fantasies of being a harbinger of doom say more about the state of mind that the work produced in the performer than it does about its viewers, many of whom seemed to take it quite differently. But doesn’t Korobkin’s feeling of being a prophet of doom assume that what she or others already possess is something worth taking—something the presence of which would be missed? The statement could equally, depending on circumstances, promise relief from some intolerable burden. What one takes the work to mean seems to have everything to do with one’s personal situation (as a Wall Street banker after the collapse of Lehmann Bros., as a husband cheating on his wife, as a death row convict awaiting the results of an appeal, as a sufferer of a terminal illness in acute pain, as an elite athlete at a doping tribunal); with where the words are encountered (at work, in church, at a divorce hearing, on line at a soup kitchen, at the barbershop—the possibilities range from the sublime to the ridiculous); and with the ways in which wearing the message makes its carrier behave.

Thus an employee at B&H Photo, in New York, remarked to Korobkin, “‘It just seems [so] negative. [It’s] true that you lose things in life and that you die, but your soul lives on. It denies that your soul would be left.’ I asked him what he would prefer. ‘One good deed can change the world.’” I cannot help

66. The journals of several participants are available at “Six Actions for New York City,” Creative Time website, creativetime.org/programs/archive/2007/performance/piper_blog.html.

fondly remembering Martin Creed's bittersweet *Work No. 203 EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT* (1999) (fig. 11), the title of which used to be emblazoned in upbeat, zingy white neon above the deeply forlorn portico of a dilapidated Neoclassical church around the corner from where I live, in Hackney, East London: both Piper's and Creed's works were gentle, muffled explosions in the everyday—the latter long since swept away by the area's rapid gentrification.

Some reactions, by contrast, were positively funny: Katherine Rust met an "old dude with a cowboy hat on the 6 train," who told her, "I think you should tell that artist that she has it backward." Rust also encountered a "slightly drunk woman" at the Midtown bar she tended, who asked, "Everything?" "Yes." "Take away my husband." The variety of these reactions—each provoked no doubt in part by how wearing the legend affected the wearer and hence the spirit in which they wore it—suggests, against the determinate reading I entertained above, that it is in fact not at all clear what the work finally means. Could it mean anything determinate (final, fixed, unequivocal) to write "Everything will be taken away" in a material associated with female adornment for Muslim and Hindu weddings and religious festivals, mirror-reversed across the foreheads of (apparently) non-Muslim, non-Hindu male and female volunteers? It seems to me that it can mean a bewildering variety of things—to the same person at different times or in different contexts, and to different people at the same time or in the same context. What must it have meant to Korobkin, who was teaching creative writing in prisons at the time, to



11. Martin Creed
Work No. 203: EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT, 1999

see herself in the mirror of a prison bathroom? Presumably something quite different from what it felt like to be looked at on the subway, or in her own bathroom mirror before turning in, or for any of those (inmates, commuters, housemates, or lovers) who may have seen and deciphered the text in any of those contexts.

Other reactions suggest that the work may be about taking up a different point of view onto, or way into, similar artistic terrain to that mapped out by the earlier *Catalysis* works. A volunteer who identifies herself only as Johanna, and who otherwise seems to embrace her newfound appearance, remarked,

On my way home I think how it must feel to be "different." . . . Knowing that everyone sees you in a way they normally don't see me. I feel I need to behave more correctly than normally. I feel that I am being watched. I also wonder whether I am gonna like to have this feeling constantly for the next few weeks. . . . People are looking at me. I have effectively called attention to myself. . . . My forehead has intruded upon the expected. I am different, no longer unobtrusive. Someone just read me. I just want to hide. This is definitely out of my comfort zone.

Reactions such as this suggest that the conditions created by Piper sometimes led her volunteers to experience the kind of psychological state that may have motivated the *Catalysis* works: the position of feeling anomalous, disconnected, marginalized, outcast. Whether setting up these conditions is an act of moral edification, cruelty, or both is an open question. That it is an open question, that the work does not predigest or resolve this for either its participants or its viewers, it seems to me, is part of the work's strength as art, but if so, its strength as art may come at the cost of its moral probity and humanity.

By raising so many questions, the diaries go to the heart of what is at stake in this work and much of Piper's art practice. Because the work provokes a series of minor disturbances in everyday relations, because it uses anomalous or unexpected ways of behaving or appearing to shine a light on unthinking patterns of behaving and knowing, and because it encourages both participants and those they encounter to reflect on how such encounters make them feel as *individuals*, it can be read as a distillation of Piper's artistic project more generally.

But what, if anything, is the significance of Piper's neo-Kantianism, as I have presented it, for this aspect of her art? Piper has expressed the hope that works of art, by stretching us conceptually, might function as a kind of training ground for xenophilia: that is, a domain in which to test our necessarily partial conceptions of self and other, and, by doing so, to foster a disposition for enquiry and curiosity, rather than hostility and defensiveness, when confronted by something that strikes us as unexpected or anomalous.⁶⁷ All well and good: but how,

67. See Piper, "Xenophilia and Aesthetic Anomaly" in "Xenophobia and Moral Anomaly."

precisely, is art able to do this? That art stretches us conceptually seems undeniable, but what is it about art that makes this possible? This is a question that Kant's theory of works of art as expressions of aesthetic ideas is well placed to answer.

To see this, one needs some sense of the significance that ideas, as opposed to concepts, have in Kant's philosophy. The difference for Kant is important. What the former pick out can never be the object of a possible experience for finite rational beings, because anything that counts as genuine knowledge or experience for such beings must have empirical conditions of application, and ideas have no such conditions. In short: ideas, unlike concepts, are never fully given in experience. And because we can have no determinate knowledge or experience of the objects of such ideas (God, freedom, immortality, and so on), we have no grounds for asserting their objective truth. Indeed, doing so requires us to step outside the constraints on genuine human knowledge. Yet despite this, ideas of reason are not simply empty; they can have an important regulative (or action-guiding function) for human beings. Take the idea of freedom. Without this idea, human beings could not so much as aspire to act morally: aspiring to act morally (freely determining one's own ends, for Kant in accordance with the demands of reason) requires that we act under the *idea* of freedom, even though we cannot *know* whether we are in fact free. Freedom is not a possible object of knowledge for finite rational beings; for all we know, we may in fact be determined. Yet since we could not even aspire to act if we did not take ourselves to be free to determine our own ends and act accordingly, rationality requires that insofar as we do aspire to act, we act under this idea. The very notion of acting, as opposed to being determined in some way, requires it. So, despite not being an object of knowledge or experience—unlike empirical concepts with determinate objects—freedom nonetheless has an important role for human beings. This already gives some indication of the significance that the expression of rational ideas in art might hold for Kant. But given how Kant understands such ideas, the claim that works of art present such ideas in sensible form raises a question of how something with no empirical conditions of application could be so presented. Kant's theory of works of art as the expression of aesthetic ideas is intended to explain this.

By characterizing art as the expression of aesthetic ideas, Kant has in mind not only what is distinctive about the content of works of art but, more important, what is distinctive about how works of art are obliged to present that content as a result. What is distinctive about a work's content is either that it presents ideas that can be encountered in experience (love, envy, prejudice) but with a fullness that experience never affords, or that they communicate supersensible ideas (eternity, immortality, God) that cannot, in principle, be encountered in experience by finite rational beings. In other words, there

is a weak and a strong formulation of Kant's claim about what works of art communicate. Which is just as well, given that the majority of works of art clearly do not fulfill the strong version of the thesis: only some works of art express rational ideas that cannot in principle be exhibited in experience. It would render Kant's theory of art indefensibly stipulative were it to insist on the strong formulation for all works of art.

What is distinctive about how works of art present such content (whether this is taken in the strong or the weak sense) is that they imaginatively expand the ideas presented by virtue of the indirect means through which they are obliged to present them. For rather than presenting the idea itself (or, in the case of ideas that can be encountered in experience, the idea in its fullness) directly to intuition, which would be impossible, aesthetic ideas present the aesthetic attributes of their object, thereby expressing an idea's implications and kinship with other concepts. Kant's example—"Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws"—aesthetically expands the idea of God's majesty by presenting it indirectly.⁶⁸ What Kant calls the logical attributes of an idea, in this case God, would be those that fulfill a concept, in this case majesty; Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws, by contrast, is an indirect expression of those same attributes, through which we are encouraged to view God's majesty in light of the wealth of thoughts provoked by Jupiter's eagle, thereby opening up a rich—and, in principle, endless—seam of further associations. Roughly: think about a creature so powerful that it can grip lightning in its talons, and you are on your way to thinking about the awe-inspiring nature of God's majesty. The indirect presentation of ideas in art in this way provokes, in Kant's words, "more thought" than a discursive paraphrase of their content could afford, thereby aesthetically expanding the ideas presented:

[Aesthetic attributes] . . . prompt the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words. These aesthetic attributes yield an *aesthetic idea*. . . . Its proper function is to quicken the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations.⁶⁹

When Kant claims that the expression of ideas in art quickens [*beleben*] the mind, he means it does so by freeing the imagination from the task of mechanically schematizing concepts of understanding. No longer constrained to present these concepts in sensible form, as it is in determinate judgment, the imagination is set free by aesthetic ideas to roam swiftly over a multitude of related thoughts and forms. By freeing it from subordination to, though not compatibility with, the requirements of understanding, aesthetic ideas stimulate the mind, albeit in a much less structured way than determinate cognition, thereby

68. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §49, Ak. 315.

69. *Ibid.*

encouraging us to view the ideas presented in a new light. It is the richness and longevity of the imaginative play to which this gives rise that constitutes both the locus of artistic meaning and the source of art's value. And it is precisely such richness of artistic meaning, as distinct from mere subject matter, that I have been at pains to draw attention to in Piper's art.

Now, it might be objected that this account, because it is framed with representational art in mind, will be unable to cope with the challenges of Piper's conceptual art, or indeed art in any nontraditional medium. But that is not so.⁷⁰ Take *Everything #10*: what does it mean to claim, "Everything will be taken away"? Consider the idea of "everything"; one could not hope for a better example of a rational idea in Kant's sense. One cannot *think* "everything," which is to say that one cannot hold "everything" in thought. God, as a perfectly (nonfinitely) rational being, presumably could, but God's experience is precisely what is denied to finite, imperfectly rational beings such as ourselves. "Everything" is not a possible object of knowledge or experience for finite rational beings: it is an idea. Taken literally it could mean anything from "everything we possess," "our lives," "the sum total of our world," or "everything in the universe" to "the universe itself." To be able to think the "everything" in "Everything will be taken away," we would have to be able to hold what is picked out by such an infinite expanse of things determinately in thought. But this cannot be done: infinity is itself an idea rather than a concept for finite rational beings; we can *conceive* of it (as "that without end" or "that for which nothing else could serve as its measure," perhaps), but we cannot experience or hold it in thought. It is equally impossible for us to think its negation—that is, what would be left once everything has been taken away, namely nothing, complete absence. This could only be another idea. Works of art, in other words, seem to achieve the impossible: they present ideas that cannot be held in thought by finite rational beings—cannot, in Piper's terms, be conceptualized—and do so by embodying them in determinate sensible form. The key is that they do so indirectly, by presenting one thing in terms of or in light of the associations called up by another, but in doing so indirectly they make those ideas tractable in ways that they would not otherwise be.

But this is not all. Like my earlier remarks about *My Calling (Card) #1*, this description of *Everything #10* is intended to demonstrate that the work's meaning cannot be reduced to its propositional content, in this case the expression written on its participants' foreheads. For its meaning must also encompass the act of sending the volunteers out into a particular city at a particular time with this phrase, written in this way, in this medium, and in this place, on their persons. It includes their reflections, both sotto voce and committed to print, and whatever meaning—whatever muffled explosion—encountering these people, with this legend, written in this medium, in this way,

70. I have defended the applicability of Kant's theory of art to a number of conceptual artists besides Piper, whose work is widely assumed to shipwreck Kant's aesthetics. In addition to the LeWitt paper mentioned above, see Costello, "Danto and Kant, Together at Last?" in Mike Rollins, ed., *Danto and His Critics*, rev. ed. (1993; New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); and "Kant and the Problem of Strong Non-Perceptual Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53, no. 3 (July 2013), for the application of the theory to Art & Language's *Index 01*, 1972, and Robert Barry's "All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking—1:36pm; June 15, 1969."

held for those who encountered them. All this and more is part of the work's artistic form, in the expanded sense that I outlined earlier; all this and more contributes to the way in which the work presents the indeterminate and indeterminable idea that everything could, conceivably, be taken away.

There are obvious resources here, both for understanding Piper's broader project and for interpreting her artwork more generally. Take Piper's philosophical contention that because our humanity or personhood is an idea, we go wrong if we make our limited empirical self-conceptions prescriptive for what we are prepared to countenance as another human being in the full sense. This speaks to the weight that attaches to the idea of the person in both Piper's and Kant's philosophies. Given this, Kant's conception of works of art as indirect expression of ideas provides a rich resource for thinking about the possibilities of indirectly communicating what lies beyond any individual's limited conceptual scheme. It is perhaps for this reason that Kant writes that the unified aesthetic attributes of a work of art "yield" an aesthetic idea in the mind of its recipient, by enlivening their powers of cognition.

To this one might object that if such ideas really do lie beyond the possible conceptual scheme of any individual, how is it possible for artists to communicate them or for the recipients of their work to grasp them? In response Kant appeals to genius, which he conceives as a capacity "first, to discover ideas for a given concept and, second, to hit upon a way of *expressing* these ideas that enables us to communicate to others, as accompanying a concept, the mental attunement that those ideas produce."⁷¹ But this might be regarded as merely pushing the question back a step, rather than answering it. For how does—how could—a genius do that? To this Kant has an even more canny response: genius, if that is taken to mean the *willing* artist, does not. Rather "nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) gives the rule to art."⁷² Genius, in Kant's formulation, is the "innate mental predisposition . . . through which *nature* gives the rule to art [*italics mine*]."⁷³ By extension, our capacity to grasp what works of genius communicate must also be the work of "nature in the subject," the attunement of our own mental capacities or powers.

Recall Piper's understanding of rhythmic dance as a kind of schematism—a way of bridging the gap between sensible and intelligible, capable of shifting ossified patterns of thought by formalizing bodily sensation in time. Set alongside Kant's notions of aesthetic ideas and "nature in the subject," the twin poles of intelligibility and sensuousness in the domain of aesthetic production, they provide a fertile starting point for understanding how one might promote xenophilia through art.

71. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §49, Ak. 317

72. *Ibid.*, §46, Ak. 307

73. *Ibid.*

BODY AND SOUL

ELVAN ZABUNYAN

Who sees all beings in his own Self, and his own Self in all
beings, loses all fear.
—Isa Upanishad 6

Orientation

Between 2007 and 2010, Robert Del Principe, formerly the director of the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA), interviewed Piper about the thirty-four years she had devoted to her monumental book, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self* (she began the manuscript in 1982) (fig. 1).¹ The conversation between the longtime accomplices took place at the foundation, in a room containing Piper's entire body of work. Toward the end of the edited version, a sixty-minute video, Del Principe asks Piper why it is so important to her to follow an idea through to its end. Piper replies,

It's because I'm basically a '60s hippie at heart. And I believe that everything is connected. . . . And the point of having an intellect, the point of having a mind is to find meaning, is to figure out what the connections are, to place any individual thing in its context, in its relationship to other things, and see the beauty of any kind of scientific investigation, any kind of intellectual investigation. . . . You start realizing that those connections are in fact systematic, and so what you're doing is not really inventing something, you're discovering something.²

Given the nature of the preceding conversation, this reference to the '60s and the hippie ideal is disarming. Yet it turns out to be very specific to Piper's dynamic research and art-making practices.

Since 1965 Piper has been immersed in the combined practices of yoga, writing, and art, traveling back and forth over this philosophical, political, and spiritual expanse to create work that encourages the manifestation of thought. The expansiveness of thought—the way thoughts can accrue and swell ever outward—what Piper calls a “thought-event,” because it is “a discrete brain event”—is in keeping with the expansiveness of time and plays with its suppleness and elasticity like a body in motion.³ When Piper refers to the 1960s, in the interview with Del Principe, the artworks in the backdrop evidence the link between the roles Piper assumes as artist and philosopher and bring together the process of memory with the present. The connection, at once physical and conceptual, allows us to understand the reference to the '60s, because in Piper's work, chronology is associated with specific dates, each a possibility to determine the moment the thought-event is formed, considered, and freed.

While the contributions of Kantian philosophy and yoga to Piper's artistic practice are cited frequently in essays written about her, they are usually considered complementary elements

1. Adrian Piper, in “Rationality and the Structure of the Self,” interview with Robert Del Principe, 2007–10, video, Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA) website, www.adrianpiper.com/philosophy-rss-video-interview.shtml.

2. Ibid., at 00:59:50.

3. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2 *A Kantian Conception* (2008; Berlin: APRA, 2013), www.adrianpiper.com/rss/docs/PiperRSSVol2KC.pdf, p. 201.

to be studied separately. To delve into Piper's artistic and philosophical work and account for all three elements—art, philosophy, and yoga—is a singular and intense experience for those who attempt it, in part because to study Piper is also to appropriate her methodological tools. The intensity of experience is perhaps not unlike the state Piper has described finding herself in when she locked herself away for several weeks during the summer of 1971 with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, fasting and practicing yoga—what would become *Food for the Spirit* (pp. 122–25). Slipping into Piper's artistic and theoretical world means exploring where historically determined social categories become porous. Criticism, politics, images, the body, intellect, emotions, and sound unite as the engines of analysis both in and for her work. “To anchor myself in the physical world,” Piper wrote of making *Food for the Spirit*,

I ritualized my frequent contacts with the physical appearance of myself in the mirror. . . . I rigged up a camera and tape recorder next to the mirror so that every time the fear of losing myself overtook me and drove me to the “reality check” of the mirror, I was able both to record my physical appearance objectively and also to record myself on tape repeating the passage of the *Critique* that was currently driving me to self-transcendence.⁴

These visual and sound recordings mark the distance that separates present from past, while also repeatedly allowing

4. Piper, “Food for the Spirit,” *High Performance* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1981); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 55.



1. Adrian Piper Interview: Rationality and the Structure of the Self. Interview by Robert Del Principe. 2007–10

the two temporalities to come into contact: the camera and the audio recorder (and, by extension, the video recorder) enable us to rewind and fast-forward, manipulating the past in the here and now.

Piper is extremely precise when recounting an artistic experiment, because she imposes on herself the same meticulousness that she demands of everyone whom she engages in dialogue. For her, the act of addressing another person is one of the ways she constructs her work at the intersection of the self and others. In the interview with Del Principe, Piper compares her process of research and writing to adjusting the focus on a camera lens; Del Principe has just asked her why it's taken so long to complete *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*. "The image just gets sharper and sharper, and you start seeing the relationship of the different parts to one another," Piper explains.⁵ Until this clarity appears, she continues, doubt reigns. Her gestures on-screen, as if she is manually focusing a camera, signal that she is an artist who, as well as understanding the technology she often uses, knows how to bridge the various disciplines she works in, here art making and philosophical writing. What took time, Piper says, was determining the various parts of the book and the relationship between these parts. The relationship between the whole and its parts in Piper's work is one of fragmentation rather than dismantling, a singularity composed of multiplicities, much like the world in which experience takes place. These fragments, so to speak, are subject to temporal and spatial laws, so that in her installations viewers become observers of a universe understood in its etymological sense. *Uni* (one) and *versum* (to turn, rotate, roll, or change) initiate the trajectory and propose a common direction, each individual becoming conscious of her responsibilities in and to the world.

