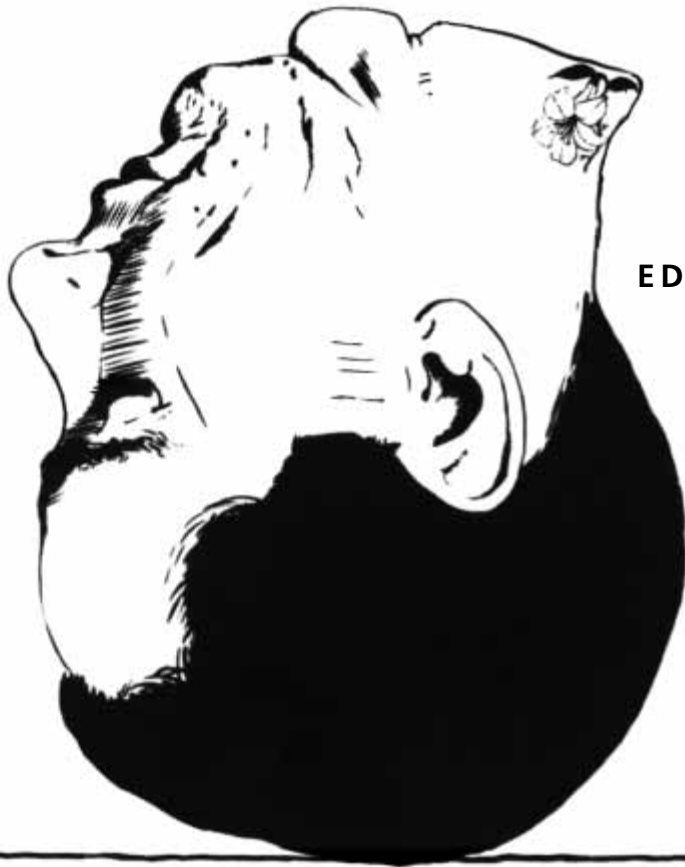




MIKE KELLEY

MINOR HISTORIES

Statements, Conversations, Proposals



EDITED BY JOHN C. WELCHMAN



MINOR HISTORIES

The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England

MIKE KELLEY

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statements, conversations, proposals

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Kelley's brief "Statement for Prospect 89" (facing page) was published in German (without a title) on p. 111 of the catalogue for the large international group exhibition Prospect 89: Eine internationale Ausstellung aktueller Kunst at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany (March 21 to May 21, 1989), curated by Peter Weiermair. Clearly related to the monologues and performance scripts of Kelley's earlier work, the piece is an exclamatory, associative text, taking off from the black-and-white diptych Wall Flowers (1988) exhibited in the show, reproduced on pp. 112–13 of the catalogue, and now used as the cover illustration of this volume.

Wallflowers . . . those shy ones! Oh! Cling! Cling thee to the furthestmost borders—the hinterlands. Sublimate, oh, sublimate thy libidinal impulses into decorative organic motifs . . . ornamental hair growths, aesthetically placed tattoos. Beauty-mark thyself!

Yes. The meeting of the eyes. Lightning flashes. The intertwining sight lines—follow them. Yes. Glinting orbs. Gazes fixed, positioned, and mapped, uh huh. Place thyself in Polar Zones of separation. But wait! Tight wooden mind, chopped off from the body trunk. Oh! Yes! Yes! Fold the fruit away from the hard seed. Slough off thy mortal tarp and reveal thyself . . . *in glory* . . . Oh! Oh! Oh! . . . the essential form lies beneath . . . *timeless*.

Floating, we are . . . in the free area designated “endless periphery.”

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PREFACE

Mike Kelley

In this, the second volume of my collected writings, the focus continues to be primarily on what I call my “functional” writings—straightforward statements designed for catalogues or as press releases, etc. Unlike the first volume, which contains writings on the work of other artists and art-world issues, this one concentrates on my writings about my own work. They range from labor-intensive research essays such as “The Meaning Is Confused Spatiality, Framed,” written for my exhibition at Le Magasin in Grenoble in 1999, to the brief video statements originally written as handouts for public screenings. The purpose in presenting such a variety of texts is to focus on my overall output as a visual artist who also writes.

The first statement in this book, “Ajax” (1984), reveals that the roots of my writings are in texts designed for performance. “Ajax” is one of my earliest attempts to write using the “authorial” voice (in contrast to performative “voices”), a voice that presumes to understand, or even “speak for,” the reader. In “Ajax,” this authorial posture is overtly ironic—but this does not remain the case. In the next statement published here, “Three Projects,” written a couple of years later for the Renaissance Society in Chicago in 1988, the irony has been removed and the piece functions as a direct statement about the works presented in the exhibition, giving some indication of my artistic intentions. But as readers will see, around 1995 I began to tire of such a stance, and

the mannerisms of my performance writings crept back into my otherwise normative statements. “Goin’ Home, Goin’ Home,” for example, lapses into sections that are little more than lists of associated word clusters, and the rest of the text is obviously written in “voice.” It is in this direction that my writing is developing at the moment. I suppose that I have been in the art world long enough to feel some sense of security that an adopted “crackpot” voice will not necessarily be confused with my own; or I just don’t care anymore if it is. At this point the crafting of my “critical” writings strikes me as often the by-product of overtly “superego-influenced” internal pressures.

Again, I would like to thank John C. Welchman for his tireless editorial work. I especially want to thank those with whom I have worked most closely in the nuts-and-bolts, day-to-day, production aspects of putting this book together: Rita Gonzalez, Lisa Lapinski, Catherine Sullivan, and Dave Kudzma. Thanks also to my co-authors and interlocutors, especially Paul McCarthy with whom I have worked so often, as well as Chris Wilder, M. A. Greenstein, Kim Colin, and Mark Skiles. Thanks to Tim Martin for his editorial comments; to Jim Shaw for his loan of research material; and to my artist friends and collaborators: Tony Oursler, Tony Conrad, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, Raymond Pettibon, Ericka Beckman, Sheree Rose, Anita Pace, and Frank Gehry. I also want to thank my primary galleries for their assistance in assembling the visual source material: Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan; Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles; Metro Pictures, New York; Jablonka Galerie, Cologne; and Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris; . . . and the supremely talented photographer Fredrik Nilsen. Thanks also to Leni Sinclair, and to Cary Loren of Book Beat Gallery, for the loan of photographic materials.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Bob Flanagan.

INTRODUCTION

John C. Welchman

Minor Histories, the second volume of Mike Kelley's collected writings, is organized in five sections: "Statements," mostly written to accompany exhibitions in the U.S., Europe, and Japan; "Video Statements and Proposals," a series of introductions to video works by Kelley and others; "Image-Texts," Kelley's writings incorporated in or accompanying photographs and artworks; "Architecture," which collects the artist's writings on architecture and space; and finally, Kelley's essays and meditations on "Ufology." Absent here are the longer critical and catalogue essays on themes and contemporary artists (collected in the first volume, *Foul Perfection*); the scripts Kelley wrote for his signature series of performances between 1976 and 1984 (and the scripts for his later video pieces), which we are reserving for a future volume; Kelley's writings on music and sound cultures; and the long series of interviews with, on, and by Kelley. The music writings are currently being prepared for publication in French and English by Les presses du réel (Dijon, France).

Even this list of Kelley's writing genres and types is not exhaustive, as several texts, which are for one reason or another difficult or impossible to reprint, cannot easily be accommodated in this volume, its companion, or projected volumes. These include the installational wall texts for *Written on the Wind* (1991), the panel text for *Written on the Lump* (1991/1998), and the collaborative cut-up text made with Paul McCarthy for the *Sod and Sodie Sock* project (1998), which

would have had to be reproduced in facsimile. For reasons of space we are also unable to publish here the many texts Kelley wrote for his black-and-white image-text paintings of the 1980s.

As I offered some more general comments on Kelley's writing practice, its relation to his artwork, and a number of wider issues in the introduction to *Foul Perfection*, what follows here is limited to the contexts and language of the some fifty briefer writings in the present volume. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from the texts discussed; and most of the other references below are to writings or issues noted in the headnotes or endnotes to the individual writings.

The twenty "statements" in the first section were produced by Kelley between 1984 and 2002. Strikingly diverse in length, address, and genre, they form a miniseries or concise reprise of Kelley's textual typology, loosely approximating the range of styles and vehicles found within and across the five volumes published, forthcoming, or in preparation. Their generic profile ranges from more experimental writings, couched in variants of the declarative and persona-driven idioms that characterize Kelley's earlier performance work (e.g. "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" of 1995 and the brief "Statement for *Prospect 89*," set as the book's epigraph), to more straightforward, or expository, accounts of the forms, structures, and research-driven thematic concerns of particular exhibitions or installations. Transposed from reflections on general issues in art and visual culture or on the work of other artists, to meditations on the organizations and effects of Kelley's own projects, this mode resembles the writing styles of most of the essays in *Foul Perfection*. It commences with the statement "Three Projects: *Half a Man, From My Institution to Yours, Pay for Your Pleasure*" (1988), and continues in recent writings such as the exhibition statements "*Black Out*" (2001) and "*Memory Ware*" (2000–01). Other texts exhibit a combination of these styles, or take the form of letters, such as "*Radical Scavengers (Letter)*" (1993), or responses to questions, such as "On Folk Art" (2001) and "On Some Figurative Artists of the Late 1960s (Responses to Questions for *Eye Infection*)" (2001–02). The introduction to *Reconstructed History* (1990), for example, is meant to read as pompous and belabored, reflecting the rhetorical mannerisms of a priggish persona (and is in this sense "performative"). But within the writerly logic thus established, the text offers a consistent exegesis of the mildly deprived "historical" images that follow it.

"Some Aesthetic High Points" (1991) and "*Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered*" (1995) are the most overtly biographical texts collected here—though sections of several others, including "*Alma Pater (Wolverine Den)*" (1991), "*Land O'Lakes/Land O' Snakes*"

(1996), "*The Poetry of Form*" (1996), and "*Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*" (1998), contain extended reflections on Kelley's childhood, university experience, or early artwork. Memory, biography, personal recollection, and Kelley's aesthetic—and sentimental—education thus constitute one of the leading thematic clusters in *Minor Histories*.

"Some Aesthetic High Points" was written as a reaction against the standard artistic bios printed by rote in exhibition catalogues and press releases. Kelley isolates six episodes from his formative experience ranging from a poster competition at his junior high school in 1968 or 1969 to concerts he attended in 1973 by Sun Ra and Iggy and the Stooges, to a stint as a volunteer for Hermann Nitsch's Orgies Mysteries Theater when it came to Los Angeles in 1978 (the year of Kelley's graduation from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia). Each recollected experience offers some form of socio-artistic revelation—about role-playing, the nature of performance, group dynamics, grassroots organization—which Kelley casts in the form of mock aesthetic juvenilia.

The statement for *Missing Time* is a more expository account of Kelley's return to a series of works made while he was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan between 1972 and 1976. In it Kelley discusses the ways that memory, repressed memories, and social/institutional formation and "abuse" may have influenced the production of his student paintings. The statement has three main agendas: to counteract the general critical tendency to "psychoanalyze" Kelley's work, inferring from it that Kelley must have "suffered some sort of childhood abuse"; to use the self-referential scene of his early work to open up larger questions about the generation and circulation of Repressed and False Memory Syndromes (which are developed in other parts of the *Missing Time* project and the statements associated with them); and to outline and annotate the artistic and pedagogic assumptions he encountered in the art department at the U of M and their relation to conflicting currents in the American art world in the later 1970s—the formalism of Hans Hofmann, gestural painting, Rauschenberg and pop, and installation and performance art. It ends with the somewhat "ironic" fact that Kelley was admitted as an MFA student at Cal Arts, "then the premier 'conceptual art school.'"

First published in 1984, and thus one of the earliest texts in this volume, "Ajax" differs somewhat from the other statements in its style and address. The piece developed from Kelley's decision to subtract nine passages from the script for his performance *The Sublime* (1984) that refer to Ajax, and to comment on and interpret them. "Ajax" plays out a move, then, from what Kelley calls (in the headnote, below) the purposeful ambiguity of the associational method of composition

used for his performances to the more settled structure of a published text. The result is a negotiation between script and text, viewer and reader, governed by Kelley's "playful" interrogation of possible audience responses to multiple levels of reading and reaction that converge on both subjective and generic understandings of "narrative, history, or drama." Though clearly not intended as a serious or sustained inquiry, the concerns of "Ajax" are emblematic of several wider issues to which Kelley returned consistently in his artwork and writing over the next decade.

While it is not possible to offer a close analysis of all the writings in this volume, I want to follow the thematic development of "Ajax" in order to give a sense of the grain and the veneer of Kelley's textual method as he layers historical research and conceptual problematization with references to the crossing and bifurcation of high and low culture. "Ajax" begins with a meditation on character development, suggesting that texts, like other inanimate objects, are subject to a process of projective personification. Even if a text is disjointed, plotless, and lacking in narrative sequence, Kelley suggests that readers will invest characterological significance in its proper names, and some form of narrative development will be read (or misread) from its patterns, time frames, and other gestures of continuity. Characters, subject positions, and different forms of reading are revealed here as provisional, "floating," and constantly renegotiated in the space between performance, text, and the vast matrix of associational coordinates that readers deliver to the scenes of their textual encounters. Ajax emerges as a complexly layered, quasi-allegorical figure incorporating a range of qualities, from the "silence, brutishness, and pride" attributed to him in several (quite different) interpretations of his role in the Trojan War (in Homer's *Odyssey* and Sophocles' play *Ajax*) to the impersonation of cleanliness foisted upon him by the Colgate-Palmolive Company in postwar American commercial culture.

However, the primary reading of Ajax that concerns Kelley is neither Greek nor contemporary. It arises from the premium placed on Ajax's silence and its association with the sublime in Longinus's treatise *On the Sublime*. The equation between sublimity and silence is followed through in the series of associative conjectures about its psychological origins that follow the nine excerpts from the script of *The Sublime*. In the first, Ajax becomes a "blue-collar drummer" and a "sympathetic . . . underdog"; in the course of the ensuing reveries, he's constructed as a "spoiled, boastful brat," a man frightened of speech, a "true friend," a dullard, an addict, a cleanser, and a warrior. A coda connects the rationale for the selection of Ajax as an icon of vigorous cleanliness to another transposed figurehead of American commercial culture, the Pillsbury Doughboy.

Propelled by a system of switches and circuit breakers relaying thematically between historical and popular cultures, psychologically between subjective overdetermination and group consciousness, and stylistically between script, fiction, and criticism, "Ajax" is an early repository of issues and techniques that Kelley would develop in more sustained and focused forms in the writings that follow.

Perhaps the most energetic sequence of texts in the "Statements" section comprises those recently described as "wild" writings:¹ "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" (1995); the second part of "Land O' Lakes/Land O' Snakes" (1996); and parts of "*Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*" (1998). Some of the texts in the third section of the volume, "Image-Texts," are also couched in variants of the exuberant, allusive language characteristic of the style Kelley first developed in his performance writings of the late 1970s and 1980s. The concatenations of puns, metaphors, and elisions that make up the most fictive and expressive register of Kelley's writing have few precedents in the avant-garde art world. Their closest relations might be the non-sense broadsides and "lampisteries" of the dada artists, notably Tristan Tzara.² But although they have their anarchic moments, Kelley's texts don't produce force fields of senselessness and nihilism;³ they offer instead a relentless stream of psycho-semantically altered pop cultural clichés, governed by free associations trawled from the TV, brand names, high art tropes, and other components of the Kelleyan everyday, arbitrated by the artist's enormous capacity for vernacular digestion and his prodigious memory.

These writings, and the seepage of their style and effects into Kelley's other textual productions, create a distinctive postmodern retort to the experimental language of the manifesto associated with the historical avant-garde. Several other artists of roughly Kelley's generation, among them Barbara Kruger, Richard Prince, and Sherrie Levine, also produced writings that equivocate between fiction and commentary, though theirs tend to be more restrained, abstract, or narrative-driven.⁴ One reaction to the distinctiveness of Kelley's language places it alongside the work to which it relates as a kind of textual extrapolation. Thus, Isabelle Graw describes the structure and effect of "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" as "opposed to a catalogue essay," suggesting instead that the "text was intended to mirror the aesthetics of the installation."⁵ The instinct to subordinate text and work to a governing aesthetic of association catches something important in Kelley's ramifying intermedia methodology. It's also the case, I would argue, that his more experimental writings come closest to the layering of association, memory, and form in Kelley's paintings and installations, a con-

junction that Kelley, like his friend and sometime collaborator Tony Oursler, makes most apparent in his use of dialogues and tape loops as integral sonic components in such projects as the *Dialogue Series* produced by Kelley in 1991.

In his 1999 interview with Graw, Kelley traces the move in his work from the early “text-driven” performances through a period in the late 1980s when he began to produce more research-based “art critical texts,” “designed for the general art world reader,” to the development of a more compressed relation to his “notes,” brief “statements,” and “lists,” which—though sometimes presented in “essay-like form,” as are the experimental writings here—might in the future be deployed as “lyrics.” Kelley envisages, then, a destiny for his more condensed, poetic writings as the lyrical supplement to his career-long interest in “pairing sound and text.” In the “wild” writings the lyrical valency is still implicit, but something of the concentration, rhythm, and lilt of the songlike mode—though, as often with Kelley, darkly keyed—emerges in these vagrant, sonorous texts.⁶

Written with his friend and fellow LA artist Paul McCarthy, “Statement for the Visitor’s Gallery: *Out of Actions*” (1998) is the only collaborative text in this volume.⁷ It arose as a commission from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, for a project in the Visitor’s Gallery that responded to the exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979*, shown at MoCA between February and May 1998. Painted onto the entrance wall of the Visitor’s Gallery, the statement proposed to use the space not for conventional educational purposes but as an “alternative space,” within which seven invited artists could present work in real time as a corrective to the exhibition’s reliance on documents, traces, and records of past performance events.

While Kelley’s work has occasioned a number of interesting and informed critical commentaries (by Colin Gardener, Tim Martin, Howard Singerman, and Anthony Vidler, among others) addressing specific issues or exhibitions, the sequence of twenty statements assembled here for the first time offers a unique opportunity for readers to encounter an almost complete survey of Kelley’s work in painting, sculpture, mixed media, and installation, presented at commercial galleries in Los Angeles, New York, Milan, Madrid, and Germany and in a wide range of one-person and group exhibitions in the U.S., Europe, and Japan from the late 1980s to the present.

The volume’s second section, “Video Statements and Proposals,” brings together brief, liner-note-like introductions to nine video pieces made by Kelley (beginning with the very early *Futurist Ballet*, 1973); eight made in collaboration with friends and colleagues, mostly based in Los Angeles (Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, Paul McCarthy, Raymond Pettibon, Tony Oursler, Anita

Pace, Ericka Beckman, and Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose); and a further five solo pieces by Tony Conrad, Oursler, Pettibon, and McCarthy. As Kelley makes clear in the headnote to this section, the video writings are slight and occasional. Written for the most part before these figures had achieved wide recognition, they do not presume to summarize or annotate the general contribution of the artists to whose work they refer. They are valuable, instead, for the informal analyses of the specific video works discussed and for the sketch they offer of the media milieu in which Kelley has worked for the last two decades.

The third section of *Minor Histories*, "Image-Texts," convenes a series of texts that Kelley wrote either to be incorporated in particular photographic works and editions, to be integral components in installations, or—in the case of "*A Stopgap Measure*" and its companion piece, "*Meet John Doe*"—to be printed on a double-sided poster that was exhibited at Patrick Painter, Inc. in Los Angeles in 1999 (it also served as a mailer/announcement for that show). According to this logic, two other texts could have been located in this section. But while "*Statement for the Visitor's Gallery: Out of Actions*" was actually painted onto the entrance wall of the Visitor's Gallery at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (as noted above), we felt that it made better sense situated among the "Statements" because its critical commentary on the assumptions and exclusions of the MoCA exhibition is not inflected by the kind of imaginative projection that informs the other writings here. The quotations assembled by Kelley in "*Quotations on Art and Crime for Pay for Your Pleasure*" (1988) were also painted directly onto portraits of the writers, poets, artists, and others cited; but again, it seemed better to locate this series of appropriations after the statement that discusses the exhibition in which the work was first presented, "*Three Projects: Half a Man, From My Institution to Yours, Pay for Your Pleasure*" (1988).

Composed in 1979, "*The Poltergeist*" is one of the earliest texts in this volume. It is also a composite text, partially pieced together from phrases, allusions, and citations taken from the numerous books and articles on poltergeists and spirituality consulted by Kelley during the research phase of his collaborative project with David Askevold, which were collided with ideas about "spontaneous human combustion" and imagery from the adolescent "weirdo" cartoon style of hod rod/surf culture artists such as Ed "Big Daddy" Roth and Stanley "Mouse" Miller. The fact that the poltergeist phenomenon is most often associated with young women entering puberty is used metaphorically to address art production as "adolescent creative transgression."

The four texts for *Timeless/Authorless* were apportioned across a series of fifteen black-and-white photo-text works first shown in Kelley's exhibition *Toward a Utopian Arts Complex* at Metro Pictures, New York, in 1995. Written from the point of view of putatively fictive victims of probably delusional abuse, the works address such disquieting themes as gang rape, torture, abduction, incarceration, and incest. Depending for their effect on subtle moments of believability, and clearly drawing on the style of Kelley's scripts and monologues (though eschewing much of the fragmentation and allusive compounding of the early work), these pieces are among the most fantastic, provocative, and disturbing of all Kelley's writings. They also reveal his dependence on the written word for the delivery, sustenance, and plausibility of imaginative extremism. For it would be almost impossible to deploy the contradictory impulses that play through these narratives—which are horrific, perverse, and almost comical, all at once—in any conventional visual media. Of course, all of this is rendered even more shocking—and more effective—when one realizes that the four texts here derive from a bout of auto-analysis as Kelley “used self-help books to determine what [his] ‘pathological’ psychology is.” As he put it in an interview: “I just plugged my own background details into the standardized dysfunctional schema.”⁸

“We Communicate Only through Our Shared Dismissal of the Pre-linguistic” (1995) is a series of fifteen approximately pagelong texts presented in two modes: on the gallery walls next to color photographs of paintings made by kindergarten students while Kelley was an assistant teacher in the Ann Arbor public school system in the early 1970s; and from the hard drive of a nearby computer terminal, accessible (interactively) to exhibition visitors. Each text offered a detailed interpretation of the image with which it was paired, summoning up colorful renditions of the “insights” and technical language of child art analysis and art therapy. As with most of Kelley's “projective” writings, these pieces have the uncanny effect of layering the rhetoric of zealously professionalized diction with hermeneutic overdetermination so that the reader is constantly shuttled between plausibility and denial. Contradiction, reading-in, and the blurring of subject positions between analyst, parent, child, and reader/viewer, accelerated by the interactive component of the display, are brought together here in a consummate effort of ironic commentary.

“A Stopgap Measure” was printed on one side of a highly charged “protest poster” for Kelley's exhibition at Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles, in early 1999; on the other side, under the title “Meet John Doe,” appeared a series of paragraphs and sentences drawn from national and

international newspapers describing or commenting upon the Steven Spielberg stalking case, along with an article from the London newspaper *The Sunday Telegraph*. This signature essay in social satire is an informative example of the composite writing methodology Kelley developed in the late 1990s. Composed, as Kelley notes, “after so many years of writing fiction” and in the teeth of a crisis in his “belief system,” the piece takes as its point of departure an issue about which he “cared” “passionately,” the provision of health care in America. In an interview with Jean-Philippe Antoine, Kelley offers an extended commentary on the nature of the “slippage” in tone and cadence he negotiated as this “everyday” concern becomes laced with parody and the non-sensical. The process, he suggests, is similar to the irrational passages navigated through “libidinal urges” or his “attraction to popular culture.” But Kelley goes on to offer a more extended and revealing comparison between what he attempts in “*A Stopgap Measure*” and evangelical oratory:

I must say that my influence in this is preaching. Because preachers do the same things. Preachers start up by talking about very workaday problems, and then they become more abstract (I'm talking more about Pentecostal preachers). So it starts with daily problems, like not having enough money, it goes into more abstract things like world conditions that promote such problems, and then it goes into speaking in tongues. So it starts with the sensical, and through shifts in syntax and cadence, goes completely abstract. And this abstract status is associated with emotion, and what interests me very much (it's always interested me very much) is how this level of our feeling has to be approached a sensical way; you can't just jump into it, you have to do it through a system of disorientation that seems rooted at first, and this is something that I was very much going for in this text.⁹

The final sections of this volume are dedicated to two subjects of special importance to Kelley through the 1990s: respectively, architecture and studies, reports, and images of UFO sightings, which Kelley designates “Ufology.” The first of the four texts on architecture, “*Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Room) for an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry*,” was written by Kelley in 1990 to Aleks Istanbulu in the Frank Gehry office. While Kelley’s intervention in the then-new Chiat/Day office building in Venice (1985–91) was never realized in situ (it was created for an exhibition at the Los Angeles MoCA in 1992), Kelley’s ironic and disruptive address to built space emerges here with playful clarity. Co-authored with Paul

McCarthy, *"An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia"* (1997) pairs separate statements by Kelley and McCarthy on experiences of pictorial and architectural space, relating to their project combining work by the sci-fi illustrator Richard M. Powers and the Cuban-born avant-garde artist Francis Picabia.

"Architectural Non-Memory Replaced with Psychic Reality" (1996) is an expository statement organized as an extended commentary on the context, making, and implications of *Educational Complex*, the large architectural model Kelley built as the centerpiece for his exhibition *Toward a Utopian Arts Complex* at Metro Pictures, New York, in 1995 (the *Timeless/Authorless* and *We Communicate* photo-texts—among other pieces—were also exhibited in this show). In addition to its outline of the construction of *Educational Complex* according to Kelley's partial and imperfect memory of the interior spaces of the seven or so schools he had attended, from kindergarten to grad school, the text meditates on the relation of his "complex" to traditions of utopian architecture, including Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical architecture and Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti. But Kelley crosses these concerns with another installment of his abiding interest in Repressed Memory Syndrome and the U.S. fixation in the early 1990s on childhood abuse. He also alludes to his own implication in these pop psychologies: "it seemed natural to look to my own aesthetic training as the root of my secret indoctrination in perversity, and possibly as the site of my own abuse."

The only formal interview in this volume, "Missing Space/Time: A Conversation between Mike Kelley, Kim Colin, and Mark Skiles" (1996), is included because it offers the broadest and most detailed reflection by Kelley on the role of architecture in his career to date. The discussion includes comments on Kelley's awareness of spatial and architectural concerns in installation pieces such as *Monkey Island* (1982) and *Australiana* (1984); reference to projects made for public space, such as *Pay for Your Pleasure* (1988); as well as an exchange on his series of wooden sculptures designed to be entered or lain upon (which includes *Primaling Cabinet* and *Orgone Shed*, both from 1992), and on the Chiat-Day intervention and *Educational Complex*. The interview concludes with Kelley's critical assessment of postmodern architectural pastiche.

Ufology is a subject close to Kelley's heart for several reasons. First, the literature on UFOs subtends an aesthetic that Kelley found fascinating and contradictory: in it, he remarked, "there is often this conflation of the cold, the hard and the metallic with the runny and sticky, and with luminous coloration."¹⁰ Such structural contrasts became another element in the analogical matrix

that Kelley connected to the sexuality of space, the pink and flesh tones of pornography and crystallography, and the color-chart formalism of Hans Hofmann. Secondly, as the opening paragraph of “The Aesthetics of Ufology” (1997/2002) makes clear, Kelley was compelled by the meeting in Ufology of “high-tech fetishism and symbolic body loathing,” “the abject and the technological.” A third interest relates Ufology to Georges Bataille’s “aesthetics of heterogeneity,” Jean-Paul Sartre’s analysis of the “slimy,” the anthropologist Mary Douglas’s discussion of filthiness and abject bodily materials, and pornographic imagery—which Kelley discusses in relation to sci-fi films from the 1950s to the 1990s and the illustrations of Richard Powers.

“Weaned on Conspiracy: A Dialogue between Chris Wilder and Mike Kelley” (1998) combines insights on Ufology by Kelley with Wilder’s reflections on the “endless roll of [similar] images” collected in Project Blue Book, the investigative agency formed by the United States Air Force in 1952.

Because some of his texts have been published in exhibition catalogues and other venues across three continents, and others have not seen well-distributed publication at all, there have been few cogent assessments of Kelley’s work as a writer. A notable exception is Robert Storr’s observation that “in Kelley one discovers the first practitioner-polemicist-historian of the broad counter-current to mainstream American modernism.” “Rather than bait the ‘art experts,’” Storr continues, “he has beaten them at their own game. More precisely he has hijacked the basic premises and methodologies of postmodernism—complete with postmodernism’s preoccupation with class, gender, and the intricacies of false consciousness and cultural denial—and redeployed them with rough and ready energy that radically alters our perspective on their past and future application.”¹¹

Storr’s suggestions are surely both accurate and relevant. But what this volume reveals above all is the unrivaled depth and range of Kelley’s textual practice, whether measured by style, genre, theme, or quantity. The collection is founded on a dense network of issues and allusions—biography, memory, architecture, aliens-among-us, folk art, the American vernacular, moving images, historical revisionism, theories of character, repression, socialized constructions of gender, performance, art-world formalism, and more—which overlap, argue, and reverberate in a blazing network of focused confluences approached only, I would contend, by the more willfully paranoid musing of Salvador Dalí.

Dalí’s meditations on the psychocultural implications of smoothness, manifested in a wild spectrum of “objects”—ranging from a “cottonless reel” and the uninflected physiognomy of

silent-era comedian Harry Langdon, to the eggs and rounded surfaces in his own paintings¹²—are matched in imaginative range (if not in critical approach), for example, by Kelley's imaginatively hectic conjugation of "blob"-like forms in several of his later writings. In the first story proposed for *Zoo TV* (1996), "The Purple Glob," Kelley actually designates his misrecollection of the narrative of the falling purple glob that he read as a child as a kind of "paranoid" projection, which becomes the imagistic basis for a delirious confabulation of gelatinous materials, authoritarian violence, alien intrusion, and cross-gendered mistaken identity (all of which Kelley decodes as screen memories). Kelley returns to the implications of the purple glob in "Weaned on Conspiracy: A Dialogue between Chris Wilder and Mike Kelley" (1998), where it becomes an allegory of the embrace by Ufology of "both the abject and metaphysical." And he alludes to it again in "The Aesthetics of Ufology" (1997/2002), in an extended reflection on the gooey, the slimy, blob monsters, and aliens—which, among other references, looks to Jung's "symbolic interpretation of the egglike form of the UFO."

Kelley's writings in this volume are by turns frenetic, vulgar, coolly analytic, and ironically obsessional. They are personal, critical, and veined with references to art and pop cultural history. Considered as a whole, they are almost unique among writings by modern artists, for they combine both the most significant body of interpretation and commentary on Kelley's work for the last decade and half with the creative co-production of a new discursive energy—part fictional, part choric, part subjective—that courses through and effectively revises the works themselves.

NOTES

- 1 Isabelle Graw, in "Isabelle Graw in Conversation with Mike Kelley," in John Welchman, Isabelle Graw, and Anthony Vidler, *Mike Kelley* (London: Phaidon, 1999), p. 8.
- 2 For Tzara's manifestos see Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (London: J. Calder, 1977).
- 3 Kelley notes that "I've never wanted my work to be associated with the Dada sensibility—to be perceived as simply negational." "Isabelle Graw in Conversation with Mike Kelley," p. 25.
- 4 For a discussion of some of these writings and related issues, see my *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 339–48; and *Art after Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s* (Amsterdam: G + B Arts International, 2001), pp. 15–17.
- 5 "Isabelle Graw in Conversation with Mike Kelley," p. 8.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 41. Following Kelley's suggestions, Graw notes that "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" is "less discursive" and "a bit like a song."
- 7 "*An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia*" (1997) was written with Paul McCarthy, but each artist wrote his own part of the text.
- 8 Kelley, in "Isabelle Graw in Conversation with Mike Kelley," p. 19.
- 9 Mike Kelley, interview by Jean-Philippe Antoine for *Les Cahiers*, no. 43 (2000), cited from unpaginated transcript. I have modified the transcription slightly.
- 10 "Isabelle Graw in Conversation with Mike Kelley," p. 33.
- 11 Robert Storr, "Eye Infection," in the catalogue for *Eye Infection*, curated by Christiaan Braun at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, November 3, 2001, to January 20, 2002 (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2001), pp. 22–23.
- 12 Dalí's reference to the cottonless reel can be found in his essay "Non-Euclidean Psychology of a Photograph"; and his reference to the face of Langdon in ". . . Always, above Music, Harry Langdon . . .," in *L'Amic de les Arts* (Sitges), no. 31 (1929), rpt. in Salvador Dalí, *Oui: The Paranoid-Critical Revolution, Writings 1927–1933*, ed. Robert Descharnes trans. Yvonne Shafir (Boston: Exact Change, 1998), p. 80. There are references to other round, smooth forms, including eggs and grapes, throughout Dalí's paintings and writings.

S T A T E M E N T S

AJAX

MK *First published in Journal: A Contemporary Art Magazine 4, no. 39 (Spring 1984), pp. 29–31, along with four original insert illustrations, this text was a playful attempt to engage with issues of readership in relation to my writings for performance, which were purposely ambiguous. I was interested in how readers of my texts would make sense of them as narrative, history, or drama, and what assumptions and preconceptions they might invest across these multiple levels. I isolated nine sections of the script for my performance *The Sublime* (1984) that referred to “Ajax” (these are set in italics), and then proposed various interpretations of them. Douglas Blau, guest editor for this issue of the Journal, made minor editorial changes in the text, some of which are retained here. New notes have been added by MK and JCW for this volume. *The Sublime* was performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, on March 15, 1984.*

2

Like an image seen in a Rorschach blot, character naturally generates itself in text. Texts generally have characters as well as plots, so even in the most confused and jumbled manuscripts, people instinctively draw out something resembling personality and narrative. For example, I recently gave a friend a copy of the script for my performance *The Sublime*, which has neither characters nor plot in the traditional sense, and she later commented on what she construed to be the central charac-



1. Mike Kelley, *The Sublime* (1984). Installation view at Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, 1984.
Photo: Douglas M. Parker Studio.

ter, "Ajax." Now, sometimes I use the word "Ajax" in the script as an allusion to the character in Sophocles' play of the same title,¹ but most often the name floats, referring to many different qualities: silence, brutishness, pride, and cleanliness—among others. Her desire to personify Ajax puzzled and surprised me, given the fractured and poetic nature of my text. Anyway, this incident prompted me to go through the performance script and pull out all of the references to Ajax to see if I could construct a character.