Recalling what Kant has written about orientation is interesting in this context. The philosopher, known for his concept of *universality*—a concept essential to Enlightenment thought and to our understanding of objectivity—identifies in orientation the possibility of subjectivity:

In the proper meaning of the word, to *orient* oneself means to use a given direction (when we divide the horizon into four of them) in order to find the others—literally, to find the *sunrise*. Now if I see the sun in the sky and know it is now midday, then I know how to find south, west, north, and east. For this, however, I also need the feeling of a difference in my own subject, namely, the difference between my right and left hands. I call this a *feeling* because these two sides outwardly display no designatable difference in intuition. . . . Even with all the objective data of the sky, I orient myself geographically only through a subjective ground of differentiation; and if all the constellations, through keeping the same shape and position relative to one another, were one day by a miracle to be reversed in their direction, so that what was east

5. Piper, interview with Del Principe, at 00:01:48.

now became west, no human eye would notice the slightest alteration on the next bright starlit night, and even the astronomer—if he pays attention only to what he sees and not at the same time to what he feels—would inevitably become *disoriented*.⁶

In Piper's work, we recognize this same oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity. As the artist told the writer Diana C. Stoll in a 2002 interview in *Aperture*,

What I have experienced is that my subjective sense of identity is much more expanded than I thought initially. I realize that there's an analogy between what happens with respect to different languages and different situations, with respect to my two different professions, with respect to the person I am on the mat and the person I am off the mat. I am really starting to think that the very concept of an individual ego is one that needs to be rethought. And this actually fits very nicely into yoga and Vedanta philosophy.⁷

To paraphrase Kant: to find the sunrise and to orient one's self is also to find balance, an understanding that is essential to yoga and Eastern philosophy.

In the acknowledgment pages of *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, Piper thanks Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Edward Sullivan, and Swami Vishnudevananda for suggesting in 1965 that she read the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Yoga Sutras—ancient Sanskrit texts central to Hinduism.⁸ The celebrated hippie revolution with which Piper claims kinship foregrounded Indian philosophy, which, unlike Western philosophy, allows that consciousness is a construction, an ongoing, evolving process. One might even call such an idea inconceivable in Western thought, a context marked largely by guilt. Artists, writers, and thinkers who are engaged in this Indian philosophy create a disjunction by soliciting a continuum between body and mind. This same disjunction is found in Piper's 2006 essay "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic," which includes a table comparing the differences between Cartesian dualism and Samkhyan dualism.⁹ In the former, the body is material, the mind, immaterial; the body is nature, the mind, soul or spirit. In the latter, body and mind are both material.¹⁰ The table's last point of comparison concerns the difference between body and mind from the perspective of consciousness. In Western philosophy, the body is the object of consciousness, and the mind is the subject of consciousness; in Eastern philosophy, the body and mind are both objects of consciousness. As Piper writes, "It is because consciousness on the Samkhyan view is objective and impersonal, i.e. not a function of the individual subject's ego-unity, that Samkhya can dispute Kant's ascription of consciousness to the unified subjecthood of the individual ego."

6. Immanuel Kant, "Was heisst: Sich im Denken orientieren?" 1786. English translation as "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in *Religion and Rational Theology*, eds. and trans., Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 8.

7. Piper, "Goodbye to Easy Listening," interview with Diana C. Stoll, *Aperture* 166 (Spring 2002): 42.

8. Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vols. 1 and 2, p. xix.

9. Piper, "Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic," APRA, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth\(2006\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteIntuit&ConcrtParticTransAesth(2006).pdf), p.16.

10. Ibid.

	BODY	MIND	PURUSHA
Cartesian Dualism	Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	Non-material Spirit Conscious Free Intelligent Enduring Animating Agent Personal Subject of Consciousness	
Samkhyan Dualism	<i>Bhûtas, Tanmâtras:</i> Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	<i>Ahamkâra, Buddhi:</i> Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient thoughts + Persisting tendencies Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	Non-material Spirit Conscious Free Intelligent Eternal Animating Agent Impersonal Subject of Consciousness

11. The phrase appears on the first in the suite of works that make up Piper's *A 108*, of 1975, from the Mythic Being series.

12. Fred Moten, "Resistance of the Object: Adrian Piper's Theatricality," in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 243–44.

It is here, perhaps, that Piper connects Indian philosophy with Kantian philosophy in her work. That Piper considers her own body an object of art is possible precisely because she links Indian philosophy with Kantian philosophy. She sees first her own body as an object of art, through which she may consider the scale of the space one occupies, whether in reality or in representation, in public or in private. From her works on graph paper to her performances in the Catalysis series to her persona in Mythic Being, Piper invokes "the original and necessary consciousness of the identity of the self."¹¹

In his essay "Resistance of the Object: Adrian Piper's Theatricality," Fred Moten studies the dissonances between Piper's practice and Michael Fried's 1967 broadside against Minimalism, which he accuses of theatricality.

What is an object? What are the limits of the object? More specifically (and crucially, for Piper the philosopher and Fried the aesthetician, both working within complex Kantian genealogies) what is the relation between the (multiple: Ding, Gegenstand, Objekt) notions of the object offered by Kant. . . . The relation between object and objectivity in Piper is disjunctive. Think about objectivity as universality, as a set of faculties or attributes given in the set of human beings; objectivity is the quality of being universal, that which is true for everyone. When Piper speaks about wanting to eliminate subjective judgments (i.e., value-based or aesthetic judgments, the question of beauty, and, even pleasure—what might have been called the immanent aesthetic) from her experience of art, she moves within a certain desire for the objective (i.e., epistemological/ethical, the categorical and its imperatives, the transcendental aesthetic as the ideality of space-time) in art. Similarly, when Piper turns herself into an object of art she should be said to be moving in the desire for a detachment from certain subjective/invalid judgments.¹²

None of this can be understood without the enduring link in Piper's artistic practice to Kantian ethics, which echoes the idea of renunciation in Hindu philosophy. In the introduction to the *Bhagavad Gita* published by Penguin Classics in 1965 (the edition Piper likely consulted when at seventeen she discovered this foundational text), Juan Mascaró makes an observation about the two philosophical schools that, in light of Piper's overlapping interests, intrigues:

The importance given to reason in the *Bhagavad Gita* is very great. Arjuna is told that he must seek salvation in reason (2.49). And the first condition for a man to be worthy of God is that his reason should be pure (18.51 and 18.57). Reason is the faculty given to man to distinguish true emotion from false emotionalism, faith from fanaticism, imagination from fancy, a true vision from a visionary illusion. Self-harmony, or self-control, is again and again praised in the *Bhagavad Gita*. All perfection in action is a form of self-control, and this sense of perfection is the essence of the Karma Yoga of the *Gita*. The artist must have self-control in the moment of creation, and all work well done requires self-control; but the *Bhagavad Gita* wants us to transform our whole life into an act of creation. Only self-control makes it possible for us to live in harmony with other people. Of course, as Kant clearly shows, self-control must have power, and all virtue depends on the power of self-control.¹³

13. Juan Mascaró, introduction to *The Bhagavad Gita* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Classics, 1965), pp. 27–28. The edition was first published in 1962, then again in 1963 and 1965.

Piper exhibits this same “self-control” in the act of creation. Each work is an encounter between herself and others, in which presence and disappearance alternately attract and repel each other, like a magnet.

This dynamic is present foremost in her performance and photography, including *Food for the Spirit*, *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (1978), *Pretend #1* (1990), *I Am Some Body*, *The Body of My Friends #1–18* (1992–95), *Everything #2.1* through *2.15* (2003), and *Everything #10* (2007). Because identity, in its visual, social, and political representations, has no immutable foundation, it can be taken away at any moment. This is in part why Piper prioritizes objectivity over subjectivity, and why she finds poststructuralism's defense of subjectivity over objectivity worth debating. In a 1999 interview with Maurice Berger, she remarked,

[Poststructuralism] is the perfect ideology to promote if you want to co-opt women and people of color and deny them access to the potent tools of rationality and objectivity. Whereas rationality and objectivity empower us to see clearly and plan strategically, poststructuralist discourses not only deconstruct so-called authoritative texts, they also deconstruct themselves. When women and people of color speak in this language, they render their own positions unintelligible to all but a very

small and esoteric community. . . . This is self-defeating. Anyone who wants to carry the day intellectually with regard to the analysis of race and gender issues has to be willing to say that racism is objectively wrong. It's not just wrong for me. It's not just wrong for you. It is objectively wrong. Moreover you have to be able to explain *why* racism is wrong.¹⁴

For Piper, then, subjectivity alone is insufficient to counter the rejection and fear of the other. Her reservations toward post-structuralism are perhaps easy to understand given the example she provides—that racism is categorically wrong—but Piper calls for the same rationality and objectivity to be applied to all aspects of work and life.

Not all poststructuralist thinkers deny the necessity of rationality, however; objectivity is not a tool solely of analytic philosophy, nor is subjectivity a tool solely of poststructuralist philosophy. Consider the dissemination and reception of the work of (notably French) philosophers in the North American intellectual sphere. Gayatri Spivak's preface to *Of Grammatology*, the English edition of Jacques Derrida's *La Grammatologie* (1967), which she translated, was received by certain feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial critics as having inaugurated the deconstruction of language.¹⁵ "French Theory" has since become an almost stereotypical term, especially within the American university system, where it exists as a school of ideas often disconnected from the context in which it first arose. That context, notably, is the period that followed decolonization, wherein politically engaged intellectual thought began to foreground analyses of cultural displacement, migration, and immigration in ways that had not previously been done.¹⁶

In the Anglo-American academic world, particularly in the field of postmodern theory and cultural studies, the work of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Derrida has often been appropriated to support positions that, by censuring rationality as the emissary of Eurocentric universalism and its binary oppositions (us/them, Western/non-Western, et cetera), claim subjectivity. Subjectivity, then, is a form of otherness worth endorsing so as to better define it. Given this history, Piper's criticism of poststructuralism prompts us to consider how Kant figures into these respective intellectual genealogies, and allows us to soften overly compartmentalized taxonomies by pointing to the commonalities among them. Doing so also refers to semantic shifts having to do with the term "universality"—its interpretation a site of major discord insofar as the Enlightenment concept in the last several decades has come to be understood as a form of Western domination. The term is at the heart of the dual concepts of objectivity and subjectivity, and helps to define the existence of a global and connected thought within the world.

Arguably, many of the concepts explored by Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida emerge from a very precise (re)interpretation

14. Maurice Berger, "The Critique of Pure Racism: An Interview with Adrian Piper," in Berger, ed. *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective* (Baltimore: Fine Art Gallery, University of Maryland, 1999), pp. 83–84.

15. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, translator's preface to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1976; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. ix–lxxxvii.

16. Michel Foucault was present, for example, in 1971 in Paris at the first large demonstration denouncing racist violence in response to the Algerian War. In late 1972, along with Jean-Paul Sartre and Gilles Deleuze, he participated in the creation of a committee for the defense of the life and rights of immigrant workers. In 1971 Derrida returned to Algeria for a series of courses and seminars. Deleuze and Felix Guattari published *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* in 1975.

of Kantian philosophy. In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, published in 1966, Foucault pays homage to Kant as the founder of modern philosophical thought.¹⁷ In *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of Faculties*, Deleuze confirms, "Objectively as well, reason has a role."¹⁸ Likewise, an analysis of hospitality proposed by Derrida in 1997 makes direct reference to Kant and his essay of 1795, "Perpetual Peace": "Kant seems at first to extend the cosmopolitan law to encompass universal hospitality without limit. . . . Such is the condition of perpetual peace between all men. He expressly determines it as a *natural law*. . . . All human creatures, all finite beings endowed with reason, have received, in equal proportion, the 'common possession of the surface of the earth.'"¹⁹ This passage underscores the significance of the concepts being advanced by Kant in his "Third Definitive Article on Perpetual Peace": "The Rights of men as Citizens of the world in a cosmo-political system, shall be restricted to conditions of universal Hospitality."²⁰ He emphasizes, "In this as in the previous Articles, the question is not about a relation of Philanthropy, but one of Right. . . . 'Hospitality' (*hospitalitas*) here indicates the Right of a stranger in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another country, not to be treated by its citizens as an enemy."²¹ In what follows, Kant denounces colonization and slavery, which he describes as "the *inhuman* behavior of the civilized, and especially the commercial, States of our Continent, the injustice practiced by them in their *first contact* with foreign lands and peoples, fills us even with horror, the mere visiting of such peoples being regarded by them as equivalent to a *conquest*."²²

Kant's lucid analysis of European imperialism also deems unacceptable the treatment of peoples or countries as property: "[These countries], on being discovered, were treated as countries that belonged to nobody; for the Aboriginal inhabitants were reckoned as nothing."²³ A thinker such as Derrida, who turned to Kantian thought precisely in order to establish historical continuity between contemporaneous descriptions of the eighteenth century and life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, would have been influenced by this passage. This is undoubtedly where the notion of modernity originates—that is, from the possibility of assessing the current state of the world with tools that have been transported to it from another era. The terminological constraints that define what can be considered *pre-* or *post-*, for example, no longer obtain when the philosophical path is detached from a rigid taxonomy.

Similarly, without upending the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, and without privileging one philosophy over another, we understand the erudition with which Piper converges the disciplines and schools of thought in which she works. The paradigms through which she shifts *in* and *toward* her artistic practice reveal the importance of applying both analytical and Indian philosophical concepts directly to the

17. Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). English translation as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

18. Deleuze, *La Philosophie critique de Kant: La Doctrine des facultés* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963). English translation as *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 69.

19. Derrida, *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort!* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1997). English translation as *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 20. See also Derrida and Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophy in the Time of Terror*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

20. Kant, *Zum eigen Frieden*, 1795. English translation as *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (Philadelphia: Slough Foundation, 2010), p. 22. The version here is based on the 1891 W. Hastie translation, with footnotes based on the 1903 M. Campbell Smith translation.

21. *Ibid.*

world—a world containing both racism and xenophobia. These unfortunate actualities are wounds that, in her combined practice of art and philosophy, Piper dresses tirelessly.

Punctuation

In Piper's work, words predominate, whether they are uttered in a video or conceptual piece, typewritten in the service of explaining a work, transcribed over a drawing, annunciated during a lecture or interview, or arranged with precision in a text. Piper's sentences bring together intelligence, reflection, endurance, and, at times, focused malice. Her beautiful, calm, even handwriting also appears in her notebooks (figs. 2, 3). Her private diary, which she has kept since January 1, 1960 (she was eleven), serves as a cache for her thoughts and ideas and tracks the blossoming of an interior monologue, a secret voice that addresses the consciousness of those who encounter it. Not that Piper typically makes public passages from her diary; to date, she has cited the journal verbatim only twice: in the 1973–75 *Mythic Being*, *Village Voice* Ads and again in her 1988 installation *The Big Four Oh*. But throughout her oeuvre, words ricochet into thoughts as in a journal—at times along temporal lines, at times along spatial ones. And in her graphic and photographic works, as well as in her installations, words are transposed into visual forms. Elements that seem so objectively personal become keys to her formal propositions.

But, as Piper underscores in the interview with Del Principe, journaling is also a way to engage with philosophy as the basis for self-knowledge, about how one relates with others and with the world. Her investigations into the mobility of thought echo Kant's when he wrote, in 1786,

The freedom to think is opposed first of all to *civil compulsion*. Of course it is said that the freedom to *speak* or to *write* could be taken from us by a superior power, but the freedom to *think* cannot be. Yet how much and how correctly would we think if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts, and who communicate theirs with us! Thus one can very well say that this external power which wrenches away people's freedom publicly to *communicate* their thoughts also takes from them the freedom to think—that single gem remaining to us in the midst of all the burdens of civil life, through which alone we can devise means of overcoming all the evils of our condition.²⁴

Although Kant does not refer specifically to the institution of slavery, the ideas he advanced may certainly help us to interpret it, including, in particular, as a form of violent self-erasure inflicted “by a superior power,” robbing millions of men and women of the “freedom to think.” Piper borrows from Kant in order to denounce racism and xenophobia and to establish an

22. Ibid., p. 23.

23. Ibid.

24. Kant, “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself?” p. 16. After reading an earlier draft of this essay, Piper commented, “This text of Kant's is very important, but it also implicitly conflicts with many earlier texts, such as the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, that ascribe greater autonomy to thought itself.”

9/88

At forty I am barely visible, the ghost in the machine, thoughtfully cranking levers, turning wheels, hoisting pulleys in sync with the basic pulse, but enmeshed over now with familiar, protective idioms - simplifying clichés which I have learned to invoke as prayers, to help me pass through passively and without incident. I generate them effortlessly, as needed, from the outer surface of my social armor, in order to help sustain the illusion of shared significance between us, to minimize confusion and paradox, and in order to construct a parchment for obscure references and decadent experiences that reveal both nothing and tangled circuitry at the same time. I flaunt my addiction to complexity behind a barricade of placid generalities. These familiar idioms are easily cast off but automatically self-renewing, dispensable in case we transcend our boundaries, and retrievable in case we adrift to finding more security within them. In becoming second nature, they centrally express my ordinary nature.

under conditions of adversity, the natural condition we all understand. I sweated blood to become myself and not someone else I didn't like. So many tears for what's been lost have been wrung out of me I thought I'd drown, parched, in my own grief. Under attack my fangs appear, emitting scolding streams of piss and vinegar. I had to get hit in the stomach with a baseball many times before I learned to play the game. Nevertheless my fangs into community are stymied by the concrete particularity of these artifacts. I don't understand their chemical structure, nor the stillness of their lives, and I can't see all sides of them at once. Embodiments of me, they become themselves; and in visual conjunction they mean other things I didn't intend and didn't anticipate. I am inspired by their imperturbability, and very blindly on my ghost to steer me through the second half of my life with the wisdom and grace stored in unrecalled midnight dreams. I defy you to stop me from dancing.

ethics in her work, one that supports staying vigilant in one's thinking. This is apparent in her magisterial series *Everything*. The various works in the series, their mediums varied, pivot around the phrase "Everything will be taken away," documenting multiple acts of erasure and calling attention to the political role of images. Viewers face the demand to keep these objects, which might otherwise disappear, alive. These objects remain alive by means of a gaze that looks on unblinkingly, in spite of the fragility of the object's perception. The work is in this sense also a portrait of the looker, who may see, in the faces emptied of features, him or herself, as if looking in a mirror.

The *Everything* #2 works (fig. 4; pp. 152, 153), printed on the graph paper the artist has famously used since her first Conceptual works, feature a group of anonymous figures posing for snapshots, still visible in spite of attempts to erase their faces. The images carry traces of the eraser rubbing against the surface, its movements physical and real, making material an allegory of disappearance. Even if, as is written across the photograph, "Everything will be taken away," art exists in the



4. *Everything* #2.10. 2003

here and now through our very engagement with it. Piper first presented this idea in her 1968 artist's book, *Here and Now*. The work is an early example of her long-standing interest in what she calls the "indexical present," a reference point in any process of creation and, later, of repeated reception. As Piper has written, "My work springs from a belief that we are transformed—and occasionally reformed—by immediate experience, independently of our abstract evaluation of it and despite our attempts to resist it. Because my creative commitment is inherently political, I am primarily motivated to do the work I do by a desire to effect concrete, positive, internal political change in the viewer, independently of—or in spite of—the viewer's abstract aesthetic evaluations of my work."²⁵

The *Everything #2* works have what might be considered a counterpart: *I Am Some Body*, *The Body of My Friends #1–18*, which Piper made ten years earlier. The suite of fifteen color and three black-and-white photographs shows the artist with friends and family in both private and public contexts. Several complementary analyses could be proposed to read *I Am Some Body* and the *Everything #2* works together, analyses that bridge temporality and corporality. For one, memory and loss are intermingled, such that the erasure in the *Everything #2* works represents the loss of memory as much as the memory of loss. But there is another facet of the erasure: that of the bodies and faces of those who appear in these images, or, in other words, of the *annamaya kosha*, the first corporeal layer in Vedic philosophy. Those who have been erased are (re)presented by a new figuration, which this time is the fruit of the imagination. The *Everything #2* works also share thematic concerns with Piper's two-volume essay collection, *Out of Order, Out of Sight* (1996): what is out of order and out of sight, and therefore unusable or invisible, exists through writing. The text is therefore a space of survival.

In 2007, with *Everything #10* (p. 161), Piper addressed the concept of time via the act of disappearance, by creating what she has called "a poetic and philosophical duration performance."²⁶ The performance, which for the artist was a "live experiment," asked volunteer participants to spend one to two weeks with the phrase "Everything will be taken away" written backward on their foreheads in henna, the ink destined to eventually fade away. Piper emphasized the endurance of the performers, though it is only when they looked in a mirror (which was not a part of the performance as Piper conceived it) that the words would appear in their correct orientation, able to be read. This reversal of perception is rather specific to her works, where face-to-face encounters are at once the chance to face oneself, face the other, and disappear in the virtuality of the reflection. The performers were asked to keep a daily journal to record their experiences along with the reactions of those who saw them, and then to reread their journal entries a year

25. Piper, "Xenophobia and the Indexical Present 1: Essay," in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 247–48.

26. "Adrian Piper: Everything #10," Creative Time website, www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2007/performance/piper.html.

later. The work revisits a trope introduced in *Everything #4* (2004), where the phrase “Everything will be taken away,” written in gold leaf on a mirror, leaves a subliminal impression on the face of the person looking. In both works, the pairing of forehead and text recalls the moment of cerebral perception and also our memory of it; what remains of this memory and what slips away.

Piper writes of the phrase “Everything will be taken away” that “It is both a promise and a threat. What will be taken away and what do we consider to be ‘our’ everything?”²⁷ The works are meant to provoke viewers to oscillate between these two ideas: to enter the space-time separating experience and its later remembrance. This ability to go back to the past and make it present through reading is a consistent theme in Piper’s oeuvre and is especially prominent in the works that make up the *Everything* series. Writing is proof that what is written once existed, not necessarily in material reality, but in thought. It is a singular experience, in which words, much like actors in a performance, play the part of the witness, then leave, only to come back on stage later to interpret the moments first observed. Words emphasize the importance of not forgetting.

Yet, at the same time, selective memory is what allows us to go on living. If we were in a constant state of recall, the mind would be exhausted, since memory selection is a set of complex processes in the unconscious mind. In Indian philosophy, the unconscious mind is a vast space of possibility. What we experience can come back to us endlessly thanks to our ability to put text to paper. The process is not unlike turning the pages of a book, but unlike the figurative act of “turning the page,” which connotes leaving an experience behind in the past, the process reveals our ability to begin to live in another way. “I consider my capacity for self-deception infinite,” Piper confides to Del Principe.

The only thing that works for me is to always take a stance of epistemic skepticism towards what I currently think. I simply have to subject it to all of the checks and balances and tests that one would subject any suspicious hypothesis to, in the process of research. That’s the only thing that works. And now for that, it really is essential for me to keep a journal, because the journal is the place where I record what I think, and that’s what enables me to compare what I think now with what I thought the last time I engaged [with this]. So if you can treat the states of the mind and the states of the self as data, as events that need to be analyzed and subject to the same principles and investigation as any scientific endeavor, then you can maybe start achieving—maybe—a little bit of clarity. . . . But, you know, it’s really tough. . . . That, for me, is the biggest problem, the problem of self-deception, what in yoga philosophy is called *avidya*, ignorance. And ignorance rises from the

tendency of desire to distort one's thought processes so that one ends up rationalizing the object of one's desire. It's a very tough process.²⁸

This act of reflexivity establishes the way one constructs oneself, both through oneself and vis-à-vis others.

In keeping a journal, then, Piper began a process of talking to herself while initiating a demanding dialogue with her peers, as it is from close exchanges such as these that her work emerges. From the very beginning of her artistic and philosophical career, Piper has consistently treated this process with a formal and conceptual rigor. Over the years, as it has been rooted in specific contexts of production and reception, this process been modified not from within—the line here is clear, without exception—but from the outside, that is, the context she was working in and with. After the Conceptual and performance-based art of the 1960s, the art world of the 1970s was better able than it was in later generations to grasp the fundamental character of practices like Piper's as institutional critique. Her early commitment to this practice and her inevitable presence in the history of Conceptual art underscore the rarity of her perseverance in a world dominated by sexism. Context remains decisive in the analysis and study of all artistic work: the 1980s saw critical practices merging more flexibly into the system of the art market, and, against the backdrop of a broader conservative backlash, crucial cultural and social questions around diversity began to emerge. In the 1990s art institutions hitherto closed to these ideas initiated calls for inclusivity and plurality.²⁹ In this decade, Piper's work was sometimes received in contexts only superficially in keeping with her ideals, although attempts to instrumentalize her work were always made in vain.

In the early 2000s Piper left the United States and started the Everything series. It was a new era for the artist, a European era; it was calmer, yet the discipline she applied to her life was in no way diminished. Piper's work was shown and celebrated in major mainstream exhibitions (documenta 11, in Kassel in 2002, the Paris Triennale in 2011, the Venice Biennale in 2015), its conceptual rigor intact. The exhibitions were orchestrated by Okwui Enwezor, a rare curator who understands how important it is to emphasize the historicity of an artist's work. He included artists like Piper in his exhibitions to compensate for a radicalism often missing in institutional spaces that otherwise program by art-world consensus. Amid all of the fluctuations in the art world and in her own life, Piper never compromised: one can use the same critical arguments to read the works produced in the period considered Conceptual and those produced in the years 1980 to 2000. Analyzing the different periods of her work in an organized way illuminates how Piper has persistently established her relationship to creation, joining together the

28. Piper, interview with Del Principe, at 00:38:55.

29. Two key publications detail this transition between the 1980s and the 1990s: Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West, eds., *Out There: Marginal-ization and Contemporary Cultures* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990); and Nilda Peraza, Marcia Tucker, and Kinshasha Holman Conwill, eds., *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990). The latter was published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organized and presented by the New Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, May 12–August 19, 1990. Piper's work appeared in both the exhibition and catalogue.

experience of the body with that of the mind. This retrospective gaze stretches the present toward the past, injecting it with the possibility of the future, much like writing in a journal, which, proceeding chronologically, is a process in progress.

With *The Big Four Oh* (p. 205), subtitled a “self-portrait video-installation,” Piper rejected the outside gaze directed at her and all of the biases that accompany it. The installation, which marks the passing of her fortieth birthday, is composed of a video monitor placed on a table; a knight’s suit of armor, shattered into pieces; forty baseballs scattered across the space; and five jars, each containing one of a fabric handkerchief soaked in sweat, a paper handkerchief soaked in tears, a bloody bandage, urine, and, finally, vinegar. Her journal rests on the floor, opened to a page in September 1988, the month of her birthday:

At forty I am barely visible, the ghost in the machine, thoughtfully cranking levers, turning wheels, hoisting pulleys in sync with the basic pulse, but encrusted over now with familiar, protective idioms—simplifying clichés which I have learned to invoke as prayers, to help me pass through unobtrusively and without incident. I generate them effortlessly, as needed, from the outer surface of my social armor, in order to help sustain the illusion of shared significance between us, to minimize confusion and paradox, and in order to conceal a penchant for obscure references and decadent experiences that reveal both nothing and tangled circuitry at the same time.

In the video documenting the installation, Piper reads this journal passage in voiceover, her tone slightly bitter. And even though this recording is not part of the live installation, Piper’s voice is still very much there, *in* the work, and, little by little, it illuminates the elements dispersed throughout the exhibition space. The journal excerpt describes the moment when Piper reread, for the first time in its entirety, all that she had written since the age of eleven. The age of forty was the moment for her to do this retrospective work; she turned to the past in order to take ownership of it and to enrich herself through it.

In the journal passage, Piper mentions her “social armor,” and in the installation this armor appears in a literal sense, with all its material weight and density. One might also understand it to be connected to Vedanta’s *annamaya kosha*, the sheath of the physical self shed in a transitional time in a process similar to molting. *Annamaya kosha* is made of liquids, and the installation likewise illustrates this idea with the jars containing bodily fluids. This is not unlike the relationship to corporality described in *Food for the Spirit*: “The *Critique* is the most profound book I have ever read, and my involvement in it was so great that I thought I was losing my mind, in fact losing my sense of self completely. I would read certain passages that were so intensely affecting and deep that I would literally break out into a cold sweat.”³⁰

30. Piper, “Food for the Spirit,” p. 55.

In *The Big Four Oh*, Piper also plays with scale: while everything else in the installation is life-size (the armor, jars, baseballs, and table), Piper appears in miniature, her thin figure scaled down to the size of the monitor's screen, like a dancer in a jewelry box. Her back to the camera, she dances without stopping for forty-five minutes, in blue jeans, white tennis shoes, and a white T-shirt against a sky-blue backdrop; for a few fleeting seconds, as she twirls around, a pinkish portrait of Kant in a powdered wig is visible on her T-shirt (pp. 53, 205). Kant's Pop art likeness underscores the anachronism as well as the freedom that Piper allows herself to refer to the primary reference of her philosophical work. Placed on a T-shirt, the image becomes both a tribute and a sly wink at the link between theory and practice. In her journal entry, Piper contends, "I . . . rely blindly on my ghost to steer me through the second half of my life with the wisdom and grace stored in unrecollected midnight dreams. I defy you to stop me from dancing." This magnificent metaphor brings together gesture and word, and anchors the artist's practice in perseverance.

The soul and funk music that Piper has selected as her dance soundtrack affirms this perseverance. As she has written, "A constant in almost all the work of the 1970s to the 1990s is the use of African American working-class music (funk, blues, rhythm & blues) as an expression of both the first-person voice and the xenophobic object."³¹ "Positive Power" (1984) by Steve Arrington, "Joy" (1983) by Marvin Gaye, "Move Your Boogie Body" (1976) by the Bar-Kays, "No Hay Amigo" (1974) by Larry Harlow, "Can You Feel the Groove Tonight" (1983) by Con Funk Shun, "Bootsy Get Live" (1979) by Bootsy Collins, "Wide Receiver" (1980) by Michael Henderson, and "Miss You" (1978) by the Rolling Stones are each listed in the video's end credits. These songs belong to a generation of artists transitioning from the 1970s to the 1980s, the moment when soul, funk, and disco entered a new commercial era, first in the United States and then across the globe. With the emergence of TV dance shows and music video channels, from *Soul Train*, which first aired in 1971, to MTV, which first aired in 1981, the dancing bodies on these shows and in these music videos express cultural emancipation. At the same time, their freedom remains imprisoned behind the screen.

The spatial configurations of Piper's installations invite viewers to confront their own corporality. It's as if the surface of Piper's signature graph paper were also the vector space of her three-dimensional pieces. The frame, monitor, light box, blackboard, and photographic format act as vertical and horizontal lines that punctuate the space and mark its limitations. Within these constraints, bodies and images move, escape, disappear, fade away, surface, and move ahead.

31. Piper, "Artist's Statement," in *Adrian Piper: A Retrospective*, p. 174.

Construction

In *Vote/Emote*, which Piper created in 1990, two years after *The Big Four Oh*, we find four voting booths, each with light boxes installed to look like windows with an image illuminated from behind (fig. 5). One of the booths contains a photograph Piper used twelve years earlier in *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (p. 144). This photo, taken by Dick Durrance for *National Geographic* in 1978, shows a group of men and women in Cape Town descending a staircase. The other three images likewise capture conditions of collective social unrest, having to do with work (young miners in South Africa in 1980, in an image published in the *Village Voice*) or civil rights (a photograph of the 1963 March on Washington, by Bruce Davidson, and a photograph of a 1988 demonstration in Brooklyn after the beating of two African Americans by a gang of white men, by Kristine Larsen, also published in the *Village Voice*). At fifteen Piper was in Washington, D.C., for the 1963 march, transforming Davidson's iconic representation of the Civil Rights Movement into the memento of an adolescent concerned about the state of the world. Piper's original use of the Durrance image in the 1970s affirms her pioneering stance against apartheid, when many of her U.S. artist peers would take up the South African cause only some years later, in the 1980s. The juxtaposition of images from South Africa with those from the United States, where some of the worst violence against black people has been inflicted, functions simply as an *objective* reminder of the facts: the same state-sanctioned racism and discrimination that exists in South Africa also exists in the United States. A year



5. *Vote/Emote*, 1990

after Piper created *Vote/Emote*, the video of Rodney King being beaten by police on March 3, 1991, was broadcast on television stations all over the world.

This was the same year that she first conceived of her multimedia *Black Box/White Box* (p. 159), a pivotal installation that summoned nearly all the elements of her prior work and presaged her work still to come. Here, the voting booths became two large cubes that viewers were invited to enter and linger in. *Black Box/White Box* presents a contrast, its two geometric forms generating a dual space. The identical cubes, one white, one black, are minimalist and neutral on the outside. But on the inside, they function as repositories for the experience of grief and anger in response to world events. The installation was first presented at the Wexner Center for the Arts, in Columbus, in the 1992 exhibition *Will/Power*. It opened in September, five months after the burning of Los Angeles, where riots followed the announcement of a verdict of innocent for the four officers charged with King's beating. Piper painted the walls gray to recall the smoke in the streets; the sound of sirens filled the space. In the white cube, Marvin Gaye's 1971 "What's Going On?" played on repeat, accompanying George Holliday's amateur video showing King being beaten. In the black cube, a portrait of King with a swollen face hangs across from an image of President Bush shaking hands with the acquitted police officers.³² "Mother, mother / There's too many of you crying / Brother, brother, brother / There's far too many of you dying / You know we've got to find a way / To bring some lovin' here today," Gaye sings in the classic song. Twenty years later, in another place, Rodney King says, "I just want to say, you know, can we, can we all get along? Can we get along? Can we stop making it horrible for the older people and for the kids? We got enough smog here in Los Angeles, let alone setting these fires. It's just not right. It's not right."³³

At the entrance to the two cubes is a quote from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, published in 1968: "Once you have taken everything away from a man, he is no longer in your power. He is free." The experience of imprisonment that Solzhenitsyn describes is one simultaneously of violence and spiritual self-fulfillment. The words belong to the character Bobynin, a veteran of the gulag faced with the threats and intimidations of the minister of state security. At the heart of this reversal, we find a philosophical position that Piper has defended with the phrase "Everything will be taken away," a thread that has guided her work since 2003, and for which the practice of yoga and Vedanta have given her the tools to consider such a proposition.

What we gain and what we lose—and what we gain through loss—became the basis of the diagrams she produced for *Everything #17.2* (fig. 6) and *Everything #17.3* (both 2007) (p. 154). The starting point of the first diagram, time, advances in fits

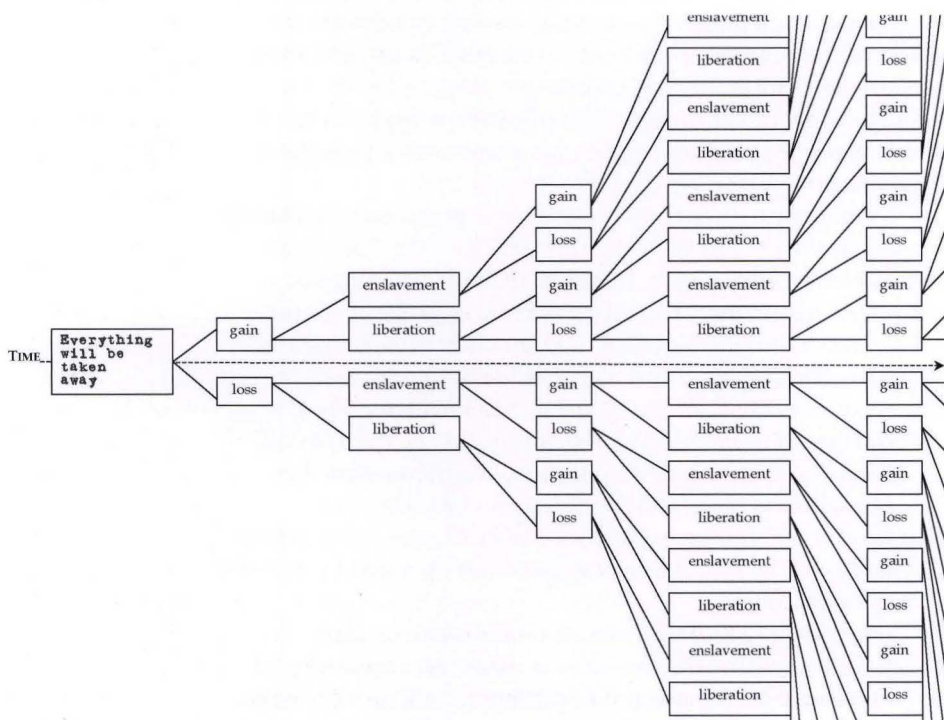
32. For a precise analysis of the installation *Black Box/White Box* in the context of September 11, 2001, as well as an assessment of the artist's talk in Greensboro, North Carolina, in November 2001, see Francis Frascina, "Class, Conflict, Race and Remembrance: Adrian Piper's *Black Box/White Box*, Greensboro, NC, November 1, 2001," *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1–24.

33. Rodney King, quoted in Bill Nichols, "The Trials and Tribulations of Rodney King," in *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 17.

and starts, alternating between gain and loss, enslavement and liberation. The second diagram is organized around changes in states—liquefaction, condensation, evaporation—wherein heat circulates from one environment to another; gain and loss, enslavement and liberation, are likewise diagrammed. Like Piper's Conceptual graphs of the late 1960s, these two works reveal the complementary aspects of randomness and structure, repetition and alternation: the phrase "Everything will be taken away" is the threshold of the experiment. At the heart of this paradox lies all the ways we weave relationships with systemic structures of power, and the choices that allow us to be free of them.

Three years after exhibiting *Black Box/White Box*, in 1995, Piper started teaching Indian philosophy at Wellesley College, in Massachusetts. As part of her introductory course on ethics, she taught the Upanishads. After years of deepening her knowledge of yoga, Vedanta, and Samkhya, she used these disciplines to guide and elevate her teaching. In India, academies that joined yoga with a classical Western philosophical curriculum had long existed, as exemplified by the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Department of the Divine Life Society in Uttarakhand, which was founded in 1948, one year after India's independence and the year of Piper's birth. The Vedas and Socrates, as well as Vedanta and Kant, came together in this erudite course of study.³⁴

34. In the brochure prepared by the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Department of the Divine Life Society in Uttarakhand, founded in 1948, the courses are presented as follows: "(I) History of Indian Philosophy = The Vedas, The Upanishads, Jainism, Buddhism, Nyaya, Vaisheshika Samkhya Yoga, Vedanta (Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava); (II) History of Western Philosophy = 1) Socrates – concept of virtue, 2) Plato (Doctrine of Ideas), 3) Aristotle (Metaphysics and causation), 4) St. Augustine, 5) St. Thomas Aquinas, 6) Kant (critique of reason, ethical norms), 7) Hegel.



In 1998, on her first trip to India, Piper took part in a symposium on art at the Parikh Centre for the Visual Arts, in Mumbai. Faced with continuing to write her book *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, Piper transformed into a chrysalis, at once elusive and ever more anchored in an analysis of reality. After her traveling retrospective of 2000, Piper began the Color Wheel series (2000–02) (p. 150), integrating the spectrum of the Pantone System with tenets of Hindu Vedantic philosophy in a set of photographic prints, vertically oriented and arced at the top. She exhibited the series at documenta 11, in Kassel, in 2002. In between the traveling retrospective and Kassel, the events of September 11, 2001, occurred, indelibly marking the United States. The unprecedented attack, as well as leaving the country in disarray, reverberated on a global scale. The subsequent climate—tense and security focused—fortified the will of certain artists and intellectuals not to yield to fear. In that fragile context, Piper’s reflections on the importance of analyzing the causes of xenophobia from a philosophical perspective assumed even greater value.³⁵ Shortly after this traumatic event, on October 9, “Democracy Unrealized,” Platform 1 of documenta 11, took place in Berlin. The preface of the publication documenting the proceedings affirmed, “Even if we cannot deny that the events of September 11 and its aftermath in the war in Afghanistan have significantly widened the political horizon of democratic and juridical discourses of our time, they could hardly be pronounced the central ground on which the struggle to overcome Westernism and imperialism is being waged. September 11 represents one of the most radical and terrible visions of the conflict of values that has attended the slow dismantling of imperialism.”³⁶

The exhibition of Piper’s Color Wheel series in Kassel the following year astonished the art world, which was ill equipped to decipher the work. As the artist points out in an explanatory text,

In Western Rationalist philosophy, colors are counted among the secondary qualities that inhere in the perceiver rather than in the object perceived. Like sounds, textures, odors, and tastes, colors are subjective modes of perception that can vary from one perceiver to the next, and so do not supply objective knowledge of objects. . . . [In Vedanta,] beneath all of these layers [*koshas*] of illusion is the true self, i.e., ultimate reality beyond the laws of psychology or physics.³⁷

The work is a study in what Piper calls “transpersonal rationality,” the most significant moment of which takes place when we realize the judgments we make about others are not justified.³⁸ It is also a study of the dichotomy between the subjective and the objective, as well as what the intellect is capable of producing when it has been “disciplined by knowledge and meditation.”