I initially became interested in working with Ajax as a motif because of my attraction to a passage in Longinus's treatise *On The Sublime*: "The silence of Ajax in the underworld is more sublime than any spoken word."²

Longinus's text concerns itself mainly with the rules of public speaking. However, he believes that there is a moral imperative attached to oration that transcends the mere ability to sway an audience. Longinus's declaration illustrates his belief that an orator's intentions are more important, more sublime, than any single manner of presentation. However, Longinus's infatuation with the silence of Ajax struck me as somewhat ironic since his text is almost entirely devoted to the rules of rhetoric. This contradiction interested me.

Longinus's epigram also appealed to the eighteenth-century romantics, who believed in the primacy of subjectivity and in the superiority of the internal to the external, of the veiled to the revealed, the obscure to the clear. Silence is given added importance in this context because the thought has yet to become a word. Worded, a thought is spoiled, impotent. No longer subjective, it has entered the world, the world of mundane materialism. Ideas die immediately upon their birth, on the threshold of the lips.

All of this prompted me to read Sophocles' play *Ajax* and the section of Homer's *Odyssey* in which Ajax refuses to speak, so that I might divine why the shade remained mute in Odysseus's presence. Homer spoke of Ajax through Odysseus's voice, which, as the two warriors were rivals, cannot be trusted. Odysseus's obviously subjective interpretation remains suspect. It was clear to me that Ajax did not like Odysseus, but it was not clear what Ajax's real intentions were—what, were he a believable literary character, his motivations might have been for remaining silent. I saw two possibilities: first, that Ajax was noble and wished to be consistent in his reactions to his enemy even in death; and second, that Ajax was a thick-headed, ignorant sore loser who, like a spoiled child, withdrew and denied Odysseus solace despite his pleas for reconciliation.

A reading of Ajax as either a sympathetic or unsympathetic character hinges on our acceptance of one of these two interpretations. But the limitations of the written material do not

allow us to postulate which of these two choices is correct. Sophocles' portrayal of Ajax is not very flattering, but we must still take into account that Ajax's cruelty, his shameful act of slaughtering innocent animals while under the delusion that they were dangerous enemies, was the by-product of heavenly intervention—he was duped by the gods. Given no real access to his thoughts, we are allowed the pleasure of a purely subjective interpretation of Ajax's character.

Bigger and better go go go. The bigger cast—beat it. The lower caste—out. Drummers—cast out. Cast out this spirit. Shu mu mu mu mu ma. Giant drum of Ajax. A mighty sublime grandiosity.

Here, Ajax could be construed as a drummer, a pariah—part of the lowest caste in Indian society.³ “Cast out” also refers to the property of the sound of drumming that elicits trance states and a loss of self.⁴ “Shu mu mu mu mu ma” is the way one author paraphrased the sound of “speaking in tongues” uttered during snake-handling ceremonies in the southern U.S.⁵ Evoking sublime grandiosity, Ajax's drum is large—so large that we lose our ability to comprehend, or even sense, its limits. Just as with the proximity of the lower to the upper classes, confrontation with such immensity generates a feeling of low self-worth, which is transformed into artistic drive. The energy of a supposed “higher” force is siphoned off and used to produce drumming, speaking in tongues, and other “creative” acts. The image of the giant drum could also evoke an industrial-sized drum of Ajax cleanser,⁶ suggesting thoughts of one of our own culture's underclass positions: the janitor. The mind-numbing qualities associated with janitorial labor, paired with the Ajax cleanser referent, defines the drumming-induced trance state as a kind of “brainwashing.” The character “Ajax” could be construed, then, as a blue-collar drummer, and because of the “religious,” sublimatory nature of his drumming, he is a sympathetic character—an underdog.

I won't speak—in blissful removal. Ajax's silence, the proud silence ready to burst. The scale face weighs wants. I am the nose of the master of breath. I hold my breath until I turn blue.

Hmmmmmm. Here, Ajax doesn't seem like such a sympathetic character; in fact, he seems like a spoiled, boastful brat. Perhaps, as the Catholics point out, speaking in tongues is a form of exhibitionism. Prayer should be humble and silent, but in this passage even silence is prideful, like the willful refusal of a criminal to confess.

The image of the “scale face” refers to the eyes revealing the measure of desire. This desire, like pride, builds up to a bursting point—an explosion of passion that culminates in crime or orgasm—shame or ecstasy.

The silence of Ajax. The strong silent product. Warrior and moralist—fighting against dirt. I clean the filthy room. I wash the filthy feet. I am the Christianized pagan now—humble now, not the proud silence.

Here is some good silent strength, a strength measured in deeds, not rhetoric. Do as I do, not as I say. Ajax has strong arms and wants to help. He will go out of his way to do a good deed, even if there is nothing to be gained by it. A good product doesn't advertise because it knows that commercials are annoying; it must suffer, because its merits are only communicated by word of mouth, which is in opposition to its silent stance. Loose lips sink ships, but make business grow.

The silence of Ajax. Dead silence. The body may be puffed-up, but at least the tongue is still—thick, rising like dough. These loaves bake in the sun.

What if Ajax's suicide was simply motivated by an aversion to speech, rather than by shame? As a response to shame, suicide is at least respectable, but using suicide as an easy way to attain silence is definitely a sign of weakness. You don't cut off your nose to spite your face—that's too easy—instead, you should succumb to ugliness rather than win false mastery over it. Silence must be attained by sheer force of will, not cheap mechanics. A blowfish inflates to frighten enemies that it cannot defeat in one-on-one combat. A body swells after death, as if proud.

Oh Ajax, don't be ashamed. Some stains just won't come clean.

Even those sure of their strength must have an additional strength—the strength to admit the limits of their strength. The efficiency of this weakness is to be recommended. A product that claims to do what it cannot do continually sets itself up to prove what has already been proven—redundancy. Clear, verifiable claims exhibit themselves in practice: strength is shown to be strength; weakness is shown to be weakness. There is a sense of constancy that is good and pleasing.

Ajax's silence. That he won't speak in the afterlife. Refusing to break the bond of silence.

What is this mysterious bond? To whom does it adhere? What is the secret? Those who die rather than reveal the secrets of others are strong indeed, for they carry twice the weight of suffering: their own, and that of those they protect. True friendship is nothing to scoff at.

Ajax's silence. That stoic silent wall. No, he won't speak in the afterlife. The prideful silence unto death.

Now, there are times when silence exhibits stupidity and serves no purpose. There is no reason, for example, to be beaten to death for refusing to reveal a disconnected phone number. A certain measure of intelligence must be used in situations like these; I don't respect habitual responses. Ajax doesn't strike me as too smart sometimes; it seems like he's someone's sap.

Ajax—the spot cleaner. The janitorial homage. Dirt.

Here, Ajax is both cleanser and warrior. His strength is self-delusion produced by intoxication—by youthful, unmanly intoxicants—by techniques like sniffing spot remover, glue, or gasoline. The religious stance falters: anyone can be blissed-out after a day of spray painting, but it takes years on your knees.

Ajax warrior—Doughboy malleable.

When I became interested in the double metaphor of Ajax—as cleanser and historical figure—it struck me as odd that a company would pick so disreputable a figure, a suicide, as its namesake. Did it suppose that most people wouldn't be familiar with the literary figure and would respond solely to the snappy name? Was it because the concepts of hard work and stupidity are connected in the popular imagination, so that the name of a brute sparks the connection: *hard worker—good job?* Or was it because the name sounds old, historical, giving the impression that the company itself is solid and reliable?

It struck me, too, that the Pillsbury Doughboy is a similarly ambiguous figurehead for a company.⁷ Again, its historical antecedent has somehow been lost in translation. That the nickname for an American World War I soldier, surely a symbol of national pride, should be applied to the fat, effeminate, giggling blob we see on television promoting cookie dough is almost incomprehensible.⁸ What could be the rationale behind such a pairing? Is it, in fact, a hidden stab at America, some sort of covert social commentary? The strategy seems similar to Ajax's own tactics: keep your mouth shut and let everyone else try to figure it out. Silence is often construed as a sign of intelligence, so the best tactic is to play dumb. The sublime, like subliminal messages buried in advertising, works precisely because nothing is comprehended.

NOTES

- 1 Sophocles, *Ajax*, ed. with introduction by W. B. Stanford (Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co., 1985).
- 2 T. S. Dorsch translates the sentence from which this passage is excerpted from section 9 of Longinus's *On the Sublime* in *Classical Literary Criticism* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1965), as follows: "Thus, even without being spoken, a simple idea will sometimes of its own accord excite admiration by reason of the greatness of mind that it expresses; for example, the silence of Ajax in 'The Calling Up of the Spirits' is grand, more sublime than any words" (p. 109). The silence of Ajax is described in Homer, *Odyssey*, book XI, lines 543ff.; see e.g. E. V. Rieu's translation (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1946), p. 186.
- 3 According to UCLA ethnomusicologist Daniel Neuman, the English word "pariah" is derived from the Tamil *paraiyar* (drummer)—the name of a caste of drummers considered untouchables. Their low status derived from the fact that drummers touch the heads of drums made from the skin of dead animals, death being a polluting attribute. The stigma attached to the touching of dead animal skin no longer exists, and drummers from North and South India now hail from different castes. Drumming was a major part of *The Sublime*. At one point in the performance, actor Ed Gierke and I (representing Hans Hofmann and Jackson Pollock) engaged in prolonged, "battling" drum solos.
- 4 The following quotation from Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), pp. 351–352, was printed on the handout for Kelley's performance of *The Sublime* in 1984.

No man, however highly civilized, can listen very long to African drumming, or Indian chanting, or Welsh hymn-singing, and retain intact his critical and self-conscious personality. It would be interesting to take a group of the most eminent philosophers from the best universities, shut them up in a hot room with Moroccan dervishes or Haitian voodooists, and measure, with a stop watch, the strength of their psychological resistance to the effects of rhythmic sound. Would the Logical Positivists be able to hold out longer than the Subjective Idealists? Would the Marxists prove tougher than the Thomists or the Vedantists? What a fascinating, what a fruitful field for experiment! Meanwhile, all we can safely predict is that, if exposed long enough to the tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end up capering and howling with the savages.

The ways of rhythmic movement and of rhythmic sound are generally superimposed, so to speak, upon the way of herd-intoxication. But there are also private roads, roads which can be taken by the solitary traveler who has no taste for crowds, or no strong faith in the principles, institutions and persons in whose names crowds are assembled.

- 5 See Karen W. Carden and Robert W. Pelton, *The Persecuted Prophets: The Story of the Frenzied Serpent Handlers* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1976).
- 6 The Colgate-Palmolive Company introduced Ajax cleanser to the American consumer in 1947. The origin of the product's name is unclear, but is probably connected to a pun linking Ajax and "toilet." Jan Kott comments:

Of all the heroes of the Trojan War, Ajax became the most ridiculed at the time of the late Renaissance. Singularly cruel treatment was accorded him in Elizabethan England. . . . A popular pun equated the stupid athlete with a privy, A-jax became a-jakes. . . . Hence, probably, the most publicized detergent in the United States has been called Ajax. Until recently the plastic container of "Ajax" recalled a knight by their [sic] shape. Ajax became a "cleaner for all purposes." Character, indeed, is destiny. In a world where everything ends on a scrap heap, the only heroic role which still remains is to be the strongest detergent.

See Jan Kott, "Ajax Thrice Deceived, or The Heroism of the Absurd," in *The Eating of the Gods: An Interpretation of Greek Tragedy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), note 51, p. 291.

- 7 According to the Pillsbury company, "'Poppin' Fresh®,' the Pillsbury Doughboy™, popped out of his first can of Pillsbury refrigerated dough on November 7, 1965. He made his debut in a commercial for Pillsbury® Refrigerated Crescent Rolls. Within three years of his first appearance, more than 87% of the population had come to know this personification of the qualities of Pillsbury Refrigerated Dough." See <<http://www.doughboy.com/Doughboy/DBAbout.asp>>.
- 8 Conflicting theories exist concerning the origination of the slang term "doughboy" for members of the United States Army between 1917 and 1920. See Gary Mead, *The Doughboys* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 2000), pp. 66–68.

THREE PROJECTS: *HALF A MAN, FROM MY INSTITUTION TO YOURS, PAY FOR YOUR PLEASURE*

JCW The three projects referred to here—Half a Man, From My Institution to Yours, and Pay for Your Pleasure—were presented at the exhibition Three Projects put on by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, May 4 to June 30, 1988. The catalogue contained an essay by Howard Singerman, “Mike Kelley’s Line,” that uses the axes, linearities, and symmetries characterizing Kelley’s work to point to his interest in the liminal spaces between high art and popular culture, crime and aesthetics, and form and dissolution: and an essay by John Miller, “The Mortification of the Sign: Mike Kelley’s Felt Banners,” that traces the genealogy and implications of Kelley’s relation to the handicraft tradition of felt banners through the refracted modernism and Catholic religiosity of Sister Mary Corita in the early 1960s.

The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago is unusual in that it is located in a functioning university building, and the hall leading to the gallery runs through a section of university classrooms. As Pay for Your Pleasure was installed in this hallway, the widths of the banners differ, designed to fit between doors and to accommodate the unusual architectural details of the space.



2. Mike Kelley, *Pay for Your Pleasure* (1988). Two installation views at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1988. Photo: Tom Van Eynde.

Pay for Your Pleasure is now owned by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (where it has been reconfigured as a freestanding symmetrical hallway in which the banners run in rainbow spectral order down each opposing wall). It consists of forty-two banners done in oil on Tyvek; an artwork by a local criminal, situated at one end of the corridor that defines the piece; and two donation boxes (all moneys collected are donated to a victims' rights organization). Half a Man and From My Institution to Yours are described below.

This text was first published in *Whitewalls: A Magazine of Writings by Artists*, no. 20 (Fall 1988), pp. 9–12. The series of quotations on crime from writers, artists, and political figures that was part of the installation follows in this volume.

Half a Man is the collective title of a group of works that make up the main portion of my exhibition at the Renaissance Society. It comprises nine cut-felt banners (including *Animal Self* and *Friend of the Animals, Daddy, and Trash Picker*, all 1987); two sewn constructions made up of stuffed animals, dolls, and crocheted and knitted items (*Plush Kundalini and Chakra Set*, 1987, and *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987); a set of refinished furniture (including a dresser, keepsake chest, chest of drawers, and a dressing stand); a series of eight symmetrical black-and-white paintings (*Incorrect Sexual Models*, 1987); and, more loosely related, *Seventy-four Garbage Drawings and One Bush* (1988). In one way or another, all the works address issues of gender-specific imagery and the family. Those that do this most obviously are related to craft traditions (the banners, sewn constructions, and furniture), since handicrafts, like sewing and home decorating, have traditionally been thought of as women's activities, while crafts using woodworking skills have generally been considered masculine pastimes. The felt banners are reminiscent of the type found in church meeting halls and school classrooms. Derived from modernist sources such as Henri Matisse's cutouts and Alexander Calder's prints,¹ their outward form elicits a joyous primitivism, a stylized adult misrepresentation of children's art. Because they are used to preach to children, or to the child in us, we infer the rules of authority and the family—the patriarchy—hidden under the loving exteriors of the banners. The two sewn constructions also deal with the picturing of the child's world by adults, in that they are made up primarily of stuffed animals. The stuffed animal is a pseudo-child, a cutified, sexless being that represents the adult's perfect model of a child—a neutered pet. In *Plush*

Kundalini and Chakra Set (1987), the toys are taken out of the child's world and returned to the adult domain from which they originated. This is achieved by ordering them in an adult system, specifically the Tantric image of the kundalini snake.² With its overtones of sexuality and power, the image of the kundalini reinvests in the dolls what has been left out. In the second sewn construction, *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987), another form of false innocence is addressed—the innocence of the gift. In this piece, composed of a large number of handmade stuffed animals and fibercraft items, the toy is seen in the context of a system of exchange. Each gift given to a child carries with it the unspoken expectation of repayment. But nothing material can be given back since nothing is owned by the child. What must be given in repayment is “love” itself. Love, however, has no fixed worth, so the rate of exchange can never be set. Thus, the child is put in the position of being a perpetually indentured servant, forever unable to pay back his or her debt.

The refinished furniture pieces are more theatrical, and more involved with issues of narrative, than the other craft pieces. *Antiqued (Prematurely Aged)* (1987), for example, consists of a chest of drawers painted a bright “girlish” pink, and then antiqued by rubbing it with dark stain. The chest sits atop a mirror that reveals a case for birth control pills, a diary, and a girl's sex education manual hidden underneath. The top of the chest has been adorned with photographs of me clipped from art magazines—as if I were the object of desire for this fictional female. The chest of drawers gives up its “presence,” its objecthood, in favor of the story played out by the things layered on top of it. The old piece of furniture starts life anew with its fresh coat of paint, and sometimes this new life has nothing whatsoever to do with the object's previous function. Now, these household objects speak the narratives of the household. They seem to represent certain ages, mentalities, or genders—to have specific voices. But this openness, this willingness to bare all, is only a protective coloration disguising the fact that these are merely stories, simply constructs.

The two-panel acrylic paintings of *Incorrect Sexual Models* (1987) are just that: failed attempts at simple picturings of complex psychosexual relationships. The series depicts a reordering of the body (an attempt to improve it?), which reduces it to a symmetrical organization of paired organs: eyes, kidneys, lobed brain—all bracketed within a decorative garland of intestine. The paintings strive to portray sexual relationships as ones of symmetry and equality. This attempt always ends in failure, except in the pictures that are utopian fantasies, *Utopia* and *Thalassa*.³ Each painting is made up of two equal halves, but, with the exception of the utopian ones, these halves never add up to a whole or, in the case of *Mommy's Penis*, a large central section is left unfinished.

Seventy-four Garbage Drawings and One Bush is the last series of works that make up *Half a Man*. Each garbage drawing derives from a cartoon panel taken from a *Sad Sack* comic book.⁴ The drawings are accurate, except that everything apart from the garbage—the landscape, architecture, and figures—has been left out. Obviously geared toward the concerns of children, the main themes of the *Sad Sack* comic stories are incompetence, subjugation, and filthiness. By setting the action in a military environment, however, these concerns are turned around and projected back onto the adult world. The military becomes a metaphor for family life, but with an all-male cast—the General becomes the powerful but mostly absent Father; the Sergeant, the Mother; and Sad Sack, the pitiful child. This construct is set up only to defile, and garbage is the weapon of choice. The majority of the stories concern the destruction of order through the intrusion of filth. By dropping everything out of the frame except the intrusive element—the garbage—there is a shift of focus, a change in the definition of “order.” When the garbage is isolated, it becomes specific and may even be seen as ordered, itself; thus formalized, it loses its transgressive nature. The abject signification of the drawings is also threatened by the addition to the series of an impostor: a bush that looks the same as the garbage. Only the narrative frame of the story allows the reader to distinguish the bush from the garbage. They are rendered so similarly that, without this context, they are indistinguishable. The filth reference is now controlled through a technique very much like that in which a neutered fruit fly is introduced into the general fly population. The presence of the false fly somehow upsets the order of the whole group, rendering it harmless. Once the garbage ceases to be viewed as abject, once it has been tamed, the family/military elements can take over that function, becoming the intrusive elements themselves.

The large, mural-sized painting *From My Institution to Yours* (1987) addresses the issue of “workers’ art.” Composed of blowups of six drawings done by security guards employed at the California Institute of the Arts (one institution),⁵ where I was also employed as an instructor, the piece was initially made for an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (the other institution).⁶ These workers’ drawings have been repositioned in a framing structure reminiscent of a shrine or monument. The guards’ simple, Disneyesque cartoons of personified animals, captioned with humorous sayings, are ill at ease in a glorified political context. The piece raises questions about the nature of the “art of the people,” and to what ends it is used. The personification of animals produces images common to both the “high art” allegories of church and state and the “low art” images of popular cartoons and fables. In this work, such representations signify in both ways.

Pay for Your Pleasure (1988) is a work produced especially for the Renaissance Society. It consists of three parts: a group of painted portraits of famous philosophers, poets, and painters (including Charles Baudelaire, André Breton, Francis Picabia, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Oscar Wilde), each captioned with a quotation from that person linking art production and criminal activity in some way; a painting by Chicago-area criminal John Wayne Gacy;⁷ and a set of money collection bins for various local victims' rights organizations. The portraits resemble the kind of literary quotation posters often found in schoolrooms, but blown up to the size of political or circus banners.

As evidenced by the variety of quotations used in this piece, which range from classical Greek sources to contemporary ones, the association of art production with criminal activity has a long history. The main questions raised seem to revolve around the idea of usefulness. Artworks are often discussed as if they were sublimations—channeling destructive energies into useful ones. The question thus arises: “What kind of use?” Some modern artists have advocated violent action as a tool for social change or a cathartic exercise beneficial to the self, and have claimed such actions as their “art.” But perhaps the question is not so much one of use-value, but of safety. Despite their usefulness, or lack thereof, how can we safely access destructive forces? *The social role of the artist might be seen as that of an agent of safety through representation.* Even in the most radical modernist art/life action, the nagging question of the aesthetic still remains—whether the act is “real” or not. Does the depiction produce the same effect as that which is depicted? Such questions, however, have become increasingly moot for artists, because criminals themselves, safely filtered through the media, serve the same function. We are left to argue now not about the efficacy of the representation—it is enough that we are drawn to it—but rather about the difference in social role between artist and criminal. This can be approached from one end or the other: either the artist is downgraded to a criminal, or the criminal is upgraded to an artist. Sometimes, we are left simply to sort out the rules governing this downward or upward movement. An example of such rules is found in the “Son of Sam” laws (named after the serial murderer David Berkowitz who called himself Son of Sam),⁸ the passage of which was prompted by Berkowitz’s sale of firsthand crime information. The laws prevent criminals from capitalizing on their crimes through sales of interviews, etc. They do not, however, prevent criminals from capitalizing on their notoriety in the form of non-crime-related products. Since being put on death row for the murder of some thirty young men, John Wayne Gacy, for example, has taken up painting.⁹ Almost laughably, art in the prison context is promoted as useful sublimation—as “therapy.” (There is a wonderful parody of this idea in John

Waters's film *Polyester* [1981], in which, after a stay in juvenile hall, a perverted, foot-stomping delinquent is converted into a useful citizen—a painter specializing in images of shoes.) In his letters to pen pals, Gacy is quite blunt about the fact that his paintings are designed for sale. They allow him to continue in his former role in the outside world as a businessman. Still, we look at the paintings through the haze of their socially redeeming value, which hides our true fascination with the works. We are not interested in Gacy's brushwork or images (usually bland depictions of clowns, landscapes, or Disney subjects), we are interested in the man behind them, the person capable of incredible atrocities. The paintings allow us to stare safely at the forbidden.

In *Pay for Your Pleasure*, Gacy's painting acts as the centerpiece, surrounded by obviously overdone rationalization systems. The portraits present the authority of the quotation simply as an excuse, another way of saying "just following orders." The wisdom of ages is rendered as a collegiate hall of knowledge, and the Renaissance Society's entrance hall, which runs through a section of university classrooms, leads us to a situation where we can at the same time condemn Gacy and have access to his crimes. But since no pleasure is for free, a little "guilt money" is in order: a small donation to a victims' rights organization seems a proper penance to pay.

NOTES

- 1 See John Elderfield, *The Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse* (New York: George Braziller, 1978). On Calder's graphics, see Jean Lipman, *Calder's Universe* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), esp. pp. 132–55.
- 2 On the Tantric image of the kundalini snake and its associated chakras, see Philip Rawson, *Tantra: The Indian Cult of Ecstasy* (New York: Avon Books, 1973), esp. pp. 26–28; and Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), esp. pp. 164–74.
- 3 Kelley's title alludes to Sandor Ferenczi, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (New York: Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 1938).
- 4 Created by George Baker (b. 1915) while he was in the U.S. Army, the *Sad Sack* comic strip, featuring a bewildered civilian trying to be a soldier, was first published in *Yank*, a weekly magazine for the army, in 1941. The strip had newspaper syndication for a decade between 1946 and 1957 but was eventually bought from Baker by Harvey Comics. Harvey Comics produced a long-running series of *Sad Sack*, and *Sad Sack* spinoffs, comic books geared to children. These comics, not illustrated by Baker, are the source of the images of garbage used in the series *Seventy-four Garbage Drawings and One Bush* (1988).
- 5 Funded by Walt and Roy Disney, the California Institute of the Arts was founded in 1961 through the merger of the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and the Chouinard Art Institute. Cal Arts moved to its present site in Valencia, California, in 1971, and offers degrees in art, music, theater, film/video, and dance. A writing program in critical studies was added in 1995.
- 6 See Howard N. Fox, *Avant-Garde in the Eighties* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987). The installation of *From My Institution to Yours* at LACMA differed from the original proposal, which called for a ribbon that would run from the "shrine," through an Employees Only door, down into the office areas and loading docks of the museum where real "workers' art" graces office cubicles and bulletin boards. A battering ram was to be positioned at the Employees Only door with inflammatory signage calling for the museum-goers to knock the door down to gain access to the restricted workers' area, where the museum-goers and office workers would mingle. Security refused this proposal, so Kelley set up, instead, an overt conflict between the museum staff and the public. *From My Institution to Yours* is an open, three-sided room that invites access. However, Kelley instructed the museum guards to evict the public from the space whenever they entered it. The red ribbon that was to lead to the workers' area now dangled in the space of the installation, holding up a carrot.
- 7 On John Wayne Gacy, see Clifford L. Linedecker, *The Man Who Killed Boys* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); Terry Sullivan with Peter T. Maiken, *Killer Clown: The John Wayne Gacy Murders* (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1983); and Tim Cahill, *Buried Dreams: Inside the Mind of a Serial Killer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).
- 8 On David Berkowitz, a.k.a. "Son of Sam," who in the summer of 1977 randomly shot young couples in the New York City area, see Lawrence D. Klausner, *Son of Sam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981). On the Son of Sam laws,

see James H. Stark and Howard W. Goldstein, *The Rights of Crime Victims* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985), pp. 265–80.

- 9 The painting by Gacy presented in the Chicago installation of *Pay for Your Pleasure* was a self-portrait as *Pogo the Clown* (1988). One of the defining characteristics of *Pay for Your Pleasure* is that for each installation an artwork by a local criminal must be featured, and the money gathered from the collection bins must be given to a local victims' rights organization. The "criminal" artworks become part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MoCA).

QUOTATIONS ON ART AND CRIME FOR *PAY FOR YOUR PLEASURE*

JCW *These forty-three brief quotations selected by Kelley from a wide range of poets, artists, novelists, popes, and philosophers address crime, art, and their interrelation. They were painted onto monochrome portraits of their authors (in red, green, purple, orange, etc.) for the installation of Pay for Your Pleasure at its various venues, beginning at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (1988). For Kelley's discussion of the installation and its contexts, see "Three Projects," in this volume.*

1. After our own verse, after all our subtle color and nervous rhythm . . . what more is possible?

After us the savage God.

William Butler Yeats

2. I have a mad impulse to smash something . . . to commit outrages.

Hermann Hesse

3. The imagination will not down . . . if it is not art it becomes crime.

William Carlos Williams

4. The fact of a man being a poisoner is nothing against his prose.

Oscar Wilde

5. I erect myself at the exact point where knowledge touches madness, and I can erect no safety rail.

Honoré de Balzac

6. If you say that everything—chaos, darkness, anathema—can be reduced to mathematical formulae—then man will go insane on purpose to have no judgment—and to behave as he likes.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky

7. We admire the work, but despise the workmen.

Plutarch

8. Men like Benvenuto Cellini [artists] . . . ought not to be bound by law.

Pope Paul III

9. If you encounter charlatans, reason with them . . . if they resist, be bold enough to drown them.

Giotto

10. We painters claim the license that poets and madman claim.

Veronese

11. The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint.

Walt Whitman

12. A painting is a thing which requires as much cunning, rascality, and viciousness as the perpetration of a crime.

Edgar Degas

13. The artist need no longer think of the souls of his fellowmen. He can forget them, forget men and everything. He can do as he pleases, he is sure his work will lead nobody astray.

François Mauriac

14. We shelter in ourselves an angel whom we constantly shock.

Jean Cocteau

15. In our oh-so-civilized society it is necessary for me to lead the life of a savage.

Gustave Courbet

16. Destruction is creation.

Mikhail Bakunin

17. I like things and people in inverse proportion to the services they render.

Théophile Gautier

18. They [artists] are more often the auxiliaries of corruption than of regeneration.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

19. If rape or arson, poison or the knife, has woven no pleasing patterns in the stuff of this drab canvas we accept as life—it is because we are not bold enough.

Charles Baudelaire

20. Great evil springs out of a fullness of nature . . . weak natures are scarcely capable of very great good or evil.

Plato

21. Only the marshes are fecund.

André Gide

22. Imagination lies in wait as the most powerful enemy. Naturally raw, and enamored of absurdity, it breaks out against all civilizing restraints like a savage who takes delight in grimacing idols.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

23. Those who restrain desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be constrained.

William Blake

24. I think the destructive element is too much neglected in art.

Piet Mondrian

25. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins were as scarlet, they are now white as snow; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

26. There is something agreeable in the misfortunes of others.

William Makepeace Thackeray

27. The simplest surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly . . . into the crowd.

André Breton

28. Everything bad that happens happens because of a conscious, intelligent concerted ill-will.

Antonin Artaud

29. I call "monster" all original inexhaustible beauty.

Alfred Jarry

30. The commitment to supreme evil is indeed connected with the commitment of supreme good.

Georges Bataille

31. I do not understand laws. I have no moral sense. I am a brute.

Arthur Rimbaud

32. We are a furious wind . . . preparing the great spectacle of disaster, fire, decomposition.

Tristan Tzara

33. The life of insects demonstrates that everything comes down to reproduction at any cost and to purposeless destruction.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

34. My only recourse is the expedient of placing at the service of truth what has been given me by the father of lies.

Léon Bloy

35. Art is a seducing, forbidden fruit. Whoever has once tasted its innermost, sweetest juice is irretrievably lost for the active, living world. He creeps more and more into his own little corner of pleasure.

Wilhelm Wackenroder

36. Crime in itself has such an attraction that, independently of lust, it alone can inflame the passions.

Marquis de Sade

37. The madness of desire, insane murders, the most unreasonable passions—all are wisdom and reason, since they are part of the order of nature.

Michel Foucault

38. Too high for common selfishness, he could
At times resign his own for other's good,
But not in pity, not because he ought,
But in some strange perversity of thought,
That sway'd him onward with a secret pride
To do what few or none would do beside;

And this same impulse would, in tempting time,
Mislead his spirit equally to crime.

Lord Byron

39. I want to sing murder, for I love murderers.

Jean Genet

40. I love the unfrocked priest
the freed convict
they are without past
and without future
and so live in the present.

Francis Picabia

41. Evil action . . . should contain within itself—and should resolve—so many contradictions that it would require invention, inspiration, in a word genius. It would thus be akin . . . to a great work of art.

Jean-Paul Sartre

42. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet.

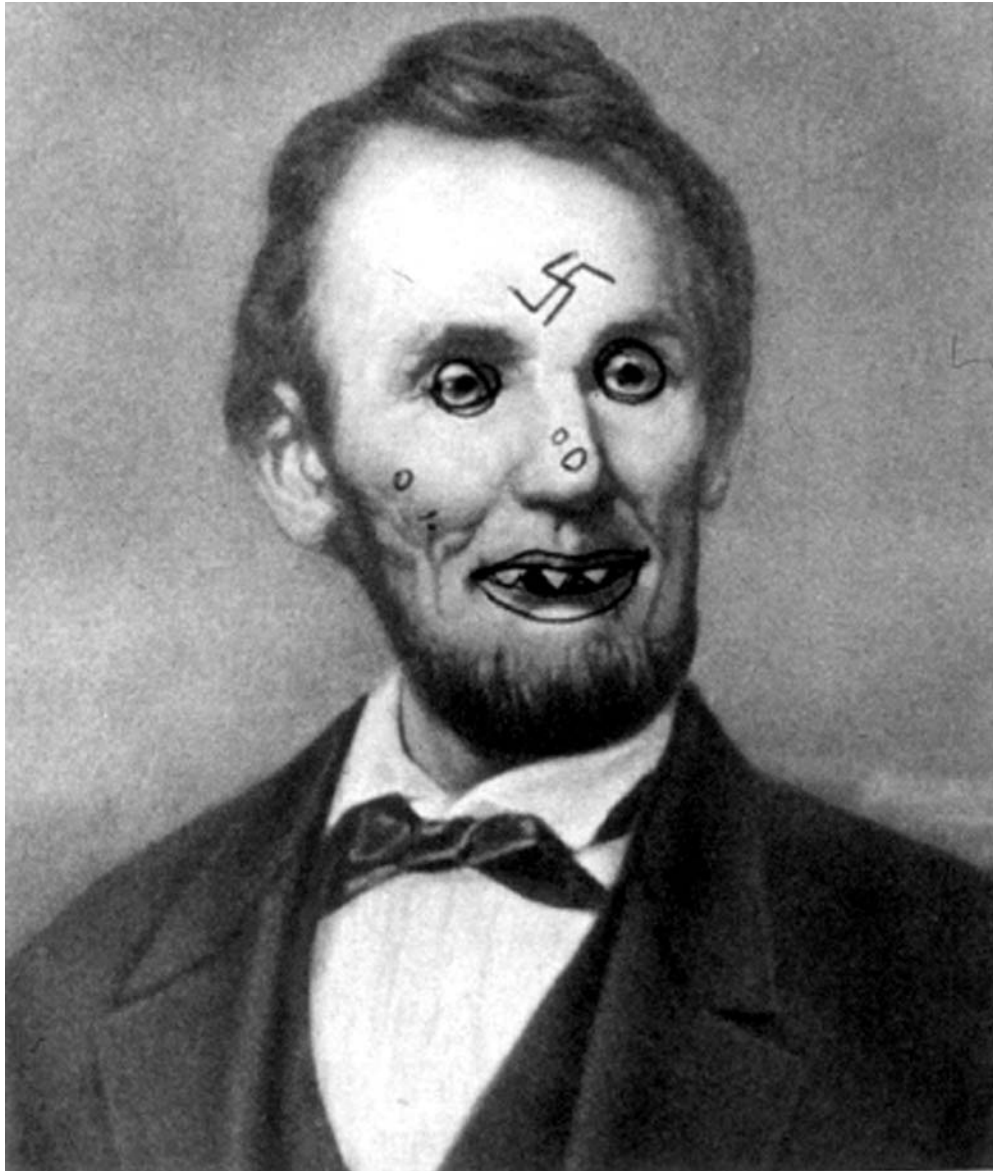
John Keats

43. Life too near paralyzes art.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

INTRODUCTION TO *RECONSTRUCTED HISTORY*

*JCW Kelley wrote this text as an introduction to the limited-edition artist's book *Reconstructed History* (Cologne and New York: Thea Westreich and Gisela Capitain, 1990). The book contains sixty-one photographs and illustrations selected from a much larger group that Kelley found in used and yard sale books on American history and then graffitied over. The embossed cover of *Reconstructed History*, with crest and scholastic "Lamp of Knowledge," mimics the look of a high school yearbook or coffee table historical tome, and features a clear dust jacket defaced with morbid adolescent doodles. The book's interior design resembles a high-end photography book, with protective barrier sheets between each isolated image. Kelley's introduction was printed, in script, on faux parchment, emulating "colonial" design. Its style, tone, and range of references—even the original graphic layout using a pseudo-historical typeface—are all duplicitous. The images in the book are not "found" but made, and the voice of the text deliberately stilted. The result is an elaborate hoax, one of the more vivid of Kelley's many efforts to perform, write, and represent through fictitious adopted personae. Photographs from the series used for the book were shown in the group show *Mike Kelley, Tim Rollins + KOS, Meyer Vaisman at Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York, in 1990*; a selection of the original graffitied illustrations were shown in the exhibition *Mike Kelley*, which traveled to the *Kunsthalle in Basel*, the *Institute of Contemporary Arts in London*, and the *Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux in 1992*.*



3. Mike Kelley, *With Malice toward None: With Charity for All*, from the series *Reconstructed History* (1989). Black-and-white photograph. 10 × 8 in.