35. See Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, vol. 2, p. 423. “Nevertheless, even if it is true that we are innately cognitively disposed to respond to any conceptual and experiential anomaly in this way, it does not follow that our necessarily limited empirical conception of people must be so limited and provincial as to invite it. A person could be so cosmopolitan and intimately familiar with the full range of human variety that only The Alien would rattle him. On the other hand, his empirical conception of people might be so limited that any variation in race, nationality, gender, sexual preference, or class would be cause for panic. How easily one’s empirical conception of people is violated is one index of the scope of one’s xenophobia; how central and pervasive it is in one’s personality is another. In what follows I focus primarily on cases of political discrimination midpoint between such extremes: for example, of a European American who is thoughtful, well-rounded and well-read about the problems of racism in the United States, but who nevertheless feels fearful at being alone in the house with an African American television repairman. In all such cases, the range of individuals in fact identifiable as persons is larger than the range of individuals

The fact that Anglo-American analytic philosophy has not considered Indian philosophy integral to the discipline means that there are fewer resources for its study, despite the fact that the former has a primary connection to the construction of the self. As Piper notes, while Vedic philosophy affirms that the ego has many functions, it also rejects that the ego is the only representation of the self.³⁹ In a way, it is this duality of Western and Indian philosophy and culture that we find in the *The Color Wheel Series, First Adhyasa: Annomayakosha #26* (2000), which was exhibited in Kassel. The title of the work refers to the first *kosha*, which, as described above, is akin to the physical self, part of the barrier to the reality of one's true self.

Within the hyper-contemporary-art context of documenta, Piper presented a new aesthetic, one that may be connected to the mysticism and psychedelia she had explored with her LSD drawings in the mid-1960s. Art-world audiences and critics, fond of typologies, were disoriented by the work and found it difficult to square with the artist's pared-down conceptual projects. But Piper's spiritual practice, as well as the unrelenting rigor of her critical method, set *First Adhyasa* within a specific transitional moment—a moment when the full meets the empty, a moment when the proposed spaces of materiality and of non-materiality engage and intertwine. Although the work advanced philosophical and ethical positions dissimilar to others put forth by documenta, when the second war in Iraq began, six months later, it stood ready to critique the new political realities, as if Piper had intuited forthcoming global events.

It was in this context that Piper produced the first work in the *Everything* series, which marks both a rupture with and a continuation of the work she made in the previous decades, reinforcing the process through which the practice of art making and thought making are fused. Most of the *Everything #2* works are photographs printed on a small sheet of graph paper with the phrase "Everything will be taken away" typed across its center. These foreground the contrast between construction—the graph paper's allusion to three-dimensional space—and erasure—the disappeared image. The work is dated April 28, 2003; the war, one month in, was already devastating Iraq. At demonstrations, protesters sought in vain to make their voices heard: "Not in my name," they chanted. The sentence "Everything will be taken away," which Piper has since used as a leitmotiv, is therefore linked to the war and to what she considered an irreversible political shift, one that began in 2000, when the Supreme Court ruled that George W. Bush had won the presidential election despite having lost the popular vote, and one that ushered in an era in the United States when anyone with a conscience could no longer be at peace with his or herself. Here Piper persevered in her careful analysis of history and politics, adjusting her spatial and visual proposals to meet the immediate relevance of her research. Thanks to the self-discipline

to whom one's empirical conception of people apply. In all such cases political discrimination can be understood in terms of certain corrigible cognitive errors that characterize prereflective xenophobia."

36. Okwui Enwezor, et al., eds., "Preface," *Democracy Unrealized, Documenta 11 Platform 1* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), p. 9.

37. Piper, "The Color Wheel Series," 2004, APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/docs/2004TheColorWheelSeries.pdf, p. 1.

38. Piper, interview with Del Principe, at 00:43:08.

39. Piper, "The Color Wheel Series."

Piper had forged over decades, the Everything series, undeniably a work of conceptual art, transformed disillusionment into strength, relying on complementary interpretations of the titular sentence as both an imagined potential future and a reminder of the violence of reality in the now.

Idea, here, takes precedence over form, visually manifesting the notion, mentioned above, of erasure and disappearance, which, in the poetic beauty of the English language, can also be rendered as fading and vanishing. The term “vanishing,” of course, appears in the title of a work of 2009, *Vanishing Point #1*, wherein Piper removed a section of drywall over a set area to reveal a building’s raw structural components. The same metaphor exists in *Everything #6*, of 2004 (pp. 156–57), which presents Piper’s phrase printed across the foreheads of six murdered American political figures—Abraham Lincoln (*Every*), Medgar Evers (*Thing*), John F. Kennedy (*Will*), Malcolm X (*Be*), Martin Luther King, Jr. (*Taken*), Robert F. Kennedy (*Away*)—in the order of their assassinations (from 1865 to 1968). The phrase “Everything will be taken away” has the impact of a bullet to the head. The image contains the sound of a gun discharging; it makes the history of American violence resonate in a continuum. Piper marks this continuum once more in her 2013 portrait *Imagine [Trayvon Martin]*, made in memory of Martin and the appalling circumstances of his death, a tragic reminder of the historical determinism of which Rodney King was also a victim. Printed on the evanescent face of the teenager is a red target. An inscription is set in the artist’s usual typeface, in blue: “Imagine what it was like to be me.” “Me” falls outside the frame and atop the black border that surrounds the target, confirming the image’s status as a death announcement.

Apparition (in the sense of a phantomlike image) and disappearance, life and death, are also considered in the forty-five-minute video animation *The Spurious Life-Death Distinction* (2006), the second part of Piper’s *Pac-Man Trilogy* (2005–08) (p. 158), in which bubbles—or perhaps they are cells—float across a blue grid on a red background, in a seemingly random motion; they advance, touch, grow, and explode, like so many representations of life passing through accidental, invariably repetitive trajectories. The installation asks viewers to consider what it means to be part of an existence whose end point is inevitably death. Or, as Piper has written of the work, “Speculative theoretical physics and Vedanta concur in equating consciousness with energy. Since energy obeys the law of the conservation of energy, consciousness is conserved throughout the cycle of growth and decay, expansion and contraction, order and entropy, life and ‘death.’ Consciousness does not die; it merely undergoes transformation of form.”⁴⁰

This notion of consciousness is present in almost every stage of Piper’s work. When, in *Everything #9.1* (2005–07) (p. 155), she presented the partially erased photographs of homes and

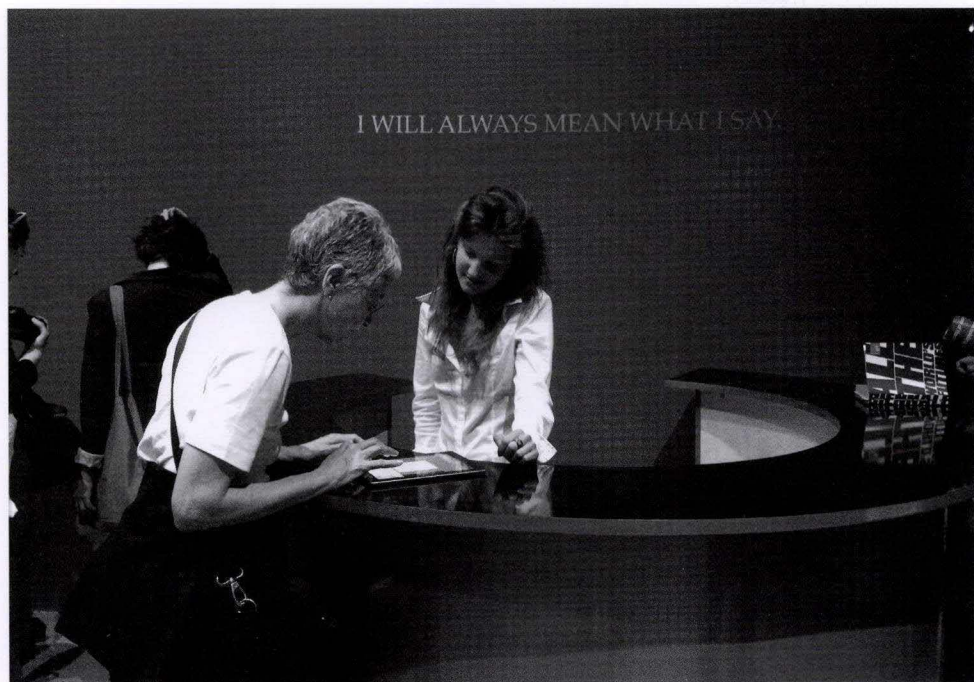
40. Piper, “The Spurious Life-Death Distinction,” 2006, APRA.

landscapes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, in late August 2005, she was underscoring the country's political reality, which she has consistently interrogated in her work using visual testimony. *Everything #9.1* denounced the U.S. government's pitiful response to the hurricane's unprecedented destruction and, with images, highlighted the social and racial injustices that befell the hundreds of thousands of survivors in the southern states. To this day, she remains vigilant about being conscious of the world around her, and allows this consciousness to guide her. To assure the perpetuity, the blackboards of *Everything #21* (p. 162), on which "Everything will be taken away" is written in chalk, erased, and rewritten, keep watch.

The Infinite

Piper was honored with the Golden Lion award for best artist at the 56th Venice Biennale for *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1-3* (2013) (fig. 7; p. 163), shown as part of *All the World's Futures*, the biennial's central exhibition, organized by Enwezor. An installation and, according to Piper's description, "participatory group performance," *The Probable Trust Registry* included three circular gold reception desks, each set in front of a gray wall with one of three sentences displayed in gold vinyl text: "I will always be too expensive to buy," "I will always mean what I say," and "I will always do what I say I am going to do."⁴¹ An administrator was stationed at each desk, where visitors participated in the project by signing a contract, via touch pad, binding them to the affirmation they had selected. The list of

41. Piper, "The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1-3," APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/biennale/TPTR_RG1.shtml.



7. *The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1-3*. 2013

signatories was to be stored in a database at APRA for one hundred years.

With this installation, Piper delivered a spatial and conceptual interpretation of Kant's maxims. In "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," Kant writes of his fourth proposition,

By antagonism, I mean . . . the *unsocial sociability* of men, that is, their tendency to come together in society, coupled, however, with a continual resistance which constantly threatens to break this society up. This propensity is obviously rooted in human nature. Man has an inclination to *live in society*, since he feels in this state more like a man, that is, he feels able to develop his natural capacities. But he also has a great tendency to *live as an individual*, to isolate himself, since he also encounters in himself the unsocial characteristic of wanting to direct everything in accordance with his own ideas. He therefore expects resistance all around, just as he knows of himself that he is in turn inclined to offer resistance to others.⁴²

42. Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 44.

This human antagonism is at the heart of *The Probable Trust Registry*. Yet, alongside this "probable truth," Piper recognizes the possibility we can escape it: that we can avoid swinging back and forth between our desire for individualism on the one hand—the duty of living in accord with oneself—and collectivism on the other—the duty of living in accord with others. Within this dual relationship, Piper embraces the audiences for her work. Paradoxically a contract, a kind of binding directive, offers, too, the freedom to act, and reinforces individual and collective responsibility. In this respect, *The Probable Trust Registry* considers the whole of Piper's concerns from the time she began her theoretical and practical work. By deploying the process that has been hers since the 1960s, and in the context of a highly trafficked art biennial no less, she sends into orbit a deliberate form of speculative fiction—the data that will be stored for one hundred years—elegantly connecting it to the role and function of archives—her archives, of course, but also of all archives. What will become of all our archives in a century's time? From decade to decade, data storage technologies change—new file formats are introduced, for example, while others become outmoded; eventually, software applications and operating systems require upgrades. In this way, digital technology is always revealing its temporal limits. It is this idea that Piper has tirelessly examined throughout her oeuvre, drawing on artistic and theoretical resources to investigate the genealogy and history of humankind. "In my artwork," she tells Del Principe,

I create anomaly, and in my philosophy work, I try to explain it. . . . The artwork . . . aims to create anomaly in the viewer's cognitive capacities, aims to create a disruption of the viewer's

conceptual scheme, and in that respect my work is no different from the work of any artist. And in my philosophy work, I attempt to chart that conceptual scheme, to schematize it, and to describe the way it operates both in the ideal case and also when it is disrupted by the kind of anomaly that I am and that I create in my artwork.⁴³

This term “anomaly,” twice used to depict an aberration from what is thought to be the normal course, can be found again in her analysis of xenophobia through the prism of Kantian rationalism: “Xenophobia is fear, not of strangers generally, but rather of a certain kind of stranger, namely those who do not conform to one’s preconceptions about how persons ought to look or behave. It is therefore a paradigm case of resistance to the intrusion of anomalous data into an internally coherent conceptual scheme—a threat to the unity of the self defined by it.”⁴⁴

In her instructions for installing *Everything #18* (2007) (p. 160), Piper specifies that the exhibition space should be covered in strips of wallpaper on which the U.S. Constitution is repeated, and “each roll of wallpaper contains one page of the constitution. The rolls measure 24 inches wide with the pages centered in the middle of the strip. So that ‘Everything will be taken away’ repeats in its entirety, the length of the installation must be a multiple of 10 feet.”⁴⁵ Here Piper underscores the conceptual link between the text’s contents and its spatial organization. The Amendments are almost illegible; as in other works in the *Everything* series, the image seems to have been overexposed, as when, in printing photographs with analog processes, too much light obscures our perception of a photograph’s contents while also rendering it dazzling. Even as the wall is covered in a montagelike sequence of the Bill of Rights, symbolically introduced by “We the People,” the rhythmic repetition eventually cancels out. The impossibility of thoroughly apprehending the Constitution creates an impasse that is depicted and affirmed in a second work, juxtaposed with the first, *Everything #5.1* (2004), an arced window that looks into the building’s interior structure. The document reproduced on the wallpaper is the archival version, the same ink and parchment that can be found through the White House’s website.⁴⁶ Piper’s use and interpretation of this founding text reminds us that many decades passed between the time these amendments were ratified (1791) and the time slavery was abolished (1865).

To look at the events of this past and establish their correspondence with present-day circumstances is also to question the ancestry of the violence that is very real today. What are the origins of this violence? What are the critical tools we might use today to counter it, and how might we use them? The singularity of Piper’s work is defined by the patience with which she

43. Piper, interview with Del Principe, at 00:58:36.

44. Piper, “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism,” *Philosophical Forum* 24, nos. 1–3 (Fall–Spring 1992–93): 188–232; reprinted in Robin May Schott, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 21–73; and in John P. Pittman, ed., *African-American Perspectives and Philosophical Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 1997). The quotation here is from page 3 of the online version, APRA, [www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteXen&KantRat\(1991\).pdf](http://www.adrianpiper.com/docs/WebsiteXen&KantRat(1991).pdf).

45. Piper, installation details for *Everything #18*, APRA.

46. The White House website links to “The Constitution of the United States,” National Archives, www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution.

sets a course that, far from being easy, has nonetheless allowed her a way to look and think about a tormented, unappeased world. The Bhagavad Gita (fig. 8), which calls, in part, for selfless action, notes, “When a man has his reason in freedom from bondage and his soul is in harmony, beyond desires, then renunciation leads him to a region supreme which is beyond earthly action.”⁴⁷ Meditating on this sentence, one can imagine how in the tireless repetition of the phrase “Everything will be taken away,” every human being might begin to find within the coherence of this renouncement, in order to face existence—even in suffering, even in absence.

47. *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 119.



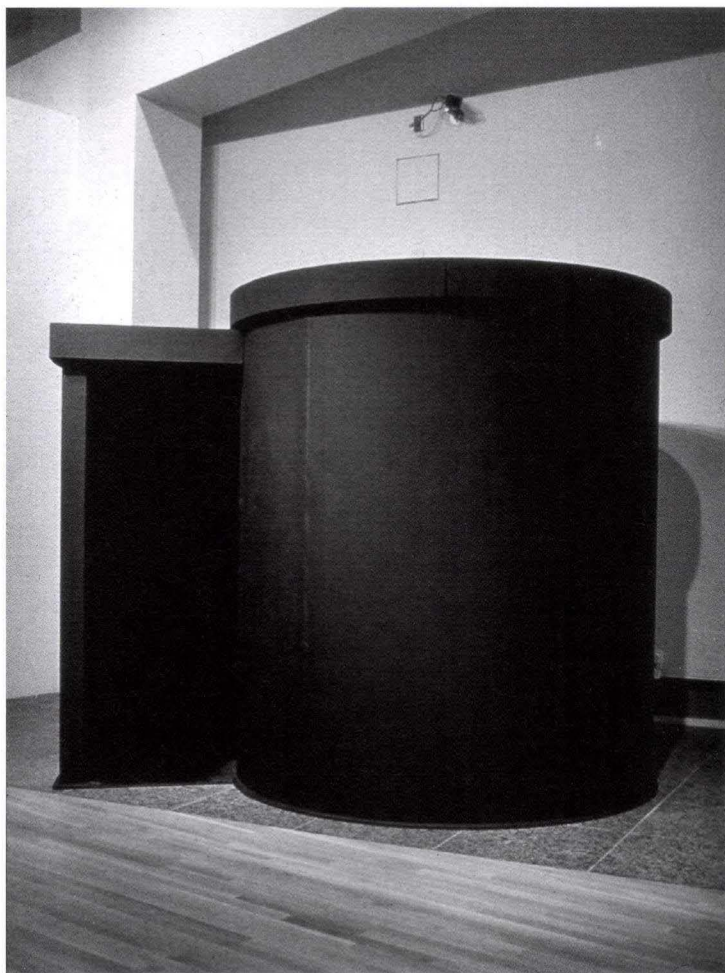
8. *The Bhagavad Gita*. 1965 edition

ADRIAN PIPER AND THE RHETORIC OF CONCEPTUAL ART

VID SIMONITI

The Work and the Viewer

Adrian Piper's installation *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* (1980) (figs. 1, 2) is a wooden, conchlike construction, admitting only a few visitors at a time. In the darkened space within, the viewer faces backlit photographs of four black men; the light radiating from the men's eyes illuminates the small space. Equipped with headphones, the viewer hears four in-character monologues, spoken by Piper, each lasting several minutes. The monologues express reactions by potential spectators, and each reveals a problematic political attitude. One voice might be described as that of a politically apathetic aesthete: "It's an interesting attempt to disrupt my composure as an art viewer . . . [but] I don't think that it works as art, because I really couldn't care less about racial problems when I come to a gallery"; and another as that of a disappointed suburban moralist: "She's representing all blacks as completely hostile and alienated, and I just think that that's not true. . . . I know lots of black people. . . . Well, of course I wouldn't advise my daughter to marry one . . .

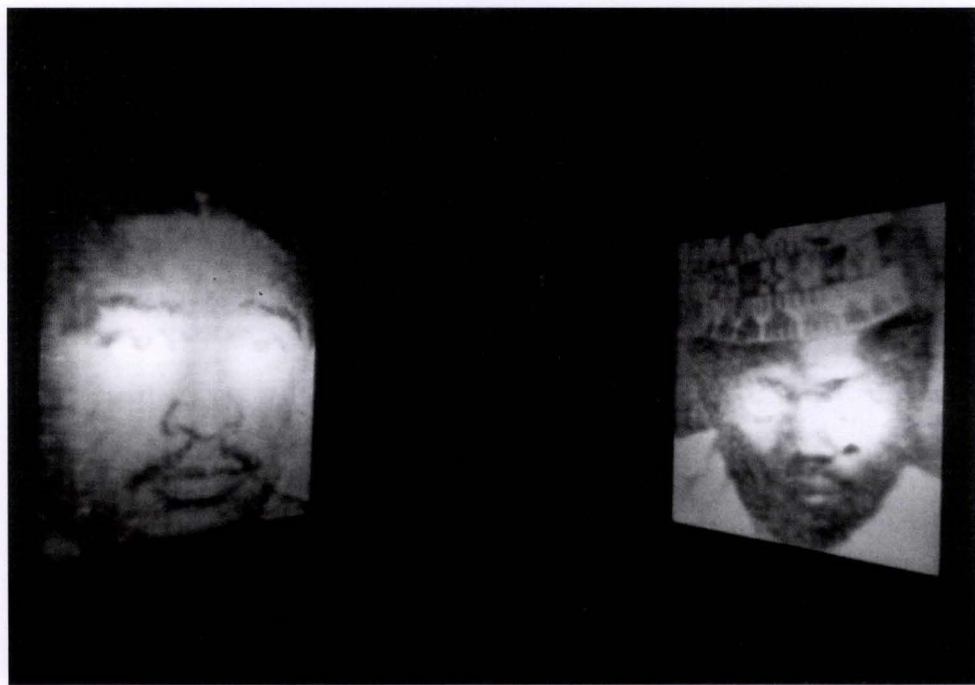


1. *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*. 1980

it's just because society makes it so difficult for an interracial couple." The third voice is enthusiastic about the work, but indulges in a facile identification with the photographed men: "This is really right on. . . . I mean I've been really down and out myself. I can really understand black anger, because like, I'm real angry too." The fourth voice is that of unabashed, bitter resentment: "This certainly doesn't bring me any closer to the so-called black experience. . . . I've found that blacks are just angry, they're difficult to get along with."¹ These four narratives, it appears, are the "alarm systems" of the work's title: defensive orations triggered by the intrusion of the photographed men into the dark box.

Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems suggests an art practice decidedly different from the one that introduced Piper's name to the New York art world some ten years earlier. She was one of the youngest participants in the Conceptual art movement; she turned twenty-two on the closing day of *Information* (1970), the seminal exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art that helped to solidify the identity of conceptualism. Piper's contribution to *Information, Context #7* (1970) (fig. 3), consisted of notebooks displayed on a pedestal and a typewritten sign instructing the viewer to "indicate any response suggested by this situation" by writing or drawing in the notebooks. As an efficient reversal of the roles of the artist and the viewer—the viewer produces the work, the artist peruses it later—the work seems typical of Conceptual art as a (clever, knowing, self-referential) idea about art. Piper's contribution to the exhibition catalogue reinforces

1. Adrian Piper, "Four Intruders plus Alarm Systems," 1980, in Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer, eds., *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 235–44; reprinted in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 182–85. In notes on the work, Piper describes the four voices as the "aestheticizing response," the "liberal response," the "appropriating response," and the "redneck response." Ibid., p. 182.



2. *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*, 1980

the impression of such an abstract investigation, explaining this role reversal with operations reminiscent of formal logic.² As far as its politics go, *Context #7* therefore seems utterly open ended, and, indeed, the responses ranged wildly, including a droll cartoon reminiscent of today's online trolling and an impassioned political message in support of the Black Panther political prisoners (figs. 4, 5). In *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*, this deep interest in the status of the audience's thought processes remains, but, by contrast, the viewer's reaction seems preempted by the discourse on the headphones.

The shift from work that is open ended and conceptual to work with an overtly political subject matter is not, of course, specific to Piper's artistic career. The politicization of advanced art came to characterize the post-Conceptual practices of the 1970s onward, with artists such as Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Victor Burgin, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Lorna Simpson all making work that countered the political taciturnity of the post-object avant-gardes of the 1960s while toeing the same aesthetic line: an economy of means, informational display, and the free interweaving of image and text. Indeed, as various further artistic turns were announced during the 1990s and 2000s—"ethnographic," "social," "archival," "curatorial," "research"—one could speak not merely of a shift in emphasis but also of a continuation of a visually restrained, post-Conceptual art that has continued to aspire to the condition of (written and spoken) political discourse. The curator and art historian Miwon Kwon has aptly

2. Piper, "Three Models of Art Production Systems," in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Information* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), pp. 111; reprinted in Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism, 1967–1992* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), p. 13.



3. Installation view of *Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 2–September 20, 1970

Free all political prisoners!

The Panthers are prisoners of war, and their trial properly belongs before ^{the} U. N. Committee on Colonialism and Racism.

I was fined \$25 for failure to report a change of address on my driving license. My hair is long and my skin is not white. White ~~peopl~~ people convicted that very same day for reckless driving were fined \$10.

Bobby Seale is being framed for ~~the~~ murder in New Haven. We will go to the full extent of recourse to the law (i.e. the Supreme Court). If we still do not get justice ^{in the small matters} and in the large, we will level the earth on this motherfucking country! Power!!!

Ya know, Clyde,
the exhibit's
better when you're
stoned

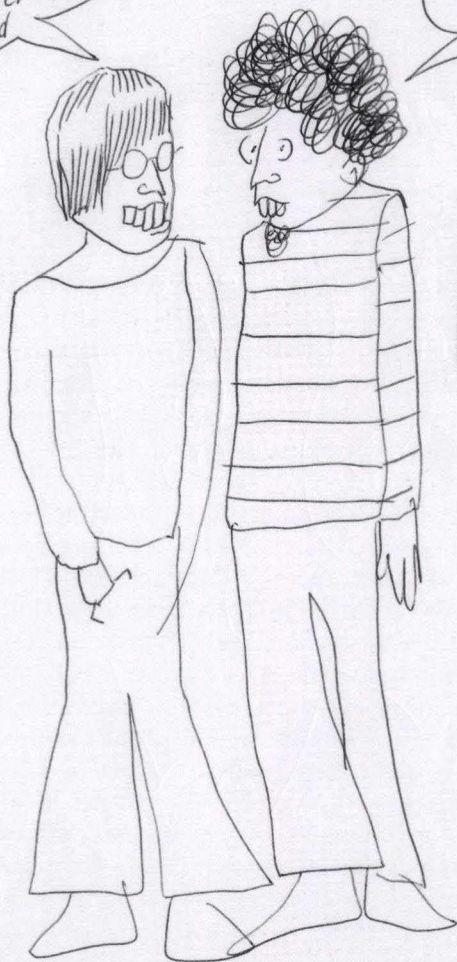
Yeah

So

is

life

So is
no
exhibit



designated such work “discursive,” the proper site of which is no longer just the gallery but public political discourse broadly conceived.³ The work of these artists often involves considerable textual output in the form of essays, written-up archival research, extensive artists’ statements, or, as with *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*, a narrative composition. Because these works already contain a textual element, they can easily migrate onto the printed page in a form that approaches that of a political essay.⁴ While Conceptual work of the 1960s introduced the use of words, numbers, typefaces, and writing as new aesthetic possibilities, in discursive art the intertwining of text and imagery becomes more deliberate, coherent, and directed toward making specific political points. Art, we might say, becomes an argument.

This essay will not so much biographically chart Piper’s turn to political issues as consider two corpora of Piper’s work side by side: her performance-based Conceptual pieces of 1968–71 and her antiracist installation works of 1978–92. I address two sets of questions that have been central to the scholarly writing on Piper’s work in this period. The first set looks at the issue of how Piper’s later, overtly political, post-Conceptual work relates to her earlier, abstract, politically tacit Conceptual art practice. As we shall see, it has not been unusual in art-historical commentary to have read the artist’s Conceptual work as having *already* addressed the issue of racism, and I want to offer some resistance to this view. Indeed, the temptation to read early conceptualism as political in its subject matter is a product of its own political moment, and one that leads to some serious and underappreciated ethical problems.

The second set of questions pertains to Piper’s later, overtly political work. Once art purposefully enters political discourse, what role does it occupy vis-à-vis non-art political discourse? Do new, emancipatory kinds of rhetoric become available when political debate takes place within the distinct sphere of art making? Indeed, one of the voices in *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* asks this very question: “Certainly it’s one thing to watch editorials on TV and have this material presented in a thoroughgoing way. And somehow I just think that that’s a lot more effective than trying to turn it into art, because after all, art is not social commentary.”⁵ Establishing the rhetorical efficacy of Piper’s later work requires paying close attention to the way it foregrounds the viewer’s consciousness, a theme she pursued through her early, more abstract investigations, and which becomes salient in the four viewers’ internal monologues in *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*. The link between the early and later work, then, is not its *subject matter* but rather its *methodology*. To flesh out the viewer whose internal processes are depicted in Piper’s works, I consider the American sociopolitical context of the 1970s and ‘80s, the context described by social psychologists as the one of “modern” racism.⁶

3. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 23–29.

4. For example, when the monologues from *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* were first published, in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, the text was placed among the essays rather than among the artworks. For other examples of how discursive art interacts with non-art publications, see *ibid.*, pp. 26–31.

5. Piper, “Four Intruders plus Alarm Systems,” p. 183.

6. For an early use of this term, see John B. McConahay, “Modern Racism and Modern Discrimination: The Effects of Race, Racial Attitudes, and Contexts on Simulated Hiring Decisions,” *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 9 (1983): 551–58. Other terms, such as “symbolic,” “subtle,” “aversive,” “covert,” and “ambivalent” racism have been used to describe this family of phenomena, but for simplicity’s sake I will use “modern” here as an umbrella term. For a useful overview of the terminology, see David O. Sears et al., “Race in American Politics,” in Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo, eds., *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 16–31.

While Piper's work is my focus here, I hope that the discussion also contributes to a bigger art-historical picture. Writing in the 1990s, various historians of American art have asked just how the politically taciturn Conceptual and Minimalist practices of the 1960s—the art, for example, of Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, or, indeed, the early work of Adrian Piper—gave rise to the politically committed post-Conceptual art of the following decades. Was this development a matter of historical accident—a contingent confluence of late modernism and the ground-shifting political developments of the late 1960s—or was there already something intrinsically emancipatory to the experimental forms of the 1960s: an aesthetic revolution, which facilitated the political one?⁷ This bigger dilemma can be illuminated by considering Piper's work, since she is one of the few conceptualists to have turned so explicitly to political issues as well as to have responded to racism specifically. This emphasis calls for a renewed inquiry into the responses of the viewers of these works—the viewers whose mental processes are depicted by the works, i.e., the actual sociohistorical spectators, but crucially, also, the belated viewers of art-historical scholarship.

Monitoring Consciousness: Performance Pieces, 1968–71

Conceptual artists in the second half of the 1960s in New York formed a tight-knit group. One only needs to compare, for example, the entries in the visitors' book for Seth Siegelaub's New York show *January 5–31, 1969*, the list of addressees to whom Piper sent her first mail-art work (*Three Untitled Projects [for 0 to 9]: Some Areas in the New York Area [1969]*), and the guest list for the *Information* special-preview cocktail party to get a sense of the significant overlap of about two hundred artists, collectors, critics, and curators who shared an interest in this kind of artistic production.⁸ Even with this cohesive group, however, it has become customary to distinguish different potentialities, and Piper approached Conceptual art through what may be called “visual” conceptualism, which owed much to the work and writings of LeWitt. Unlike Joseph Kosuth or the group Art & Language, who by the end of the 1960s understood Conceptual art to be largely linguistic and theoretical, LeWitt took Conceptual art to be in a sense continuous with the kind of work that a *visual* artist performed.⁹ Piper acknowledges LeWitt's work as a crucial early influence; the two formed a friendship in 1967 or 1968, and Piper soon began renting a loft in the same building as LeWitt.¹⁰

While LeWitt's practice was still concerned with drawing lines in space, its important contribution was to see the line as “dematerialized”: primarily imagined and constructed not on a physical support but in one's head. LeWitt's wall drawings are typical of this approach, since their defining element is not any particular physical instantiation but their instruction to imagine a visual arrangement, for example, “All architectural points

7. See, for example, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (1990): 131–37, 141–43; and Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 35–70. For a critical discussion, see Anna Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (2000): 149–63; and Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 64–69.

8. Seth Siegelaub Papers, LA.40, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York; *Three Untitled Projects* (1969), archival material, Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin (APRA); The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 934.27, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

9. On the relationship between Sol LeWitt, drawing, and writing, see Anna Lovatt, “The Mechanics of Writing: Sol LeWitt, Stéphane Mallarmé and Roland Barthes,” *Word & Image* 28, no. 4 (2012): 374–83. On the alleged Kosuth-LeWitt split as it entered the historiography of Conceptual art, see Buchloh, “Conceptual Art,”

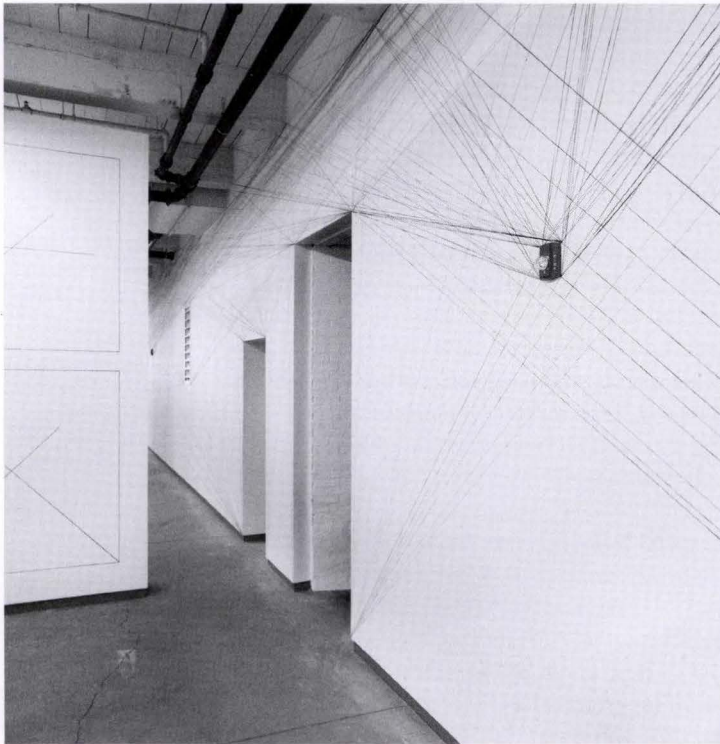
connected by straight lines,” the directive for *Wall Drawing #51* of 1970 (fig. 6). In this respect, LeWitt’s drawings are much like mathematical equations: we can physically draw the function $y=x^2$ as a parabola, or we can just calculate the values and mentally represent the curve to ourselves. Likewise, we may physically draw LeWitt’s lines on a wall, or we can simply imagine them to be there. Indeed, LeWitt sometimes described the actual drawings as mere “documentation” or as an “aid” to the mind, and he was famously laissez-faire about how the drawings were executed.¹¹ The real interest, we might then say, inhered not in the artist’s authoritative stroke of the pencil but in the generative idea that existed in an abstract, imagined space.

Piper’s early Conceptual performance pieces are likewise concerned with the act of drawing a line in an imagined space and with the relationship between a generative idea and the executed work. Consider Piper’s Hypothesis series (1968–70) (pp. 140–43). For this work, Piper went about her daily business—walking around a room (*Hypothesis: Situation #1*), sitting at a table (#2), watching television (#3), spending time in a park (#8)—but she recorded the contents of what she was seeing by taking a snapshot with a camera held at her forehead, either at random or at scheduled intervals. The presentation of each work consists of three framed panels. One of them shows photographs and a graph plotting Piper’s movements along space and time coordinates, another presents a typewritten key explaining what

pp. 113–15, 124–29; and Peter Osborne, “Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy,” in Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion, 1999), pp. 52–61.

10. Adrian Piper, “Sol, 1928–2007,” APRA, www.adrianpiper.com/art/sol.shtml; and John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 42.

11. LeWitt, in Patricia Norvell, “Sol LeWitt, June 12, 1969,” in Norvell and Alexander Alberro, eds., *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegel, Smithson, and Weiner* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 117. See also LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967): 79–84; reprinted in Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 12–16, in particular p. 15. On the execution of LeWitt’s works, see the accounts by his draftsmen in Susan Cross and Denise Markonish, eds., *Sol LeWitt: 100 Views* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press; North Adams, Mass.: MASS MoCA, 2009), pp. 108, 127.



6. Sol LeWitt. *Wall Drawing #51*. 1970

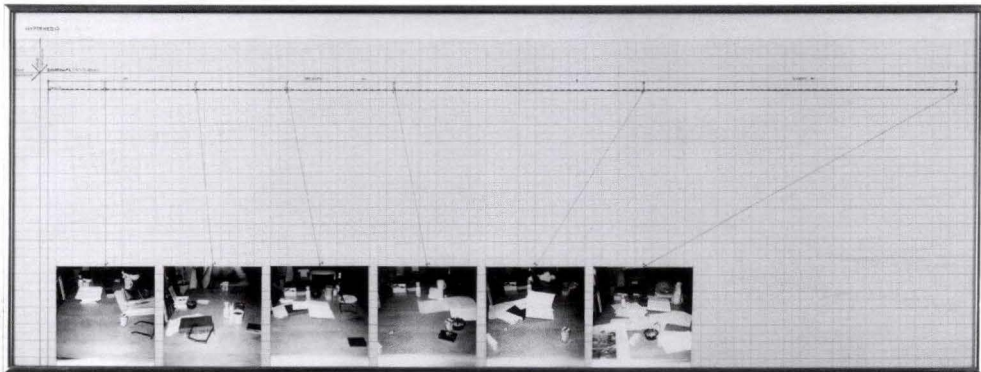
is shown, and another presents a typewritten essay. The graphs themselves of course include *lines*, drawn in india ink, but perhaps the most noteworthy line—the line that constitutes the Conceptual *work*—is the line charted by Piper's consciousness across a particular time period, as marked by the points on the line represented in the camera snapshot.

A line drawn by a consciousness is a rather overwhelming concept, to be sure, but designating one's own present conscious state as the site of the work was not an unfamiliar procedure in Conceptual art—take, for example, Robert Barry's idea pieces, such as *Something that is taking shape in my mind and will sometimes come to consciousness* (1969). Piper's method in the Hypothesis series likewise documents her state of consciousness and adds to it the LeWittian idea that the artwork involves the artist passing the contents of her consciousness into the viewer's. The Hypothesis series' continuity with LeWitt's work can also be gleaned from the beginning of a text on LeWitt written by Piper in 2009:

Think of any object, any event, any state of affairs, anything as it is at a particular moment in time and location in space. Think of that space-time intersection as a point in the space-time matrix. Then think of that thing as it is at a slightly later moment in time. . . . That second space-time intersection forms a second point in the matrix. Then draw a straight line between the first point and the second. . . . That line marks the path of the actual. It marks a section of the journey the thing actually took through time and space.¹²

Although Piper does not mention her own works in this text, it is notable that she describes LeWitt's practice in words that seem to recall the Hypothesis series: drawing lines between two points in *time*, something physically impossible but that constitutes precisely the kind of paradoxical projection of the mind's powers, precisely the kind of poking at the edge of rationality that Conceptual art so characteristically delighted in.

12. Piper, "The Unity of Sol LeWitt's Oeuvre," in *Sol LeWitt: 100 Views*, p. 89.



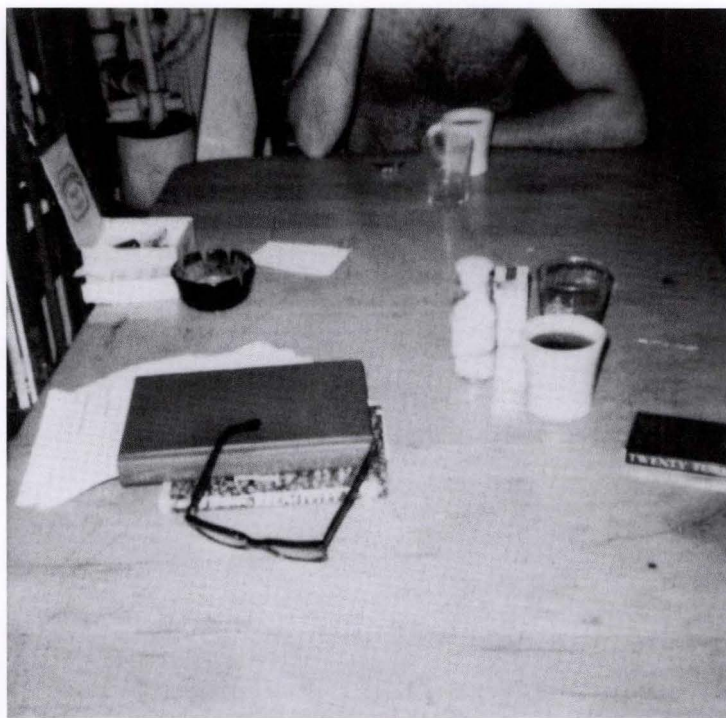
7. *Hypothesis Situation #2*. 1968

Of course, the Hypothesis series also involves the artist's body and the artist's private experience in a way that is mostly absent from LeWitt's practice, and, as a result, the work perhaps generates a temptation to read it through the (real or imagined) biography of the artist. For example, *Hypothesis: Situation #2* (1968) (fig. 7) tells the story of a single table as it enters Piper's consciousness at predetermined time intervals. Six times the unremarkable kitchen table appears in front of us, and yet the second photograph also contains a nude male torso (fig. 8). This unmentioned human presence surely captures our interest: is this athletic apparition, which momentarily disrupts the detached Conceptual investigation, relevant to the piece? Given that the artist is female, and that the photographed torso is male, and that the year is 1968, perhaps we should understand this presence as a sign of desire, or perhaps rebellion, or perhaps of the artist's subversion of the usual power dynamics. It is not difficult at this point to start reconstructing the piece as an episode in the artist's personal life, and I will return to this biographizing impulse later.¹³ For now, however, I want to resist the temptation and retain the focus on what I take to be primary in the Hypothesis series: a conceptual investigation into the relationship between the artist's consciousness and the viewer's.