Here we have a collection of grotesqueries, defacements of some of the most cherished images of our American past. Who could be responsible for such defilements? What could be the purpose in tarnishing the heroic figures and events we hold so dear? These are questions one is compelled to ask; yet might questions be better put to the images themselves? We might ask, instead, why these pictures provoke addition. What has been subtracted from them?

Heroic images thrive on subtraction. Idealization occurs as things move away from the physical concerns of mankind. Only then, after the body and desire are no longer in proximity to them, are things worthy of adoration. Gods are gods simply because they are not human. The photographs you see here are not truthful representations of the historical events they picture, nor are they meant to be. Like a printed word, which gives up its graphic specificity to express a concept, these pictures leave historical specificity behind to convey general American values. The reality of these past events is a confused and gruesome one, anyway. One is better off buried. Murder, war, the struggle for power, the desire for wealth, and the disruption of social order—all these passions fired by the flesh are of no consequence today, when peace and satisfaction are the rule. The past is where these things belong—adored but not emulated.

But as in a confused state in which we can see a word but not understand its meaning, these repressed historical specificities refuse to be totally erased. It is this return of the repressed that gives a heroic image its repellent aura. The same formula that produces a god, the excising of the human, also produces monsters. Thus it is easy to understand why the ill-educated sometimes confuse the heroic with its corrupt “soul.” In such a case, the nonhuman is read as inhuman—unsympathetic and cruel.

Luckily, the dualism of attraction and repulsion in the heroic image is not one of balance. For the most part, the fearful nature of the image remains repressed. The picture can continue to do its useful, orderly work, causing only the slightest tinge of unease—a load we cheerfully bear. It is not a contradiction that the Christian God is simultaneously all-good and harsh judge. It must be remembered that the benevolent dictator acts out of kindness in consenting to rule those who cannot rule themselves, even if his subjects resent that fact.

Such childish resentment is the cause of the defacements presented here. The inability to accept their lower position in the order of things provokes these “artists” to drag back to the surface garbage long buried—to sully, vandalize, and render inoperable our pictures of health. Not that such a tactic is always bad. These negative impulses sometimes perform a useful function; in

propaganda, for instance, false heroic images are rightly revealed as corrupt. The enemy is attacked, de-heroicized, by reestablishing its connection with the body. Sexuality (especially in its most culturally unacceptable expressions, such as homosexuality, pedophilia, and bestiality), bodily functions (scatological ones, in particular), and crimes against the family (a symbol of the broader family of society) are the most effective agents of besmirchment.

These are the very tactics in evidence in this disturbing group of photos. Returning to the question I posed about who is responsible for these images, the answer is: they were produced by grade school students. This answer may be surprising, for the students are not the revolutionaries or satanists you might have expected. Rather, they are normal young people who would no doubt consider themselves patriotic Americans and conservative heterosexuals. They would, I believe, be hard pressed themselves to explain the flood of mayhem and pansexuality exhibited here. But because these defacements are totally unconscious productions, the students should not be taken to task. On the contrary, we should be glad that these young people have felt the urge to deface and have succumbed to it! Their impulse to reinsert the body back into the heroic reveals their subservient position. Clinging to their human nature is a sign that they do not seek to transcend it; unlikely candidates for a revolutionary youth army or satanic murder cult, they will probably never desire power.

The stiffness of the heroic images of our shared past brings a realization of our own frail physicality, and causes us to regret it. These children, these defacers, are at an age where they do not yet appreciate the beneficial nature of that realization. It is something they are struggling to learn, and therein lies their frustration. Yet, as all adults know, resentment blossoms into respect when the lesson is finally mastered. Heroic textbook illustrations should be thought of as teaching aids, and the defacement of them as proper scholastic exercises. With these exercises, children become adults, and allegiances shift from the repressed to repressors as children become repressors themselves. These young people are our future civic and religious leaders. They take their first, tottering step toward the construction of a glorious future with this: their degraded reconstruction of the past.

ALMA PATER (WOLVERINE DEN)

JCW This statement was written by Kelley as a description of the work he presented in the exhibition El Jardín Salvaje (The Savage Garden: Landscape as Metaphor in Recent American Installations) curated by Dan Cameron at the Sala de Exposiciones de la Fundación Caja de Pensiones in Madrid from January 22 to March 10, 1991. Mostly of Kelley's generation, the other ten artists in the exhibition included Judith Barry, Barbara Bloom, Félix González-Torres, and Ann Hamilton. In his catalogue essay, Cameron links the increasing attention to what he calls the "bi-Atlantic phenomenon" (p. 16) of installation and site-specific art at the turn of the 1990s to the intersection of avant-garde art with "the unadorned detritus of everyday life" (p. 18); he attempts an outline history of this phenomenon, from dada to the work of Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci, in the first section of his text. Looking for social and aesthetic emphases that might account for the particularity of cultural development in the U.S., Cameron argues that discourses of the pastoral, the wilderness, and the sublime—focused on that organization of the natural world symbolized by the garden—offer a privileged set of determining coordinates for the American adjudication between nature and culture. The "savage garden," then, encompasses the "ruin" and "failure" of these relations, the "co-existence [in it] of brutality and beauty," and what Cameron proposes as a final equivalence between ecology and democracy—"really two different names," he suggests, "for the exact same thing" (p. 30).



4. Mike Kelley, *Crying Horse*, detail from the installation *Alma Pater (Wolverine Den)* (1990). Oil on canvas.
51 × 51 × 1³/₄ in.

From its beginnings in performance, Kelley's work has engaged quite consistently with ideas and experiences of landscape, especially with the history and popular reception of the sublime (which he discusses in several essays in Foul Perfection as well as in some of the statements and writings that make up the present volume). Cameron's claim, however, that the "pastoral aspects" of Kelley's work have to do "with a retreat into madness" and a focus on "cultural violence" (p. 40) is a little misleading. For while Kelley is concerned with the social production of anxiety, repressed memories, and popular mythologies, he rarely employs or alludes to spectacles of violence, concentrating instead, often humorously or ironically, on the formal organization, dissemination, and misreading of socially embedded stereotypes and rituals. Addressing as it does the social and psychological conditions of undergraduate education, Alma Pater (Wolverine Den) clearly has something of a pastoral quotient, but it is centered on a memory-driven, parodic simulation of the visual regime of fraternity, academic, and popular masculine identity encoded in dining-room décor, mascots, emblems, effigies, and horse paintings. As the teasing gender reversal of the installation's title suggests, however, and as Kelley explicitly notes, the project "shouldn't be taken too seriously."

This statement is published here for the first time.

The installation consists of a long narrow room, the walls of which are covered in maroon felt. Portrait paintings of horses are located at each end, and a row of felt banners hangs from poles on the long, facing walls. Dividing the room in half is a freestanding wall/painting flanked on both sides by dog beds. The room refers to the official, sports-related aesthetics of my alma mater, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.¹ Suspended at an angle from the walls in a manner reminiscent of heraldic devices, the felt banners are composed in the school colors, blue and maize (a golden, corn-colored yellow), and the subject matter is completely derived from materials I received over the years from university mailings. For the most part, these were flyers for souvenir items related to the school's football team, the Wolverines. The overall look of the room derived from a faculty/alumni dining room I had dined in after a lecture I gave at a southwestern university some years earlier. I no longer remember exactly which school it was in, but I think it was in Arizona. I still have slides of this space, but no notes on its location.

This dining room was decorated in a very old-fashioned, East Coast, Ivy League manner.² The aesthetic was decidedly male, featuring dark colors with an accent on sports motifs. The walls of the room were covered with dark red felt, and pennants and banners from various universities hung everywhere. Some of these dated back to the 1910s. For the Madrid exhibition, I combined motifs taken from this room with others specifically referring to my own undergraduate university. In a way, the installation was a humorous attack on my alma mater, which I felt wrongly stressed sports over academics in its self-presentation. When I was at the University of Michigan in the early 1970s, I was appalled by the school's endorsement of the thuggish, macho values of its football players and fraternity members. To this day, fundraising mailers and the university's alumni newsletter focus on such moronic events as "tailgate parties"—picnics held at the rear end of cars in the parking lot outside of the sports arena—and useless debates concerning the inventor of the "Go Blue!" football cheer, a truly inspired piece of writing that evidently warrants serious research.

The imagery of the blue and maize banners on the installation's walls was taken directly from such source material. The themes include a Wolverine baby bib; "Willy," the cute, personified version of the Wolverine mascot; a modernist football trophy; a manly U of M desk lamp; a souvenir toy football; a U of M bumper sticker; and the official seal of the U of M alumni association. The central wall is double-sided. One side is painted with dark, faux woodgrain; the other with an image taken from a flyer for an "effigy-hanging contest" held at a fraternity house during my student days. This panel is pierced by a hole, enabling viewers to toss a souvenir U of M toy basketball through it into one or other of the U of M Wolverine dog beds. (For those who don't know, a wolverine is the raccoon-sized mammal adopted as the state animal of Michigan, and in folklore associated with a mean and nasty temperament.)

I actually attended the effigy-hanging contest. As a kind of performative intrusion, I made an effigy—a simple dummy composed of old clothes stuffed with newspaper—and took it to the frat house to see what the contest was all about. It turned out to be a booster event for a football game. The frat's "sorority sisters" had sewn a cuddly, stuffed figure that represented the animal mascot of the other team and hung it from a tree by a rope. My effigy was the only other one submitted for the contest. I hung it from the tree as well. There followed a series of speeches, presided over by an aging housemother, attacking the other team and their coach—I had no idea who they were. But as I had brought an effigy for hanging, I was called on to speak. I was terrified, but pulled it off by delivering an impassioned rant, using only generalities, about the evils of the other team.

I then called for the burning of the effigies. This provoked a shocked silence. It turned out that the sorority sisters were too proud of their handiwork to destroy it, and the housemother informed me that burning things on fraternity property was strictly forbidden. I responded by saying that they obviously did not hate the other team enough, but they weren't convinced. Because I was the only person submitting an effigy who was not affiliated with the fraternity, I won the contest by default. I asked for my trophy but was told that there wasn't one. I don't think they ever expected anyone from outside of the fraternity to attend the event, so no trophy was acquired even though there was a poster advertising that one would be awarded to the winner. The next day I went back and demanded my trophy, making it clear that I would keep returning until it was given to me. One of the frats took a track trophy from his shelf and applied a handmade sticker over its inscription announcing that it was now the trophy for the effigy-hanging contest.

In addition to the banners and the central wall, the installation contains two tasteful oil portraits of horses, painted in the rich manner of Dutch old master painting. I commissioned these but added details myself, painting sad eyes and tears on one horse, and adding milk to the lips of the other. When I was in high school, a friend's father had a used-car lot. He would often trade used cars for items of value, so he had a large collection of art objects, trophies of war, and other valuables. This collection interested me very much, since it was a kind of catalogue of what, besides money, people in my social class considered valuable. Horse portraits were among these treasures. They are quite common in men's clubs, where they function, I believe, as idealized images of masculinity. When these paintings are compared to photographic portraits of horses, their idealized state is obvious. In preparation for the paintings, I went to a stable and made such photographs. But when I examined the images, I was shocked to see how stupid the animals looked, and realized I was more used to seeing illustrations of them. The photos were useless as models for a typical horse portrait painting. Instead, I instructed the painter to use "how to" books to produce the paintings. Professional horse painters have developed a set of pictorial conventions that invariably result in the image of a noble-looking animal, imbued with obvious human characteristics. With the addition of the "sensitive" tears to the crying horse, and the "infantilized" lips to the milk-drinking horse, I worked against the masculine connotations of these conventional images.

This "gender bending" aspect of the work also operates in the title. I shifted the gender of the term "alma mater"—which in Latin means "fostering mother" and is used to designate the

school from which one graduates—to the masculine “alma pater.” This reversal is not very obvious, however, for the shift from the feminine to the masculine simply stresses the masculine nature of the aesthetics of the university and does not necessarily cause one to question it. In essence, it is an accentuating device.

Despite this critical accent, the work is playful in nature and shouldn’t be taken too seriously. *Alma Pater* uses common American visual tropes in only slightly altered forms that many viewers would not even recognize as “subversive.”

NOTES

- 1 On the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, see note 1 to "*Missing Time*" (which also discusses Kelley's undergraduate years), in this volume.
- 2 The Ivy League is "a group of colleges in the Northeast United States forming a league for intercollegiate sports: often used to describe the fashions, standards, attitudes, etc. associated with their students" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*).

SOME AESTHETIC HIGH POINTS

MK *Written in lieu of a biographical statement for inclusion in the monograph Mike Kelley, edited by William S. Bartman and Miyoshi Barosh (Los Angeles: A.R.T. Press, 1991), pp. 54–59 (which also published my interview with the artist and critic John Miller, conducted on March 21, 1991), this is probably my most misunderstood text. It has often been cited as a serious commentary on my aesthetic concerns. In fact, it was designed as a humorous jab at the impossibly difficult assignment to write a thumbnail encapsulation of my artistic practice. To evade the problem, I chose instead to depict primarily juvenile “aesthetic” events that predated, or ran parallel to, my artistic career. I did not, however, intend the text to function as an antiart manifesto. This does not mean that the situations it describes were not important formative events in my artistic life; but they are obviously not the most significant. For each of the events recounted in the text, I could substitute more aesthetically influential events from my adult life. Such influences are given longer and more studied attention in my essays collected in the companion anthology, Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).*

Something Done in Bad Faith Can Be Successful (c. 1968–69)

When I was in junior high school there was a contest sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars to design a patriotic poster.¹ Along with a guy in my chemistry class lab station, I decided to enter the contest. From the very beginning we meant it as a joke. First of all, we agreed to collaborate on the poster, so that neither of us would be responsible for the final outcome. Secondly, we were not close friends, so we didn't care about making each other look talentless. We couldn't have spent more than fifteen minutes on the poster. We each took turns painting it. And we picked the most insipid subject matter and caption we could think of: a portrait of George Washington in front of the American flag with the motto, "Your Land and Mine." We used the cheapest materials—poster board and elementary school poster paint—and painted as poorly as possible. The flag was depicted as a crude series of stripes with one sloppy star and a totally unrecognizable Washington was painted in a garish combination of chartreuse and green. We won.²

***Détournement*³ (c. 1970–71)**

In high school, I went with several friends to a dance at a rival school—the Catholic school I had attended before switching to a public school at the end of the eighth grade. We were friends of the band hired for the event, and we hung with a small group of other "freaks," glowering against the wall. On this wall was a collage composed of various uplifting and happy photographs cut from popular magazines. These images formed the phrase "Everything Is Beautiful," taken from a sappy pop song.⁴ I rearranged the letters to form the phrase "Vagina Is Beautiful." We were thrown out.

Role Playing

Around the same time, I was getting quite a bit of pressure from my father to "act more normal." He wanted me to engage in group activities more appropriate for a boy, namely sports. To spite him I took up sewing—not because I had any interest in it, but just to piss him off. I sewed a very crude doll, which I laid on my bed.⁵ I also collected a group of prissy dolls from garage sales and arranged them around my bedroom.

Brechtian Theater Techniques (1973)

After hearing psychedelic music, I became a rock music fan and went to many concerts. In the early 1970s, the general trend was for pompous, self-involved rock theatrics. The beatnik notion of "poet-is-priest"⁶ became "rock star-is-priest," and the rock concert audience was transformed into a hedonized mass, generating a group consciousness orchestrated by the rock singer. As at a church service or football game, the audience was enticed to sing along or raise lit matches in unison. Two concerts changed everything for me: one by Sun Ra at the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival,⁷ the other by Iggy and the Stooges at a small biker bar in Wayne, Michigan.⁸

The two shows were quite different. Sun Ra's shows at this time were huge, showy, and spectacular. The stage was filled with tons of equipment and many musicians, his "Arkestra," as well as dancers and props. The aesthetic was a mix of African music, exotica, big band, science fiction, Greek chorus, and political rally. It was unlike anything I had ever seen or heard. The audience would be excited into a dancing frenzy by throbbing, African-style drumming, and then Sun Ra, or Mr. Mystery as he sometimes called himself, would start to fuck with your head, shifting at break-neck speed from schmaltzy big band arrangements, to strange neo-Egyptian poetry and long nonsense chants, to weird skits about "outer space employment agencies." You were constantly being asked to shift gears abruptly. At one point, you might be swept up bodily, only to be dropped on your ass by twenty minutes of harsh electronic white noise. It was the most intellectually and physically demanding show I have ever seen.⁹ Afterward, I climbed a fence, got backstage, and met Sun Ra. He was very approachable. When I asked him how he felt his show differed from James Brown's equally elaborate but more pleasure-oriented performance,¹⁰ Sun Ra replied, "James Brown gives the people what they want; I give them what they need."

During an intense winter snowstorm, I braved hitchhiking from Ann Arbor through a particularly redneck rural area outside Detroit to see the Stooges. When I arrived at the "club," I found it was a small biker bar. I was the first one there. Passing the time, I asked the bouncer, a huge, fat biker, whether he had ever seen the Stooges. "No," he said, "But if that prick throws up on stage, I'm going to kick his ass." When the Stooges arrived, Iggy was dressed in a ridiculous jazz-dancer's outfit, a kind of leotard with spangled skirt. His eyes were sloppily ringed with eyeliner, and a cigarette drooped from his lips. His whole demeanor said, "Fuck you." I could feel the current of hatred

spread through the bikers. Iggy was the total front man; the rest of the band barely moved. They stood stiff and erect like store window dummies, their faces blank. They were the perfect foil; all eyes were focused on Iggy, a master of body gesture. Every move was charged, and his moronic, contorted dancing seemed inspired, like an acrobat possessed by the spirit of an epileptic Jerry Lewis. The show started off simply enough with a few upbeat rock tunes that got the crowd going. Iggy incited the audience to respond to him, got them heated up—*they want Iggy*. Then, all of a sudden, he stopped, singling out a girl pushed up against the stage, one of the fans to whom a second earlier he had been gesturing and enticing. The room went silent.

“Get this bitch out of here. She tried to touch me! We won’t play unless she is removed.” The tension started to build. She moved out of sight. Then Iggy asked, “What do you want to hear?” The crowd yelled back an incomprehensible roar of song titles.

“Oh . . . ‘Louie, Louie.’”¹¹

So the band launched into “Louie, Louie.” It is hard to explain now what “Louie, Louie” meant at that time, when rock music was trying to be important. It was the first song a hillbilly rocker would learn on his guitar to impress the girls at a school dance—a throwback to an embarrassing time when rock music was entertainment for fraternity boys, not an instrument of social change. It was a slap in the face to the audience. But they politely suffered through it, even good-naturedly hoopin’ and hollerin’ a little bit.

Then Iggy asked again, “What do you want to hear?” The same roar came back.

“Oh . . . ‘Louie, Louie.’”

And the band tore into “Louie, Louie” for a second time. “Louie, Louie” was played three times in a row. The audience was starting to get antsy. The band did another rocker and the audience regained its faith, only to have Iggy pull some other disruptive stunt.

He was an amazing performer. I have never seen better. He played the audience like a fish. The crowd was in the palm of his hand. They would suffer insult after insult, have their faces rubbed over and over again in their own complicity, and come running back for more. This doesn’t sound like much after fifteen years of punk music, in which these stage antics are the norm. But Iggy invented this stuff.

After about five or six songs, a big biker shouted, “Hey, Poodle Boy,” and hit Iggy with an egg. The next thing I saw was Iggy doing a belly flop into the audience; and then a riot broke out—

a real traditional biker bar fistfight. Chairs and tables overturned, the place was cleared within fifteen minutes. The lights were turned up, the band had run out the door, and I was left standing there babbling, “What happened?” It was the best piece of theater I have ever seen.¹²

Everything of major importance that I know about performing, I learned from these two concerts.

Grassroots Aesthetics (1974–76)

In 1974, fellow University of Michigan art student Jim Shaw and I ran into two people we knew slightly at a party. Their names were Cary Loren and Niagara. Loren was a photographer and filmmaker studying at Eastern Michigan University at Ypsilanti, and Niagara had dropped out of the U of M art department. We were talking about the sad state of current music and the evils of country and arena rock. We decided right there and then to start a band, which we called Destroy All Monsters, after a Japanese monster movie.¹³ It was a very democratic affair. No one knew how to play an instrument except Cary, who played guitar a bit. My solution to this problem was to go to garage sales and buy any old piece of electronic equipment with a speaker, and set it up to produce feedback. I amassed quite a pile of noisy, industrial suburban waste. We didn’t get to play out very often. Our way of getting gigs was to crash parties, set up, and play. We were always thrown out. Our first gig was a comic book convention. We crashed it and asked the Trekkie band if we could use their PA system. We played one song: two lines from Black Sabbath’s “Iron Man”¹⁴ repeated over and over against a wall of feedback. We were thrown out.

Group Dynamics (1978)

The year I graduated from Cal Arts, I moved to Hollywood. Hermann Nitsch came to town to do one of his elaborate Orgies Mysteries Theater rituals,¹⁵ and a call was put out for volunteers to work on it. Based on photographs I had seen, I was interested in his work, and ended up playing in the noise orchestra. I was very impressed with Nitsch as a director. He was able to take a large group of people and, in a very short time, devise a system for them to work together: simple hand-cues triggered various sounds or activities. The performance was very tightly choreographed. As a lapsed Catholic, I had great reservations about the symbology of Nitsch’s work. I was worried that it might just



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.

5. a: "Poster contest winners," *Westland Eagle*, April 23, 1969, p.10. b: A dance at St. Mary's gymnasium, Wayne, Michigan, circa 1970–71, Mike Kelley far right, half in frame. c: Mike Kelley with a hand-sewn doll, Westland, Michigan, 1970. d: Sun Ra and his Omniverse Jet-Set Arkestra, New Year's Eve, 1980, at the Detroit Jazz Center. Photo: Leni Sinclair. Courtesy Book Beat Gallery, Oak Park, Michigan. e: Iggy and the Stooges at the Grande Ballroom, Detroit, 1968. Photo: Leni Sinclair. Courtesy Book Beat Gallery, Oak Park, Michigan. f: Some of the Destroy All Monsters circle annoying Andy Warhol during his book-signing tour for *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975: left, Andy Warhol; center, Niagara and David Keeps; far right, Jim Shaw. Photo: Cary Loren. g: Hermann Nitsch's Orgies Mysteries Theater, Venice, California, 1978, Mike Kelley second from left with face obscured. Photographer unknown.

be a primitivist version of the Catholic mass, and I was staunchly opposed to any kind of mystical artwork. It is true that his blood rituals are very similar, symbolically, to the mass, but after my participation in the piece, I was won over by its sheer physicality. I enjoyed being involved in a group activity for an extended period of time and being confronted with such intense material on every sensory level. The only group ritual I have ever found satisfying, it was a perfect materialist industrial urban mass.¹⁶

NOTES

- 1 The Veterans of Foreign Wars was established in 1899 by veterans of the Spanish American War who sought benefits and rights in appreciation of their service. The organization continues to advocate for veterans' rights to this day.
- 2 The winning poster is reproduced in the *Westland Eagle*, April 16, 1969, p. 3; and again, this time with the artists present, in the *Westland Eagle*, April 23, 1969, p. 10.
- 3 Writing in the *Internationale situationniste* ("Détournement as Negation and as Prelude,") *IS*, no. 3, December 1959), Guy Debord defines *détournement* as "the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble." Its two "fundamental laws," he continues, "are the loss of importance of each détourned autonomous element—which might go so far as to lose its original sense completely—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect." *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 55.
- 4 Recorded by novelty, pop music, and gospel songwriter Ray Stevens, "Everything Is Beautiful" was a number one pop hit in 1970.
- 5 The doll described here is pictured, accompanied by the caption "The pink button eyes on the homemade doll mimic the male vestigial nipples hidden under this 15-year-old's shirt," in the cover photograph for the catalogue *Mike Kelley Three Projects: Half a Man, From My Institution to Yours, Pay for Your Pleasure*, curated by Suzanne Ghez (Chicago: Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1988).
- 6 This phrase is borrowed from John Sinclair's essay "Poet Is Priest," collected in *Guitar Army: Street Writings/Prison Writings* (New York: Douglas Book Corporation, 1972). A poet and music critic, Sinclair was one of the main organizers of the Ann Arbor-based anarchistic White Panther Party, which later transformed into the Rainbow People's Party. He also managed the influential rock group the MC5.
- 7 Pianist, band leader, and jazz improviser Sun Ra was born Herman "Sonny" Blount in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1914, and died there in 1993 after spending many years living and playing in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Sun Ra developed a complex mythopoeic philosophy of black liberation that combined references to Egypt as the ancestral homeland of black culture and utopian parables of interplanetary space travel. See John F. Szwed, *Space Is the Place: The Life and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Pantheon, 1997).
- 8 Formed in the Ann Arbor, Michigan, area in the late 1960s, the original lineup of the Stooges consisted of Iggy Pop on vocals, Ron Asheton on guitar, Scott Asheton on drums, and Dave Alexander on bass. Their first album, *The Stooges*, was released on Elektra Records in 1969. A hugely influential band, the Stooges are generally considered the preeminent model for later punk and grunge guitar-dominated rock bands.
- 9 Kelley's recollection of this concert seems to be a combination of memories of two different performances by Sun Ra, one in 1972 and the other in 1973. Recordings of these concerts are available on *Life Is Splendid: Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival 1972* by Sun Ra with His Solar Myth Arkestra and *Outer Space Employment Agency: Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival 1973* by Sun Ra and His Intergalactic Arkestra. Both recordings were produced by John Sinclair and are available on *Total Energy*.

- 10 James Brown, the “Godfather of Soul,” was born on May 3, 1933. With over 116 charted hits during his career, he is the foremost R & B recording artist. Fronting a large band with a horn section, Brown put on a stage act that was intensely theatrical, including manic dancing, feigned bouts of exhaustion, and false exits. His musical compositions of the late 1960s and ’70s are characterized by relentless rhythmic repetition. He could be credited with inventing the musical form known as funk.
- 11 “Louie, Louie” was written and performed by Los Angeles R & B musician Richard Berry and first released on Flip Records in 1956. For an extensive recording history of this rock standard, see the liner notes by Rockin’ Rhino Reagan included in *The Best of Louie, Louie: The Greatest Renditions of Rock’s #1 All Time Song* (Santa Monica, Rhino Records, 1983).
- 12 Iggy Pop recalls the show described here in his autobiography, *I Need More* (Los Angeles: 2.13.61 Publications, n.d.), pp. 107–109; it is also cited in Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), pp. 221–23. In “Iggy Pop: Blowtorch in Bondage” (1977), Lester Bangs writes about the same concert but misidentifies its location as Warren instead of Wayne, Michigan; see Lester Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, ed. Greil Marcus (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), pp. 206–8. Bangs dates the event to early January 1974, but a flyer in Kelley’s possession lists the concert date at the Rock and Roll Farm as February 4. For an audio document of Iggy and the Stooges from this period, listen to *Metallic K.O.* (Skydog Records, 1976), which purports to document the last Stooges concert, recorded at the Michigan Palace, Detroit, several days after the concert at the Rock and Roll Farm.
- 13 The movie was *Destroy All Monsters* (dir. Toshiro Honda, 1968). Shaw and Kelley left the band in 1976 when they moved to California. Loren and Niagara continued on, inviting ex-Stooges guitar player Ron Asheton to join. Soon, internal problems in the group left Niagara as the only remaining original member in Destroy All Monsters. At that point the band went in a hard rock/punk direction. For a record of the early noise incarnation of the band, listen to the three-CD box set *Destroy All Monsters: 1974–1976* (Ecstatic Peace/Father Yod Records, 1994).
- 14 Black Sabbath’s original lineup included Ozzy Osbourne (vocals), Tony Iommi (guitar), Geezer Butler (bass), and Bill Ward (drums). From a working-class industrial section in Birmingham, England, the members of Black Sabbath began performing in 1969. Their first record, *Black Sabbath*, was released in 1970. Their thick, power-chord-dominated sound could be considered the origin of heavy metal. Black Sabbath’s song “Iron Man” is included on their second LP, *Paranoid* (1970).
- 15 On Hermann Nitsch and the Orgies Mysteries Theater, see Dieter Schwarz and Veit Loers, eds., *From Action Painting to Actionism: Vienna 1960–1965*, volumes 1 and 2 (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1988–89).
- 16 Kelley does not find Nitsch’s blood rituals to be as effective in the rural settings in which they are more commonly performed. Since city-dwellers are generally shielded from the sight of animal butchery so common on the farm, he believes that such activities should really be performed in this less naturalized arena. Otherwise, Nitsch’s performances are too easily read as nostalgic evocations of a preindustrial world. Set in an urban environment, however, such rituals force urbanized viewers to confront their true relationship with the animals they use for food and other products.

IN THE IMAGE OF MAN

JCW *"In the Image of Man" was published in volume one (critical essays and artists' statements and interviews) of the catalogue for the Carnegie International 1991, curated by Mark Francis and Lynne Cooke at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), p. 94; volume two contains Cooke's essay "Change of State: An Exposition" and documentation of artists' works. Kelley's text was accompanied by three illustrations: a view of his studio showing boxes containing craft materials to be utilized in his installation for the exhibition, and two head shots of what Kelley termed "Oral Comedians" (burlesque, "baggy pants" comics taken from 1950s men's magazines). The latter two images were intended as humorous comments on the artist's "critical voice," since the "orality" of the two comics is obviously of the infantile, preverbal variety (one sucks on what looks to be a piece of cloth, while the other has his finger stuck in his mouth).*

Forty-three artists, selected in part for their interest in the history and aesthetics of visual display, and drawn from Japan and Eastern Europe as well as North America and Western Europe, were invited to Pittsburgh so that they could produce or select work responding to the exhibition's sites. Kelley exhibited Craft Morphology Flow Chart (1991), an installation of 32 folding tables on which 114 handmade dolls are displayed according to their size and iconography in association with 60 "documentary" photographs (and one drawing). As I note in my "Survey" text for Mike Kelley (London: Phaidon, 1999), quoting the artist, "the work took on the



6. Mike Kelley, *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* (1991). Installation view at Carnegie International, 1991, Carnegie Museum of Art. Found handmade stuffed animals, thirty-two tables, acrylic on paper, sixty photographs at 14 × 11 in. each.

restoration of analytic 'order' to objects whose 'culturally unconscious production modes' had always tended to resist inquiry and dissolve into affect" (p. 74). In his introductory essay, Francis connects Kelley's work to that of Louise Bourgeois and David Hammons on the grounds that all three are concerned with "the prehistory of the objects they reuse so that repressed meanings are allowed to come to light" (p. 21).

In the 1980s, when some artists self-consciously began to produce works that embraced their status as commodities, there arose, simultaneously, the desire in other artists to make works that escaped such commodification.¹ The argument was advanced that an artwork could function analogously to the gift, an object outside of the system of exchange.² This is what initially led to my interest in home-made craft items, that is, objects already existing in popular usage that are constructed specifically to be given away. This is not to say that I believe craft gifts themselves harbor utopian sentiments; all things have a price. The hidden burden of the gift is that it calls for payback, but the price is unspecified, repressed. The uncanny aura of the craft item is linked to time. Crafts are the literal embodiment of the Puritan work ethic. They seem to announce that work is its own reward. This is conveyed by the long, labor-intensive hours required to construct them by hand. They speak the language of the wage earner in which there is a one-to-one relationship between time spent and worth. The equation is not between time and money; it is a more obscure relationship drawn between time and commitment, one that results in a kind of emotional usury. The gift operates within an economy of guilt, an endless feeling of indebtedness attends it because of its mysterious worth. And the highly loaded nature of these objects is intensified by their material nature: by the seeming contradiction that their emotional weight far exceeds the worth of the cheap and lowly materials from which they are constructed. However, it isn't proper to speak of the "junk" status of the craft item; it is in bad taste to comment on the financial worth of a gift. The fine art "junk sculpture" could be said to have value *in spite* of its material, while the craft item could be said, like the icon, to have value *beyond* its material.

In the process of acquiring large numbers of craft items, primarily dolls and stuffed toy animals, I started to become conscious of them for the first time as discrete objects. Beyond thinking of them as mere carriers of "love hours" (or "guilt hours"), I became aware that they also had specific forms, and that there must be some connection between these forms and the objects' use.