Piper's performances following the Hypothesis series took turns emphasizing one or the other side of this relation. The Catalysis series initially consisted of seven numbered actions performed between summer and autumn 1970.¹⁴ These

13. In case the reader would like that biographical curiosity assuaged: it seems that the man in the photograph might be Piper's then-boyfriend, who has appeared in some of her work around 1968. See Piper, "Meat into Meat," in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 9–10.

14. The earliest notes on the series are dated August 1970, and the seventh piece was performed, unannounced, at the *Before Cortés* show, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which closed January 3, 1971.



8. *Hypothesis Situation #2*. 1968

were all unannounced interventions into public space, such as Piper going about town with a large bath towel stuffed in her mouth (fig. 9), working in the library while playing a concealed recording of loud belches, or politely shopping at Macy's while wearing clothes covered in wet paint.¹⁵ Despite the outlandish nature of these actions, the artist's contemporaneous notes show her in her analytical, detached, Conceptual mode. The notes begin with a quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and continue with two sets of "Notes and Qualifications," and, interestingly, nowhere in this initial set of remarks does Piper reflect on the unusual character of her actions or on the fact that they might appear to her audience as "either meaningless or insane," as she put it two years later.¹⁶ Instead, the notes seem primarily concerned with the possibility of creating a work that is "defined as completely as possible by the viewer's reaction and interpretation."¹⁷ Or, as Piper observes toward the beginning of the notes, "The work is a catalytic agent, in that it promotes a change in another entity (the viewer) without undergoing any permanent change itself."¹⁸ If *Context #7* (exhibited during that same time, at *Information*) was an open-ended vehicle for the viewer's reaction, the *Catalysis* series was attempting to do the same, with one difference: here, the reactions took place outside of a preannounced art-world context; Piper meant for the reactions to be pure, uncorrupted by the "prestandardized set of responses" that an institution like a museum provokes.¹⁹

15. Lucy Lippard, "Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper," *The Drama Review: TDR* 6, no. 1 (1972): 76.

16. Piper, "Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object," 1970–73, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 49.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 41.



9. *Catalysis IV*. 1970. Photograph by Rosemary Mayer

If the *Catalysis* works privilege the audience's response, another performance from this time returns to the artist's own experience, excluding, for the time being, any audience other than herself. For *Food for the Spirit* (1971) (fig. 10; pp. 122–25), Piper spent a hot New York summer practicing yoga and studying Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* at home in her loft. She became, as she puts it, "obsessed with Kant's thought," and describes a kind of metaphysical buzz that will be familiar to anybody who studied philosophy as a young person: a dangerous exhilaration that comes with exploring a vast, intricate, just-about-graspable intellectual system, amplified in this case, no doubt, by Piper's "two-month juice-and-water fast."²⁰ To anchor herself in the material world—to remind herself that she had a body as well as a mind, Piper took clothed and nude self-portraits and kept a diary. The view of herself as a merely "physically embodied" person reassured her that "the *Critique* was a book with good ideas in it that I had chosen to study, and not (only? necessarily? really?) the entrance into a transcendent reality of disembodied self-consciousness."²¹

20. Piper, "Food for the Spirit," *High Performance* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1981); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 55.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 55.



10. *Food for the Spirit* #6. 1971

The piece was only written up and published, with the photographs, in 1981.

Both the *Catalysis* works and *Food for the Spirit* can be described as semipublic performances: it remains ambiguous in what form they were to be received by a secondary, art-world audience. Two of the seven *Catalysis* performances of 1970 were photographed by Piper's friend Rosemary Mayer; the critic John Perreault mentioned the *Catalysis* actions in the *Village Voice* in 1971; the same year, Piper also performed two new *Catalysis* pieces in a gallery context; and Piper discussed the series in an interview with Lucy Lippard in 1972.²² The photographs of *Food for the Spirit* were, as said, only published ten years after the performance. Several other unnamed and photographically undocumented performances from 1971–72 are semipublic in this sense. In one piece, Piper aurally memorized Aretha Franklin's *Respect* and danced to it, without any sound, both in front of passersby (prefiguring Gillian Wearing's 1994 *Dancing in Peckham* by twenty years) and privately in her loft.²³ For another, she recorded, memorized, and then recited her side of a telephone conversation with her best friend, Phillip Zohn, performing the piece "in front of a shop window on Essex Street shortly before sunrise" and "in front of a mirror in my loft in complete solitude," as well as elsewhere.²⁴ In each of these works, the primary audience was either unaware that what they were seeing was art, or the audience consisted only of Piper herself.

The *Hypothesis* and *Catalysis* works, *Food for the Spirit*, and the unnamed pieces, notwithstanding their differences, share among them an inquiry into the Conceptual notion of art as a transfer of ideas from one consciousness to another, unencumbered, where possible, by the context of the art world. As with many other first-generation Conceptual works, there is, perhaps, also something meditative or pensive about these detached investigations.²⁵ The attempt in the *Hypothesis* series to freeze in eternity that fleeting *now*, which by its very definition is always slipping away, can be read as a melancholy enterprise; after all, Faust's "Verweile doch, du bist so schön" (Stay a while, you are so beautiful) expresses longing as well as metaphysical impossibility.²⁶ In an audio work from the same period, *Seriation #2: Now* (1968), Piper simply recorded herself saying "now" at increasing speed. *Catalysis*, *Food for the Spirit*, and the unnamed performances likewise thematize the artist's consciousness as isolated from that of others. While Piper's notes consider solipsism primarily as an abstract, philosophical proposition, her actions surely also reveal to us the existential weight of that view.²⁷ Solipsism acquires a more autumnal color when it implies that all that exists is our end of the telephone conversation.

22. Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, pp. 170, 172–75, 190–91; Lippard, "Catalysis."

23. These occurred at some point before September 1972. Piper, "Talking to Myself," p. 48.

24. The recording, dating from May 12, 1972, is available as a sound work. Piper, "Phillip Zohn Catalysis," 1989, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 57–58; see also "Talking to Myself," p. 49.

25. See Jörg Heiser, ed., *Romantic Conceptualism* (Bielefeld, Germany: Kerber, 2007).

26. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* 1772–75, part 1, line 1,699.

27. For Piper's contemporaneous notes on solipsism, see "Talking to Myself," pp. 47–51.

The Performance Pieces and Four Viewers

Considered from the standpoint of Piper's later antiracist work, in what light do these private performances appear? If examined alongside the four monologues from *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*—performed a year before the documentation of *Food for the Spirit* was published—what overtones do these investigations into the artist's consciousness and into the viewer's acquire? The dominant art-historical account has indeed read Piper's early performances as prefiguring later work, that is, as pointed critiques of patriarchal and racist social relations. John Bowles—the author of the as-yet only monograph on Piper, which provides the most comprehensively researched account of her 1965–75 work—argues that in the Hypothesis series, Piper cast herself as a neutral observer of her own experience; thereby, Piper “repudiates Kant's assumption that blacks and women are unable to comprehend their perceptions by presenting her subjectivity as a problem for Modernism.”²⁸ *Food for the Spirit* has been similarly analyzed as a repudiation of racism, for example by the art historian Amelia Jones: “For a black woman (who is also a philosopher by profession) to pose naked in the act of incorporating Kantian theory as well as in the act of taking a picture is a multivalently radical act.”²⁹ Bowles, partially concurring, considers *Food for the Spirit* an attempt to pitch Piper's particular experience as a black woman against Kant's totalizing, universalizing framework; Piper repudiated the “cultural norms” of 1971, which “silenced any black woman who made a claim to universality.”³⁰ The poet, critic, and cultural historian David Marriott points to the vanishing, ghostly quality of the images and argues that the problem Piper explored is not particularity versus universality but rather that “blackness has no material or phenomenal meaning outside of its relation to racist representation; it is only a stock of signs through which the subject cannot digest itself (as a presence or signifier) without slipping away from itself in a glissando of aberrant remainders.”³¹ Finally, the Catalysis series is the most often discussed of the early performances, and is usually presented as an antiracist and feminist piece. The art historian Christine Ross's comment captures the consensus when she writes that Piper “dressed and behaved in ways that confused categories of gender and race, in order to confront people with cognitively dissonant situations and thus potentially ‘catalyze’ white viewers out of their limited perceptions.”³²

Yet there is a certain friction between these political readings and Piper's contemporaneous notes, which, written soon after the performances took place, analyze them as conceptual investigations into the author's and the viewers' conscious experiences. Of course, matters are never as simple as assessing the author's “original” intention against the historian's belated interpretation. Piper would have been aware of the response that her semipublic performances occasioned in

28. Bowles, Adrian Piper, p. 120. Bowles connects Piper's interest in Kant with Clement Greenberg's.

29. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 162. For a similar reading, see Joanna Frueh, “The Body through Women's Eyes,” in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), p. 194.

30. Bowles, Adrian Piper, p. 208; see also pp. 213–18.

31. David Marriott, “On Racial Etiquette: Adrian Piper's *My Calling (Cards)*,” *Postmodern Culture* 24, no. 1 (2013): 1–22.

32. Christine Ross, “The Paradoxical Bodies of Contemporary Art,” in Jones, ed., *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 393. In overviews of performance art, the Catalysis series is regularly analyzed in this way. See also Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 162.

the contemporaneous art world audience, too. Between 1971 and 1972, Mayer, Perreault, and Lippard all considered the *Catalysis* series a feminist work, an interpretation that Piper occasionally resisted.³³ For example, when in a published conversation about the series Lippard suggested that Piper might have been getting out some of her “aggressions about how women are treated,” and that she had turned herself into an object that was “repellent, as if [she] were fighting back,” Piper replied, “In retrospect, all these things seem valid, even though they weren’t considerations when I did the pieces.” As to her intentions, she felt the work was “completely apolitical.”³⁴ Indeed, in her 1970–71 notes on the *Catalysis* pieces, Piper drew a division between artistic and political activity: “An artist can’t effect political change by making political art intentionally, but by . . . striking exhibitions, picketing galleries and museums, and so on”; she also reflected on the need to take her works into the street precisely because the autonomous gallery context was disintegrating.³⁵ The original 1968 essay on the Hypothesis series and the 1981 notes on *Food for the Spirit* do not include any discussion of Piper’s racial or gender identity or any other political commentary.³⁶ Retrospectively, however, Piper has suggested that a political reading of these works can become available. In the preface to her notes on the *Catalysis* series, published in 1974, she describes it as a reflection of the political situation of the early 1970s; in a 1992 text, she describes the Hypothesis series as “the crucial link between the earlier conceptual work and the later, more political work.”³⁷ Importantly, though, Piper suggests the link consisted in what I call her *methodology*—her attention to the problem of consciousness—and not in her intention to raise the subject matter of race or gender.³⁸

A four-way tension thus arises between different “viewers” whose reactions to Piper’s performances we might want to track: ordinary audience members who might have encountered Piper’s performances and of whose reactions no record exists; contemporaneous critics, such as Mayer, Lippard, and Perreault; the art-historical commentators; and Piper herself, represented both by her 1968–74 notes and her later reflections. Rather than tip the interpretative balance one way or another, my aim here is to inscribe this tension within a broader historical moment—the moment that arises around 1970 and during which a largely apolitical modernist artistic production in the United States clashed against an increasingly urgent need for a political reception of art.

This need to describe Conceptual art as politically effective began at least by the time of *Information*, in 1970. Kynaston McShine, the exhibition’s curator, included the seminal Art Workers’ Coalition antiwar poster *Q: And babies? A: And babies.* (1969) in the exhibition and, in a strongly worded essay, connected the art on display to the antiwar protests. Interestingly, the art on display did not obviously conform to this expectation;

33. Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, pp. 170–75.

34. Lippard and Piper, “*Catalysis*,” 77–78.

35. Piper, “Talking to Myself,” pp. 40, 41, 45.

36. Piper, “Hypothesis,” 1969, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 20–21; and “Food for the Spirit,” p. 55.

37. Piper, “Talking to Myself,” pp. 41, 45; and “About the Hypothesis Series,” 1992, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, p. 19.

38. For a candid autobiographical account of Piper’s transition from apolitical to political work, see especially “Flying,” in Jane Farver, ed. *Adrian Piper: Reflections* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1987); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 223–32.

of the New York-based artists in the exhibition, only Hans Haacke submitted a work that made explicit reference to the politics of the day. Still, for several of the critical audiences, reading *Information* as a political event had by then become an ethical imperative (as can be seen in the submissions to *Context* #7, discussed above); indeed, the exhibition was put on at the height of the antiestablishment and antiwar protests that swept the New York art world by the end of the 1960s.³⁹ Arguably, this ethical imperative did not abate for the generations of art historians and critics that followed—that is, for those scholars who first received the task of “writing up” Conceptual art and Minimalism. The art historian Hal Foster has candidly remarked that for his generation, critical theory continued as a surrogate for modernism—both for the “difficulty and distinction” of its high art and for its cultural politics, insofar as theory’s “radical rhetoric compensated a little for [the era’s] lost activism.”⁴⁰ Even for art historians less invested than Foster in critical theory, reading political potentialities into the (abstract and, on the surface, apolitical) Conceptual and Minimalist works of the late 1960s became almost a matter of evidencing the author’s own political allegiances. To give the example of LeWitt: his serial, factory-fabricated modular sculptures have been interpreted as containing an “implicit theory” of the “Taylorization of labor”; his act of drawing directly on the wall as representing “a democratic gesture of accessibility and directness”; and with regards to his open and closed cubes, it has been maintained that the “radical contingency and oppositionality of LeWitt’s practice . . . points to an alternative model of democracy.”⁴¹ As with Piper’s 1968–71 work, such interpretations go well beyond the artist’s own initial attestations and emphasize instead the politically charged backdrop of the late 1960s.

The art historians writing about the 1960s from later perspectives are surely deeply aware of the dilemmas here: arguably, no art-historical writing can isolate the work from its context of production, while the total rejection of an artist’s intentions carries its own ethical and theoretical problems.⁴² Nevertheless, I would like to offer some further constructive resistance to the received view of Piper’s early performances as a critique of patriarchal and racist social relations.

Viewing the performances alongside a 1980s work like *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* makes this resistance available. On the one hand, the juxtaposition can certainly encourage an antiracist reading of the earlier performance, via the late work. On the other, however, *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* reminds its audience that looking at a racial other can be structured by ascriptions of emotion and intent. Three out of the four monologists describe the faces as angry or hostile, but is that the emotion they really express? What pattern of thought suggests to us, the viewers, that they are angry or hostile? Beholding, again, the picture of the naked woman photographing herself,

39. The institutional politics around *Information* have been comprehensively researched. See Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 170–85; and Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 13–22, 178–84.

40. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. xiv.

41. Jonathan Flatley, “Art Machine,” in Nicholas Baume, ed., *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 84–85; Kirsten Swenson, *Irrational Judgments: Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, and the 1960s* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 146; Lovatt, “For an Adversarial LeWitt,” in *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes*, p. 67.

42. For a recent discussion of the way that even those art-historical approaches that attempt to refuse biography and intention tend to appeal to a minimal sense of context of production, see Sam Rose, “Close Looking and Conviction,” *Art History* 40 (February 2017): 156–77.

shown alongside a text in which she describes her engagement with Kant's first *Critique*, raises another question: what pattern of thought suggests to us, in the first place, that the woman is making a statement about race?

Some of these tensions have been articulated by the art historian Darby English, who has explored how race can become a deeply problematic means of art-historical assessment that obscures separate and significant concerns of the artist in question. To paraphrase English, the issue is not quite as simple as reading the work on its own terms *versus* reading the work through the artist's identity; if we read the work of black artists through the lens of identity alone, however, we may end up with a new segregationism, whereby these artists are consigned to only ever addressing issues of race.⁴³ What would it take for us—what kind of work Piper would have to make—to see a documentary photograph of *Food for the Spirit* as an investigation into the problem of consciousness, rather than as a work about identity politics? The worry is that the photograph would have to show a white man.⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, philosophically inflected work from this period by white male Conceptual artists, such as Kosuth, does not get analyzed in terms of the artist's perceived gender or ethnic identity but in terms of the links between their work and philosophy.⁴⁵ Equally, we should not let Piper's perceived identity preclude our understanding of her early performances as abstract philosophical investigations into the universal features of human consciousness, all the more so because of Piper's unique status as the only Conceptual artist whose work on philosophy has been validated outside of the field of art. While Piper's early works certainly prepare the ground for her later turn to political issues, their significance, I believe, also consists in providing us with some of the most moving and sophisticated examples of that wholly abstract, philosophical, conceptual idiom of American art making.⁴⁶

I sound this cautionary note not to dispute the accomplishment of the other historians here discussed; their work has importantly located Piper within the history of feminist and antiracist art. Likewise, if an artist or theorist somewhat freely uses a photograph from *Food for the Spirit* within an emancipatory discussion of portrayals of black female subjectivity, it would be needlessly pedantic to complain of the interpretative inaccuracies of such a use.⁴⁷ However, as I briefly illustrated with various readings of LeWitt's work, the art historian's politicizing gaze, the gaze that (indiscriminately) wills a political subject matter into the late 1960s Conceptual work, must itself be understood as a symptom of its own historical moment, a moment that ought not to lie beyond critical scrutiny.

Word, Image, and Types of Racism: Installations, 1978–92

“When thinking about black female spectators, I remember being punished as a child for staring, for those hard intense

43. See Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 11, 15. See also all of the introduction and chapter 1.

44. Interestingly, Bowles briefly floats a similar objection to Jones's reading of *Food for the Spirit* as important “simply because it exists as a picture of a black woman ‘who doesn't look like one.’” Bowles, *Adrian Piper*, p. 211. Yet surely the same criticism applies to Bowles's own reading of Piper's performances; for example, his reading of *Catalysis VII*, of which he says that the “particularities of [Piper's] appearance articulate a black feminist's critique of the partnership between Modernism and norms of race, gender, and sexuality.” *Ibid.*, p. 163. For *Catalysis VII*, Piper walked through the exhibition *Before Cortés* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, chewing huge amounts of bubble gum and carrying a purse filled with ketchup.

45. See Jean-François Lyotard, foreword, in Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

46. For further discussion of these points, see also W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing through Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); and English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*

direct looks children would give grown-ups, looks that were seen as confrontational, as gestures of resistance, challenges to authority.”⁴⁸ So begins bell hooks’s influential essay “The Oppositional Gaze,” in which she diagnoses racist subordination as crucially disciplining the black gaze, exploring this process in the depictions of black people in the white-created television show *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1951–53) as well as in the 1955 murder of fourteen-year-old Emmet Till, who was accused of sexually violating a white woman merely by looking at her. In Piper’s *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*, the viewers presented in the voiceovers discipline the “intruders” in ways described by hooks some ten years later: they ascribe a motive of hostility to the men’s direct looking. Piper’s installations of 1978–92 share among them, again, not their subject matter, but rather their methodology of scrutinizing the viewer’s consciousness in the act of looking. This methodology, derived from Conceptual art, explains the rhetorical efficacy of Piper’s post-Conceptual, anti-racist works, as I will now argue.

While the themes of race and gender first implicitly entered Piper’s work in the Mythic Being works in 1973—a set of actions and print media that involved her mustached drag persona—I am here primarily concerned with the corpus of her installation-based work, from *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (1978) to the Decide Who You Are series (1992). These works are characterized by a certain shared aesthetic and presentation: the shift toward an explicitly political subject matter coincides with Piper’s inclusion of found images, often photographs of black people taken from newspapers and advertising. Typically, these are experienced while Piper’s voiceover, performing a kind of in-character museum audio-guide commentary, plays on headphones.

Piper’s *Close to Home* (1987) (figs. 11, 12), for example, shows fifteen found black-and-white photographs, reproduced from *Ebony* magazine, each on a large (22 by 17 inches [55.9 by 43.2 cm]) sheet of paper. There are important aesthetic continuities with early work, such as the Hypothesis series: the central tenet of the conceptualist aesthetic, whereby an image may only ever be present within the context of commentary, is upheld in *Close to Home* by Piper’s inclusion of questionnaires, which are sorted into four categories of progressive levels of intimacy. These are: “I. Do you have a black colleague at your place of employment?” “II. Have you ever had a black person visit your place of residence?” “III. Do you have at least one black friend?” and “IV. Have you ever had a sexual relationship with a black person?” Within each category, there are multiple-choice, follow-up questions, which vary with the image: “If yes, in what manner do you socialize in the workplace?” (I.D) or “If yes, what social events did you attend together?” (IV.C). A panel under each questionnaire asks whether we feel uncomfortable at the thought of displaying such questions on the living room

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Important precedents for and parallels with this discussion are drawn from feminist art history. One seminal text is Anne Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O’Keeffe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

47. See Lorraine O’Grady, “Olympia’s Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity,” in Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven, eds., *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action* (New York: Icon, 1994), p. 156.

48. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), p. 115.

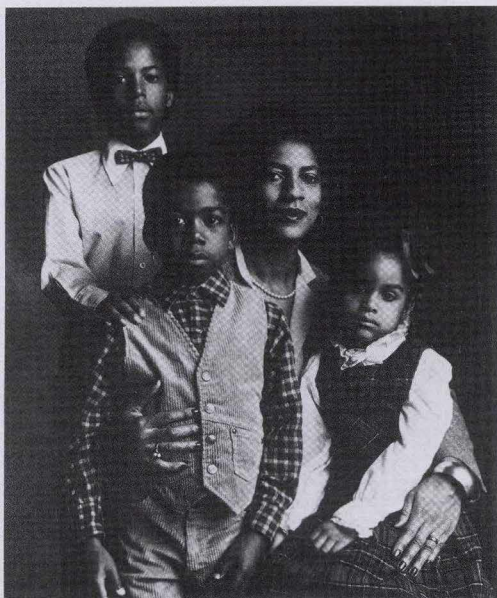


I. Do you have at least one black colleague at your place of employment?

D. If yes, in what manner do you socialize in the workplace?

1. one-on-one dinner _____
2. business lunch _____
3. coffee break _____
4. office party or gathering _____
5. none of the above _____

Do you feel uncomfortable at the thought of
displaying such questions on your living room wall?



IV. Have you ever had a sexual relationship with a black person?

C. If yes, what social events did you attend together?

1. family reunions _____
2. dinners, etc. with close friends _____
3. job-related dinners, parties, or outings _____
4. dinners, etc. with acquaintances _____
5. outside entertainment (movies, sports, etc.) _____
6. none of the above _____

Do you feel uncomfortable at the thought of
displaying such questions on your living room wall?

Instructions for secretary

1. Get keys
2. Answer phone "Seth SiegelauB"
3. Catalogs are available only at gallery - if any one wants extras we will mail them. (except for the press)
4. If someone is interested in purchasing work, call me.
5. My other phone is 288-5031.
6. Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11 - 5:30.
7. Gallery will exist for this month only.
8. Every morning turn on both Robert Barry pieces.
9. Lawrence Weiner has one freehold piece (see catalog) - if anyone inquires about this - tell them they can own the piece by making arrangements with Mr. Weiner at GR7-4113.
10. Have people sign guest book.
11. The typewritten Information sheet is for Press only.
12. For the first 6 hours of the exhibition (sat.) take a poloroid photo every 1/2 hour of the Huebler sawdust (looking into the hall) and then place it on the wall (with scotch tape) near the type-written document. At the end of the 6 hours (5 PM Sat.) remove the sawdust and throw it away.

Heat - water area - 1st floor
 - 3rd floor a) Turn valve slightly
 b) turn pump on

Sat only

13. Seth SiegelauB's instructions to his secretary (Adrian Piper) for the exhibition January 5-31, 1969, Seth SiegelauB Contemporary Art, New York

wall. The typewritten text instantly recalls what the art historian Benjamin Buchloh has memorably called the “aesthetics of administration” of Conceptual art; it evokes the spirit of an onerous bureaucratic protocol, also found in the works of Art & Language or Dan Graham or in Haacke’s viewer questionnaires.⁴⁹ Even some of the paraphernalia of Conceptual art—such as Siegelau’s to-do list, which Piper would have been faced with as the secretary at his show *January 5–31, 1969*—somewhat resemble the imperious tone of these protocols (fig. 13). The commentary device will be also familiar from Piper’s earlier Conceptual work (for example, from the essays that accompanied the Hypothesis series), even though in the 1978–92 installations, the artist’s commentary is turned into a more characterful voiceover. In *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*, Piper performs the roles of possible viewers; in the audio track that accompanies the *Close to Home* images and text, she affects a sarcastically pleading tone, apologizing to the viewer whose sensibilities might have been offended by the questionnaire: “Wait. Please. Please don’t turn away. I’m. I’m just asking. I, I’m not accusing you of anything, I. I just wanted to know. I know these are difficult issues, and . . . and nobody’s perfect. . . . I, I didn’t mean to antagonize you. . . . I, I just I just wanted to know.”⁵⁰ In a later work, *Safe* (1990), Piper personifies the viewer over Johann Sebastian Bach’s “*Erbarme dich*” (Take pity), from *St. Matthew Passion*.

Describing the nature of the viewer summoned by these voiceovers requires emphasizing the shifting context of the late 1970s and ’80s, when these works were made. The United States at this time were no longer “legally racist” (the Civil Rights Act of 1968 arguably stamped out the last remaining Jim Crow laws). While, of course, the struggle against discrimination continued, one key change was the self-perception of white citizens in relation to this struggle. As can be seen from the national polls of the period, white America now mostly considered itself on board with the integrationist demands made in the 1960s by civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr.; problematically, however, white respondents tended to consider the struggle against racism as thereby completed (see fig. 14). From the 1960s to the 1990s, polls showed a steady liberalization of attitudes among white respondents insofar as the “in principle” issues of racial integration were concerned. White respondents gradually but significantly moved toward near-universal (over 90 percent) espousal of equal rights for employment and embraced the desegregation of schools. However, white respondents also became less likely to perceive black citizens as victims of discrimination (from 41 percent in 1977 to 34 percent in 1996). When it came to *implementing* racial equality by government intervention, in schooling or in employment practices, the responses either remained unchanged or, in the case of school desegregation, even exhibited a trend toward greater resistance.

49. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art,” pp. 118–19, 128.

50. *Close to Home* (1987), transcription of original tape, APRA.

51. For a recent overview of ongoing inequality and discrimination, see Fredrick C. Harris and Robert C. Lieberman, eds., *Beyond Discrimination: Racial Inequality in a Post-racist Era* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2013). The difference between the idea of equality and action on behalf of it became known as the principle-implementation paradox. See Howard Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*, rev. ed. (1985; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 121–22, 191–95. For a more recent synthesis that includes American attitudes through 2012, see Bobo et al. “The Real Record on Racial Attitudes,” in Peter V. Marsden, ed., *Social Trends in American Life Findings from the General Social Survey since 1972* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 38–83.

Issues of Principle	1950s–60s	1970s	1980s–90s
Should black and white students go to the same or separate schools? (%Same)	63 (1964)	86 (1972)	96 (1995)
Do you approve of marriage between blacks and whites? (%Approve)	4 (1958)	34 (1978)	67 (1997)
Should blacks have as good a chance as whites at any kind of job, or should white people have the first chance at any kind of job? (%As good a chance)	85 (1963)	97 (1972)	(No data)
Social Distance	1950s–60s	1970s	1980s–90s
How strongly would you object if a member of your family wanted to bring a black friend home to dinner? Would you object strongly, mildly, or not at all? (%Not at all)	55 (1966)	71 (1972)	77 (1985)
Existence of Discrimination	1950s–60s	1970s	1980s–90s
On average, black people have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are mainly due to discrimination? (%Yes)	(No data)	41 (1977)	34 (1996)
Do you think these differences are because most blacks: have less in-born ability to learn/less motivation to pull themselves out of poverty/less chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty? (%Yes Less Ability/ Yes Less Motivation/ Yes Less Chance of Education)	(No data)	27/66/50 (1977)	10/52/55 (1996)
Who do you think is more to blame for the present conditions in which blacks find themselves—white people or black people themselves? (%Whites/blacks/both)	23/58/na (1968)	17/58/17 (1989)	14/56/23 (1995)
Implementing Antidiscrimination Measures	1950s–60s	1970s	1980s–90s
Should the federal government see to it that white and black children go to the same schools, or it is not the government's business? (%See to it)	42 (1964)	31 (1974)	25 (1994)
Should the federal government see to it that black people get fair treatment in jobs, or is this not the government's business? (%See to it)	38 (1964)	36 (1974)	28 (1996)

14. Data adapted from Howard Schuman, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*, rev. ed. (1985; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 104–8, 123–25, 142–44, 156–60. All the data is from national surveys and tracks the white respondents' answers. Years of surveys are given in parentheses. The percentages exclude missing data. The wording of questions is approximate, and minor changes (e.g., "Negro" instead of "black," in the 1960s) occur over time.

Acceptance of *social proximity* to the racially other also lagged: intermarriage moved from 27 percent approval in 1972 to (only) 67 percent in 1997. Therefore, while black Americans continued to experience inequality and discrimination, white Americans tended to espouse equality in principle but resisted its implementation.⁵¹

Against this background, the generation of antiracism activists working from the 1970s through the 1990s sought to disrupt the triumphalist complacency of liberal America and point to the persistence of subtler but still pervasive forms of racism. Feminist writers of color (e.g., Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, and hooks), critical race theorists (e.g., Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Mari Matsuda), and social psychologists (e.g., David Sears, John Dovidio, Patricia Devine, and Lawrence Bobo) focused on these new, modern manifestations of racial prejudice. Piper's installations can be understood as exploring the same territory as the work of this latter group. The focus of social psychologists on "modern," "symbolic," "aversive," or

"subtle" forms of racism in the 1970s and '80s reflects Piper's contemporaneous artistic investigation into that same set of attitudes.⁵² As described by social psychology, this new set of modern, subtly racist attitudes differs from blatantly racist ones because they do not consciously endorse the belief that the racially other is morally or aptitudinally inferior. Instead, these attitudes are exhibited as, for example, sublimated hostility toward integration,⁵³ implicit biases,⁵⁴ or a greater willingness to interpret an act as a punishable transgression when it is committed by an ethnically other.⁵⁵ Crucially, these attitudes are compatible with the subject believing she or he is not racist, despite the pernicious effect their attitudes may have; this is perhaps most dramatically shown by racial prejudice patterns in jury-based trials.⁵⁶

In Piper's installations, the initial trigger for the viewer's emotional reaction to the work is usually something as simple as a found photographic image of a black person. Interestingly, for the viewer implied in the voiceover, such an image is enough to recognize the work as a piece of "political" art; the central emotion of each piece is therefore not the feeling of flagrant racist dislike of black people, but the comparatively mild affective dislike that one might feel toward the topic of racism being discussed. This is similar to what has become known as "aversive racism," the mildly negative feelings that lead to the avoidance of the racially other rather than risk confrontation with them,⁵⁷ as well as to "stereotype threat," the unwillingness among white survey respondents to discuss political issues with a black pollster due to an a priori worry that they will be perceived as racist.⁵⁸

If in real life such mild tactics of avoidance can go unnoticed by the subject, they take center stage in these installations. As in the early works, one of the key tasks for the installations is to arrest the (viewer's) consciousness in the instantaneous "here and now," the moment Piper later came to discuss under the heading "the indexical present."⁵⁹ However, if in a series like *Catalysis* Piper experimented with the audience's consciousness outside of the art environment, in the 1978–92 installations the art setting was key for focusing on the present. This is most clearly evident in *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* (fig. 15; p. 144). Here a newspaper picture of black men and women is shown out of the original context and covered with reflective Plexiglas that casts back the visitor's face. The monologue played on a concealed sound system addresses the viewer as "you": "It doesn't matter who these people are. They're parts of a piece of art, which is part of an art exhibit, in an art gallery, right here, right now. . . . You want to have an aesthetic experience: to be fulfilled, elevated, edified, irritated."⁶⁰ As the monologue progresses, it describes the viewer growing increasingly impatient and frustrated by the work and feeling preached to. Interestingly, several studies in unconscious stereotyping,

52. For these terms, see note 6. In examples of individual studies, I will, where possible, limit myself to those that coincide with the period of Piper's works (1978–92). Where I could not locate studies for this period, I cite more recent ones.

53. See, for example, Sears, Carl P. Hensler, and Leslie K. Speer, "Whites' Opposition to 'Busing': Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?" *American Political Science Review* 73, no. 2 (1979): 369–84; Sears, "Symbolic Racism," in P. A. Katz and D. A. Taylor, eds., *Eliminating Racism: Profiles in Controversy* (New York: Plenum, 1988), pp. 53–84.

54. Patricia G. Devine, "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56, no. 1 (1989): 5–18; and John F. Dovidio et al., "On the Nature of Prejudice: Automatic and Controlled Processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 33, no. 5 (1997): 510–40.

55. Philip Atiba Goff, "A Measure of Justice: What Policing Racial Bias Research Reveals," in *Beyond Discrimination*, pp. 158–71.

56. Jennifer L. Eberhardt et al., "Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts

which have revealed the tendency of white Americans to more readily associate negative emotions with black faces than with white faces, are likewise based on trying to capture a "here and now." These studies measure the speed with which the viewer can associate positive or negative attributes with images of white or black people.⁶¹ *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma*, however, fixates on that putative initial moment of aversion.

A few of Piper's later works, like the Catalysis series, utilize Piper's own presence as the catalytic effect on the viewer. But whereas in *Catalysis IV* the artist is a bizarre unannounced apparition on the public transport, in the video installation *Cornered* (1988) (pp. 43, 148) she appears in a neutral blue cardigan and pearls; she is perhaps even conservatively dressed for an art-world presence. She smiles at us, holds our gaze, and then announces plainly, "I am black." Perhaps we feel, Piper tells us, that she is making "an unnecessary fuss" by declaring her identity in this way, but if she does not announce her identity, she has to put up with racist remarks that white people make in her presence, believing that she is white.⁶² In this way, *Cornered* is one of a number of works that thematize Piper's personal predicament, as well as her family's, as black persons who can "pass" for white.⁶³ Evoking what has been described by social psychologists as covert racism, these works address the tendency of white subjects to endorse illiberal or racist beliefs in nonpublic and all-white environments.⁶⁴ The work is not only

Capital-Sentencing Outcomes," *Psychological Science* 17, no. 5 (2006): 583–86.

57. Samuel L. Gaertner and Dovidio, "The Subtlety of White Racism, Arousal, and Helping Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35, no. 10 (1977): 691; and Gaertner and Dovidio, "The Aversive Form of Racism," in Gaertner and Dovidio, eds., *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism* (Orlando, Fla.: Academic Press, 1986).

58. Goff, "A Measure of Justice," pp. 174–75.

59. See Piper, "On Conceptual Art," *Flash Art* 143 (November–December 1988); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 241–42. See also Piper, "Xenophobia and the Indexical Present I: Essay," 1989, in Mark O'Brien, ed., *Reimaging America: The Arts of Social Change* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1990); reprinted in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 247–48.

60. Piper, "Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma," 1980, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, pp. 69–70.

61. See note 55. For a recent, ongoing study of implicit bias see Project Implicit, Harvard University, www.implicit.harvard.edu/implicit.

62. The transcript for *Cornered* has been



15. *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma*. 1978

notable as a piece of testimony, however, but for the brilliance of its rhetoric, beginning with the discomfort that such a simple initial remark—"I am black"—has the power to occasion. The viewer may feel uncomfortable (preached to?) simply because he or she does not want to run the risk of seeming racist and would prefer to avoid any discussion of the subject altogether. The viewer may shrink away from the issue rather than see it, as Piper suggests in the video, as *our* problem—both her own as well as the viewer's. The uneasy viewer thus is cornered by his or her attitudes as much as the woman in the video is cornered by the objectionable choice between passing for white and court-ing hostility.

There is, then, an important structural similarity between the 1968–71 and the 1978–92 works, even if we do not take the early works to broach the issue of racism. In the 1978–92 corpus, Piper's work continues to build on the key issues of Conceptual art, some of which were already broached by LeWitt: the relationship between the work's instruction and the audience's reaction (what Piper termed "catalysis"), and the ability of a consciousness to focus on, and self-analyze, the experience of the present moment (the "indexical present"). Recalling the strictures of Conceptual drawing that traced the artist's consciousness in the *Hypothesis* works, each of the 1978–92 installations proceeds like a polygon for the viewer's thought. One is confronted with an image as well as a questionnaire or a voiceover, each forcing a new level of scrutiny upon one's own initial reaction. In *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma*, the viewer is even forced to observe his or her own face in the Plexiglas that covers the photograph. Here, then, it is the viewer who draws the line that his or her consciousness has traveled. The bequest of early Conceptual art to later politically engaged practices was not, then, we might suggest, in its subject matter but in its rhetoric.

We might also ask again: who exactly is this viewer? To the four viewers discussed in the previous section, we must add a fifth: an artificial character that I have been referring to, constructed from the person addressed or impersonated by Piper's voiceovers and from the sociohistorical context of these works. This fifth, sociohistorical viewer is a hypothesis, but a hypothesis to which the studies cited here add plausibility. In other words, if reading Piper's works side by side with social psychology seems at all convincing, then the viewer that Piper's installations so masterfully evokes is precisely the modern, subtly racist subject of liberal, post-civil rights America. (While I could not find any studies on racism pertaining to a gallery-going public, it is interesting that higher education has been shown to correlate with a higher commitment to liberal principles, but not with a higher commitment to their implementation.)⁶⁵

This is not to suggest, of course, that any *individual* viewer must have reacted in this way (though it suggests many probably

published in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung, eds., *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), chapter 14.

63. The video in *Cornered* is displayed as part of an installation that includes the two birth certificates of Piper's father, one identifying him as "white," the other as "octoroon." Other works that make use of Piper's biography include her Political Self-Portrait series (1978–80).

64. See, for example, studies that show white respondents to be more likely to report negative views toward black Americans when interviewed by white interviewers. Shirley Hatchett and Schuman, "White Respondents and Race-of-Interviewer Effects," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1975): 523–28.

65. Indeed, higher levels of education resulted in *less* liberal attitudes on some issues of implementation, such as preferential treatment; see *Racial Attitudes in America*, pp. 231–34. Similar results continue to be reported today; see Geoffrey T. Wodtke, "Are Smart People Less Racist? Verbal Ability, Anti-Black Prejudice, and the Principle-Policy Paradox," *Social Problems* 63, no. 1 (2016): 21–45.

did). It is to argue, rather, that the rhetorical effectiveness of Piper's work consists of making us temporarily inhabit a deeply familiar character, a deeply plausible and recognizable picture of the kind of racism that the society now faces. What any of us does with that picture—whether we recognize in it a part of ourselves, or of our world, or of our persecutors—will depend as much on our circumstances as on our sensibilities. At any rate, to return to the question I posed at the beginning of the paper—what do discursive forms of art offer vis-à-vis broader, non-art political discourse? —Piper's art surely offers a convincing answer: here is an art that induces an exacting, uncompromising degree of self-scrutiny in the here and now, which we simply do not encounter in other registers of political debate. The same scrutiny of the audience's internal processes that was developed through abstract investigations of Conceptual art is now presented as a rhetoric designed to display and dismantle a modern, subtly racist viewership.