But at the same time that I became conscious of this fact, I also realized that they were extremely limited in a formal sense. The few craft types commonly made can easily be categorized by material and construction techniques. The shift in my interest to the individual craft item led me away from my earlier accumulation works, such as *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987) and *Plush Kundalini and Chakra Set* (1987), into the *Arena* series, which consists of stuffed animals arranged on blankets laid on the floor. Primarily composed of “autograph hounds,” *Arena #10 (Dogs)* (1990) is typical of the series. In these works, I toyed with the viewer’s inclination to project into the figures, to construct an inner narrative around them, which I would argue makes viewers less aware of their own physical presence. To counter this tendency, and thus make the viewer more self-conscious, I used extremely worn and soiled craft materials in the construction of these works. The immediate tendency of viewers to be sucked into a narrativizing situation was dismantled when they got close enough to the sculptures to recognize the unpleasant tactile qualities of the craft materials. Fear of soiling themselves countered the urge to idealize.

Stuffed toys, especially dolls, lend themselves to invisibility. When you look at a doll, you don’t notice its particularities. Rather, you see it in a general way as “human.” If there are enough suitable cues—head, body, legs, etc.—you can personify it; specific details like facial features, hands, and feet are unimportant. In fact, the figure can be stripped down to a simple bag shape and still be accepted as portraying a human being. All of the “humanoid” details missing in such an object are filled in by the viewer. It is this projective relationship with the doll that allows us to empathize with it. If you were to see the doll as an exact model of a figure, as a portrait statue, empathy would be impossible—it would be seen as a monstrosity.

In my next series, *Empathy Displacement: Humanoid Morphology (2nd and 3rd Remove)* (1990), I concentrated on this process of identification. I take as my starting point the notion that there is a Platonic human archetype, and that individual human beings are at the first remove from it. A three-dimensional doll would be at the second remove; and a two-dimensional depiction of the doll, at the third. These works consist of a human-scaled black-and-white illustrative painting of a doll, presented along with its model concealed in a black box that lies on the floor in front of it. Empathy is problematized in this situation, for the shift in scale makes it difficult to empathize with the painting of the doll, and the viewer is led to empathize instead with the original doll, which they must assume is enclosed in the box. Projection is made complete because the object of empathy can no longer be seen.

My latest work with these materials, *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* (1991), will be presented at the Carnegie International, 1991. This is, I believe, the last of my “stuffed animal” works. I removed all vestiges of empathy from this piece in order to address the pure “material nature” of the crafts. Three representational systems are used simultaneously to present the materials. First, the crafts are arranged categorically, according to construction technique and shape, on simple folding tables. Second, every one of these items, accompanied by a ruler to show its true size, has been photographed. And third, one representative grouping of craft items—the collection of “sock monkeys”—has been rendered in a large black-and-white line drawing reminiscent of archaeological illustration. Through this reiteration, I propose that the psychological baggage that usually attends such objects has been discarded. Of course, by attempting to repress them, these emotional qualities become even more pervasive.

NOTES

- 1 Commodity “readymades,” which introduced object-based rather than image-based forms of appropriation, feature in the work of key New York postmodernists such as Jeff Koons and Haim Steinbach. The restaging of mass-produced objects (Steinbach, Koons, Sherrie Levine); of logos, decals, and collective image-bites (Ashley Bickerton); or of simulated signs and info systems (Peter Halley, Philip Taaffe) is realigned, as Steinbach put it, in complicity “with the production of desire” and through the cultivation of an explicit “pleasure in objects and commodities.” See David Robbins, ed., “From Criticism to Complicity,” discussion between Haim Steinbach, Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, Philip Taaffe, Peter Halley, and Ashley Bickerton (moderated by Peter Nagy), *Flash Art*, no. 129 (Summer 1986), pp. 46–49.
- 2 Kelley is referring here not so much to recent art-world dialogues with anthropological conceptions of the “gift” (formulated most notably by Marcel Mauss in his *Essai sur le Don*, 1950) as to ideas of collectivity, collaboration, and noncommodity distribution espoused by artists and groups such as the Colab (Collaborative Projects, Inc.) collective in the late 1970s and ‘80s. He recalls one book in particular that circulated in the art world in the 1980s: Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

RADICAL SCAVENGERS (LETTER)

JCW This text is from a letter dated November 18, 1993 from Mike Kelley to curator Mark Francis at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, concerning his participation in the 1994 exhibition Radical Scavenger(s): The Conceptual Vernacular in Recent American Art. The letter was printed in the section titled "Vernacular Photographic Credits" at the end of the catalogue, while the six images that it comments on were distributed throughout the introductory essays, along with images selected by other artists in the exhibition. The six images chosen by Kelley consisted of clippings about "crafts" passed on to him by friends and others interested in his work. For a brief description of Craft Morphology Flow Chart (1991), the work by Kelley exhibited at the MCA, see the headnote to "In the Image of Man," in this volume.

Kelley's reference to the frog collection in the second paragraph relates to his own early interest in creating strategies of formal coherence for his performances and first installations. In Confusion, for example (first performed at the Mandeville Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, in 1982; with a related installation in "Visiting Artists Installation": John [M.] Miller, Michael Kelley, Jo Ann Verburg at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, 1982), everything, including images of frogs such as The Head's the Same as between the Legs (acrylic on paper, fronted by green Plexiglas, 1982), was presented in green, black, and white. The performance of Confusion featured a slide presentation titled An Actor Portrays Boredom and Exhibits His Knick

Knack Collection, with a sequence of images of Bill Wintersole with his frog collection assembled on a table.

These images are not source materials for, nor are they particularly related to, my artwork *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* that is to be included in the exhibition *Radical Scavengers*. Rather, they are materials scavenged by my audience, and sent to me because they thought I would be interested in them. They were retrieved from the general rubbish pile of everyday mass media and passed along to me, as someone who should use them. And if I do not actually use them, I should at least protect and save them. This I have done.

I am reminded of an ex-neighbor of mine, whose apartment was crowded with frog knickknacks. I assumed, of course, that he had some special interest in frogs. When I asked him about them, he replied that he had no love for frogs. He had once been given a ceramic frog as a present, and other people, seeing it in his home, came to the conclusion that he liked them, and he was continuously given frog knickknacks until he possessed a large collection. In this case, the givers obviously have more investment in the given image than the receiver.

I have sent only a small selection of the many images relating to crafts, childhood, and stuffed animals that I have been given. Some I find interesting, others not. The problem I have with such an archive is that, when confronting it, I see my work made general, when in my own thoughts and practice each piece I have ever made utilizing such materials and imagery has always been very specific. Here you see that, in communion with your audience, the specific always becomes general in some way. You are no longer you, but all of them as well.

MISSING TIME: WORKS ON PAPER 1974–1976, RECONSIDERED

JCW This text was first published in the catalogue for the exhibition Mike Kelley: Missing Time, Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered at the Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, Germany (May 9 to July 2, 1995), pp. 25–34, alongside writings by Carsten Ahrens, Carl Haenlein, and Timothy Martin. Seventy-four works in mixed media on paper were shown, made while Kelley was an undergraduate in the art department at the University of Michigan (1974–76), with around twenty-seven bearing double dates (e.g. 1974/1993) that record their modification in 1993 and 1994. The pictorial idioms of the early works include images that make historical references (e.g. Cubist Drawing, 1974); detailed drawings lifted from popular cultural sources (e.g. Cottage Cheese, 1974–79); works that portray psychological states or sexual ambivalence (e.g. the frontal and profile, teeth-clenched faces surrounded by barbs of hatching in Parallel Personality Development, 1975, and Hermaphrodite, 1974); collages (e.g. the butter wrapper incorporated in Land O' Lakes (1974/1994); explorations of abstract forms and patterns (e.g. Blobs, 1974, or In Anticipation of America's Bicentennial, 1975); works incorporating text (e.g. William Burroughs Quote, 1974); works that include self-representations or images of friends or associates (e.g. Self-Portrait in Suburban Landscape, 1975/1993; Portrait of Niagara, 1975); and a series of star- and quasi-star-shaped pieces from 1976 with a range of found or simulated iconography surrounded and overlaid by gestural brushstrokes, color forms, and patterns (e.g. Painting with Hawaiian

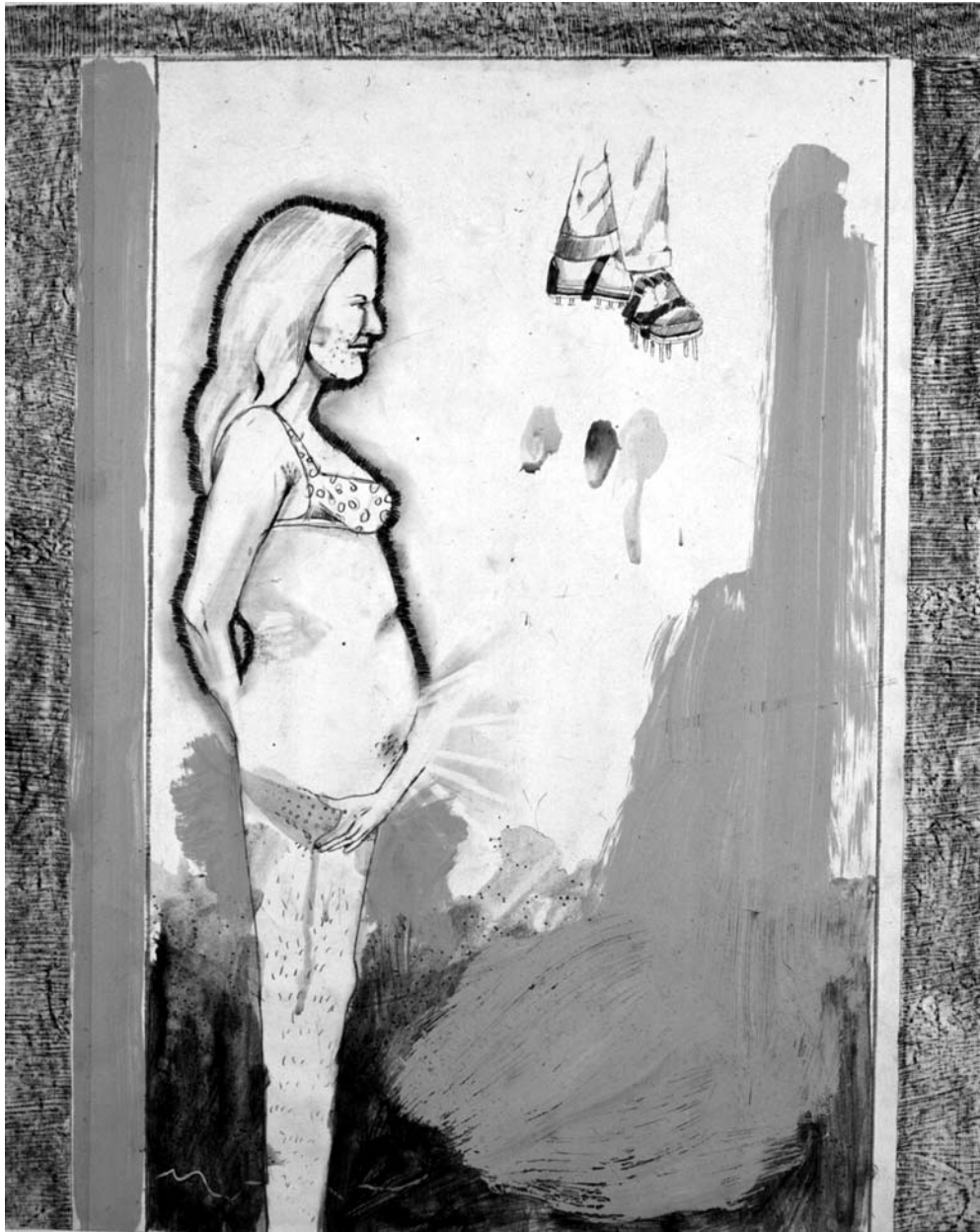
Mask, Ballerina, and De Stijl Painting, 1976). Inaugurating an ambitious inquiry into the relations between time, memory, and art that is still ongoing, the exhibition and essay on “missing time” turn the legacy of training, apprenticeship, and “influence,” simultaneously repressed and sanctified by modernist art history, into a challenging reflection on the formation of artistic style and iconography that makes visible the blizzard of indoctrination, fashion, chance, obsession, and repression through which they somehow emerge. Kelley’s decision to “paint over” his earlier pieces works both to block them out and start them again: his gestures are, therefore, acts of rupture, erasure, and continuity.

These works were done while I was an undergraduate student in my early twenties in the art school at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor from 1972 to 1976.¹ I have not looked at or thought about them in many years. However, I recently pulled the works out of storage for a current project, the general title of which is *Missing Time*.² The project grew out of my interest in a debate raging in the United States over the issue of Repressed Memory Syndrome, which, simply stated, is the notion that memories of traumatic experiences can be completely and unconsciously blocked out and made inaccessible to the conscious mind. In recent years, a large therapeutic industry has emerged working on the assumption that childhood sexual abuse is the cause of this syndrome.³ Such therapists also believe that repressed memories can be recalled through therapy and that remembering them can help cure patients of a variety of symptoms, the most serious of which is multiple personality disorder.⁴ Many therapists who champion the idea of Repressed Memory Syndrome believe that all memories dredged up during therapy are true. This is the kernel of the debate: one camp defends the notion that in almost all cases recalled memories of childhood sexual abuse are historically true, while another camp argues that these memories are often fantasies, or are even unwittingly implanted in the patient by the therapists themselves.⁵ The debate has now extended beyond psychotherapeutic circles into the much larger arenas of the legal system and law enforcement. Recent changes in the law have done away with the statute of limitations in some instances of supposed abuse. If victims of childhood sexual abuse can prove that they only recently reacquired through therapy the memory of the crime against them, they can now bring charges against their abusers long after the events took place.⁶ There have been some startling cases in which the family

members of supposed victims have been convicted and imprisoned for sex abuse crimes without any physical evidence whatever, the case being decided solely on the convincing testimony of the victim recounting newly remembered memories of abuse.⁷ The arguments against Repressed Memory Syndrome, referred to by its detractors as False Memory Syndrome, question the verifiability of memory itself and threaten to shake the foundation of the legal system. If current research reveals memory as unstable and prone to fictionalization, detractors argue, how can testimony based on the recollection of events have any weight either in police investigations or in court?⁸ As an artist, this is where I become interested in the debate. For at this point, the whole drama of the law and the system of justice merges with the territory of aesthetics. The implication is that life at its most “real,” where it intersects with the agencies of power, with that which controls you, also lies in the domain of art, of that which is created or fictional.

This is what first drew me to reexamine my old paintings. This, and the fact that most viewers make sense of my work by psychoanalyzing it, often postulating that I must have suffered some sort of childhood abuse—though they rarely suggest institutional or general sociocultural abuse as a cause for the strangeness of my artistic output. I always assumed that my current work must in some way be affected by my art training, even though I consciously rebelled against this education and saw no particular formal connection between recent and student work. The “symptoms” of my recent work must, then, be the by-product of elements of my training that I have repressed. Further, this repression proves my training must have been traumatic—it must have been a form of abuse. I chose to confront my old works and consciously to relearn the rules under which I produced them, in order to understand my abuse more fully, and thus deal with it in future work. I did this by painting on top of my old paintings—though not in a confrontational manner. The point was not to change the meaning of the original works, but to make them stronger in their own terms. I wanted to regain as much of the mindset of the earlier period as I could and mentally return to that time. It was an exercise in self-discovery. In the exhibition at the Kestner-Gesellschaft, these painted-on works were shown alongside untouched works. My hope was that the viewer could not tell the difference. My desire was that they be of uniform quality.

I suppose I should give the reader some background information concerning my milieu when I produced these works. The art department at the University of Michigan was primarily a painting school: the painting faculty was the largest, and painting was openly championed as the most serious of the fine arts. Part of that large generation of artists produced after World War II by



8. Mike Kelley, *Cottage Cheese* (1974/1994). Mixed media on paper. 24 × 19 in.

the GI Bill, most of the tenured faculty had been teaching for many years.⁹ Some of them, in fact, had been there so long that I discovered, in later conversations with Ed Emschwiller and Douglas Huebler,¹⁰ that we had some of the same teachers, despite the vast difference in our ages. It is not uncommon in midwestern university art departments to find this kind of longevity of faculty. The situation was not much different in the UCLA art department when I taught there in the late 1980s.

Surprisingly, most of the painting teachers were not followers of the New York School. Even though they were around the same ages as their abstract expressionist brethren teaching in other university programs around the country, my teachers seemed to have been schooled primarily in the European manner. Most of them were not touchy-feely painters, but staunch formalists who had studied under Hans Hofmann in America¹¹ or under various modernist masters in Europe. My training was quite academic, including generous doses of color theory, life and still-life drawing and painting, and even exercises in such archaic techniques as egg tempera painting and calligraphy. The typical student painting was a gestural, abstract formalist composition in the Hofmann manner: this was “serious” painting. Arguments over painting were still caught up in questions of composition, and had not really got beyond the shock offered by pop art and color field painting—the horrible realization that composition could be as easy as the centralized placement of an iconic image or simple, all-over, monochrome dispersion. Some of the painters most influential in this training were gestural pop painters. Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers¹² found favor with both faculty and students alike: with faculty because they were gestural and compositional, and with students because they included pop representational elements. Once, I was given an assignment in a drawing class literally to mimic Rauschenberg’s lighter-fluid transfer drawings.¹³ Larry Rivers was invited as guest curator of a student exhibition, and I was quite pleased when he chose some of my works for the show.

The paintings presented in the *Missing Time* exhibition were a by-product of this Rauschenbergian influence—perverse reactions against it, perhaps, but still recognizably related. One thing I didn’t like about Rauschenberg, and pop art in general, was that subject matter was of so little importance. It seemed to me that, in Rauschenberg’s work, any image could replace any other, and that little attention was paid to the associative tensions between them, or the relationship between the images and the generally expressionistic manner of paint application. Image was equivalent to paint smear in his paintings. Even if this was the case, I felt he could have gone much further in pursuit of this impossible equivalency—the way Warhol did in his *Disaster* series (where shocking photojournalism is used as decorative motif); the way Öyvind Fahlström did in his more

politically oriented works (where formal play and sociopolitical information are melded in an uncomfortable mix); or the way Jim Nutt did with his use of the lowest and most degraded advertising materials (often used as gestural asides to the cruelly distorted central figures in his early paintings).¹⁴ All of these artists were basically formalist painters in my estimation, yet they were able to push formal boundaries much further than Rauschenberg, who struck me as conservative in comparison.

Yet all of the painters I preferred over Rauschenberg did something I did not want to do at this time: they gave up the gesture. Even Peter Saul, who had used gestural painting to great effect in his paintings of commodities and political subjects, gave it up in favor of a kind of psychedellic pointillism.¹⁵ I liked the goopy, slightly disgusting surfaces of abstract expressionism, and I thought such surfaces could be used to great advantage in combination with various kinds of more loaded images, images that couldn't be reduced so easily to a kind of abstract equivalency. Like Jim Nutt, I began to use low imagery from bottom-end advertising, drawing on my own knowledge of fringe popular culture: weird second-rate comic books, erotica, Santo the Mexican masked wrestler,¹⁶ and drawings by adolescents. I also drew upon imagery associated with the art world and underground culture: Patty Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army, William Burroughs, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Igor Stravinsky, Sun Ra, etc.¹⁷ Such figures were positioned alongside more mundane or ridiculous images in my compositions, and I employed conflicting techniques of paint handling to push what I considered the limits of equivalency.

At the same time, however, I began to question whether painting was the best way to address this issue. Looking at the work of Claes Oldenberg, Paul Thek, Öyvind Fahlström, Joseph Beuys, and the Vienna actionists, I became interested in installation and performance art.¹⁸ By the time I graduated from the University of Michigan in 1976, I was already applying the lessons I had learned in my formal painting experiments to the rock band structure. In 1974, I had formed the band Destroy All Monsters¹⁹ with three other art students. Named after a Japanese B monster movie, the band combined improvisational techniques, analogous to painterly gesture, with more ironic allusions to various pop music forms. In many ways DAM was my painting strategy made flesh. Our "music" was a pastiche of serious avant-garde music, free jazz, and hard rock, leavened with black humor—a mixture that could definitely be considered proto-punk.

My decision to leave Ann Arbor in 1976 was also a decision to abandon painting practice as I knew it. I applied to two MFA programs—California Institute of the Arts, near Los Angeles, and

the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where my application was rejected. In my meeting, the head of the Art Institute program said that my paintings were “too Chicago.” The art school was attempting to free itself from the stigma of association with the Chicago imagist tradition and to align itself, instead, with more contemporary movements such as conceptual art. Personally, I didn’t think my work at this point had too much in common with the “Monster Roster” or the Hairy Who,²⁰ and, ironically, I was accepted into the master’s program at Cal Arts—then the premier “conceptual art school.” The rest is another story.

I should mention a few of the teachers at the University of Michigan who influenced my development. In my early years, I worked most closely with Al Mullen,²¹ an abstract formalist painter. He was a very tough and demanding teacher—and a harsh critic—who pushed me to develop my painting skills. But he was also willing to spend a lot of time, even after school hours, to work with students. Later, I developed a closer relationship with Gerome Kamrowski, an automatist painter who had been an active part of the New York abstract surrealist scene.²² He had known and worked with such important figures as Jackson Pollock, William Baziotes, and Roberto Matta. Unlike Mullen, he was a laid-back teacher who preferred to work with self-motivated students. But Kamrowski was an inspirational figure—the university environment hadn’t killed his spirit (which wasn’t the case with many of the other faculty members) and he was still a good, practicing artist. His black humor and openly hostile responses to the tired academic theories and methods of his fellow teachers were a breath of fresh air in the stale environment at U of M.

I also worked with Jacquelyne Rice, a ceramic sculptor, who was extremely knowledgeable about West Coast funk art, folk art, and other “fringe” art movements.²³ She was also the only faculty member willing to discuss subcultural aesthetics in the fine art context. I remember that she caused quite a stir when she stated publicly that the underground cartoonist Robert Crumb²⁴ was worth serious consideration. Most of the faculty was openly hostile to such opinions and were horrified by the thought that Crumb could be anything other than an ignorant hippie cartoonist. Also, her class was the only one in which issues of gender politics were considered at all, even if not overtly. All of my experiments with installation work were done in independent study with Rice. In this way, I was able to fulfill my sculpture requirements, without working with the macho I-beam welders who made up the bulk of the sculpture faculty. I had absolutely no interest in the Mark di Suvero-inspired work that was the student norm at that time.²⁵ Jacquelyne was a great teacher who allowed me to explore “expanded” notions of sculpture, even though they had nothing to do with ceramics.

NOTES

- 1 The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor is the largest university in the Midwest. Kelley was an undergraduate in the U of M art department from 1972–76. See “*Alma Pater (Wolverine Den)*,” in this volume, for further discussion of Kelley’s student years and the aesthetic reconsiderations they have occasioned.
- 2 The title is taken from the book *Missing Time* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981) by famed UFO abductee and abduction chronicler Budd Hopkins. “Missing time” refers to the erasure of memory common in those who have been abducted by aliens. Like the lost memories of traumatic events discussed in the literature on Repressed Memory Syndrome, these experiences may be regained through hypnosis. Hopkins’s book recounts the stories of seven abduction victims.
- 3 Renee Fredrickson states bluntly: “If you have repressed memories of childhood trauma, the memories are undoubtedly about abuse.” See Renee Fredrickson, *Repressed Memories: A Journey to Recovery from Sexual Abuse* (New York: Fireside/Parkside Books, 1992), p. 23.
- 4 Fredrickson again: “Hypnosis is invaluable if you suffer from multiple personality disorder as a result of your abuse or if you know you were abused but have trouble accessing images through other methods.” *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.
- 5 Fredrickson, along with Ellen Bass and Laura Davis—the latter, authors of *The Courage to Heal* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988)—are some of the best-known champions of the recovered memory movement. Works that dispute their claims include Richard Ofshe and Ethan Waters, *Making Monsters: False Memories, Psychotherapy, and Sexual Hysteria* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1994); Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); and Mark Pendergrast, *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusations and Shattered Lives* (Hinesburg, Vt.: Upper Access, 1995).
- 6 Ofshe and Waters note that “about half the states have enacted changes in their statutes of limitations to allow recently recovered memories of abuse to become the basis for civil lawsuits and in some cases criminal prosecution.” *Making Monsters*, p. 3.
- 7 See, for example, Kathryn Lyon, *Witch Hunt: A True Story of Social Hysteria and Abused Justice* (New York: Avon Books, 1998).
- 8 See Loftus and Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory*, pp. 62–64.
- 9 “On June 22, 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the ‘Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944,’ better known as the ‘GI Bill of Rights.’ At first the subject of intense debate and parliamentary maneuvering, the famed legislation for veterans of World War II has since been recognized as one of the most important acts of Congress. During the past five decades, the law has made possible the investment of billions of dollars in education and training for millions of veterans, and the nation has in return earned many times its investment in increased taxes and a dramatically changed society.” “The GI Bill: From Roosevelt to Montgomery” website: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/education/GI_Bill.htm>.

- 10 Ed Emshwiller (1925–1990) was a filmmaker and video artist who began his career in the mid-1950s and continued producing work until a year before his death of cancer. Emshwiller was born in Lansing, Michigan, served during World War II, and earned a degree in design at the University of Michigan in 1949. In addition to his work in experimental film and video art, he had a successful career as a science fiction illustrator. Emshwiller was the dean and then provost of the School of Film and Video at the California Institute of the Arts from 1981 through 1986. See Robert A. Haller, *Intersecting Images: The Cinema of Ed Emshwiller* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1997).
- On Douglas Huebler see “Shall We Kill Daddy?” in Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- 11 Hans Hofmann (1909–1966) was a German abstract painter who opened a painting school in New York in 1933. The famous teacher of many of the New York School painters, his theory of “push and pull” composition is outlined in Hofmann’s “The Search for the Real in the Visual Arts,” in *Search for the Real and Other Essays by Hans Hofmann*, ed. Sara T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 40–48.
- 12 Robert Rauschenberg (b. Texas, 1925), attended Black Mountain College in 1949, where he met composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham. Begun in the later 1950s, his signature “combine paintings” combined personal objects, and later photographs and other found materials, with gestural applications of paint. On Larry Rivers, see Helen A. Harrison, *Larry Rivers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).
- 13 Rauschenberg first made drawings using solvent transfers in the 1950s, one of several “transfer” techniques, including lithography and silkscreen, that he used to manipulate imagery appropriated from newspapers and commercial print culture in two-dimensional “collaged” formats. For reproductions and a discussion (by Julia Blaut) of these works made between 1958 and 1970, see *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), pp. 154f.
- 14 On Warhol’s *Disaster* series, see *Andy Warhol: Death and Disasters* (Houston: Menil Collection/Houston Fine Art Press, 1988). On Öyvind Fahlström see “Myth Science,” in Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). Nutt’s *Miss E. Knows* (1967) is a good example of what Kelley describes here. See *Jim Nutt* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Milwaukee Museum of Art, 1994), p. 73.
- 15 See *Peter Saul* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d’Art, 1999).
- 16 El Santo (born Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta in 1917) was a popular, masked Mexican wrestler who starred in films and magazine adventure stories. His professional wrestling career spanned forty-eight years. El Santo began making films (*cine luchador*, or wrestling films) in 1958 and continued to do so until shortly before his death in 1982. He is depicted in an early drawing by Kelley, no longer extant.
- 17 The Symbionese Liberation Army was a radical “urban guerilla” group founded by Donald DeFreeze (a.k.a. Cinque Mtume) and Pat Soltysik in 1973 in Berkeley, California. In a plot to free two members held for the murder of an Oakland school district superintendent, the SLA kidnapped newspaper empire heiress Patty Hearst. Hearst recounts her story in Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow, *Patty Hearst: Her Own Story* (New York: Avon Books, 1982). The SLA logo, a seven-headed cobra, is utilized in two of Kelley’s drawings: *Elegy to the Symbionese Liberation Army* (1975) and *Elegy to the Symbionese Liberation Army No. 2* (1975), pictured in *Mike Kelley: Missing Time* (Hannover: Kestner-Gesellschaft, 1995), illus. 32 and 33. A third drawing depicting Patty Hearst is no longer extant.

For Kelley's work depicting Burroughs and Schwarzkogler, see *William Burroughs in Mexico* (1976) and *Painting with Rudolf Schwarzkogler Image* (1976), both pictured in *Mike Kelley: Missing Time*, illus. 67 and 66. The composer Igor Stravinsky is depicted in an unpublished etching, *Stravinsky Ascending into a Field of Alice Coltrane Music* (1975). The work on Sun Ra is *Sun Ra, Food, Torso* (1976/1993), reproduced in *Mike Kelley: Missing Time*, illus. 70.

- 18** During this period, Kelley's primary sources of information on installation art, and the artists associated with this methodology, were Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings* (New York: Abrams, 1966); Udo Kultermann, *Art and Life* (New York: Praeger, 1971); and Adrian Henri, *Total Art: Environments, Happenings, and Performance* (New York: Praeger, 1974).
- 19** Named for a Japanese B movie (dir. Toshiro Honda, 1968), Destroy All Monsters was formed in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the winter of 1974 by Cary Loren, Niagara, Jim Shaw, and Mike Kelley. All but Loren met as students at the art school of the University of Michigan in 1972. In the liner notes for the box set of *Destroy All Monsters: 1974–1976* (Ecstatic Peace/Father Yod Records, 1994), Kelley describes DAM's "dadaist nonsense recitations" and noise production using hair dryers, vacuum cleaners, army surplus cassettes, and thrift store tape decks.
- 20** "The term 'Monster Roster,' coined in the 1950s to describe some of the members of that generation, distinctly implied a bold, heavy-handed expressionism." Franz Schulze, *Fantastic Images: Chicago Art since 1945* (Chicago: Follett, 1972), p. 6.

The Hairy Who group consisted of six painters: Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Karl Wirsum, Suellen Rocca, Art Green, and James Falconer. All met at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, and first showed together in a group exhibition at the Hyde Park Art Center in 1966. The name "Hairy Who" was a joking reference to Chicago art personality Harry Bouras; see Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, pp. 160–61.

- 21** Albert Mullen (1921–1983) was born in Ridgefield, New Jersey. He graduated from Cooper Union Art School in 1946 and took advanced work in the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in New York and with Fernand Léger in Paris in 1950–51 on the GI Bill of Rights. He joined the faculty of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1956 and traveled and painted in France, Italy, and the United States, including the Southwest deserts and the Big Sur coast of California.
- 22** On Gerome Kamrowski see Evan M. Maurer and Jennifer L. Bayles, eds., *Gerome Kamrowski: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1983). For a summary of Kamrowski's career, and on the relationships between the New York-based abstract surrealists and abstract expressionists, see Paul Schimmel, *The Interpretive Link: Abstract Surrealism into Abstract Expressionism, Works on Paper 1938–1946* (Newport Beach, Calif.: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1986), pp. 17–28.
- 23** Jacquelyne Rice received a BFA in ceramics from the University of Washington in 1968 and an MFA in 1970. She left the University of Michigan in the early 1980s to run the ceramics department at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she still teaches. Rice was Dean of Fine Arts at RISD from 1989 to 1996. On West Coast funk art, see the exhibition catalogue for *Funk*, curated by Peter Selz at the University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, April 18 to May 29, 1967.
- 24** Cartoonist Robert Crumb (b. 1943 in Philadelphia) worked for the humor magazines *Help* and *Mad*, and the alternative newspaper the *East Village Other*, in the early and mid-1960s. Moving to San Francisco in 1966,

he was one of the founders of the underground comic book *Zap* in 1967. In 1970, an X-rated film version of *Fritz the Cat* (which Crumb had first drawn as a single-issue comic back in the late 1950s) was released by film animator Ralph Bakshi. In 1978 Crumb created *Weirdo* magazine with Aline Kominsky. A decade later Crumb left the U.S. to settle in France. His work was included in the New York Museum of Modern Art's 1990 exhibition *High & Low*. See also *The R. Crumb Sketchbooks*, vols. 1–9 (New York: Fantagraphics Books, 1992–2002).

- 25** See *Mark di Suvero: Retrospective 1959–1991* (Nice: Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, 1991).

GOIN' HOME, GOIN' HOME

JCW This flavorful piece was published in the catalogue for the exhibition Mike Kelley: The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on the Winter), at the Jablonka Gallerie, Cologne, January 27 to March 18, 1995, which featured a series of thirteen brightly colored oval paintings in acrylic on wood, made in 1994 but mimicking the look of works done when Kelley was an undergraduate. They were numbered in the following order: The Birth of the New Year, Fecundity, What's Limp in 3D Is Erect in 2D, The Dawning of Sexuality, Summer's Rage, Fall, The Descent, Cactus Flower (The Purple Twilight of Middle Age), Snow on the Temples, The Decay of Year-End, The Giving Old Man, Death, and Art. These pieces were exhibited with the similarly shaped black-and-white series Paintings in Time, dated between December 25 and 31, 1994. With two exceptions, these six and one-half repaintings of a minor painting on paper (Low-Definition Presidency, 1993) were differentiated from one another only by small daubs of gray paint. The exceptions were the piece dated the Christmas Day holiday, December 25 (which showed a completely different image), and that dated December 31, the transitional last day of the year, which is only one-half of a painting. Symbolically, the Paintings in Time contrast with the Timeless Paintings (1995), which were first exhibited at the Metro Pictures gallery in New York as part of the exhibition Toward a Utopian Arts Complex (1995). Unlike the Missing Time series, which are student works that were painted on, the Timeless Paintings—like The Thirteen Seasons—were new paintings that emulated the look of the student works. In the larger, shaped paintings executed on wood panels, Hofmann-



9. Mike Kelley, *Death*, #12 in the series *The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on Winter)* (1994). Acrylic on wood panel. 62½ × 40 in.

esque rectangles of color act as censorial bars blocking visual access to parts of the paintings. Unlike those in Hofmann's paintings, however, these blocks of color are painted wood panels literally screwed to the surface of the Timeless Paintings.

An essay by Timothy Martin, "Mike Kelley: The Thirteen Seasons," included as an insert, notes that The Thirteen Seasons was conceived in dialogue with Kelley's training, its presentation in "a timeless, fully-mastered, and naturalized" mode suggesting "the perpetual return of the same: that is, seasonality." Martin also observes that "the oval shape of the paintings bends the picture plane into the configuration of a cameo, privileging the temporal over the spatial, and haunting the painting's timelessness with the cameo's evocations of time lost."