Finally, it is the same scrutiny we can apply to ourselves as art historians. I have suggested that the art-historical gaze of the 1990s and 2000s, one that reliably reads a political message into Conceptual art of the 1960s, may have grown out of a legitimate concern for a politically more engaged academia, but also that it has, by now, perhaps, become a maneuver that is too predictable and too totalizing to be always useful. As I tried to suggest with Piper, this gaze can also unhelpfully fix an individual artistic subjectivity into some allotted place. Instead, it may be more productive to return to the abstract investigations of Conceptual art on their own terms, to think about what rhetorical modes were thereby enabled, and then to think, perhaps, about which of these rhetorical modes we may use in the continued struggle for a more just society.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF WORKS BY ADRIAN PIPER

LSD Abstraction. 1965

Oil on canvas

16 × 16 in. (40.7 × 40.7 cm)

Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive

Foundation Berlin

p. 133 (top)

LSD Couple. 1966

Acrylic on canvas

24 × 18 in. (61 × 45.7 cm)

Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation
Berlin

p. 14

Alice in Wonderland: The Mad Hatter's Tea Party. 1966

Alice in Wonderland: Alice and the Pack of Cards. 1966

Alice in Wonderland: Alice down the Rabbit Hole. 1966

Tempera on canvas board

24 × 18 in. (61 × 45.7 cm)

Collection Konrad Baumgartner, Milan

p. 133

Concrete Infinity 6-inch Square ["This square should be read as a whole . . ."]. 1968

Typescript page in square mat

11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Collection Alan Cravitz and Shashi Caudill

p. 104

Untitled Statement ("My present work is involved . . ."). 1968

In the notebook *Nineteen Concrete Space-Time-Infinity Pieces*. Typescript page

11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent
Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg

p. 80

Sixteen Permutations of a Planar Analysis of a Square. 1968

Mixed-medium installation. Photostat and wood model

Photostat 32⅞ × 21⅞ in. (83.5 × 55.5 cm);

model 10⅞ × 10⅞ × 8⅞ in. (27 × 26.4 × 20.6 cm)

Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
Foundation Berlin

p. 21

Six handwritten preparatory studies for *0 TO 9* magazine, no. 5. 1968

Fales Library and Special Collections,
New York University Libraries

pp. 77, 135–39

Here and Now. 1968

Cardboard portfolio with text on graph paper and text on mimeographed paper taped to box; and sixty-four loose sheets of text on mimeographed paper

Each sheet 9 × 9 in. (22.9 × 22.9 cm)

Collection Alan Cravitz and Shashi Caudill

Detail: page 42, p. 23

Hypothesis: Situation #2. 1968–69

Typescript page on mimeographed paper;

gelatin silver prints and ink on graph paper, and two photolithograph pages

11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm); 11 × 29½ in.

(27.0 × 74.9 cm); and each 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive

Foundation Berlin

Details:

panel #2, p. 253

photo #2 of panel #2, p. 254

Hypothesis: Situation #4. 1968–69

Typescript page on mimeographed paper; gelatin silver prints and ink on graph paper, and two photolithograph pages

11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm); 11 × 40⅝ in. (27.9 ×

103.2 cm); and each 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive

Foundation Berlin

pp. 140–41

Hypothesis: Situation #5. 1968–69

Typescript page on mimeographed paper;

gelatin silver prints and ink on graph paper;

and two photolithograph sheets

11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm); 11 × 33¾ in. (27.9 ×

85.7 cm); and each 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent

Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Detail: panel #2, pp. 140–41 (top)

Relocated Planes I: Indoor Series, 6/69. 1969

Relocated Planes II: Outdoor Series. 1969

Two notebooks, each with six typescript pages;

ballpoint pen on four typescript pages; twelve

photostats of architectural tape on acetate over photograph on paper; and cut-and-pasted text on

twelve sheets of colored paper

Each page approx. 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)

Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent Loan
to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Details:

systems page, p. 84

systems page, p. 85

Relocated Planes I: Indoor Series, ⅞/69, Group II

Untitled ("original location, inner plane: Sunday,
June 1, 1969, 1 PM"), p. 86

Untitled, p. 87

Relocated Planes II: Outdoor Series, Group I

Untitled ("original location, inner place: Sunday,
June 8, 1969, 9 AM"), p. 88

Untitled, p. 88

Untitled postcard from Adrian Piper to Kynaston
McShine (recto and verso). July 1969

Felt-tip pen on photolithograph

3½ × 5 in. (8.9 cm × 14 cm)

Collection Kynaston McShine Information

Exhibition Research, II.14. The Museum of Modern
Art Archives, New York

p. 134

Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City. 1970

Documentation of the performance.
 Four gelatin silver prints
 Each $3\frac{3}{16} \times 3\frac{3}{16}$ in. (9 × 9 cm)
 Photographs by Rosemary Mayer
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 pp. 25, 112, 113

Catalysis I Postcard. 1970

Retrospective postal notification of the street performance. Photolithograph
 $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ in. (8.9 cm × 14 cm)
 Harold Szeemann papers. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2011.M.30)
 Foundation Berlin
 Detail: verso, p. 70

Catalysis III. 1970

Documentation of the performance.
 Three gelatin silver prints
 Each $16\frac{1}{8} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$ in. (41 × 41 cm.)
 Photographs by Rosemary Mayer
 Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg
 pp. 26, 118, 185

Catalysis IV. 1970

Documentation of the performance.
 Five gelatin silver prints
 Each $16\frac{1}{8} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$ in. (41 × 41 cm)
 Photographs by Rosemary Mayer
 Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg
 pp. 27, 73, 116, 184, 255

Context #7. 1970

Seven ring binders with typescript page and ink, pencil, postage stamps, photographs, and sugar package on paper
 Each binder $11\frac{3}{4} \times 11 \times 3$ in. (29.8 × 27.9 × 7.6 cm)
 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund
 Details:
Untitled ("Free all political prisoners! . . ."), p. 142
Untitled ("You know, Clyde . . ."), p. 143
Untitled ("I love you . . ."), p. 248
Untitled ("Art is what we do . . ."), p. 249
 installation view in *Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 2–September 20, 1970, shown between Andy Warhol's *IN THE FUTURE EVERYONE WILL BE WORLD FAMOUS FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES* (n.d.) and Carl Andre's *Seven Books of Poetry* (1969). Photograph from The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, p. 247

Context #8. 1970

Binder with eighty-one flyers, mails, manifests, and postcards
 Binder $11\frac{1}{16} \times 10\frac{3}{4} \times 3$ in. (29.7 × 27.3 × 7.6 cm)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 Details:
 frontispiece, p. 108
 flyer, p. 109

Food for the Spirit. 1971

Ring binder with fourteen gelatin silver prints and forty-four annotated pages torn from a paperback edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, mounted on colored paper, in plastic sleeves
 Binder $11\frac{1}{2} \times 10 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ in. (29.2 × 25.4 × 3.8 cm)
 Collection Thomas Erben, New York
 Details:
 pages 3 and 4, pp. 122–23
 pages 23 and 24, pp. 124–25
 page 6, p. 189
 page 14, p. 195

Food for the Spirit. 1971

Fourteen gelatin silver prints (reprinted 1997)
 Each $14\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{13}{16}$ in. (37 × 37.7 cm)
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 The Family of Man Fund
 Details:
 #3, p. 32
 #6, p. 256
 #7, p. 126

The Mythic Being, Village Voice Ads. 1973–75

Advertisements appearing in the *Village Voice*.
 Seventeen newspaper pages
 Each 17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm)
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchased with funds provided by Donald L. Bryant, Jr., Agnes Gund, Marlene Hess and James D. Zirin, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, Donald B. Marron, The Edward John Noble Foundation, Katherine Farley and Jerry Speyer, and Committee on Drawings Funds in honor of Kathy Fuld
 Details: *The Mythic Being, Cycle I: 1/9/65* (January 31, 1974), p. 35

The Mythic Being: Cruising White Women. 1975

Documentation of the performance. Three gelatin silver prints
 Each 8 × 10 in. (20.3 × 25.4 cm)
 The Eileen Harris Norton Collection
 Detail: #2, p. 178

The Mythic Being: Getting Back. 1975

Five gelatin silver prints
 Each $15\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ in. (38.7 × 29.8 cm)
 Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg
 Detail: photograph #1, p. 34

Some Reflective Surfaces. 1975–76

Documentation of the performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, February 28, 1976. Two gelatin silver prints and 16mm film transferred to video (color, sound), 00:15:27
 Prints $19\frac{1}{2} \times 15$ in. (49.5 × 38.1 cm) and $15 \times 19\frac{1}{2}$ in. (38.1 × 49.5 cm)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 Detail: print #2, p. 13

Art for the Art World Surface Pattern. 1976

Mixed-medium installation. Constructed wood environment, custom-printed wallpaper, stenciled text, audio, and naked light bulb
7 ft. x 60 in. x 60 in. (213.4 x 152.4 x 152.4 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Purchase through a gift of Shawn and Brook Byers
p. 144 (top)

Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma. 1978

Mixed-medium installation. Black-and-white photograph framed under Plexiglas, audio, and lighting
Photograph 18 x 18 in. (45.7 x 45.7 cm); installation dimensions variable
Source photography: Dick Durrance II/National Geographic (Cape Town, South Africa, 1977)
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation
Details:
photograph, p. 144 (bottom)
photograph with viewer reflection, p. 269

Political Self-Portrait #1 (Sex). 1979

Photostat
29% x 19% in (75.3 x 49.9 cm)
Collection Margaret and Daniel S. Loeb
p. 17

Political Self-Portrait #2 (Race). 1978

Photostat
29% x 19% in (75.3 x 49.9 cm)
Collection Richard and Ellen Sandor
p. 18

Political Self-Portrait #3 (Class). 1980

Photostat
29% x 19% in (75.3 x 49.9 cm)
Collection John Campione
p. 19

Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems. 1980

Mixed-medium installation. Constructed wood environment, four photographs, light boxes, audio, and headsets
Four monologue tracks, 00:06:00, 00:12:00, 00:06:00, and 00:03:00, and music soundtrack, 00:03:00, in endless loop
Dimensions variable
Soundtrack: War, "Night People"
The Ohio State University. Courtesy Wexner Center for the Arts. Gift of the artist
installation view, p. 245
interior view with two lightbox photographs, p. 246

Funk Lessons. 1983-84

Documentation of the group performance at University of California, Berkeley, November 6, 1983.
Video (color, sound), 00:15:17
Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
Detail: video still at 00:06:36, p. 145 (top)

My Calling (Card) #1 (Reactive Guerrilla Performance for Dinners and Cocktail Parties). 1986-90

Performance prop. Printed card
1⁵/₁₆ x 3¹/₂ in. (5 x 9 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York
p. 146 (bottom)

My Calling (Card) #2 (Reactive Guerrilla Performance for Bars and Discos). 1986-90

Performance prop. Printed card
1⁵/₁₆ x 3¹/₂ in. (5 x 9 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York
p. 177

Vanilla Nightmares #16. 1987

Charcoal on newspaper
21⁵/₈ x 26⁵/₈ in. (55 x 67 cm)
Collection Katharina Faerber
p. 146 (top)

Funk Lessons Meta-Performance. 1987

Documentation of the participatory performance and discussion. Video (color, sound), 00:42:00
Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
Detail: video still at 00:12:45, p. 145 (bottom)

Close to Home. 1987

Fifteen photographs with text, fifteen texts, and audio, 00:00:55
Photographs with text 22 x 17 in. (55.8 x 43.1 cm); texts 11 x 17 (27.9 x 43.1 cm)
Source photography: Ebony Magazine
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Museum purchase funded by Michael and Jeanne Klein
Details:
photographic panel and text panel #1, p. 263
photographic panel and text panel #5, p. 264

My Calling (Card) #1 Meta-Performance. 1987-88

Documentation of the participatory performance and discussion. Video (color, sound), 00:58:00
Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
Details: video stills at 00:43:59, 00:41:50, and 00:43:35, p. 147

The Big Four Oh. 1988

Video installation. Video (color, sound), 00:47:32, with monitor, ring binder with 153 blank sheets, two pages of handwritten text, forty baseballs, disassembled plastic coat of armor in fourteen pieces, and five bottles each containing blood, sweat, tears, piss, or vinegar
Dimensions variable
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund
Details:
video still at 00:45:55, p. 53
video still at 00:33:19, p. 199
handwritten text, pp. 226, 227

Vote/Emote. 1990

Mixed-medium installation. Four wood booths with swinging doors, four notebooks with preprinted pages, pens, four photographs, light boxes, and framed windows
 7 ft. × 13 ft. 8½ in. × 48¾ in. (213.4 × 417.8 × 123.8 cm)
 Source photography: Kristine Larsen, Village Voice (1988; Brooklyn, NY); Dick Durrance II, National Geographic (1977; Cape Town, South Africa); Bruce Davidson—Magnum, Newsweek (August 29 1963; Washington, D.C.); Alon Reininger—Village Voice (January 14 1980)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 234

Cornered. 1988

Video installation. Video (color, sound), 00:17:00, with monitor, two birth certificates, table, and chairs
 Dimensions variable
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Bernice and Kenneth Newberger Fund
 Details:
 video still at 00:00:48, p. 43
 installation view, p. 148 (top)
 two birth certificates, p. 149

Out of the Corner. 1990

Video installation. Video (color, sound), 00:26:00, with seventeen monitors, sixteen pedestals, table, seventeen chairs, and sixty-four gelatin silver prints
 Dimensions variable
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
 p. 148 (bottom)

Black Box/White Box, Surface #1. 1992

Pencil on graph paper
 11 × 8.5 in. (27.9 cm × 21.6 cm)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 159 (top)

Black Box/White Box. 1992

Video installation. Video (color, sound), 00:30:00, with two constructed wood environments, monitor, four photographs, light box, audio, chairs, tables, tissue boxes, and trash baskets
 Dimensions variable
 Generali Foundation Collection—Permanent Loan to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg
 installation view in *Adrian Piper: seit 1965*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, May 17–August 18, 2002, p. 159 (bottom)

The Color Wheel Series, First Adhyasa:

Annomayakosha #33. 2000
 Digital file for print reproduction
 Dimensions variable
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 150
 Artist's note: in *The Color Wheel Series*, the artist assigns a different combination of Pantone colors for each viewing occasion, whether in print reproduction, a gallery or museum setting, or projections for talks.

Everything #2.4. 2003

Photograph photocopied on graph paper and sanded with sandpaper, with printed text
 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)
 Collection Beth Rudin deWoody
 p. 152

Everything #2.2. 2003

Photograph photocopied on graph paper and sanded with sandpaper, with printed text
 8½ × 11 (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
 Collection Irène and Bertrand Jacobberger
 p. 153 (top)

Everything #2.12b. 2003

Photograph photocopied on graph paper and sanded with sandpaper, with printed text
 8½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
 Private collection
 p. 153 (bottom)

Everything #2.10. 2003

Photograph photocopied on graph paper and sanded with sandpaper, with printed text
 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm)
 Rother Faria Collection
 p. 228

Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago. 2004

Documentation of the participatory performance-lecture. Video (color, sound), 01:43:18.
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 Detail: video stills at 00:49:44, 00:49:57, 00:50:52, p. 151

Everything #6. 2004

Six digital prints on wallpaper
 Each print 24 × 24 in. (61 × 61 cm)
 Source photography: Portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Medgar Evers, John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 pp. 156–57

Unite (Part I of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2005

Animated video (color, silent), 00:43:37
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 158 (top)

The Spurious Life-Death Distinction (Part II of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2006

Animated video (color, silent), 00:09:22
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 158 (middle)

Bait-and-Switch (Part III of The Pac-Man Trilogy). 2008

Animated video (color, silent), 00:04:48 min.
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin
 p. 158 (bottom)

Everything #9.1. 2005–07

Nine inkjet prints, five of them scrubbed with steel and foam-rubber sponge, four of them over-printed with text
 Each 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (32.7 × 32.7 cm)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 p. 155

Everything #8. 2006

Mixed media installation for the KBH
 Kunsthall, Copenhagen: vitrine with glass, mirrors and stenciled text on pedestal
 46 × 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 32 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (117 cm × 200 cm × 83 cm)
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 p. 47

Adrian Moves to Berlin. 2007

Documentation of the street performance.
 Video (color, sound), 01:02:33, endless loop
 Video by Robert Del Principe
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 Detail: video still at 00:38:09, p. 164

Everything #17.3. 2007

Extensive-form decision tree. Vinyl wall print
 Dimensions variable
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 p. 154

Everything #10. 2007

Participatory group performance
 Commissioned by Creative Time, New York
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 p. 161

Everything #18. 2007

Five digital prints on wallpaper
 Dimensions variable
 Private collection, USA
 installation view in *Everything*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery,
 New York, March 1–April 19, 2008, p. 160
 detail: 1 of 5 digital prints

Everything #17.2. 2007

Extensive-form decision tree. Vinyl wall print
 Dimensions variable
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 p. 236

Installation view of *Everything*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery,
 New York, March 1–April 19, 2008
 p. 206

Adrian Piper Interview: Rationality and the Structure of the Self. Interview by Robert Del Principe. 2007–10
 Video (color, sound), 01:00:43
 Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive
 Foundation Berlin
 Detail: video still at 00:48:05, p. 218

Everything #21. 2010–13

Chalk on four vintage blackboards in lacquered wood frames, each covered with the handwritten sentence “Everything will be taken away” and mounted on the wall at eye-level
 Each 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. × 8 ft. 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (120 × 250 cm)
 Rennie Collection, Vancouver
 Details:
 two of four, p. 162 (top)
 installation view in in *Empire State: New York Art Now*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2013, p. 162 (bottom)

The Probable Trust Registry: The Rules of the Game #1–3. 2013

Installation and participatory group performance.
 Embossed gold vinyl text on three walls with 70% gray paint, three circular gold reception desks with stools, computer system, contracts, registry of contact data for signatories, three administrators, and self-selected members of the public
 Each desk 6 ft. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (183 cm) diam. × 53 in (160 cm) high; installation dimensions variable
 installation view in *Adrian Piper: The Probable Trust Registry; The Rules of the Game #1–3*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, May 3–31, 2014, p. 63
 Hamburger Bahnhof–Museum für Gegenwart, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin
 installation view in *Adrian Piper: The Probable Trust Registry; The Rules of the Game #1–3*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, February 24–March 9, 2017, p. 240

Rationality and the Structure of the Self, vol. 2, *A Kantian Conception*. 2013 (revised edition). 2008 (original edition). Berlin: APRA
 Foundation Berlin
 Detail: front cover, p. 57

ILLUSTRATIONS OF WORKS BY OTHER ARTISTS

Martin Creed

Work No. 203: EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT. 1999

White neon

19¹¹/₁₆ in. × 42 ft. 2 in. (50 cm × 13 m)

Commissioned by Ingrid Swenson

installation view at The Portico, Linscott Road, London, 1999, p. 210

Seth Siegelaub's instructions to his secretary

(Adrian Piper) for the exhibition *January 5–31, 1969*, at Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art, 44 East Fifty-second Street, New York

p. 265

The Bhagavad Gita

Translated from the Sanskrit by Juan Mascaró

London: Penguin, 1962

p. 243

Joseph Kosuth

One and Three Chairs. 1965

Wooden folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of "chair"

Chair 32³/₈ × 14⁷/₈ × 20⁷/₈ in. (82 × 37.8 × 53 cm); text

panel 24 × 30 in. (61 × 76.2 cm); photographic panel

36 × 24⁷/₈ in. (91.5 × 61.1 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Larry Aldrich

Foundation Fund

p. 95

Sol Lewitt

Sol LeWitt

46 Three-Part Variations on 3 Different Kinds of Cubes. 1967

Enamel on forty-six aluminum structures

Each 45 × 15 × 15 in. (114 × 38 × 38 cm)

installation view in *46 Three-Part Variations on 3 Different Kinds of Cubes*, Dwan Gallery, New York, February 3–28, 1968, p. 110

Wall Drawing #51. 1970

All architectural points connected by straight lines.

Blue snap lines

LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

p. 252

Incomplete Open Cubes. 1974

Painted wood structures and gelatin silver prints and drawings on paper

Each sculpture 8 × 8 × 8 in.; each print and drawing

26 × 14 in.; base: 12 × 10 × 18 ft.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions

Committee Fund: gift of Emily L. Carroll and Thomas

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Michael Murray, Danielle and Brooks Walker, Jr., and

Phyllis C. Wattis

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Incomplete Open Cube 6/11. 1974

Enamel on aluminum

42 × 42 × 42 in. (106.7 × 106.7 × 106.7 cm)

p. 171

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Food for the Spirit. 1971
Ring binder with fourteen gelatin silver prints and forty-four annotated pages torn from a paperback edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, mounted on colored paper, in plastic sleeves
Binder 11½ × 10 × 1½ in. (29.2 × 25.4 × 3.8 cm)
Collection Thomas Erben, New York
Detail: page 3 (see pp. 122–23)

WITH ESSAYS BY
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