Kelley's text addresses a backward-looking aesthetic in a humorously maudlin manner and the concatenation of juvenile puns, wordplays, and smutty jokes it contains should be understood as the exaggerated product of a Kelleyeen persona. The "poems" inserted into the text are reminiscent of Kelley's notebook writings—lists of associated word clusters, which he often used as part of his creative process and to title artworks. Some of the references in "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" are deliberately corny and obvious (for "At Tross City limits," read "Atrocity limits"); other references are annotated below.

*An unedited version of this text, without notes, was published in the catalogue for the exhibition *Painting at the Edge of the World*, curated by Douglas Fogle at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (February 10 to May 6, 2001), pp. 160–64.*

Q: How do you know if your Doctor is a man?

A: There's shit on his speculum.

Looking backwards, ass backwards.

This is your life.¹

Peephole history.

The Wayback Machine.²

Porthole to the soul.

Your lemon sheets, hung out the bedroom window to dry.

*Lonesome yellowing scrapbook in the sun.
Gilded hair gone white.
Silver mirror.
Golden Boy/White Trash.
Upscale cracker, with caviar on it.
Tommy Roe, Cum Gum, Bun Boy, Love Gun.³
This is the oval reflector, solar-framed, exuding light.
The mirror has been painted on, outlining the self.⁴*

*At the crossroads of life.
At Tross City limits.⁵*

*Standing, vertical, in front of a mirror, in the dark, with candle in hand,
reveals the multicolored aura.
Caught squatting over a mirror with a flashlight.
"Say, Doc, is there such a thing as an anal speculum? Huh?"
Oh, oh! Candle in the sock drawer.
Yes, right below the vaseline drawer, sir.
It's next to Mommy's secret cabinet . . . of . . . of horrors.
Body loathing, Mmmmmmmmm good.
Gaze trauma. Wow! And, va va voom!
Keyhole shock. Zzzzzzzzzzz.
Electric doorknob.
Jane and/or John Doe caught a disease from it.
They all bumped into it and got a hickey. Yeah, sure!
Blame it on the toilet seat, just like everyone else.
What's that a picture of, in there?
I don't know, and if you can't say what it is . . . it must be dirty.
It's bad, and I'm bad, and we're both alike, and that's good.
Tee hee! Look at me! I'm naughty.*

When painting a painting, there comes the final period when you enter into struggle with it. It taunts you; it dares you to force it to behave, to make it be "right." A painting might be finished, that is, the support may be adequately covered with paint, the handling of the medium may display a proficiency with materials, yet the painting does not seem done. It calls out:

"I have yet to conform. That mysterious sense of order and balance has not yet been attained."

But when this balance *is* found you instinctively know it. Then the painting becomes placid and ceases to cry out. Only then is it *good*.

But what are the rules that define this completion? What are these laws that elude articulation? One can speak, but the language that surrounds a true image never conveys its material perfection. An image that sits well defies explanation. Its surrounding language has an otherworldly air, divorced from body and soul. It comes off as pedantically technical, emotionally empty. The thing done correctly is the thing that assumes its own naturalness. And the natural is irretrievable through anything but itself. It can only be spoken through itself. The laws that govern true being must not be questioned. They simply are. To question them is to destroy their naturalism. To pose the question makes truth into a lie. What are the laws? Shut up, and don't ask.

The law is the law. It is buried in you. You operate perfectly well under its domination. And, believe me, you really don't want to know anyway.

Pray to the old God, the cruel One.

Pray to the One you struggled to erase your belief in.

Pray to the One who preys on you.

This is the vicious God of the Old School.

He is the maker of the violent universe.

He is the cosmic torturer.

He snorts when you say the Messiah has come.

"No son of mine," the bass intones.

"Slap the Sissy around."

And Helen Girly-boy Brown⁶

Came to town

Sittin' like a girl, crossed legs

Carryin' schoolbooks like a girl, pressed to chest
Sobbin' like a girl, tears rolling down apple cheeks
Gigglin' like a girl, with a gaggle of others
Gettin' beat like a girl, submissive-like
Suckin' Dad's Cock like a girl
etc., etc., etc.

Except maybe it's Mom's Cock. A lot of things aren't what they seem, are they? Take the painting's aura of completion, for instance. Let's call this sense of completion the painting's *normalcy*. What if this normalcy is only a screen memory—a projected image of comfort, based on social stereotypes, used to mask an unbearable true event that cannot be faced without grave psychic damage? In this scenario the painting's comfort, its sense of naturalness, comes only from repressed indoctrination covering up subjugation and abuse. Your root, your true self, is a false mirror. Who knows what's really there? It's a moot point now, because nothing's been left behind. You are only compliance. Your inability to get to the bottom of your sense of aesthetic pleasure is not a merging with a natural order—akin to not recognizing yourself in the mirror, which is a beautiful humble experience—it is simply repression. Oh, you think you have risen above. You think that your loss of memory is a sign of getting past certain wrong-headed childhood fantasies, of leaving old useless baggage behind. Not true. Your memory loss is successful, planned erasure. You are now living, breathing indoctrination.

You are now “you.” Since your true self cannot be confronted, you have mystified it. Now that which has been tossed into the mind's garbage can become “special.” The so-called “finished” artwork is simply the one that presses unlabeled psychic buttons. They switch on the *pleasure* sign, the one that illuminates your denied, hated self in an admirable light. Every time you feel aesthetic pleasure you unconsciously reenact your abuse at the hands of the *law*. You live the unchanging rule. You don't know you are doing it. Your sense of accomplishment is mysterious. You don't even realize you are in compliance. You don't realize that your very being is a continuous loop playing back your originating abuse.

I am the reincarnation of Hans Hofmann.⁷
Prodigal son.⁸

*To Sir with Love.*⁹
*Beachside painting resort disciple.*¹⁰
Old-fashioned acolyte.
Fawning at your lord's feet.
*You can go home again.*¹¹
*Teach Me Tonight.*¹²
Rebirthing once a week.
Put down in the ship's log.
Hearth and home.
*Call me Norman Bates.*¹³
Summoned up.
Making the primal scene.
Family-treed by bloodhounds.
Puppet of the ancients.
Unhooded by the Clan.
*Outlived by Jim Morrison's Dad.*¹⁴
Transfused with Master's blood.
*I, Renfield.*¹⁵
*The Fall of the House of Maytag.*¹⁶
Still warm stiff.
Blood is thicker than matte medium.
In the shanty foldin' panties.
*Ed Gein Memorial Junior High School.*¹²
Past sniffer.
Corpseophile.
Not dead, just sleeping.
*Awake!*¹⁸

Whenever you “rediscover” your old creations, isn't it funny that you find them so satisfying? You're as engrossed as baby is with his or her own poop. And, to top it off, it seems as if a hiatus from old ways sharpens your skills at those abandoned practices. Then you ask yourself:

“Why did I ever stop doing this? How is it that I forgot myself? Why do I have to rediscover what I already know?”

And then you cry out:

“I want to go home again!”

Well, come on back. Your room’s just like it was when you left. We’ve kept it exactly the same, untouched, in anticipation of your return. You’re home.

So here I am back at the steps of my old academy. I knock on the wise door with a tear in my eye. Yes, I am the first to admit that my paintings are willful perversions of my training. They are full of ironic inversions and grotesque substitutions. All of these strategies are empty posturings; they are simply flimsy facades hung on a solid framework, but they do not diminish the truth of their interior structure. All of my pathetic Oedipal struggles to construct a new aesthetic, one that is solely “mine,” cannot hide the fact that all of my later “innovations” are based on unshakable *law*. Inversion and perversion serve only to reinscribe the *law* they seek to undermine. Surface meaning is of no consequence. The underlying rule never falters.

I, on the other hand, stumble. Weak-kneed, I totter forward, still deluded that I chart my own course. I live a lie. I believe that I have matured, when I have only aged. I fancy that I have constructed my own history. It is all shit. The *law* is there. And in my last breath, like all lapsed believers, I will whimper and ask for forgiveness. I will die groveling, begging to be reinstated into the ranks I never truly left: the ranks of the law-abiding. Stupid me. I was a believer all along.

NOTES

- 1 *This Is Your Life* was a popular TV program, broadcast on NBC between 1951 and 1962, which confronted celebrities with family members and other people associated with their pasts.
- 2 “The Wayback Machine” was a time machine featured in Jay Ward’s *Peabody’s Improbable History* cartoon series about a time-traveling dog and his pet boy, Sherman, which first aired in 1959.
- 3 Tommy Roe was a popular bubblegum singer from the ‘60s whose hits include *Sheila* (1962), *Dizzy* (1969), and *Jam Up and Jelley Tight* (1969); “Cum Gum” is street slang for Freshen’ Up chewing gum, a soft gum with a liquid center that explodes in the mouth when bitten; Bun Boy, a chain of hamburger stands, originated in Nevada; and *Love Gun* is the title of an album by the rock group Kiss (1977).
- 4 In this line, Kelley alludes to two finger-painted self-portraits on mirrors by John Miller (both *Untitled*, 1982).
- 5 That is, “atrocities limits.”
- 6 “Helen Girly-boy Brown” is a play on Helen Gurly Brown (b. 1922), author of *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) and founding editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine.
- 7 Hans Hofmann, the painter and teacher (1880–1966).
- 8 “Prodigal son” refers to the parable in the Bible, Luke 15.11–31.
- 9 *To Sir with Love* is a movie made in 1967 (dir. James Clavell; title song by Lulu).
- 10 “Beachside painting resort disciple” is a joke on the East Coast regimen of the student artist studying with a “master” in the woods or by the sea.
- 11 Thomas Wolfe’s novel *You Can’t Go Home Again* was published in 1969.
- 12 “Teach Me Tonight,” the famous teacher/student love song was written by Sammy Cahn and Gene De Paul in 1953, originally sung by Janet Bruce, and popularized by Marvin Gaye and Kim Weston, among others.
- 13 Norman Bates was the owner of the Bates Motel; played by Tony Perkins in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960).
- 14 The Doors’ lead singer Jim Morrison claimed early in his career that his father was dead; however, he was alive and ended up inheriting Morrison’s valuable musical and literary properties. See Jerry Hopkins and Daniel Sugarman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (New York: Warner Books, 1980).
- 15 R. M. Renfield is a patient in Dr. Jack Seward’s sanatorium when first mentioned in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), while in the 1931 film version he becomes the Count’s servant, pitifully mimicking his master’s diet of human blood by devouring insects.
- 16 “The Fall of the House of Maytag” combines references to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) with the home appliance manufacturer Maytag Corporation. (Kelley also refers to the use of Maytag boxes and cartons for shelter by the homeless.)
- 17 Ed Gein is the notorious rural Wisconsin mass-murderer, necrophiliac, and fetishist of female body parts, whose “house of horrors” was discovered in 1957.
- 18 “Awake!” refers to the magazine of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

LAND O' LAKES/LAND O' SNAKES

JCW This statement was written for inclusion in the catalogue for the exhibition Mike Kelley: Land-O-Lakes at Wako Works of Art, Shinjuku, Tokyo, November 22 to December 27, 1996. The catalogue also printed Ichihara Kentaro's essay "Anti-Aesthetic of Excess and Supremacy of Alienation" (in Japanese, with an introduction in English). The space at Wako Works of Art is small, so the show featured one large freestanding painting, Thanks/Coming Float. Theme: "Ritual of the Savage" (acrylic on wood panels, sandbags, 1996), with other images on wood panel and paper, including Slightly Psychedelic Depiction of the Sexualized Land O' Lakes Girl (High Priestess) (1996) and the two-part painting Upright and Inverted (1996). Kelley chose to show this work in Japan realizing that the parody of exotic otherness it offers made better sense there, thus freeing up the ridiculousness of his images, fixations, and arguments. As with "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" (in this volume), the text incorporates a "poem" composed from lines and fragments from Kelley's notebook. The result is more abstract than the often specific, punning allusions of the earlier piece. Explanations of particular references are provided in the endnotes.

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The works in this show reflect my long-standing infatuation with the image on the Land O' Lakes butter package: the so-called Land O' Lakes Girl.¹ This is the first picture I can remember finding



10. An example of the folding game performed with the Indian maiden logo on the Land O' Lakes butter package.

sexually intriguing. It was much more riveting than the soft-core photos of nudes found in the pages of *Playboy* magazine, and more palatable than the hard-core pornographic photos which I initially saw printed on the back of playing cards. These images were beyond my comprehension. I'm talking about the early 1960s here, when any kind of sexual imagery or literature was still considered somewhat taboo. No full frontal nudity could be found on the magazine rack at the corner liquor store, and there was no "erotica" section at the local bookstore. Nevertheless, as a child, I saw porn of both the soft and hard varieties as it was passed around surreptitiously by preadolescent boys. This material was found, I assume, hidden away in Dad's bottom drawer. While the image of the Land O' Lakes Girl is not pornographic in any sense, it lends itself to a kind of mildly sexual visual punning. The Land O' Lakes Girl is an "Indian maiden." She kneels, facing the viewer, dressed in fringed buckskin, and demurely holds in front of her breasts the very butter package on which she is pictured. When this image is folded, her knees can be positioned in such a way as to resemble nippleless bare breasts hanging over the top of a grassy knoll. This pictorial manipulation was the source of much amusement to lads of my generation. When I was introduced to this game, I don't believe I was even fully aware of the specific anatomical differences between the sexes. I certainly did not yet know about sexual intercourse. The terrain of the woman's body, hidden beneath the clothes, was completely open to speculation. The interchangeability of the Land O' Lakes Girl's breasts and knees seemed somehow plausible given my sexually ignorant, fantasy-prone state of mind. This initial foray into speculative anatomy opened the psychic floodgates to let loose a torrent of more flamboyant inner visions of unseen body parts. Later, these fantasies found form in endless notebook pages filled with Arshile Gorky-like psychedelic blob drawings²—each blob the illustration of some newly invented genital.

In *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, Sigmund Freud describes "sexual infringement" onto parts of the body other than the genitals as "anatomical transgression."³ This sexualization of the nongenitals is considered normal if those body parts bear some formal similarity to the sex organs: for example, the mouth or anus can easily be compared to the vagina. When these transferences lack this simple one-to-one morphological relationship, they are considered perverse. Freud cites the fetishization of the foot or hair as examples of anatomical transgressions that are surprising in that these body parts seem little adapted to regular genital purposes. He goes on to say that the fetish is actually a manifestation of the attempt to give up the sexual aim and suggests that early sexual intimidation could be the cause of these inappropriate substitutions.

I only mention this theory because it so clearly illustrates the poverty of the commonsense adult conceptions of sexuality prevalent when I was a boy. It describes a mind that understands sexuality only in terms of procreative use-value and explains all other sexual pleasure as the result of mistakes based on simple structural similarity. Most people have to relearn the multiplicitous intensity of their childhood erotic lives as adults. This, I think, explains my infatuation with the Land O' Lakes Girl. My public exhibition of excitement in response to this image of an Indian maiden was a pretense. Rather, my pleasure was rooted more in the successful acting-out of male stereotypes (as I understood them)—of pretending to be an adult man—than it derived from actual sexual arousal. I knew I was supposed to find an image of a young woman sexy, so even though I was too young to care about such things, I struck the pose: "Wow, look at the jugs on that Indian chick!" But I believe that the true pleasure I got from the folding game resulted from the fact that it stirred in me the wondrous confusion of an earlier pregenital sexual stage. In pregenital sexuality, the kinds of "genital substitutions" Freud describes as perverse are commonplace—though sucking the thumb is an obvious replacement for sucking the breast, the child's fondling of the "transitional object" is more complex—rooted in both broadly tactile pleasure (in that it is soft like skin) and specific olfactory pleasure (in that it smells like mother).⁴ Still, both of these examples would have to be described as non-genitally-oriented erotic practices. The prudish adult sexual logic of compartmentalization and the hierarchical placement of the genitals at the top of the sexual ladder are not yet established at this stage. Oral, anal, and genital pleasure, as well as simple kinetic play and optical wonder, merge into one complex erotic soup. The whole conscious body is a sex organ. And the game of sharing fantastic theories about adult sexual practices and physiognomy, common to older children, is itself a kind of exciting mental version of sexual intercourse. This is sexuality at its most open and multitudinous. The highest goal of art would be to attain the infinite range of image permutations characteristic of this period of projective sexuality. The Land O' Lakes Girl intimates this plenitude by demonstrating the ability of the body to transform and multiply itself—within itself—through a simple fold of paper. Such boundlessness is evoked in another way as well. The butter box which the Land O' Lakes Girl holds up in front of her is the very one on which she is pictured. She is replicated within herself like an endless hall of mirrors—one image contained within the other into infinity.

The paradox of the butter box image is that this infinite opening-up is presented within that which hides. The carton she holds up covers her breasts like a censorial bar and in so doing it

stresses what it purports to obscure: the butter/milk/breast connection. Such loaded obscurity provokes the desire to eroticize that which *is* accessible. The innocent protuberance of the knees becomes sexually charged. And, as nippleless mammary glands, what exotic function do they now serve? You are allowed to ascribe any meaning you want to them; they offer themselves up for projection.

In American popular mythology, the Indian maiden is a symbol of unsullied, virginal nature. Recently, a feature-length cartoon version of the tale of Pocahontas was released with great success.⁵ Since the nineteenth century, the image of the Native American has commonly been used in advertisements for foodstuffs—especially corn products, since corn is an indigenous American food.⁶ Though a slightly unusual hybrid of dairy land milkmaid and corn goddess, the Land O’ Lakes Indian maiden is part of this long tradition. For some reason, even though almost all other ethnic caricatures have been banished from advertisements and packaging graphics, the image of the Native American persists.

As a child growing up in the Great Lakes region of the northern Midwest, I was bombarded by commercials using the image of the Native American to sell products such as beer, corn starch, and, of course, Land O’ Lakes butter. Part of the appeal of these campaigns was that they nostalgically evoked the region’s idyllic past. They pictured a before-time of clear lakes and virgin forests, when there were no dangerous inner-city ghettos and rotting, abandoned factories. But just as these Edenic scenes no longer existed, neither did the Indians. There is almost no trace left of the Native American populations who once lived in this area. If these images of Native Americans represented an “other” to a young white boy like myself, it was an exemplary other—an unspoiled, “natural” being, more pure than my corrupted and urbanized self. This was the being one tried to emulate at Cub Scout meetings, where the attempt was made to relearn the lost skills of tribal sharing and forest survival, and the very same being the hippies were trying to emulate under their latter-day tepees. Of course this idealization of the Indians as noble savages could only be maintained through their absence. To be deified, they had to be destroyed.

I confronted a quite different situation when I moved, as a young adult, to Los Angeles. There, close to the Mexican border, if you are a northern white boy, you are constantly surrounded by “others” who proudly display their Indian ancestry. You are bombarded by heroic images of Mexican Indian warriors and beautiful maidens—on calendars, in street murals, on countless other objects.⁷ Symbolically this exotic population became inescapably linked in my mind to the nonexistent

northern Indians of my youth—except these people were alive and resistant to idealization. Their noble illustrations of their Indian ancestry were their own idealizations, not mine. I could not own these images as I could the image of the Land O' Lakes Girl. Instead, by virtue of their very incomensurability, I came to view these people as unattainable and erotic.

Their difference could also be understood as dangerous. I vividly recall my mother sending me clippings of newspaper articles recounting the horrors endured by naive Anglo-Americans who had the misfortune to end up in Mexican prisons, usually on drug charges.⁸ Her letters begged me to steer clear of Mexico. There, on the other side of the border, she pointed out, American justice had no power. Once caught, the poor misguided gringos who strayed there only lived as long as the payments, sent by their distraught relatives to their captors, continued. Once the family bank account was drained, Whitey was done for.

In 1989, a twenty-one-year-old white college student from Texas was abducted from the streets of the Mexican border town of Matamoros while on a drinking binge with his buddies.⁹ The young man had strayed across the border to taste the illicit thrills on the other side and did not live to tell his story. Instead, he became the sacrificial victim of a drug-smuggling gang who practiced black magic. Perversions of Santería religious practices,¹⁰ their rituals were guided by their “high priestess,” Sara Aldrete—herself a former university student from Texas. Although this gang had previously murdered quite a number of locals, on this occasion their twisted rites called specifically for gringo blood. The brain of Mark Kilroy ended up in their *nganga*, a cauldron containing a fetid stew of body parts and other materials both exotic and mundane. The *nganga* is considered the repository of enslaved, tortured souls who are bound to carry out the evil spells of the magician.¹¹

This crime gave rise to various urban legends in the Southwest,¹² all recounting the abduction of young white people by satanic Mexicans, that reveal our fascination with the “negative other.” And this is what Sara Aldrete became to me: the inversion of the Land O' Lakes Girl, her openly eroticized double. Just as the Land O' Lakes Girl was natural, virginal, and pure, so the High Priestess was all things forbidden, dangerous, and sensual. The Land O' Lakes Girl could only perform her polymorphously perverse body-shifts hidden behind the cool geometry of her butter box shield; but the High Priestess shamelessly lorded over the *nganga* pot filled with its frightful, gooey wad of shapeless chaos. The *nganga* stew was limitless eroticism made manifest.

It was thus that the Land O' Lakes Girl, that sweet, buttery denizen of the meadows, merged with Sara Aldrete, the representative of sublimely terrifying nature. This conflation was

necessary if the Indian maiden was to retain her erotic charge, if her allure was to become more suited to adult considerations. At the same time, this unification provided a facade that hid the socially unacceptable charms of the high priestess. The polar aspects of this new dual being are revealed by the folding game. Unfolded, the Indian maiden is whole, orderly, and in her idealization, dead: this is the Land O' Lakes Girl. Folded, she is polymorphous, chaotic, erotic, and alive: in this form she is the High Priestess. When her knees become her breasts, when she is capable of morphing herself into any shape she pleases, then she is the High Priestess. Paradoxically, it is in her folded, partial state that this goddess is most powerful. Unfolded and whole, the Land O' Lakes Girl is only the larval stage of the High Priestess, the High Priestess-in-waiting and as yet unborn.

The shaped paintings in this exhibition reflect the loose contours of either the Land O' Lakes Girl or the High Priestess. The containing form of the unfolded girl is considered the shape of the nonerotic, while the containing form of the folded girl is defined as erotic. The primary, underlying meaning of these rough silhouettes relegates the imagery within the paintings as secondary—it limply evokes certain themes, but, in essence, is simply “filler” used to energize the containing structure. Thus the paint handling is somewhat analogous to the slop held within the *nganga*: it is the pot that gives chaos its form, and, in so doing, that limits it. To underline this secondary relationship of image to shape, I have painted over the paintings with black lines, canceling them out. However, this abandonment of surface meaning is too frightening. To deny the importance of the surface is to reveal—to make conscious—the psychosexual struggles at the project's core. That's when the impulse to rescue the paintings kicks in. Despite their cancellation, I cannot help wanting the paintings to be recognized as “good” paintings, as paintings done correctly. This is their socialized veneer, and this is why they are weak, polite paintings. Their obliteration is half-assed; for the latticework covering their surface remains open enough for the paintings' conventionalized compositions to be seen. They are paintings that strive toward communion with the erotic cosmos, but sheepishly and guiltily return to the safety and blandness of the dead Indian maiden's harboring maternal caress.

No Follow-through
Slave to tradition
Composition's patsy
Pretty boy

Nice and neat

Timid

Primal scene/primal stew

Chaos in a can

Chunky-style soup of life

Death's perfume

A psychological swirl of energy depicted in base organic materials

Tech fear and body loathing in one package

Goo parade

Human compost heap

Biological bouillabaisse

Abstract expressionist stroke book

Meat secret

Slop as self-conscious as a fop

Eager hands in each other's diaper

Copping a fluffy dairy-whip feel

Exoskeleton of the flabby body

Pulpy sack, cowering in a UFO

Invertebrate inebriation

Egg and runny stuff

Jism network

White spunk running down black rubber

Battery ooze

The old ones and their young-uns¹³

Amorphous appendage

Ectoplasm sculpture

Little softy¹⁴

Snowballing the mysterious cadence

French-kissing secrets of the stars

Portholes of entry

Spit-like visitors
Uncleaned aquarium of the cosmos
Universal stench

Other's choice
An evening of Orientalism
Homewrecker's ball
Tokin' on nganga pot¹⁵
Bobbing for Adam's apples
Frigid air¹⁶
Thanksgiving Day cornoil wrestling
We call it maize¹⁷
The state of seminudity no body can occupy
Give it up

NOTES

- 1 Land O' Lakes butter was given its name and trademark Indian maiden emblem following a nationwide contest in 1926. As the areas of Minnesota and Hiawatha were associated with Indian lore, the image of the Indian maiden was worked into the product design. The original artwork for the package came from an amateur landscape painter, but it was modernized in 1939 by Jess Betlach, a popular illustrator.
- 2 Kelley is referring, in particular, to Arshile Gorky's painting *The Liver Is the Cock's Comb* (1944), reproduced in Harry Rand, *Arshile Gorky: The Implications of Symbols* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 208.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, rpt. in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 566.
- 4 D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (1951), in *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), p. 229.
- 5 Disney's *Pocahontas* (co-directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg) was released in June 1995. For a critical history of the myth of Pocahontas, see Robert S. Tilton's *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- 6 For a history of the use of Native American images in advertising, see Jeffrey Steele, "Reduced to Images: American Indians in Nineteenth-Century Advertising," in S. Elizabeth Bird, ed., *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 45–64.
- 7 Kelley is referring here to the nationalist aesthetics of Mexican calendar artist Jesús Helguera, whose work still circulates in mass reproduction. On Helguera's career, see Jim Heimann, "Calendario Girls: Mexican Chromos," *Juxtapoz* 28 (September/October 2000), pp. 28–33.
- 8 Kelley found a Mexico-bashing article, similar to the ones described here, years later, on the front page of the *New York Times* (November 1, 1996): "Abductions Torment Mexicans, and Not Just the Rich, Leading to a Sense of Chaos." This article was used in the collage *Untitled (New York Times Nganga)* (1997) which included the caption: "The anti-nganga—the careful drawing and coloring of these squares—serves as a psychic antidote for the chaotic conditions that now exist in Mexico—it orders that chaos."
- 9 University of Texas student Mark Kilroy vanished from a crowded street in Matamoros, Mexico, on March 14, 1989. His mutilated body was found some weeks later at the nearby Rancho Santa Elena, where satanic rituals had been carried out under the leadership of the Cuban-American cultist Adolfo de Jesús Constanzo and his partner, Sara Aldrete. There have been a number of lurid paperback treatments of the Matamoros killings, including Gary Provost, *Across the Border: The True Story of the Satanic Cult Killings in Matamoros, Mexico* (New York: Pocket Books, 1989); and Jim Schultze, *Cauldron of Blood: The Matamoros Cult Killings* (New York: Avon Books, 1989).
- 10 The origin of the Santería magical cult found throughout Latin America is linked to the beliefs of the Yoruba people from the Nigerian coast. Brought as slaves to the Americas, their complex pantheon of deities became conflated with the Catholic saints of the Spanish and Portuguese colonialists. In Spanish, *Santería* means, literally, "the worship of saints." See Migene González-Wippler, *Santería: African Magic in Latin America* (New York: Julian Press, 1973).

- 11 This lurid description of the Santería *nganga*, a black witch's cauldron (also an evil spell), is taken from Clifford Linedecker's true crime potboiler, *Hell Ranch: Nightmare of Voodoo, Drugs & Death in Matamoros* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1989); see esp. pp. 133–36.
- 12 See Thomas A. Green, "Accusation of Satanism and Racial Tensions in the Matamoros Cult Murders," in James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley, eds., *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 237–48.
- 13 For a reference to the "Great Old Ones" in H. P. Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), see note 8 to "Sub-level: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas," in this volume.
- 14 "Little softy" refers to "Lil' softy," the product mascot, first appearing in the 1970s, for "nice n' soft," a brand of toilet paper. Lil' softy, a cherubic, big-eyed blonde child, appeared nude with a bouquet of flowers discreetly covering parts of her body. She wore an oversized blue bonnet and appeared to be skipping through a flower patch. Her motto (and that of the toilet paper) was "i'm softy-er."
- 15 On *nganga*, see note 11, above.
- 16 The Frigidaire Company, a manufacturer of heating and cooling systems and appliances, was founded in 1916 and became part of General Motors in 1926.
- 17 Spoken by an emblematic "Indian girl," "we call it maize" was the catch line of a commercial for corn oil.

THE POETRY OF FORM

JCW *The Poetry of Form consists of thirty-four black-and-white photographs of cave formations, made for Patrick Painter Editions, originally shot out of books sometime in 1984 and 1985 as part of Kelley's project Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile, which concluded in 1986 with a performance at Artists Space in New York. The performance text, rewritten in prose, was published in book form as Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile by New City Editions (Venice, Calif.) in association with Artists Space, in 1986. For further discussion of the performance, see Colin Gardner, "Let It Bleed: The Sublime and Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile," in Catholic Tastes, exhibition catalogue (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), pp. 112–34. Kelley returned to these images in the mid-1990s, using them for exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona (MACBA) and at Wako Works of Art in Tokyo.*

His technique of rephotography was somewhat different from the forms of appropriation dominant in the mid-1980s. Kelley views these photographs as "recontextualisations" or "mythic insertions," and aligns them more with what Guy Debord and the situationists termed détournement than with established forms of appropriation associated with New York post-modernism. The photographs were printed in soft focus, offering "romantic" connotations, and several of the negatives in the series were manipulated to efface any signs of human presence.



11. Mike Kelley, *The Frozen Cascade*, from *The Poetry of Form: Part of an Ongoing Attempt to Develop an Auteur Theory of Naming* (1985–96). Gelatin-silver print, title text on mat. 16 × 12 in.

One of his concerns in this work was to investigate color correlations between Rothko's somber hues and the tones associated with the Christian tradition of Lent.

My general working methodology in the late 1970s and early '80s was to select, somewhat randomly, a limited number of word or image pairings and then research associated topics. This yielded a vast amount of disconnected information that I would then attempt to organize mythopoetically into what, on the surface at least, resembled a coherent belief system. As part of this process, I shot many photographs out of library books. Sometimes these photos were used as source materials for the black-and-white image-text paintings that I produced during this period; sometimes they were incorporated as slide projections within my performances; and at other times they were used as illustrations for published texts (some of the cave photos from *The Poetry of Form* series were, for example, in my book *Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile*). Less often, I would exhibit selected photographs as finished artworks. The rarity of this presentational method didn't stem from any prejudice against photography; I simply did not have the financial resources to have photos printed at that time. I recall that on at least one occasion I presented this entire set of cave images as a slide show at a public lecture, reciting the name of each rock formation as the image was shown.

In the mid-1980s I became dissatisfied with the general restriction I had set for myself, to paint only in black and white. I wanted to find a way to incorporate color into my work, but in a manner different from my undergraduate art school training in an Albers-based formal approach.¹ This led to an interest in commercial paint chips—those sample cards, with rows of titled colors, given away at paint stores to assist customers in determining what shades to use on the walls of their homes. I was attracted by the names given these commercial colors, and collected whole sets of them from a variety of paint companies. The names are often extremely flowery, and I believe customers are influenced just as often in their choice of paint color by the ring of its name, as they are by the color itself. My personal interest in these names (rather than the colors themselves) was clearly influenced by my conceptualist training in the Cal Arts graduate program, where language was usually given precedence over the visual.² When I examined the color sample sets, I discovered that the various companies had distinctive naming styles, far more distinctive, in fact, than the col-

ors themselves, which were quite similar from company to company. It seemed obvious to me that, in many cases, one person, one author, was responsible for the names. To test this hypothesis, I wrote to the companies and inquired about their titling process. It turned out that one person was generally responsible for naming the colors. In a few instances, professionals had been employed to perform this task, but more often the colors were named by someone from the company itself, who worked in another capacity and simply had a knack for naming. This led me to look for other examples that illustrated an auteur theory of naming. I wanted to stress the naming process, as in some conceptual art, as a primary aesthetic characteristic, and to find examples of things that, in and of themselves, were uninteresting unless they were singled out with “aesthetic” titles.

By focusing on the naming process as a form of authorship, I became fascinated with the possessive form, which designates ownership. I made lists of common possessive pairings. This is how I came up with the series title: *Plato’s Cave*, *Rothko’s Chapel*, *Lincoln’s Profile*. I wasn’t especially interested in these particular themes; I just liked how the three possessives sounded together. But in the process of researching these subjects, I discovered another instance where the names given to a specific category of object were as florid as those denoting commercial colors—the names given to cave rock formations by spelunkers. In my research on the Plato’s Cave possessive (I had actually never read Plato’s parable before this, and knew it only by name),³ I studied books on cave exploration, and found that the photographing and naming of odd-shaped cave formations was quite common. The rock formations are essentially found objects that are given identity through the naming process. More interestingly, even though this discovery and naming implies ownership—like the discovery and naming of land masses or stars—in all of the examples I found, they were titled anonymously. As with the commercial color names, I attempted to track down the authors of the names given to various rock formations that I had photographed from books. I was not very successful. No such records had been kept. The anonymity of the naming author is in striking contrast to the implied ownership of the possessive form, and to the authorial relationship of artists to artworks.

In 1985, I was invited by Creative Time, a New York-based arts funding agency, to do a work for their exhibition series *Art in the Anchorage*. As part of this event, artists did site-specific installations in the anchorage, a structural component lying at the end of the Brooklyn Bridge. The large, windowless rooms inside the anchorage have very high ceilings and are constructed entirely of brick. They are extremely dramatic spaces, resembling a cross between a cathedral and a

cavernous sewer. Responding to this exotic locale, I decided to make a visually simple work that stressed the architecture itself. To this end, I made giant, monochrome paintings using the kind of commercial paints previously mentioned. The unstretched, bannerlike paintings hung loosely on the walls, like tapestries. The main body of my installation consisted of three four-panel sets of these large monochromes. The colors were the same in each series: white, yellow, red, and brown. However each panel in each series was differentiated by a name, written in small letters at its bottom edge. In a purposely archaic gesture, one series was titled after so-called races: "Caucasian," "Oriental," "Indian," and "Negroid"; another after bodily fluids: "Sperm," "Urine," "Blood," and "Feces"; and the last after the commercially given names of the paints in which they were all executed: "Chablis," "Sapsucker," "Rock Coral," and "Irish Setter." Again, it is the name that is given primacy as the defining attribute in the work, even though the banners were so visually dramatic in the space that associational qualities relative to their color usage was obviously a secondary consideration for the viewer.

This installation was called *The Trajectory of Light in Plato's Cave*, referring to Plato's allegory of shadowy reality. Other aspects of the installation play with associations related to the three possessives of the project's encompassing title. For example, a banner makes reference to Rothko's suicidal bloodstain, linking it to the Shroud of Turin, while another painting points toward the bloodstain of the assassinated Lincoln. *Plato's Cave* was literalized in the dark, damp environment of the anchorage, which was truly cavelike. Recently, I have reconstructed this environment as a freestanding structure, somewhat like a stage set, in which the brick walls of the anchorage were replaced with faux-brick paneling.⁴ To enter it, the viewer must crawl under a painting at one end of the piece, like a cave explorer squeezing into a hole.

I continue to be interested in this project. And if I come across other examples, like the commercial colors or rock formations, where flowery titles overshadow the objects named, I will document them as well. A project is never truly over; but it may, sometimes, go into hibernation until the time is right for its reawakening. This is why, given the opportunity, I have gone ahead and printed these cave photos at this late date.



12. Mike Kelley, *Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile* (1985). Interior view. Mixed media. $10\frac{1}{2} \times 45 \times 12$ ft. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

More Tragic! More Plangent! . . . More Purple! (1985/1996)

A suite of six photos consisting of keystone photographs of paintings by Mark Rothko. The hue has been shifted from Rothko's original coloration toward purple. His purple paintings, generally considered sad and soulful, fit the mythology of his tortured "artistic" life.⁵

* * *

The Birthplace of Lincoln, The Birthplace of Christ (1985/1996)

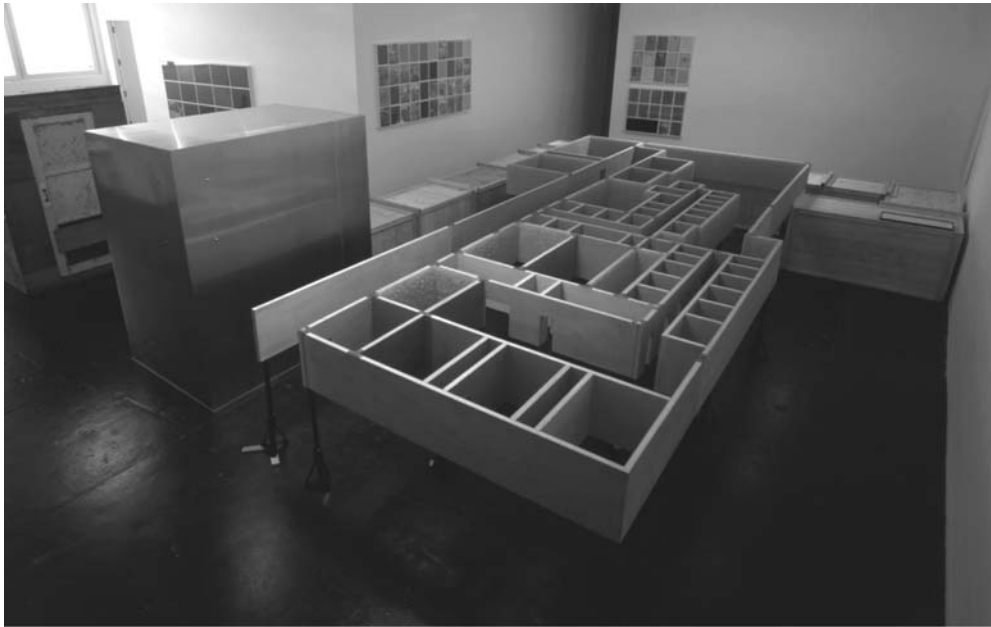
This last photograph pairs images of the log cabin birthplace of the popular American president, Abraham Lincoln, with the supposed birthplace of Christ. In America, Lincoln is held in the same regard as a saint, so the pairing seems natural. I was also drawn to the cavalike qualities of the two photos.

NOTES

- 1 On Albers, see Joseph Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).
- 2 On the California Institute of the Arts, see note 5 to “Three Projects,” in this volume.
- 3 Plato’s parable of the cave is set out in the *Republic*, book VII (“The Philosophical Ruler”), section 7; see, e.g., trans. Desmond Lee (Hardmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1974), pp. 317–25.
- 4 The retrospective of Kelley’s work for which *Plato’s Cave* was first realized as a freestanding structure was organized in 1997, and traveled to the Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden; the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona; and the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.
- 5 Rothko’s image as a tortured artist is well illustrated by Lee Seldes’s description of his suicide: “The enormous patch of congealed blood was the ultimate work of art, the final dramatic gesture, the true, most poignant action painting.” Lee Seldes, *The Legacy of Mark Rothko* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 111.

SUBLEVEL: DIM RECOLLECTION ILLUMINATED BY MULTICOLORED SWAMP GAS

JCW *"Sublevel" was published in English and German in the catalogue for the exhibition curated by Kelley and Karola Grässlin, Mike Kelley—Two Projects: Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas, Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites (Kunstverein Braunschweig/Verlag König, Cologne, Germany, September 4 to October 31, 1999), pp. 11–14 and 57–61. The catalogue also contains an interview with Kelley by Daniel Kothenschulte, "Black Nostalgia," pp. 16–20 and 52–55. First presented at Jablonka Galerie, Cologne, in 1998, Sublevel is a labyrinthine construction, the unremembered sublevel spaces of which are lined with pink crystal. This structure and a companion tunnel leading to an aluminum "cell" were exhibited at Braunschweig with a series of other works, including Geode; pieces from the Bouquet series; The Pink Crystal Speaks; pieces from the magazine and acrylic paintings of the Missing Time Color Exercise series; the two-part acrylic painting In Reference to the Natural Composition of the Decayed and Tattered Pants Worn by "The Thing" (Elmer, 1951) and in Homage to Ivan Albright's "Fleeting Time Thou Has Left Me Old" (1946); and associated works. Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites, a set of a dozen bulbous clusters of found plush toys suspended from the ceiling with nylon ropes and pulleys, and surrounded by wall-units made of fiberglass painted with car paint and containing electric pumps that issued disinfectant sprays, was installed in the "garden room." An associated performance, Runway for Interactive DJ Event (Kelley with Beate Bilken-*



13. Mike Kelley, *Sublevel* (1998). Two installation views from *Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*, Jablonka Galerie, Cologne, 1998. Plywood, resin, car jacks, and steel. $84\frac{3}{5} \times 324\frac{2}{5} \times 233$ in. Photos: Nic Tenwiggenhorn.

roth, Oliver Blomeier, Kalin Lindena, Gero Neumeister, Marco Olbrich, Anita Pace, and Andrea Stappert), took place on September 3, 1999 (for a description, see the "Video Statements" section of this volume).

Despite the forward thrust of its form and the open, expansive qualities of the color blue that surrounds it, the sun collapses, taking with it the grid of the ordered universe.¹ This is because there is a portal, an opening into "no light," a vacuum that sucks into it all atmosphere, erasing the visual freedom of unrestricted plains. There are only murky sheds here. Behind the big house is the little house. And under the sunny desert of daily life is a world of caves and shadowy, half-remembered thoughts.

The sublevel is the basement of Cal Arts.² In *Educational Complex*, an architectural model that reformulates every school I have ever attended into one "utopian arts complex," the sublevel is the point furthest underground. To get to it one must crawl under a table. There, one can lie on a mattress, stare up through an invisible floor, as if up a skirt, and study the structure of that architecture. Parts are missing. Seen through the theories of Repressed Memory Syndrome, these missing areas represent necessarily forgotten memories.³ All recollection of them has been repressed because of an associated trauma that is generally sexual in nature. Now the dimly recollected "*Sublevel*" has been built large enough for one to enter it, physically, and is lined with pink crystal, like a geode.

I have made it my project to reconstruct my missing memories of this site. Given the large number of rooms that I cannot clearly recall, this is a daunting task. The sublevel must have been an incredibly torturous arena to engender such a wide blanket of forgetfulness. But one spot seems especially ominous, more terrible than the rest: the ultimate zone of unspeakable horror. On the Cal Arts floor plan outlining the sublevel, a room is depicted outside its limits, existing in a basement area all its own, inaccessible from the main section. As far as I can tell, there is no access to it at all. Like a time capsule, it might simply be a buried chamber. For the sake of simplicity, in my dimly recollected *Sublevel*, I have provided a tunnel that grants access to this void. The tunnel is sub-sublevel; it exists in a plane even lower than the sublevel itself. It exists in the plane of nonexistence, of provisionally reconstructed memory.

Why pink crystal? Because, as everyone knows, regardless of meaningless exterior coloration, it's all pink inside. Crack any dull geode, and inside is its fiery heart: the crystalline core of beauty and wonder. This is the lovely core of sensuality free of sexual trauma. Like the center of a chocolate cherry, it spills forth sweetness.

"Hustler Honey" Shayla has her privates thrust upward.⁴ They are a beacon to the stars. Pink deck shoes next to her mirror the color signal. Her darkness has been illuminated with a spotlight so all its glory is revealed. In pornography, the spotlight beaver shot is a fairly recent development. I do not think it existed before the 1970s. Not long ago, I saw a photo in which the spotlight focused upon the genitals was so theatricalized that its purpose was obviously more than simple illumination. The pink spotlight itself had come to equal the vagina in its optical allure. I foresee a time when genitals will no longer need to be pictured at all, yet a state of arousal will still be induced in the general pornographic audience; the image of a pink spotlight projected onto a backdrop will, itself, be enough to produce an orgasmic drive.

The quality of a jewel shimmering in the darkness already elicits a similar response. Perhaps any effect that points toward darkness illuminated, toward memory recovered, toward the suggestion that the veiled will make itself seen, is erotic. But this effect is most intensely erotic (and uncanny) when darkness remains its dominant attribute.

As a child, I played doctor with two other children a year or two apart in age. When you are young, such minor differences in age seem major. The oldest of the three of us was a girl, I was in the middle, and the youngest was another boy, barely school age. We would get together and study each other's bodies, without fondling each other. In broad daylight, this activity was disturbing. The physical differences between us were shocking. But we did find great pleasure in lying together, in the darkness, under the bed. There, nestled with the dust bunnies, with our pants off, we would lie face down with our bodies touching. Placing pretty stones from my rock collection into our ass cracks, which functioned as natural "settings," heightened the sensuousness of this practice. Sexual pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment were conjoined. The delectation of the pseudo-gems was the aesthetic entrance necessary to allow us the enjoyment of the sight of each other's very different bodies. In the half-light, only the memory of the stones' particularities existed. We shared these visions in the darkness, which allowed us communion. Age and gender no longer separated us. We were merged.

At the McMartin Preschool, the site of a famous child abuse witch-hunt, the children remembered being taken into underground tunnels. In addition to sexual activities, they recalled cruel

rites being performed there. Animals were killed, and sometimes the abusive adults took the form of animals themselves—something akin to sports team mascots, or the costumed figures at Disneyland, or the personified animals in cartoons. When the school was razed and the ground beneath it dug up, no tunnels were found.⁵

When I was young, I occasionally played in a rec room set up in a neighbor's basement. The walls were decorated with murals depicting characters from Hanna-Barbera cartoons: Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound, etc.⁶ With the lights turned down low, the silhouettes of these characters seemed to gain life. Later, as a teenager, in similar basements I would watch people under the influence of LSD stare at static images, attempting to enliven them. And later still, I came across a book intended for doctors, which contained drawings done by people suffering from a variety of maladies. All the drawings were of Yogi Bear. The differences in line quality between the various drawings were supposed to be useful as a diagnostic tool. Drawing the standardized form of Yogi would reveal the patient's particular pathology. The shakiest, most fractured depiction was by a patient suffering from delirium tremens.

As rendered by comic postcard artist Elmer⁷ in 1951, "The Thing" represents both a d.t.'s vision and the sufferer as well. It's not clear if "The Thing" is the snakelike apparition coming out of the moonshine jug or the figure grasping it: a shirtless hillbilly in tattered pants. The country hick is often depicted as a conduit to the "dark side." In H. P. Lovecraft's writings, the inbred bumpkin is the medium by which the pre-Christian "Great Old Ones" gain access to our world of order.⁸ The simple denizens of the backwoods lack the mental barriers, common in civilized folk, which resist the advance of primitive urges. At times, this can be seen as a positive attribute, however. Giving up your mind might seem a small price to pay for a taste of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Just imagine the pleasure of an eternal ride in the lock-groove of original sin. The hick is lustier than civilized man. Take a look at old episodes of *Hee Haw*,⁹ or the films of Russ Meyer,¹⁰ and you'll find out this is true.

In the late '60s, a letter was sent to the editor of my hometown newspaper.¹¹ A local woman complained that pornography was for sale at the corner market. And, what was worse, this pornography was disguised as a comic book. Obviously, this was an attempt at the seduction of innocents. The title of the magazine was *Sex to Sixty*.¹² *Sex to Sixty* is the bible of hick erotica.

Just as the Old Ones find their way into your mind through the humblest vehicles, so *Sex to Sixty* also lends itself to more abstract usage. Observed from afar and thus freed from illustrative

constraints, the color schemes of their cover paintings glisten like those nighttime jewels I previously mentioned. I own an incomplete set of *Sex to Sixty* magazines, myself, and the missing issues, like those rooms in my old schools that are lost to memory, seem especially pregnant with meaning. In this exhibition, the missing ones are abstractly reconstituted using a formal analysis of the color relationships of the extant magazines, laid out in a grid formation. In an effort to balance the grid as a whole, a color of “inbetweenness” is mixed to fill in the missing spots. This requires extremely complex color mixing, and many attempts were made before the proper balancing colors were found.¹³

A different problem arises when the painting support is attacked directly, without reference to an exterior system. What is the criteria for the color scheme in this case? The color schemes that first come to mind are always clichés. They represent the colors of consciousness, of socialized mediocrity.

In an attempt to produce a “realist” monochrome, I mixed many colors together, producing a general, dirty brown, kidney-like color: the common sign of drab reality. To be as direct as possible, I applied this paint to the rectangular panel with my hands. Surprisingly, the brown arranged itself in a grid, echoing the rectangular format of the support.¹⁴ As a rejoinder, I applied the paint to a second painting in a swirling antigrind with my fingers.¹⁵ This produced a decorative abstract-impressionist painting, lacking any truth. I decided that the constricting rectangular shape of the panel was the problem—in addition to the choice of the color brown for the pigment, which was derived too consciously. I therefore constructed panels of baroque complexity, both in contour and form. The paint was again applied with the fingers, but in a more tactile and less optically oriented manner. Color was not an issue, I decided. I simply used the paints left over from the *Sex to Sixty* mixings. I organized these roughly by chroma, corresponding to the spectrum. My hands ran over the surface of these supports as if I was applying sensuous oils to the body. This produced a deep, primarily monochrome, organic visual space.¹⁶

To ascertain the contours of the painting support panels, I randomly drew page after page of bloblike doodles. From these, I picked the ones that lent themselves most easily to personification, those that could be seen as a person or animal, standing up or lying down.¹⁷ The problem I then set for myself was to apply pigment to these forms in such a manner as to deny this illustrative tendency. The composition of the painting had to work against this reading to foreground the structural qualities of the support itself. As you can see, the origins of this process are highly

premeditated. But in this play of contradictory impulses, in this collision of meaning and form, the physical act of painting itself took over, and the mind went dead.

Down, down, down you go, down a tunnel of many colors. Who gives a shit about how they are categorized? It's too late for that. I look and see the cups containing the paints I had mixed, grouped according to spectral division. Do they need form? No. Let the color sit there, taking on the form of its container. Organize these cups into whatever composition you like, just as you would a bouquet of flowers. Organize them one way, then another . . . then another, until they wither and die.¹⁸

Down, down, down you go, into a secret buried chamber. And once you've gotten past your trauma, your conditioning—once you've gotten past thinking that your life is surrounded by dirt, then things start to open up. In this blackness, can you tell the difference between the stifling claustrophobia of the living grave and the limitless expanses of outer space? I think not. So just relax.

In Catholic school, if a student sold enough fundraising candy, he or she received a prize. One prize was a flesh-colored plastic form that looked very much like a vibrator. When it was opened, you discovered a statue of the Virgin Mary inside. This thing frightened me. I was haunted by the thought of Mary locked inside her case in eternal darkness. I was upset by my vacillating read of this object as either rocket or penis, shooting Mary out into the nether regions of space or into the depths of the body. I thought about this later, when I read about the probings performed upon people abducted by aliens.¹⁹

What strange devices do they insert into you? Or are they simply common objects picked up at random? The extraterrestrials don't care what the objects are. Their interest is in the orifice, not the probe. As creatures with no insides or outsides, with no orifices, they approach any dark hole with curiosity and wonder. This is why they reside in the inky recesses of outer space. This is why they want to explore the inside of you. They look at you with their big black eyes—like those in a Keane painting²⁰—eyes like an animal of the night. And you know that you are home. You start to remember all the dank holes you've been in . . . with those people who claimed to be your parents, with your mentors, and Joe Schmo, and everybody else. Now you are sick of dirty little crevices. You want the glint. You want a spot of color. You want art.

NOTES

- 1 This sentence alludes to the painting *"The Sun Collapses, Taking with It the Grid of the Ordered Universe"* (1998), included in the exhibition at Kunstverein Braunschweig.
- 2 On the California Institute of the Arts, see note 5 to "Three Projects," in this volume.
- 3 The main sources for Kelley's investigation of Repressed or False Memory Syndrome are detailed in *"Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered,"* notes 3 and 5, in this volume.
- 4 Hustler's Honeys are the women featured as models in magazine spreads and in various other *Hustler* venues. Hustler Honey Shayla appears in Kelley's collage *The Pink Crystal Speaks* (1998). An advertisement for the 3D sex toy version of "Hustler Honey—Shayla's Pussy" begins with the slogan "HUSTLER gives you pink" and describes the simulated anatomical part it peddles as "a pussy that shines in the spotlight"; see <http://www.amazingtails.com/novelty/RealisticPussies.htm>.
- 5 For a description of the allegations made in the McMartin Preschool case, see Debbie Nathan and Michael Snedeker, *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch-Hunt* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 61–87. In the literature purporting to expose the deeds of child sex abuse cults, the claim is often made that adults dress in costumes in order to create "screen memories" in children to confuse their recollection of abuse. "This last," notes Linda Blood, "often referred to as a perpetrator tactic of posing as a television personality or other famous character in order to discredit the child. 'Mickey Mouse put something in my bottom' tends not to wash well in court." Linda Blood, *The New Satanists* (New York: Warner Books, 1994), p. 125. An alleged map of the McMartin tunnels can be found in Roland Summit, "Digging for the Truth: The McMartin Tunnel Project versus Trenchant Disbelief," *Treating Abuse Today* 4, no. 4 (July/August 1994), pp. 5–13. This account argues for the existence of the tunnels.
- 6 William Hanna and Joseph Barbera met while working as animators at MGM studios where, between 1943 and 1953, they earned a record-breaking seven Oscars for their *Tom and Jerry* cartoons featuring the hyperviolent antics of a cat and mouse. In 1957, when most major studios stopped making animated cartoons for movie theaters because of their high production costs, the duo formed their own production company to create cartoons especially for television. Using limited animation techniques to cut down on costs, Hanna-Barbera reinvigorated the animation business. Their hugely successful cast of animated television characters includes Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear, the Flintstones, and Scooby-Doo. See Ted Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera: Fifty Years of Creativity* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1989).
- 7 Comic postcard illustrator Elmer Anderson was active in the 1950s. His cards were published by H. K. Kittrell Co. of Waterloo, Iowa. Elmer's image of "The Thing" is the source for the two-part painting *Ghostly Afterimage* (1998).
- 8 In "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), H. P. Lovecraft writes of "the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died." The contemporary followers of the Old Ones are described as "men of a very low,

mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type.” H. P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, edited with an introduction and notes by S. T. Joshi (New York: Penguin, 1999), p. 153.

- 9 The TV variety show *Hee Haw* emerged as a rural alternative to the pop entertainment of Rowan and Martin’s *Laugh In*. Beginning in 1969, the show featured cornpone skit comedy interspersed with the biggest performers in country music in a surprisingly long run that lasted until 1991. That year, *Hee Haw* was given a facelift, which removed most of the rural sets, replacing them with city streets and a shopping mall. This drastic change led to a quick decline in audience and the ultimate cancellation of the show.
- 10 Russ Meyer began his career as a pin-up photographer before turning to filmmaking and becoming one of the true auteurs of sexploitation. His films feature a mix of bawdiness, black humor, and violence, edited in rapid-fire montage. Among his many exuberant productions are *Mudhoney* (1965), *Faster, Pussycat, Kill! Kill!* (1966), *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970), and *Supervixens* (1975). Meyer’s later films take place in an undefined desert locale version of “small town USA,” populated by cartoonish embodiments of white trash America.
- 11 The letter stated, “I went to a small neighborhood grocery store a few weeks ago and I saw laying on the counter (within easy reach of little hands) a pile of magazines that appeared to be coloring books. I opened one and I was shocked. It was one of the filthiest books I have ever seen. . . . The name of the magazine is ‘Sex to Sixty.’” “Pornography Blasted by Upset Citizen,” letter to the editor from Mrs. E. Thomas, *The Wayne Eagle*, October 22, 1969, Section A, page 6.
- 12 Published by S.R.I. Publishing in Fort Worth, Texas, and edited by Richard Rodman and Ken Idaho, the first issue of *From Sex to Sixty*, a magazine featuring reader-contributed adult jokes and cartoons, came out in 1965. The title was later shortened to *Sex to Sixty*. The magazine was pithily described as “a raconteur’s anthology of classic American humor.” The magazine ceased publication in the early 1980s.
- 13 This description relates to the series of *Missing Time Color Exercise* paintings (1998).
- 14 The painting referred to is part one, *I Was Shocked to Discover the Pigment Had Composed Itself in a Loose Grid Formation*, from the two-part 1988 work *In Reference to the Natural Composition of the Decayed and Tattered Pants Worn by “The Thing” (Elmer, 1951) and in Homage to Ivan Albright’s “Fleeting Time, Thou Has Left Me Old” (1946)*. The painting by Ivan Albright (1897–1983) depicts an aged man clad in tattered and decaying clothes. See Frederick A. Sweet, *Ivan Albright: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Art Institute of Chicago in collaboration with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1964); *Fleeting Time, Thou Hast Left Me Old* is illustrated as plate 9. For more on the idiosyncratic still lifes, character studies, and self-portraits of Ivan Albright, see the exhibition catalogue *Ivan Albright: Magic Realist*, curated by Courtney Graham Donnell (Art Institute of Chicago, 1997).
- 15 The “second painting” is part two of the same work cited in note 14 above, called *In Response, I Consciously Strove to Resist the Support’s Call for Geometric Order* (1988).
- 16 The paintings referred to here are from the series *Free Gesture Frozen, Yet Refusing to Submit to Personification* (1988).
- 17 The original drawings for these paintings are arranged, in spectral order, in *Spectral Personification* (1989).

- 18 This refers to the works of the *Bouquet* series (1998), which each consist of the plastic cups used to mix the paints for the *Missing Time Color Exercise* paintings, arranged on the floor in random order and grouped by color.
- 19 See David M. Jacobs, *Secret Life: Firsthand Documented Accounts of UFO Abductions* (New York: A Fireside Book/Simon and Schuster, 1992).
- 20 The husband and wife artists Margaret and Walter Keane began producing paintings of soulful, big-eyed children in the late 1950s. The works were mass-marketed with such success that they inspired a legion of imitators. While the paintings were initially attributed to Walter, Margaret Keane is now considered the primary artist. See Tyler Stallings, *Margaret Keane and Keaneabilia* (Laguna Beach: Laguna Beach Art Museum, 2000).

STATEMENT FOR THE VISITOR'S GALLERY:
OUT OF ACTIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES

(with Paul McCarthy)

*JCW The following text, written by Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, was painted onto the walls of the Visitor's Gallery for the duration of the exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (February 8 to May 10, 1998). The artists and performers invited by Kelley and McCarthy as part of their intervention were John Malpede and the Los Angeles Poverty Department, who work in avant-garde political theater; Allan Kaprow, the father of *Happenings* in the late 1950s; the pioneer minimalist composer Tony Conrad; performance artist Carolee Schneemann; stand-up performer Michael Smith; the performance poet and word-artist David Antin; and the modernist dancer Anna Halprin, whose work influenced the *Happenings* and early performance art scenes. See also Kelley's description of the video made with McCarthy, *Out o' Actions* (1998), in this volume. Minor changes and corrections have been made for the present volume.*

In conjunction with *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979*, we (artists Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy) were invited by Paul Schimmel, chief curator at MoCA and curator of the exhibition, and Kim Kanatani, director of the education department at the MoCA, to produce a special installation for the Visitor's Gallery. As defined by MoCA, the function of the Visitor's Gallery is to "provide the public with a meaningful context for understanding the exhibition on view, and to allow exhibiting artists to function as educators giving them a voice in the exhibition process." The Visitor's Gallery is meant to serve as an extension of the main exhibition, educating the general viewing public about its central themes.

Out of Actions focuses on the relationship between visual and performance art in the postwar period, covering three decades from 1949 to the 1970s. It attempts to do this by "displaying the *results* [our emphasis] of the artists' performative activities in ways which will in some way retrace and reveal their creative methods."

In response to this curatorial orientation, we have decided *not* to install an educational exhibition in the traditional sense. That is, there will be no displays of informational signage, historical time lines, documentary photographs, etc. Instead, our intention is to use the Visitor's Gallery as an *alternative space*, inviting seven artists who fall within the chronological limits of the exhibition to use the gallery, in any way they see fit, for roughly two weeks during the run of the show. The seven artists we have invited represent a wide range of time-based practices, including experimental theater, dance, performative poetry, music, etc.

We have chosen to use the Visitor's Gallery in this manner for a number of reasons:

- (1) To counter the main exhibition's focus on the material results/production of the artists included, without acknowledging their time-based practices themselves as their artwork. The Visitor's Gallery will give these artists the opportunity to present works in real time—either as actual performances or as a site for current production. In some cases, the artists presenting works in the Visitor's Gallery will not make objects at all.
- (2) To broaden the range of the types of artists presented in the main exhibition. We question the curatorial decision to limit *Out of Actions* to the practices of *visual artists* who perform, while excluding artists such as dancers and musicians whose aesthetic practice is entirely performative. The definitional boundaries of the exhibition seem

random in many cases. They are also in opposition, philosophically, to the goals of many performance artists whose work attempts to break down aesthetic classifications based on traditional genres and models. It is critical to the understanding of performance/action art to recognize the direct interaction between, and mutual influence of, musicians, playwrights, dancers, poets, and visual artists.

- (3) To allow living artists included in the exhibition to present new works, thus permitting a reception of their work outside the historical timeframe of the exhibition. This is important because the time-based aspect of much of the work in the show was designed to accommodate itself to contemporary historical circumstances—in essence, to make art time-specific. We want to give these artists the opportunity to respond to their categorical periodization.

We respect Paul Schimmel's decision to mount an extensive exhibition of action/performance art. We believe that this endeavor is important to the understanding of contemporary art. We also recognize that Paul Schimmel precisely and intentionally frames the exhibition as *performance/action in relationship to the object*. This is surely a valid theme around which to build an exhibition, but we feel this choice continues to sway the construction of the history of performance art in the direction of a materialist art-historical reading. The history of "action art" in America has long been dominated by the cliché that it is an outgrowth of the New York School of "action painting." To position this material-dominated discourse as the root of much later time-based work is simply not defensible. What it does do, however, is strengthen the general perception that painting is the "über-art form."

The museum continues to find it difficult to present work that is primarily ephemeral, whose forms and subjects are time, memory, perception, spoken language, sound, human action, and interaction. We want to point out that this materialist prejudice creates a false history of contemporary art. By glorifying the object of performance, the museum marginalizes the important cultural effects of time-based expressions. It was not the musical scores of John Cage, for example, that influenced the work of younger artists like Allan Kaprow, but Cage's musical performances and, beyond this, his entire practice, including his daily life and philosophy of art.¹ Instead of focusing on period relics, the museum could have presented actual time-based works in the form of restagings of performances. It could have invited artists to update their work, to address current

situations, or at least to present time-based documentation of original works in the form of film, video, or sound recordings. In this way, the public would have been given a more accurate picture of the artists' original intentions.

By prioritizing the pieces within performance history that are object-oriented, the exhibition makes those objects into icons of a particular approach to art history that suits the structural limitations of the museum. The fetishization of the performance relic reduces the museum to mausoleum using as an excuse the museum's own architectural boundaries. It implies that all artworks must be tailored to function within the museum building if they are to earn their definition as art. In this way, the physical architecture of the museum building is given precedence over the artists' production. It *is* possible for the museum to act more as an organizational body, shifting off-site when necessary, and expanding itself to suit the aesthetic needs of the artists who exhibit there. But this attempt is rarely made. The very nature of time-based work throws into question how museums define and present art, and how the museum represents itself and its role in the culture.

Performance and action artists attempted to redefine and create a larger arena for art, one that could include the ephemeral. One must remember that there are many significant artworks that do not reference the genres of sculpture or painting and are not meant to be seen within the physical framework of a museum. Their form was dictated by their immediate situation, and their potency as art was directly connected not only to their specific surroundings but to a precise moment in time. These practices do not lend themselves to encapsulation in symbolic objects. Other solutions must be found to readdress the historical importance of these events than the fetishization of their material leftovers.

We also wish to work against the notion that the historical development of art is progressive—a notion implied by the show's construction, which is chronological rather than thematic. The idea that one artistic form replaces another decade by decade, in a manner echoing technological advancement, is not supportable since art has no measurable cultural "use value." We would prefer a historical presentation that stresses that these artistic forms developed out of or in opposition to each other for ideological reasons, in a complex web of simultaneous interactions. These interactions cannot be presented in a simple chronology, reduced to decade-framed "movements."

The seven consecutive presentations in the Visitor's Gallery will be documented on video, as will the process of their installation and the artists' interface with museum curatorial and educational staff. The resulting video documents will be cumulative, with sections added as they are

finished. This is meant to provide the general viewer with a sense of the full scope of the presentations as well as an idea of the processes through which a museum show is constructed.

We feel that our treatment of the Visitor's Gallery qualifies as "educational" in the sense that it is an overt response to the curatorial assumptions present in the main exhibition. It allows a number of working artists, specialists in the field the exhibition purports to represent, to respond to it in an active manner. We recognize that our attempt to present an alternative to the main exhibition by offering actual performances or actions is only symbolic, given the large number and various types of performative works made from 1949 to the present.

The artists presented in the Visitor's Gallery are:

John Malpede/Los Angeles Poverty Department 2/2/98–2/15/98

Allan Kaprow 2/16/98–3/1/98

Tony Conrad 3/2/98–3/15/98

Carolee Schneemann 3/16/98–3/29/98

Michael Smith 3/30/98–4/12/98

David Antin 4/13/98–4/26/98

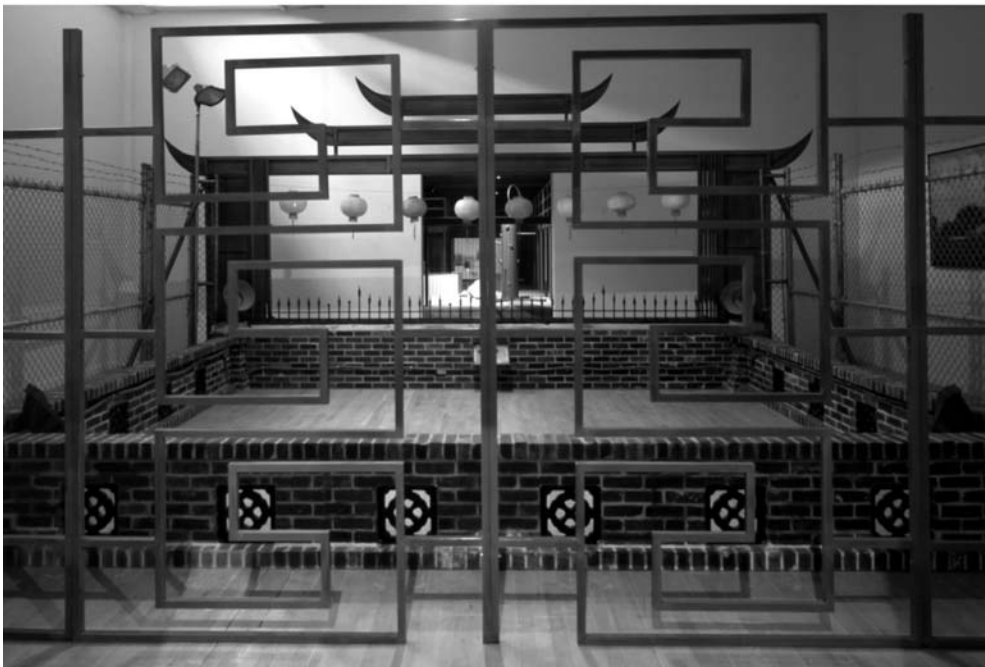
Anna Halprin 4/27/98–5/10/98

NOTE

- 1 On the Cage and Kaprow connection, see Allan Kaprow, "Right Living" (1987), in his anthology *The Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 223.

THE MEANING IS CONFUSED SPATIALITY, FRAMED

JCW *"The Meaning Is Confused Spatiality, Framed"* was published in English and French in the catalogue for Mike Kelley: "Framed and Frame (Miniature Reproduction 'Chinatown Wishing Well' Built by Mike Kelley after 'Miniature Reproduction "Seven Star Cavern" built by Prof. H. K. Lu')" "Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses" at Le Magasin–Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France (October 16, 1999 to January 16, 2000), pp. 62–75, 85–98. The catalogue also carried an introduction by curator Yves Aupetitallot and an essay by Laurence A. Rickels, "Just a Test." Kelley's essay was illustrated by images and diagrams from Harry Harlow's experiments in primate emotions conducted at the University of Wisconsin in the 1950s and '60s, the abstract stage sets designed by Isamu Noguchi for choreographer Martha Graham, pages from Time-Life publications in its "Human Behavior" series (1976), and sculptural works by Max Ernst, among others. In addition to the two large, architecturally scaled sculptures consisting of multiple parts that title the exhibition, Kelley showed several other works associated with Framed and Frame from 1999, including the color photographs Abandoned Faux Rock Building (Bob Lo Island, Detroit River) and Duck Blind (Grassy Island, Detroit River); the sculpture Aerodynamic Vertical to Horizontal Shift; Collage with Photograph of the Belle Isle Aquarium, Detroit River; Color and Form (two color photographs); the painting Dystopian Horizontal to Vertical Shift; and Pre and Post (two color photographs).



14. Mike Kelley, *Framed & Frame* (Miniature Reproduction "Chinatown Wishing Well" Built by Mike Kelley after "Miniature Reproduction 'Seven Star Cavern' Built by Prof. H. K. Lu") (1999). Two installation views at Le Magasin—Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, 1999. Steel cyclone fencing, wood, electrical fixtures, paper lanterns, faux concrete, paper pulp, acrylic, statuary, spray paint, mattress, afghan, pillow, Vaseline, and condoms. Photos: André Morin.

Framed and Frame was exhibited at the Metro Pictures gallery, New York, in spring 1999; Test Room . . . was produced especially for Le Magasin, Grenoble.

The exhibition and its detailed accompanying essay are excellent examples of Kelley's complex working methods and materials. The installations, performance, sculptures, photographs, mixed-media pieces, and writing that make up this work form an associative matrix within which Kelley negotiates an elaborate network of allusions and symmetries, connecting experimental psychology, modernist sculpture, dance and design, anthropomorphic imagination, Chinese American cultural symbolism, sexuality and repression, personal history, simulations of nature, and the aesthetics of form and color. A snapshot image of the intensity and suggestiveness of Kelley's combinatoire can be found on p. 72 of the catalogue, which reproduces a pair of photos: the first a view of a caged infant monkey with a simplified maternal surrogate; immediately below it, an image of Noguchi at work on one of his outdoor garden sculptures. The compositional rhymes between the monkey and the artist, the mesh cage and the sunken garden, and most striking of all, between the large, cylindrical textured stone, propped at an angle, and the cloth-covered surrogate mother supported by a metal brace that tilts in the same dimensions, are simultaneously ironic, humorous, and revealing. Reinforced by other juxtapositions—such as the Noguchi model set for Graham's Night Journey (1944), which is paired with a photograph of one of Harlow's object-filled, open field rooms for testing monkey behavior (p. 73)—a provocative spiral of structural relations uncoils between the mood-seeking connotations of modernist abstraction and the object relations of primate psychology. While he monkeys with modernism, Kelley turns the modernist artist into a monkey.

We have provided a bibliography of sources for the experiments by Harlow and others and endnotes for the more specific references to Graham, Noguchi, and child psychology. For a recent study of Noguchi's work in dance design, see Robert Tracy, Spaces of the Mind: Isamu Noguchi's Dance Designs (New York: Proscenium, 2000).

Framed and Frame is a recreation of a local landmark in the Chinatown section of downtown Los Angeles: a "wishing well" in the form of a fanciful, miniature, biomorphic landscape replete with grottos, Asian and Western statuary, and receptacles for tossed coins. A ramshackle cyclone fence

decorated to resemble a Chinese gate surrounds the nine-foot-high and fifteen-foot-wide sculpture to protect it. The history of this tourist attraction is unclear. Contradictory stories exist concerning the sculptor of the work; it has been ascribed to a Professor H. K. Lu as well as to a Professor Lim Hong Kay.¹ Locals have given the date of its construction as 1949, yet I have found a postcard of the sculpture dated 1948 showing it fully completed—though none of the familiar Chinatown buildings surrounded it as yet. One shopkeeper recounted a curious creation myth which described the method of the wishing well's construction. He claimed that old railroad ties were burned, causing boiling water to shape wet concrete into the random peaks that make up the edifice. Close inspection of the wishing well contradicts this story. It was obviously produced by hand-shaping and molding concrete over understructures. It is clear that the mass has been altered and added to by various people over the years. Other old postcards reveal that, as recently as the 1960s, the wishing well was in good repair and lush with greenery; now it has essentially been abandoned and resembles a large clinker.

I have constructed an almost perfect replica of the original “Seven Star Cavern,” but I exhibit the rocklike central structure and its surrounding fence as separate sculptural entities, preferably in two different rooms. I present the biomorphic “formless” section of the wishing well and its enclosure as objects belonging to different categories. In an accompanying set of photo works, a similar operation of separation is performed on a Danish postcard that depicts a memorial monument in Silkeborg, and on a photograph that I shot in the Belle Isle Aquarium in Detroit, Michigan.

The Danish postcard images what appears to be a pre-Christian megalith along with what I would assume are later additions: an inscribed memorial text, a small capping statue of a bird in flight, and a surrounding fence. Through digital manipulation I have removed these later additions, leaving only the megalith standing alone in the landscape. A second photograph reverses the process and presents the fence, which now surrounds the text and statue floating in air, minus the upturned stone. These two photographs are titled *Pre* and *Post* and are colored in a manner reminiscent of sepia-toned photography.

The photograph of the Belle Isle Aquarium has also been digitally manipulated to produce two separate images. The original black-and-white photograph depicts a faux-rock coral “aquariumscape.” Random areas of pure color have been applied to this image, corresponding only roughly to the main forms that make up the rocklike structure. They therefore serve no “illustrative” function. The effect is somewhat akin to a coloring book page on which the coloring does not

conform to the linear boundaries of the image. In the first version of these photographs, the map-like color areas have been foregrounded so that the photographic image is almost completely invisible. In the second photograph, the color has been dropped back behind the image so that it is visible but difficult to read. These two photographs are titled *Color* and *Form*.

The visual effect of the latter pair of photographic works was meant to mimic the disconnected relationship between image and coloration found in old tinted photo postcards, especially those depicting such “formless” structures as cave interiors and rock formations. In these postcards the color tinting bears little relation to the image. Sometimes this supposedly illustrative “tinting” amounts to little more than random puddles of color on which the image has been superimposed. This relationship produces an extremely confusing visual space.

This kind of image/color overlay results in a peculiar color effect that I find very attractive. When semitransparent pigments are applied to a black-and-white photograph, the final effect is a very muddy, dirty kind of coloration. I have always loved such “dirty” color. Many paintings produced by beginning art students have a similar effect. In a naive attempt to create “natural” tonal shifts, novice painters add black paint to colored pigment, producing an extremely ugly and unnatural color palette. At first I was disturbed by such coloration, but I have grown to admire it and gone on to produce works attempting to utilize it. The *Unwashed Abstraction* series of 1989 is made up of such paintings composed by applying various densities of black stippling over areas of pure color, in a manner similar to the overlaying of half-tone dot patterns in graphic design. In some paintings I laid the stippling down first, then applied transparent glazes of color over it. Both techniques result in a very theatrically impure color effect that has something of the feel of cheap photographic reproductions of color paintings.

Part of my admiration for such coloration is the murky unspecific “space” it produces. I have recognized and appreciated this kind of space in paintings that span art history—from the obscure, muddy backgrounds in Rembrandt’s paintings, to the primordial goo space of 1940s biomorphic abstraction. Such space has an erotic appeal for me; it is the confused “nothing” space of presexual consciousness.

This attraction accounts, partially at least, for my interest in the Chinatown wishing well. During the last forty years, Chinatown has slowly ceased to be a popular tourist attraction. Much of it is now dingy and run down, and the wishing well is no longer verdant. In a vain attempt to keep it looking bright and festive, however, local shop owners have taken to spray-painting colored

polka dots on it. Absorbed by the rough gray concrete, this pigment has created a strange uniformity of color value—an effect accentuated by years of exposure to bleaching by the sun, and by layers of accumulated smog and dust. As in the tinted photo postcards described earlier, the spots of spray-painted color do not follow the articulation of forms within the sculpture. They have been applied in a haphazard manner that essentially camouflages the form of the sculpture. This produces an optical effect of great confusion. It is hard to read the sculpture because this busy surface decoration adds visual complexity to an already overly complicated and ambiguous form. I would describe this effect of visual confusion as “orgasmic.” In my reconstructed version of the wishing well, I have added a crawl space/fuck room outfitted with a mattress, jars of lubricant, and sexy candles. This addition is meant to literalize the erotic charge that I propose its ambiguous spatiality and murky coloration creates in the viewer.

My examination of the Chinatown wishing well is an extension of my previous interest in the pictorial conventions of the rendering of the “formless.” The *Garbage Drawing* series (1988) and the *Lump Drawings* (1991) are examples of earlier explorations. The *Garbage Drawings* took as their starting point the depictions of garbage found in *Sad Sack* comic books.² These generalized blob shapes are revealed as “garbage” only by the narrative frame of the stories; they would otherwise be indistinguishable from similarly rendered plant or cloud forms found in the same stories. In the *Lump Drawings*, I took on the task of “rendering” abstract biomorphic shapes. I used standard illustrative tropes to provide these shapes with distinguishing surface details and the illusion of three-dimensional form. The point was to fix shapes generally used to signify the formless. In the *Framed and Frame* sculpture, I am playing a somewhat similar game. By treating the fence that surrounds the wishing well as a discrete sculpture, I hoped to make clear some of the conventional devices used to give “amorphous” forms meaning. Without its surrounding fence (which signifies that this is an object worth considering), the Chinatown wishing well would appear to the casual viewer as little more than a heap of scrap cement. The function of the fence is not unlike the “frame” of a painting that, similarly, reveals the “formless” as visually discrete. The edge of a Jackson Pollock painting alerts the viewer that the painting is not simply an endless expanse of random swirls. It focuses the attention of the viewer on the discrete forms within the painting; it makes it possible to understand that these complex masses of line have been composed. In this way, the “object” nature of the paint as a signifier of the “formless” is downplayed. The object becomes available for concrete viewing.

Linguistic definition functions in an analogous manner: it provides comfort in relation to objects or images that would otherwise be understood as chaotic. The large lump encrusted with cheap ornaments that sits in the middle of Chinatown bears no resemblance to the famous landscape of the Seven Star Crags region in China to which it supposedly refers. But simply naming the object after that place gave it meaning. Its designation as a “wishing well,” as a “tourist attraction,” and as a “symbol of the Los Angeles Chinese American community” all perform this function. Yet the object itself defies such simple attempts to give it closure. The reasons for this are manifold, and were obviously not intended by its maker. The Chinatown wishing well represents a time in the recent past when cultural exoticism on the civic level could flourish unchallenged. It represents an era in Los Angeles when Anna May Wong—the Chinese American actress famous for her roles as a variety of beautiful cultural “others”—could plant a willow tree, donated in her honor by Paramount Studios, on the concrete lump and make it seem a proud moment.³ Today this object seems as schizophrenic as the Danish megalith in Silkeborg; it is a pastiche of conflicting cultural references. Whatever current cultural meaning this “monument” has would have to be ascribed to contemporary notions of “border politics” that are projected upon it. Border politics are concerned with those regions in which cultures clash and intermix. These clashes reveal the power relations of the cultures involved, but also have the potentially positive effect of destabilizing cultural stereotypes and producing third terms that lie outside of either cultural bracket.⁴

With its ridiculous mishmash of Buddhist and Christian statuary and Chinese American kitsch, the Chinatown wishing well is illustrative of the unfixed qualities of cultures in collision. This aesthetic is in direct opposition to the formal and definitional strategies employed to give it fixed cultural meanings. In this sense, it is one big messy “melting pot” that escapes the feel-good application of that term. This is why I believe that the “Seven Star Cavern” is the only interesting piece of public sculpture in Los Angeles. It is as politically messy and confused as its histories. However, my interest in the sculpture does not reside primarily in the political realm. The issues it raises in relation to cultural studies and identity politics are only part of a set of concerns that emerge from broader aesthetic issues and questions of representation. Part of the wishing well’s appeal is that its slippery nature allows me to roam intellectually among the wide variety of interests it harbors, and never to feel fully satisfied that I have arrived at any conclusions about them.

The *Framed and Frame* sculpture will be shown with a number of associated works. *Aerodynamic Vertical to Horizontal Shift* and *Dystopian Horizontal to Vertical Shift* are specifically related

to the sculpture. The first is a copy of one section of the central rocklike portion of the wishing well which has been turned onto its side. It sits on sawhorses and is accompanied by the sound of a jet airplane taking off. The addition of this sound is supposed to make up for the dynamic thrust lost when this section is shifted from a vertical to a horizontal orientation. This sculpture is also a playful commentary on the “impossibility” of presenting a formless section of a formless whole. The second, related piece presents the surface treatment of the wishing well within the frame of painting. In this case, the horizontal “ground” of the sculpture has been shifted to a vertical “pictorial” position. However, this “elevated” position is countered by the addition of a ‘60s science fiction paperback novel, which has been embedded in the surface of the painting. This book, the cover of which depicts an “existential” figure in proximity to a “futuristic” rock formation, colors the painting with dystopian, postapocalyptic overtones. A soundtrack accompanies this artwork as well. In this case, the sonic component is a Halloween CD replete with rattling chains, stormy winds, and ominous groans, which adds a further layer of abject signification.

In addition to these two pieces, there are two other photographs. Unlike the two sets of digitally manipulated photographs that accompany the *Framed and Frame* sculpture, these large-scale works are straight documentary photographs. They image found “formless” architectures. One depicts an abandoned faux-rock building on Bob-Lo Island in the Detroit River. At one time this island was home to a grand amusement park, which has now been demolished. Sculpted in concrete in emulation of a large boulder, this building looks to be a vestige of a zoo area. The second photograph is of a duck hunting blind found on Grassy Island, a tiny speck of land that is also in the Detroit River. This hut is partially made up of reeds so that it is indistinguishable from the general river vegetation.

The final work in this series, *Collage (with Photograph of the Belle Isle Aquarium, Detroit River)*, presents a number of primary research images, related to the project in general, laid out under Plexiglas on a table. The images are accompanied by handwritten texts explaining the main poetic connections I draw between them. Structured like a desk, so that the viewer, in a seated position, may comfortably spend some time with the materials provided, this work is meant to function somewhat as a key to the entire show, hopefully offering access to some of its more arcane references. The images consist of old tinted postcards of cave interiors that represent the color effects described earlier; postcards of natural and manmade rock architectures; postcards showing the Chinatown wishing well in views spanning the 1940s through the ‘60s; a contemporary view

of the wishing well in its current degraded state; the original Dutch postcard of the monument in Silkeborg; information about the original site in China to which the wishing well is meant to refer; and a photo of Anna May Wong planting a willow tree on the wishing well.

This last image leads to a selection of movie stills of actresses Anna May Wong and Tuesday Weld—a grouping that I could not resist presenting, even though it deviates somewhat from the central poetics of the project. After I had bought a number of film stills of Anna May Wong, I realized that I already owned a series of stills from films starring Tuesday Weld. Comparisons of the two sets of photographs revealed a surprising number of similarities. Despite the differences in their filmic roles, the “girl next door” and the “exotic other” are framed within a very limited set of Hollywood visual conventions—so their differences are erased when presented side by side.

Sitting atop the table also is a group of plaster and ceramic aquarium grottos and castles that were bought just down the street from the Metro Pictures gallery in New York, at a pet store. I was astounded by the similarity between the paint application on these objects and that on the wishing well. Above the table hangs a smaller version of the *Form* photograph, in which the “form” has been accentuated by being printed in a darker shade of black. Just look at that photo, then back to the collection of aquarium grottos. Look back and forth, back and forth, a number of times. See if you don’t find yourself subsumed in a macrocosmic/microcosmic spatial shift—one colored a sub-lime—and dingy—psychedelic hue.

The second project that I am presenting at Le Magasin is *Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses*, a sculpture that consists of a large, steel cage-like room, with an overhead observation ramp, constructed from prefab steel components in a design reminiscent of modernist architecture. The structure contains sculptural elements derived from the playroom objects used in the “open field” test room in certain experiments exploring primate affection conducted by Harry Harlow in the 1950s and 1960s at the Primate Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin. These objects have been enlarged to human scale and arranged in such a way as to evoke the abstract stage sets designed, beginning in the 1940s, by sculptor Isamu Noguchi for the American choreographer Martha Graham.

I have long been fascinated by Harlow's primate experiments—familiar to anyone who has taken a basic psychology course in an American university—and have previously made brief references to them in two works from 1982, the large-scale project *Monkey Island* and a videotape, *The Banana Man*. If for no other reason, Harlow's experiments are memorable because of the striking image of the monkey surrogate-mother statues that he designed for them. I have returned to this material once again because I continue to be puzzled by questions concerning the aesthetics of these objects, and their implied relationship to modernist fine art production.

Harlow's experiments concern the infant monkey's attachment to its mother, and were meant to defy contemporary theories of attachment, applicable to the human child as well, postulating that the infant bonds with the mother primarily for the alleviation of hunger. Harlow sought to shift focus away from this theory, which puts great emphasis upon the mother's breast, emphasizing, instead, a more general theory of tactile attachment. He constructed two surrogate monkey mothers: one covered with soft terrycloth in emulation of the furry body of the monkey mother, and another that was little more than a wire frame. The soft mother was not equipped with a feeding bottle; the wire mother was. The monkey infants showed a preference for the soft mother despite the fact that it did not provide nourishment. Harlow also conducted tests in which infant monkeys were put into terrifying situations, and demonstrated that the frightened infants found comfort through contact with their soft surrogate mother—so much so, in fact, that they quickly confronted and explored the very objects that had previously terrified them. The infants also formed lasting attachments to these surrogates and could recognize them even after quite long periods of separation. Because it focuses so intently on a tactile relationship to the mother, Harlow's work seems to have a strong antvisual bias. He offers little explanation for the visual design of the surrogate mothers. One would assume that the first model of a monkey surrogate mother would bear some visual relationship to an actual monkey, but this is not the case. Instead of using a stuffed monkey as a surrogate mother, for example, Harlow built something that looks much more like a modernist stylized figurative sculpture. The soft mother has a large round head, bicycle reflector eyes, simplified geometric renditions of the nose and mouth, and a streamlined terrycloth body. Its round face is rendered in a manner that corresponds to cartoon-like depictions of happiness. This surrogate resembles the stylized robotic sculptures of the Bauhaus-associated artist Oskar Schlemmer, or Max Ernst's sculptures of the 1940s that were influenced by primitive sculpture.⁵ The skeleton-like wire

mother has what Harlow describes as a “simple dog face”; it looks more like an animal skull. The visual implication is that the soft mother is alive and the wire mother dead. Harlow’s only stated reason for the difference in surrogate head designs was that it visually differentiated them—though he goes on to suggest that this visual difference is of little importance. In later experiments he demonstrates that surrogates with no heads at all perform just as well as those with heads. We might ask why no experiment was conducted that offered the monkey infant two “mothers” with no representational qualities at all. Harlow’s experiments originally grew out of the observation that infant monkeys developed strong attachments to simple cloth pads placed in their cages, in a manner reminiscent of a human infant’s attachment to a security blanket. Could it be that the infant monkeys were “in love” with these cloth pads? What was the rationale for sculpting them in the form of surrogate “mothers” in the first place?

There are many contradictory visual references in these experiments. While Harlow demonstrated that headless surrogates function just as well as those with heads, and that infants show no preference one way or the other for differently colored surrogates, he also stated that, at certain points in their development, monkeys begin to observe and manipulate the face of their surrogate mother. They will press a button to observe “visually attractive” objects, including their surrogate mother, in an inaccessible room. Questions arise about the experiments conducted in the open field test room. In some versions the “fear-inducing” object is noisy and active—generally a mechanical toy—but in other experiments, it is simply an unfamiliar object. While it seems obvious that a loud, moving object should frighten an infant monkey, why should it fear a silent and immobile toy bug? And if the monkeys are so visually inept, how is it that they differentiate between a bug-shaped object and the abstract play objects present within the same room? Some of these variables seem to depend on the stage of the monkey’s development and other factors. Nevertheless, the experiments strike me as having a very conflicted relationship to the visual, and the very fact that so little attention has been paid to their aesthetic nature (which was clearly viewed as virtually inconsequential) bears this out. Whatever motivated the design of the objects was not considered worthy of notice, or was completely unconscious.

It is this unconscious aspect of Harlow’s primate experiments that makes them so fascinating, and so disturbing. Clearly, most animal research is not truly meant to shed light on the behavior of animals. It is designed to reflect, in some manner, certain aspects of human behavior. Primate research could be considered a kind of theater that plays out contemporary conceits of the

nature of human existence using monkeys as its actors. Donna Haraway has written about primate research from a feminist perspective, pointing out how it has been used to legitimate sexist social theories. She cites an example of early primate research, conducted in the 1920s, in which baboon behavior was observed on a “monkey hill” in the London Zoo. Almost all of these animals were killed in brutal fights because the human-constructed social organization of the monkeys on this plot bore so little relationship to that of the animals in their natural habitat. What kind of useful information about animal societies can be gleaned from such research? Many of Harlow’s experiments seem specifically designed to produce dysfunctional and neurotic animals exhibiting pathologies common in human beings. In one such experiment, young monkeys were prevented from establishing relationships with other monkeys their own age, thus producing “mommy’s boy” monkeys. Other experiments produced catatonic monkeys, masochistic monkeys, sexually handicapped monkeys, and “bad mothers.”

Because Harlow’s experiments engage so wholeheartedly in personification, it is easy to understand why the general public embraced them when they were presented at the World’s Fair in 1964. Yet I find it somewhat strange that this empathic appreciation superceded any critical reading of the scenarios that were played out. If the experiments portrayed the human family, what kind of family is it? Where, for example, is the father in this model? What is the purpose of this exclusion? The imagination runs wild: Could this be some kind of Oedipal fantasy played out with monkeys, or an attempt at an antiphallic, matriarchal family model, or a cruel male world populated only by “dead” mothers, etc. etc. etc.? I’m actually shocked (this was the 1950s after all!) that no one complained that these experiments were morally suspect in that they only represented single-mother households. Looking at Harlow’s work as a kind of highly melodramatic and psychological theater—as lurid as any Tennessee Williams play—it is not such a great leap to Martha Graham’s dance theater work.

Graham is considered one of the preeminent American choreographers of the twentieth century. Schooled in the Orientalist dance of Ruth St. Denis, she went on to create her own dance form characterized by the expansion and contraction of the body and an emphasis on the dancer’s physicality: “Her dancers grip the floor with their feet rather than stand above it on their toes as in classical ballet.”⁶ Louis Horst, Graham’s mentor and the composer of much of her early dance music, links this to a “primitive” aesthetic: “In a primitive dance study the gestures are simple and direct like a child’s or an animal’s.”⁷ In what he calls an “Earth Primitive” dance study, “The

movements are in the lower areas and oriented to the floor. They can be clumsy and animalistic. . . . But always they are simple and meagerly articulated; lean and taut.”⁸ Animal references occur repeatedly in descriptions of Graham’s work. In *Dark Meadow*, she is a “scuttling, prehensile animal”;⁹ and the work contains “references to archaic memory, natural primitive consciousness, primal prehensile humanity, the cosmic cycles of the seasons, and the regeneration of the species through love, it is one long fertility ritual.”¹⁰ Once more, in relation to Isamu Noguchi’s stage design, “Graham does not dance within a set but on a stage which she can use, that has some nearer function than that of the eye. She prefers to climb over the set pieces, move, carry, refocus the objects of her stage as an animal moves in his scenery.”¹¹ It is interesting to consider this last description in relation to Harlow’s primate settings. They share the same anti-optical impulse, the same foregrounding of the tactile. The description of Noguchi’s set could easily apply to the décor of Harlow’s open field test room.

Despite these animal metaphors, the evocation of the primitive and animalistic in Graham’s work is not meant to rest simply in the realm of the material world. Noguchi goes so far as to call for an “an anti-materialist revolution,” stating that artists must now be “more concerned with the relationship of things than with things themselves. . . . The psychological factor looms large on our horizon.”¹² Martha Graham’s dance work is a kind of high psychological theater. Speaking of *Errand into the Maze*, Noguchi describes the stage as “a space conceived like the cave of the mind”¹³ (could it be one colored murky like a cheap tinted postcard?); and Graham describes one of Noguchi’s stylized set pieces as a “doorway . . . from which the child I never had comes forth; but the only child that comes forth is myself.”¹⁴ According to Graham, the goal of dance is “to make visible the interior landscape.”¹⁵ But, again, this is not a mundane, individuated psychology. It is one that, as Noguchi describes it, is part of a “primordial time of the mind.”¹⁶ It is a mythic, timeless, and shared psychology.

That Graham was attracted to the psychological theories of Carl Jung is revealed in her statement that “through art, which finds its roots in man’s unconscious— race memory—is the history and psyche of race brought into focus.”¹⁷ (If this sentiment were expanded to an evolutionary scale, the idea of Graham choreographing works for apes does not seem unfeasible.) Like Jackson Pollock and other artists, she underwent Jungian analysis herself in the mid-1940s, and she probably also found support for such ideas through her friendship with the mythologist Joseph Campbell. Around the same time that Graham began her analysis, she began choreographing her most

famous cycle of works: the so-called Greek or mythological dances that include *Herodiade* (1944), *Dark Meadow* (1946), *Cave of the Heart* (1946), *Errand into the Maze* (1947), *Night Journey* (1947), *Judith* (1950), and *Embattled Garden* (1958). All of these dances had sets designed by Isamu Noguchi, who collaborated with Graham on over twenty pieces. Noguchi says of the works of this period that they “went beyond specific legend to a general, amorphous state of somnolence from which all things come.”¹⁸ (Could this amorphous state of somnolence be the orgiastic spatiality of the Chinatown wishing well?) The amorphous is approached in a number of ways in these works. One is through the ambiguous representational nature of Noguchi’s props, which refuse to illustrate the narrative elements of the dance works. The set for *Night Journey*, an adaptation of the Oedipus myth, consists of a series of Brancusi-like sculptures arranged as steps leading up to a slanted, incestuous “bed” composed of bonelike forms. Whatever symbolic meaning these objects might have in relation to the Oedipus myth is certainly open to personal interpretation.

A second level of ambiguity resides in the nonspecific spatiality of these theater works. Noguchi, who later became famous for his architecturally related public sculpture and gardens, credits his stage experience with Graham as an important influence on this direction in his work.¹⁹ The space of the stage is inherently obscure, and Noguchi’s abstract props offer no clue as to scale. The only clear scale referent offered in the theater is that provided by the performers. But if the stage is “the cave of the mind,” then even this reference is denied—the performers become dream figures in a nether zone. Graham pushes this effect in her dance films, which were performed on a seamless stage so that there is no horizon line. The dancers seem to float in an abstract void.

In my *Test Room* sculpture, I want to produce a spatial ambiguity similar to that of the theater, but freed from the frame of the proscenium stage. Two walls of the cagelike structure, which encloses the enlarged versions of the test room playthings, have been replaced with Plexiglas. This relates stylistically to Harlow’s experiments in which infant monkeys are observed through windows, and where they, in turn, observe objects of desire through windows and clear walls that they seek to penetrate. One of these walls in my sculpture refers to the “fourth wall” of the proscenium stage. It is a “picture window” that frames the playroom objects in such a way as to evoke a Noguchi stage set. The second wall is composed of translucent white Plexiglas, and acts as a projection screen for a video documentation of various activities played out in the set. This video has been shot on a seamless stage, in a manner similar to Graham’s dance documentation, so that the action takes place in a very ambiguous space. The space of this videotape is clearly not that of the interior of the

cage. I hope, therefore, that the viewer experiences a kind of spatial crisis. The videotape documents a dance work choreographed by Anita Pace²⁰ in the manner of Martha Graham and performed in the Harlow-inspired stage setting, and includes actors who portray monkeys and actors who exhibit great anger or affection toward various props. This last section was greatly inspired by the films of Albert Bandura. In addition to the enlarged versions of Harlow's open field test room play objects, I have also constructed two "surrogates" based on Harlow's model but referring to a human rather than a simian subject. The various video clips are meant to frame the stage set in a variety of ways: (1) in relation to Noguchi's abstract (yet symbolic) sculpture, (2) in relation to the simple abstract toys Harlow provided his primate subjects, and (3) in relation to the surrogates used in Albert Bandura's famous experiments with children concerning mediated violence. I want to underline several aspects of these three approaches in order to clarify my poetic usage of these various subjects.

I am drawing a comparison between the ambiguous referentiality of Noguchi's sculptures and stage props and the simple abstract play forms that Harlow provides for his simian subjects. Noguchi purposely produced ambiguous objects—supposedly to escape quotidian definition—in order to promote psychological projection on the part of the viewer. Obviously, this was not Harlow's intention in his choice of monkey play objects, but I believe that there might be some unconscious relationships. Harlow does not provide his infant monkeys with "toys" found in their natural environment, rather, he provides them with what look to be baby or pet toys. This fact strengthens my contention that these experiments strongly engage in personification. Furthermore, the toys Harlow provides for his monkeys are consistently abstract. Representational objects are only introduced into the environment as "fear stimuli." The sole exception to this rule is the surrogate mother itself, which is a profoundly simplified depiction of a monkey. I wonder if Harlow was unconsciously reacting to theories concerning the design of children's toys in his decision to provide his monkeys with these particular objects. It has long been believed that young children show greater imagination when playing with unstructured materials—including such raw materials as paints and paper, clay, blocks, and boxes—than with highly realistic toys. It has been hypothesized that the abstract qualities of these materials promote a greater degree of fantasy play, and thus imaginative thought, than representational objects. The relationship between this supposition and Noguchi's beliefs is striking. A number of experiments have been conducted over the years to test this hypothesis in relation to child's play, but it has not been proven.²¹

Albert Bandura's experiments in the early '60s afford an interesting parallel to those of Harlow. Bandura used surrogates as well, but instead of objects of affection, his surrogates are the objects of violent aggression. If Harlow could be popularly described as the voice of the "love generation" (although a cruel one), then Bandura would be the voice of growing fear, the voice of a nascent paranoia regarding the mass media. Bandura's experiments were designed to examine the effect of mediated violence on young children. Children were exposed to an adult who pummeled a "Bobo" punching doll, a filmed version of the same action, and a "fantasy" film version of the action (an adult costumed as a cat who punched the doll in front of a backdrop of brightly rendered trees and butterflies). Despite the varying levels of mediation, the children uniformly mimicked the violent actions of the adult model. These experiments were used as a rationale to attack depictions of violence in the media, but they had another side effect. Once it had been ascertained that "mediation" desensitized one to violence, then it could be used for positive desensitization. For example, people with phobias could be exposed to films of the things that frightened them, thus lessening their fears. The experiments also seemed to spawn a growing trend to utilize surrogates for a variety of purposes. Following Bandura's experiments, surrogates were used for rage control. Victims of violent crimes suddenly had the opportunity to vent their anger on inanimate surrogate criminals. Sexual surrogates also appeared upon the scene. Before Harlow and Bandura, these would probably not have been considered acceptable therapeutic practices.

My interest in these experiments has to do with the questions they provoke about the symbolic meaning of the surrogates they deploy. The primary question is: For what do these surrogate objects stand in? What do they truly represent? This is a political question, because these are highly charged objects in the service of science and thus of truth. They are objects utilized to define reality.

In his essay "Psycho-analysis and the Problem of Aesthetic Value,"²² Herbert Read attacks the Freudian psychoanalytic view of art as reductive, suggesting it focuses too much on the subject matter of the work of art and not enough on its formal qualities, which Read sees as art's primary concern. To a certain degree, I agree with this criticism. It is not enough to view art as simply an illustration of a pathological symptom, a by-product of a problematic relationship to the real.²³ On the other hand, to posit that it is possible to have a strictly "phenomenological" relationship with objects in the world, and that that should be the main concern of the artist, strikes me as ridiculously naive—or, even worse, as a form of romantic mystification that seeks to raise art up above

common concerns. It's true that in my own work I surf between formal considerations provoked by my examinations of the work of Graham and Noguchi, of Harlow and Bandura. I had a lot of fun doing that, and get great pleasure from the myriad games I can play shuffling all of the variables I find within these various informational brackets. But was that my initial reason for going to this material in the first place? No, I don't believe so. Whatever formal games I have performed upon this material must, in the end, be reconsidered in relation to my daily experience. They must resonate in some truly felt way with my actual position in the world at this moment. Otherwise, art becomes a meaningless, useless diversion.

Of course, the manner in which art does this is complex and hard to define. While art must concern itself with the real, at the same time it throws any notion of the real into question. It always turns the real into a facade, a representation, and a construction. But it also raises questions about the motives of that construction.

Even though they seem to revel in the pathological, the works that I present in this exhibition are not meant to define art simply as a pathological by-product. But neither do they have the audacity to claim to exist on some level higher than the real. As Georges Bataille says of poetry—that form of language that pits language against itself in order to destabilize its definitional imperative: “starting from the moment when this unreality immediately constitutes itself as a superior reality, whose mission is to eliminate (or degrade) inferior vulgar reality, poetry is reduced to playing the role of the standard of things.”²⁴

NOTES

- 1 Most of the information about the history of Chinatown comes from a pamphlet produced by the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the area: *Chinatown Los Angeles 50th Year: The Golden Years, 1938–1988*.
- 2 On *Sad Sack*, see note 4 to “Three Projects,” in this volume.
- 3 A photograph of this event is found in *Chinatown Los Angeles 50th Year*.
- 4 See, for example, John C. Welchman, ed., *Rethinking Borders* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- 5 Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943), head of the Bauhaus’s sculpture and theater workshops from 1923 to 1929, produced numerous images and dance performances in which the body is diagrammed, schematized, or mechanized. On the sculptures of Max Ernst, see Werner Spies, ed., *Max Ernst: sculptures, maisons, paysages* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou [and DuMont], 1998).
- 6 Stephen Polcari, “Martha Graham and Abstract Expressionism,” *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* (Winter 1990), p. 13.
- 7 Louis Horst and Carroll Russell, *Dance Forms in Relation to Other Modern Arts* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1961), p. 59.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- 9 Robert Horan, “The Recent Theater of Martha Graham,” *Dance Index* 2, no. 3 (1947), p. 13.
- 10 Polcari, “Martha Graham and Abstract Expressionism,” p. 12.
- 11 Horan, “The Recent Theater of Martha Graham,” p. 15.
- 12 Isamu Noguchi, “Meanings in Modern Sculpture” (1949), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona and Bruce Altschuler (New York: Abrams, 1994), p. 33.
- 13 Noguchi, quoted in Robert Tracy, “Noguchi: Collaborating with Graham,” *Ballet Review* (Winter 1986), p. 13.
- 14 Graham, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 15 Graham, quoted in Polcari, “Martha Graham and Abstract Expressionism,” p. 3.
- 16 Noguchi, quoted in Tracy, “Noguchi: Collaborating with Graham,” p. 10.
- 17 Graham, quoted in Polcari, “Martha Graham and Abstract Expressionism,” p. 3.
- 18 Noguchi, quoted in Tracy, “Noguchi: Collaborating with Graham,” p. 11.
- 19 Noguchi, “The Sculptor and the Architect” (1968), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, p. 50.
- 20 The choreographer and dancer Anita Pace collaborated with Kelley on several projects in addition to *Test Room* (1999) alluded to here. These include *Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof* (1989), *Beat of the Traps* (1992), and *Pole Dance* (1997). Pace’s most recent dance performance is *Combat de Boxe*, performed with Carl Burkley to music by Mayo Thompson, Albert Oehlen, and Christian Marclay at the Patrick Painter gallery, Los Angeles, in July 2001.
- 21 Examples of such experiments include Mary Ann Pulaski, “Play as a Function of Toy Structure and Fantasy Pre-disposition,” *Child Development* 41, no. 2 (1970), pp. 531–37; J. L. Elder and D. R. Pederson, “Preschool Chil-

dren's Use of Objects in Symbolic Play," *Child Development* 49, no. 2 (1978), pp. 500–4; and Vonnice C. McLoyd, "The Effects of the Structure of Play Objects on the Pretend Play of Low-Income Preschool Children," *Child Development* 54 (1983), pp. 626–35.

- 22 Herbert Read, "Psycho-Analysis and the Problem of Aesthetic Value" (1950), in *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays toward an Aesthetic Philosophy* (New York: Horizon, 1960), pp. 76–93.
- 23 This view of art has, however, been articulated positively in relation to Martha Graham, whose work has been described as "a kind of privately deranged world in which some fragment of emotion has been allowed to become magnified until it crowds out every alternative." Horan, "The Recent Theater of Martha Graham," p. 11.
- 24 Georges Bataille, "The Use Value of D. A. F. de Sade (An Open Letter to My Current Comrades)" (1929–30), in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. and ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 97.

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A MINOR HISTORY: CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE AND MORGUE

JCW *"A Minor History" was published in English and French in the catalogue of the two-person exhibition Mike Kelley, Franz West at Hôtel Empain, Brussels, Belgium, curated by Catherine Bastide and Anne Pontégnie for OneTwoThree a.s.b.l. (December 10, 1999, to January 15, 2000), pp. 11–12 (in French in an unpaginated addendum). The catalogue also contains an introduction by Pontégnie; "Like Mike," a brief text by West; six scenes from the script of a theatricalized version of a conversation between West, Kelley, Bastide, and Pontégnie in which the original interlocutors were played by actors (accompanied by a note by Kelley and an exchange of letters); "A Chat between Andreas Reiter Raabe and Franz West"; and excerpts from an audio tour of the exhibition written by Kelley.*

Offering a candid glimpse of the scouring accumulations and object fetishism of a post-modern artist-appropriator, the audio tour details Kelley's devotion to particular hybrid objects, his attention to scraps and leftovers, "binge craft-buying sprees" and associative rationalizations for impulse flea market purchases, as well as the teetering research piles, gifts given and received, and other stuff inherited, handed down, found in the mail, or simply stumbled over. Above all, both text and exhibition reveal the multi-ply wit, formal intelligence, material finesse,



15. Mike Kelley, *Categorical Imperative* (1999). Two studio views. Photos: Fredrik Nilsen.

and collusive subjectivity that Kelley brings to the compositional arrangement and aesthetic annexation of this quasi-infinite series.

Categorical Imperative and *Morgue* are projects I made specifically for a two-person exhibition with Franz West in Brussels, in 1999. The idea behind them is simple: to use everything I had in storage, left over from other projects. *Categorical Imperative* consists of three-dimensional objects, while *Morgue* is made up of two-dimensional images. All of the items included were things that I had saved for some reason; they were interesting enough to keep, but had never been appropriate for use in previous works (though some of the images used in the *Morgue* collages were source materials for earlier projects). In most cases these things are not collectibles, and were not acquired because I liked them aesthetically in and of themselves: they were things I picked up specifically for the production of art. The two projects were a way to “clean house,” not just literally, but mentally as well. I was interested in why I had saved all of this stuff (in some cases for over twenty years) and in why these things had never been “right” for aesthetic usage. I thought this exercise would force me to confront some of my artistic preconceptions.

My first idea for the Brussels exhibition was to make a series of discrete sculptures out of these leftovers, somewhat in the manner of previous accumulation works I had made with craft materials. In those works I paired things based on visual similarities or metonymic relationships. I did not stick with this decision for very long. Once I had sorted all of my raw materials into rough categories, I found that few of them lent themselves to interesting compositional arrangement. The first group I composed, *Black and Yellow*, was made up of felt scraps sewn together and had fixed object relationships. This piece struck me as too “aesthetic,” especially when compared to the groupings composed of objects that really did not lend themselves to merger. After this work I no longer sewed, or otherwise attached, the objects. I simply dumped them into piles or, in some cases, where the grouping contained clothing or other wearables, arranged them on manikins. I lost interest in trying to make fixed compositions, as I felt that doing so produced objects that looked far too much like traditional, dada-influenced junk sculpture.

I wanted to avoid the “nostalgic” overtones present in much junk assemblage. This led me to make sculptures in which various objects are arranged on obviously new furniture-like con-

structions. Because of the associative qualities of the furniture's design, these works strike me as quite narrative in their effect. One looks somewhat like a dorm room desk, another like a child's play station, and a third like a patriotic display or study area. All call to mind some missing protagonist whose psychology is implied by the choice of objects displayed, and their relationship to the design particulars of their furniture-like pedestals. These works were also motivated by the fact that the objects displayed on them simply did not look good on the floor. In some cases, as with the framed pictures, the objects require a vertical orientation.

I became interested in seeing all of the groupings together in a mass, where they could be compared and contrasted, and I wanted a controlled diversity within that mass. A collection of objects of various sizes, heights, and weights looks more interesting than one low plane of similarly scaled material. So, despite the fact that I had given up trying to make objects that had fixed compositions, I still proceeded to think about the entire project in a formal manner. While the individual groupings in the *Categorical Imperative* project have no fixed relative placement, they were constructed with diversity in mind; there was some consideration of proportional relationships that would exist despite its specific composition in a given architectural space.

This formal consideration is not my dominant concern, however. I am more interested in the process of categorization, in the various criteria that I used in organizing the objects into groups. This corresponds to a general trend in my work of the last couple of years, which is a historical focus, or at least a kind of play with the historical roots of my conception of the formal. Such a "historical outlook" led me to adopt a kind of "show and tell" approach to the work, to add a textual element to it that explains how and why I came to have all of this stuff. Adopting this approach finally freed me from the nagging feeling that I had to produce discrete, finished works. *Categorical Imperative* and, to a lesser extent, *Morgue* simply became archives, and thus did not require compositional attention. In the case of *Morgue*, this is not quite true because, being collages, the pieces are fixed and cannot be adjusted. Yet, as the collages developed, I composed them less and less artistically until, by the end, I was simply fitting the images together like a mosaic. Categorical concerns are now more apparent than compositional ones. This is most obvious in the collages where the categories become mixed or unrecognizable. When a category is not easily recognized, viewers make recourse, I think, to the composition of the collage to provide meaning. But, these collages are just not that interesting compositionally, so the ones that are not clearly organized by type look pointless. I made the collages before I started working with the three-dimensional objects.

They were done very quickly, almost as a kind of warm-up exercise for the *Categorical Imperative* project.

I tried not to get too caught up in questions of style in the textual component of this work, which consists of flat-footed recollections related to the various archival elements. I want to present these texts, in spoken form, on a CD that viewers can listen to as they tour the exhibition, a format for presenting information common in museums. Because this explanatory text was not completed for the exhibition in Brussels, I tried to provide some of this information through an extemporaneous live performance done at the opening event. Accompanied by the local musical group Fan Club Orchestra (whose music is a kind of raw improvisational electronica), I talked about some of the categories and various individual objects. Because of this live interaction, I found it impossible to present the material in the uninflected manner I had intended. It was hard to resist responding vocally to the rhythms of the music and to other sound considerations. The performance became more musical—and more theatrical—than I had anticipated. Accordingly, the audience probably did not take in very much of what I was talking about.

In many ways *Categorical Imperative* is a failure in relation to my stated intentions, and somewhat deliberately so. Even though I claimed that the piece is primarily historical in orientation, this is not how I think the general viewer will understand it. Even if viewers listen to all of the explanatory textual material I provide, I don't think that this experience supersedes the strong visual, and formal, impact of the work. Nor do the texts say anything especially interesting about aesthetics. They are simply personal anecdotes and musings. Only the physical presence of the storyteller himself could, possibly, be strong enough to give these piles of junk some semblance of "historical" relevance. My presence would then be the historical point of reference that placed all of the disconnected objects on common ground (rooted in some notion of the psychological), and thus shifted the focus away from a formalist reading. On its own, however, the work is not capable of conveying this aura of the psychological. And, I must say, I am not particularly interested in a reading so dependent on my personal history and psychology. In the end, I think that the work is more interesting, and humorous, in its pretense to illustrate some kind of grand, social aesthetic history, than as an example of the random droppings of an individual. However, I suppose that the latter understanding of this accumulation of objects as "psychological evidence" could be understood, politically, as supporting the importance of a theory of minor histories as opposed to major History—an idea to which I do subscribe.

ON FOLK ART

JCW These responses to a questionnaire on folk art were published in French in the catalogue for the exhibition *Un art populaire* curated by Hervé Chandès (with Héléne Kelmachter and André Magnin) at the *Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain*, Paris (June 21 to November 4, 2001), pp. 71–72; an English version appeared in a supplement. Each of the thirty-eight artists— from Belgium, Brazil, China, Congo, Ghana, France, Japan, Italy, and the U.S.—who work for the most part with popular materials, including ceramic, papier-mâché, wood, paint, metal, and found common objects, were given the same set of four questions, and their responses, long or short, are the only texts printed in the catalogue. Kelley showed *In Memory of Camelot* (2000), a three-part sculpture using wood, beads, buttons, a figurine, glass, a bottle, a tree branch, and a framed newspaper; and several pieces from the *Memory Ware Flat* series (2001) in papier-mâché, glue, and acrylic, using beads, buttons, and jewelry on wooden panels. This text offers the most recent in a series of commentaries by Kelley on folk art and popular culture that includes “Three Projects” (1988), “*In the Image of Man*” (1991), “*Alma Pater (Wolverine Den)*” (1991), “*A Minor History*” (1999), and “*Memory Ware*” (2000–01), all in this volume.



16. Mike Kelley, *In Memory of Camelot* (2000). Wood, miscellaneous beads, buttons, jewelry, figurins, bell jar, framed newspaper, and memory ware bottle. Three parts: tree, 71 × 16 in.; pedestal, 67 × 12 in.; newspaper (framed), 30¹/₄ × 21¹/₄ in.

Q 1 What is folk art for you? What relationship does your work have to folk art?

Mike Kelley The general definition of folk art is that it's "people's art"—but the question is . . . what people, and . . . what art?

In the United States the term usually refers to traditional crafts, often those associated with outmoded technologies—handmade ceramics, furniture, sewn items, etc. The term "folk art" has a historical air about it and is not often used to describe contemporary crafts. For example, the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles would probably mount an exhibition of nineteenth-century hand-carved puppets made by farmers, but not the contemporary versions made by elementary school students. Also, folk art is traditional. It represents agreed standards of quality and beauty. This same museum might, therefore, mount an exhibition of crude landscape paintings by the self-taught Grandma Moses, but not Jim Shaw's collection of eccentric paintings found in contemporary thrift stores.¹ Grandma Moses's paintings picture an idealized and harmonious past, while Shaw's collection is a schizophrenic accumulation of works that obviously reflect a culturally diverse population. This image of "the people" is at odds with the nostalgic overtones of the term "folk art." Jean Dubuffet's concept of art brut is an interesting foil to this socialized notion of art. He too is drawn to artists who are self-taught and who use traditional and easily accessible materials, but only to those who do not adhere to the normative usage of these materials. Dubuffet was an avant-garde artist who hated the intellectual pretensions of the avant-garde, and thus searched for those who made avant-garde works unconsciously.²

I find this stance somewhat disingenuous. When somebody does something wrong, I want to feel sure it is done purposely. I was raised in a nonartistic environment, surrounded by anti-intellectuals, so I am suspicious of populism of any variety. I wanted to get out of my conservative and repressive neighborhood as quickly as I could. So I embraced the avant-garde position of art production whole-heartedly . . . and I still embrace it. I hate folk art. It is the art of satisfied slaves.

Q 2 Does your work have a relationship to tradition? Are the environment, roots, and memory important in your artistic practice? What about family and community?

MK Yes, in my work I play overtly with various aesthetic traditions. In art school I was trained in the modernist tradition, yet I felt compelled to return again and again to materials associated with my lower-middle-class upbringing, to reexamine those materials from a critical vantage point. At the time, I thought about this through the politics of “camp.”³ In retrospect, my strategies seem more closely linked to situationist methods of *détournement*.⁴ I do not like the goofiness of the camp sensibility—I have a meaner sense of humor. I was using these traditional materials in an intentionally perverse way—misusing them to reveal their conventionality.

I believe community is a very important issue in my work. The general reason given for the hatred of fine art by the masses is that it is a specialized language. If they understood this language, they would enjoy fine art—they just need to be educated. This is not the case. I believe modernist tropes can be understood by “regular” viewers—they simply do not like them. This is why I use craft materials. At first glance, many of my works look normative. It takes a moment to catch on that something’s wrong. This has provoked great anger in some of my audience, and I consider viewers who hate my work as important as those who like it. When I had my retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art,⁵ the comment book was filled with mean-spirited attacks, mostly in response to the works I had made using traditional craft materials. Because these works were primarily formal in their attitude, because they did not conform to traditional, “friendly” compositional usage, they were read as aggressive. At first I was taken aback by this response; then I realized that these viewers were probably correct to read aggression in my work, even though this was not my primary intention.

I also realized that people like to be angry; they look for insults even where there are none. This is the paranoid mass mindset. Many people go to museums to become upset; the outrage induced by the alien qualities of fine art makes them secure in their own righteousness and normality. My recognition of this popular striving for righteous anger prompted much of my most recent work, which frames my production through the popular psychological model of Repressed Memory Syndrome. I create fictions that conform to popular rationales for artistic production—that it is the by-product of a mind damaged by abuse. Despite the ridiculous nature of these fictions, the audience still has an investment to believe in them.

Q 3 Do you think that folk art can have an influence beyond its cultural territory and the context in which it was produced?

MK Yes, I believe all art functions on multiple levels of readership. African tribal sculpture found favor in Western twentieth-century art through formalist readings, not through any appreciation of its native cultural meaning. The popular embrace of any cultural production has to be viewed through the culture of reception. Artworks, themselves, have no intrinsic value.

Q 4 In your view, what relationship does folk art have with contemporary art? What place does it occupy?

MK There is a profound connection between contemporary art and folk art. Most young artists do not have an investment in traditional folk modes, so any contemporary definition of folk art would have to dispense with the “historical” associations connected with the term. The previous cultural infatuation with such outmoded forms as woodcarving, quilting, and glassblowing has been replaced by a nostalgia linked to such contemporary forms as graffiti, pop music–related fan production, and elementary school crafts, like macaroni collage. The nostalgia for simpler historical times has been replaced by a nostalgic craving for earlier periods of social development—namely childhood and adolescence. This trend is in line with the current merger of the art world with the youth culture–oriented entertainment industry. I believe the term “folk art” will quickly lose any associations it has with the idea of the handmade. This is not much of an issue in the current art world where artists “own” images through their appropriation of them. In essence, the mass culture of today is the folk art of tomorrow. Leaving the idea of nostalgia behind—since folk art is, really, a timeless art supposedly representing traditionally shared values—the mass culture we live in at the moment is already folk art.

NOTES

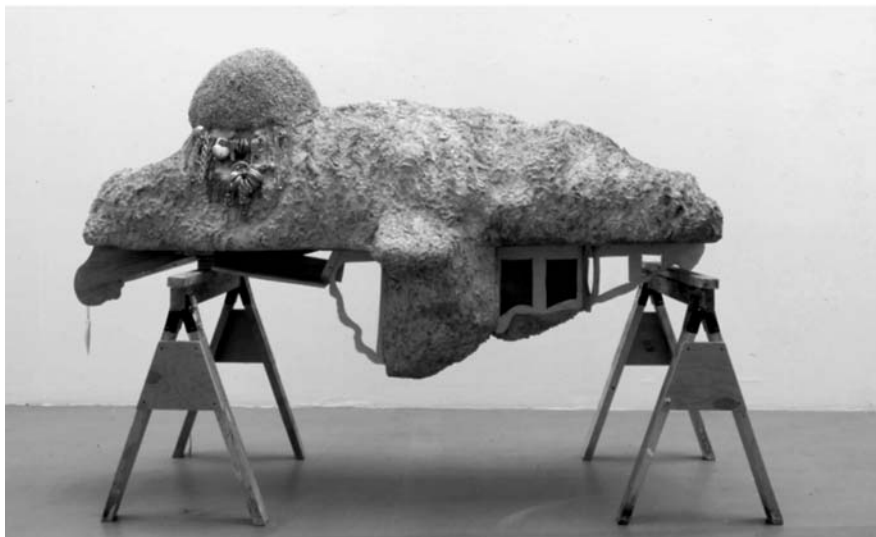
- 1 Anna Mary Robertson Moses (1860–1961) began to paint scenes from rural New York state in her seventies, and became a celebrity folk artist as “Grandma Moses” following her first one-person exhibition at the Galerie St. Etienne in New York City in 1940. On Jim Shaw’s thrift store paintings, see Jim Shaw, ed., *Thrift Store Paintings: Paintings Found in Thrift Stores* (Hollywood: Heavy Industry Publications, 1990).
- 2 See Jean Dubuffet, *Asphyxiating Culture and Other Writings*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988). See also Allen S. Weiss, *Shattered Forms: Art Brut, Phantasms, Modernism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992). Dubuffet wrote of *art brut*: “We understand by this term works produced by persons unscathed by artistic culture, where mimicry plays little or no part (contrary to the activities of intellectuals). . . . We are witness here to a completely pure artistic operation, raw, brute, and entirely reinvented in all of its phases solely by means of the artists’ own impulses.” Dubuffet, “Art Brut in Preference to the Cultural Arts” (1949), cited in Weiss, *Shattered Forms*, pp. 1–2.
- 3 On camp, see Susan Sontag’s key essay “Notes on Camp” (1964), in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1966), pp. 277–93. Kelley discusses aspects of camp in his essay “Cross-Gender / Cross-Genre,” in *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- 4 On *détournement*, see note 3 to “Some Aesthetic High Points,” in this volume.
- 5 Kelley’s retrospective, *Catholic Tastes*, curated by Elisabeth Sussman, was first shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (November 5, 1993, to February 20, 1994); it then traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (June 30 to August 11, 1994) and the Haus der Kunst, Munich (February 11 to April 17, 1995).

MEMORY WARE

JCW *The text below combines statements written for exhibitions at the Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris, in November 2000, and Jablonka Gallery, Cologne, in June 2001. For more on the ideas about popular culture and form discussed here, see "Three Projects" (1988), "In the Image of Man" (1991), "Alma Pater (Wolverine Den)" (1991), "A Minor History" (1999), and "On Folk Art" (2001), all in this volume.*

Memory Ware grew out of earlier projects such as *Educational Complex* (1995)—an architectural model composed of recreations of every building in which I was educated—and *Framed and Frame* (1999)—an altered reproduction of a fantasy landscape/wishing well found in the Chinatown district of downtown Los Angeles. *Memory Ware* is also related to other recent projects, including *Categorical Imperative* (1999), a large installation in which unused materials from twenty years of art production are organized. All these projects reflect my continuing involvement with memory and biography presented through references to historical artistic practice.

The exhibition at the Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot consists of a new large-scale work that, like *Categorical Imperative*, uses materials left over from the production of previous artworks. It also features a series of biomorphic sculptures and paintings that mimic a folk-art form called memory



17. *top*: Mike Kelley, *SS Memory Ware Hump* (2000). Paper pulp and acrylic, wood, tile grout, miscellaneous beads, buttons, jewelry, and sawhorses. 79 × 95 × 49 in. *bottom*: Mike Kelley, *SS Cuttlebone* (2000). Paper pulp and acrylic, wood, birdseed, cuttlebone, metal jewelry, and sawhorses. 73 × 106 × 44 in.

ware, in which decorative items such as buttons, beads, shells, and pieces of costume jewelry are used to decorate common household objects like bottles and ashtrays. The focus of the exhibition is reexamination and re-use, and I give playful “new life” to unused materials and discarded formal and thematic considerations in a manner similar to memory ware’s revitalization of cast-off objects.

The central sculpture in the exhibition, *Double Contour with Side Bars*, is constructed with remnants from *Educational Complex* and the “framed” component of *Framed and Frame*.¹ These leftovers are composed on two long tables presented side-by-side in a formally similar manner that forces a visual comparison between the two otherwise unrelated works. Foamcore scraps from *Educational Complex* have been used to make a fantastic architectural model of a ruined, dystopian city of the future; the faux-rock material used to construct the fantasy landscape in *Framed and Frame* has been formed roughly to mimic the skyline of this city. Encrusted within it is the leftover statuary from that earlier project. Two “coffee table” asides accompany these central pieces. One holds the foamcore subscraps left over from the construction of the ruined city. The geometrical scraps are fixed in the random configuration they assumed at the time of the sculpture’s completion, and are painted in an industrial orange in emulation of the typical coloration of 1960s welded steel sculptures by Anthony Caro, Mark di Suvero, Alexander Calder, Alexander Liberman, and others.² The other, glass-topped table contains a collection of science fiction paperbacks used as reference materials for the large collaborative installation I made with Paul McCarthy, *An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia* (1997).³ Many of the cover illustrations on these paperback novels reflect the science fiction aesthetic of the dystopian city model. The table is also used to display various objects unsuitable for use in the other sculptures, as well as a Belgian ceramic vase decorated with seashells in a manner similar to memory ware.

The other sculptures in the exhibition are roughly modeled after *Aerodynamic Vertical to Horizontal Shift* (1999)—a copy of one section of the “Chinese landscape” reconstructed in *Framed and Frame*. This sculpture is an ironic presentation of a “formless” section of a “formless” whole, shifted from vertical to horizontal orientation. The new sculptures made for the Hussenot show are “free” compositions that do not refer to any previous construction, but are similarly “formless,” horizontally oriented vessels that rest on sawhorses. Some have been decorated with the same kinds of glittering materials that coat memory ware. Because of their organic forms, these sculptures have a somewhat animal-like appearance. To offset this reference I have titled all of them with the prefix “SS,” as if they were sea-going vessels. Sections of some of them have been left unfinished, reveal-

ing their wooden substructures and emphasizing their interiors. *SS Future Primitive* is, in fact, an exact duplicate of the interior structure of *SS Cuttlebone*, left unadorned and suspended from the ceiling by thin cables. Because of its “lightness” and the absence of a rocklike skin, it is not easily recognizable as the twin of *SS Cuttlebone*, despite the fact that they are the same size and form.

Another sculpture, *Lazy Susan*, resting directly on the floor, takes the form of a low, roughly circular, concentric stacked construction that supports the odd assortment of encrusted bowls used to mix the faux-concrete material for *Framed and Frame*. It offers a conflation of landscape and still life references.

In Memory of Camelot (2000) is a sculpture memorializing the death of John F. Kennedy Jr. An elaborately decorated memory ware tree branch serves as a pedestal for a found figurine of “John John” as a child; this is accompanied by the framed front page of a newspaper announcing his death, which reproduces the photograph after which the statuette is patterned.⁴ A second, more classically designed pedestal holds a vintage memory ware bottle.

The paintings in the exhibition, called *Memory Ware Flats*, treat the painting support structure in a manner analogous to the common objects that are decorated to become memory ware. In *Memory Ware Frame*, however, the frame of the painting rather than the painting panel has been encrusted so that it is the primary focus in the work. The painting itself is only the compositional “underpainting” that is normally covered over with buttons, beads, etc.

The exhibition at Jablonka Gallery consists primarily of *Memory Ware Flats*. The materials used to decorate objects in the memory ware tradition are often keepsakes, things saved for sentimental reasons that prompt fond memories. My works are not loaded with similar sentiments, of course, as I am more interested in the themes of reexamination and reuse than in the production of nostalgia. The paintings in this exhibition are constructed out of similar decorative materials, but they are employed in different ways. Some paintings are completely covered with similarly sized buttons that, because of their uniformity, produce an intense optical effect when arranged in a field. Others are made up of a wider variety of decorative materials in a more garish “wild style” approach,⁵ while still others are composed of strings of brightly colored beads and have swirling psychedelic surfaces. All of the paintings, however, share a noncompositional, “overall” approach to their dispersion of materials.

In addition to the “paintings,” the exhibition also features two sculptures. Both two-part works play humorously with notions of sculptural balance. In *Balanced by Mass and Worth*, one

long, torpedo-like form is thickly coated with a wide variety of cheap decorative items. It is mirrored by a sister sculpture, the decoration of which is limited to one piece of jewelry: a 1940 campaign pin for failed presidential candidate Wendell Willkie.⁶ The monetary value of the mass of decorative materials on the one form is roughly equal to that of the single pin.

Balanced by Mass and Personification takes a more psychological approach to balance. A large bottle, profusely covered with colorful items, is paired with a smaller container for inexpensive household cleaning liquid that has simply been decorated with a minimal, facelike pattern. Despite the complexity and size of the larger container, it cannot compete with the empathic response provoked in the viewer by the personification of the more humble jug.

NOTES

- 1 For further discussion of *Educational Complex* (1995) and *Framed and Frame (Miniature Reproduction "Chinatown Wishing Well" Built by Mike Kelley after "Miniature Reproduction 'Seven Star Cavern' Built by Prof. H. K. Lu")* (1999), see, respectively, Kelley's essays "Architectural Nonmemory Replaced with Psychic Reality" and "The Meaning Is Confused Spatially, Framed," both in this volume.
- 2 The pictorial abstraction of color reference in Caro and other metal sculptors is discussed in the feature "Colour in Sculpture" in a special edition of *Studio International* ("Some aspects of contemporary British sculpture," January 1969).
- 3 For more on *An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia* (1997; included in their volume), see Ann Goldstein, "Painting as Architecture," in *Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy Collaborative Works*, exhibition catalogue (Toronto: Power Plant, 2000), pp. 38–49.
- 4 "John John" was the pet name for President John F. Kennedy's son, John Kennedy Jr. The found figurine reproduces the stance of John Jr. saluting the coffin at the funeral of his father. The *Los Angeles Times* cover story was captioned "JFK Jr., His Wife Feared Dead."
- 5 The term "wild style" refers to graffiti style. Wild style is differentiated from the simple "tag" (a stylized signature) by its more complex treatment of letterforms and color. Kelley's use of the term in relation to paintings composed of strings of beads isn't quite accurate, since wild style refers specifically to a manner of lettering. Kelley felt it was appropriate, however, as the letterforms in wild style are often so distorted that they are unreadable, and the general visual effect is one of swirling arabesques of color.
- 6 A New Deal critic and author of the internationalist *One World* (1943), Wendell Wilkie (1892–1944) was the Republican candidate who lost to Franklin D. Roosevelt by nearly five million votes in the U.S. presidential election of 1940.

BLACK OUT

JCW *Artists Take on Detroit: Projects for the Tricentennial, curated by MaryAnn Wilkinson and Rebecca Hart at the Detroit Institute of Arts (October 19 to December 31, 2001), was intended as a celebration of Detroit's tricentennial year. The exhibition consisted of ten mixed-media projects loosely connected to the city, past and present, by both Detroiters and non-Detroiters, including the Destroy All Monsters Collective (Cary Loren, Mike Kelley, and Jim Shaw), displayed in and around the museum's special exhibition galleries. Kelley's statement is available in a slightly different version in the online catalogue <<http://www.dia.org/artiststake/projects/kelley.html#>>, along with a video clip of an interview with Kelley about the exhibition and slide shows of the installation and the Detroit river series. Black Out was recreated at Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles, April 20 to May 31, 2002.*

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For *Artists Take on Detroit: Projects for the Tricentennial*, I produced a new installation collectively titled *Black Out*. The project consists of a variety of elements, including a series of "documentary" photographs, "manipulated" photography, and a large-scale mosaic sculpture. The installation arose from my interest in the contemporary pop psychological theory of Repressed Memory Syndrome.¹ Beginning in 1995, I began to experiment with this theme in works such as *Educational*



18. Mike Kelley, *John Glenn Memorial Detroit River Reclamation Project (Including the Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968–1972, Wayne/Westland Eagle)*, detail (2001). Foam, fiberglass, PC-7, ceramic, glass, metal, wood, Gatorfoam, Plexiglas, and 441 black-and-white, sepia-toned framed photographs. 136 × 18 × 249 in. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

Complex, an architectural model combining every educational institution I ever attended.² Those sections of the different structures that I could not remember have been left blank, the stated reason being that they were sites associated with some kind of abuse. Eventually, I want to “recover” all of these repressed atrocities and produce them as videotape narratives—the plot lines of which will be based on general models found in repressed memory literature and self-help books (fleshed-out with details taken from my own experience). The mise-en-scène of these fictive victim-scenarios will be based on photographs of “extracurricular activities” I have collected from old high school yearbooks. Examples of the narratives I am describing can be found, in prose form, in my photographic series *Timeless/Authorless* (1995), where they are framed as newspaper clippings, thus giving a sense of historical believability. So far, I have directed one of these videotapes, *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)* (2000).³ For a related project, the *Missing Time* series of paintings, I attempted to relearn to paint in the manner of my college years, and presented the results as a form of “art therapy” meant to confront the “institutional abuse” of my academic formalist painting training.⁴

My installation for the Detroit Institute of Arts grew out of a trip I took to Detroit in 1998 to work on two separate projects. For one of these I searched the archives of the local newspaper (the *Wayne/Westland Eagle*) from the Detroit suburb where I grew up, and documented every example of what might be considered “local culture.” I limited my exploration to the years between 1968 and 1972, from the period when I first developed an interest in fine art to when I left home. I photographed the images and articles that I felt fit this category, but left vestiges of surrounding material to provide an overall cultural context. My definition of local culture is broad, including overtly aesthetic examples, like arts and crafts shows and music concerts, as well as civic events such as parades and holiday spectacles. But it also includes what could be construed as “countercultural” activities, like vandalism and drug activity. I documented nearly 150 examples providing, I believe, a good overview of my milieu at the beginning of my artistic development. Three versions of each photograph were made, printed on different paper stocks, resulting in a total of around 450 images. The different paper types radically affect the look of the photos. One paper produces a very high contrast image, giving the photograph a documentary look; another is warmer in tone and more in line with the tradition of “art photography”; while the last variety is a sepia-tone paper that gives the image a “nostalgic” feeling. The photographs have been grouped according to different associational systems, and mounted on double-sided 4 × 8 feet vertical panels, which may be

pulled, like drawers, out of two display cabinets. This work is titled *Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968–1972 (Wayne/Westland Eagle)*.

A second element of *Black Out* consists of photographs documenting a boat trip up and down the Detroit River, during which I visited most of the islands in the Detroit area. In contrast to the historical nature of the *Pictorial Guide*, this project was meant to reflect fantasy life. The islands represent exotic locales, mysterious zones in proximity to Detroit but far removed from it. My stated purpose for this trip was to search for the Land O' Lakes Indian maiden, a fictive character pictured on the carton of Land O' Lakes butter.⁵ She was the object of my childhood sexual fantasies because when the butter carton is folded, her bare knees become her naked breasts. Everyone my age was familiar with this juvenile game. I photographed a model, dressed as the Land O' Lakes Girl, as if she were caught by surprise in the forest of Peche Island. This black-and-white photograph mimics the famed "Bigfoot" photo—with the figure in the distance, obscured by foliage.⁶ Another large color photograph pictures the Land O' Lakes Girl as a hallucinogenic, butter-colored vision—a romantic image of the preindustrial natural landscape that once was Detroit.

My boat trip took me to Sugar Island, Stony Island, Fighting Island, Grassy Island (Canadian), Zug Island, Peche Island, Belle Isle, and Bob-Lo Island. The islands present an amazing environmental diversity, ranging from industrial wasteland to virgin growth. Perhaps the most surprising to me was Bob-Lo Island, which had been a popular amusement park when I was a child.⁷ Now the park has been bulldozed and the island has an eerie sense of abandonment. I photographed each island using black-and-white film, and took a sample of its soil. A selection of these straight documentary photographs, along with similar photographs taken in and around the neighborhood in which I was raised, have been edited into a portfolio of twenty-five photographs, *Photo Show Portrays the Familiar*. The title was lifted from one of the stories I had photographed from my local newspaper, reporting a show by a Detroit-area documentary photographer.⁸

Another series of photographs from the same trip, this time shot in color, images the shoreline of the Detroit River, seen from the boat. A technical malfunction in the camera produced photos that are primarily black, with only a small strip of the film frame properly exposed. At first I was upset that all of my color photographs were unusable, then I realized that the camera error was providential. For, these black, empty areas perfectly represent the "missing time," the blocked-out trauma described in Repressed Memory Syndrome literature, and are analogous to the unfinished sections of *Educational Complex*. Eight of these photographs have been grouped in a series and

arranged horizontally. Fragments of landscape fade to black and then open up to new, alien locales. The effect is akin to falling asleep in a car and awakening on occasion to radically different vistas. The photo series is titled *Black Out (Detroit River)*.

On a second trip to the Detroit area in 2001, I visited the artist Gerome Kamrowski, an ex-teacher of mine, at his home in Ann Arbor, and photographed his sculpture garden.⁹ Again, a technical malfunction resulted in a set of mysterious images. Developing my negatives, I found that the entire roll was covered with inexplicable chainlink-shaped, white wave patterns, especially evident on a strip of underexposed frames of film. I have printed four of these frames as one image in a long horizontal photograph titled *Psychic Waveforms (Gerome Kamrowski's Sculpture Garden, Ann Arbor, MI)*. Like the *Black Out (Detroit River)* series, this photograph purports to display the direct effect of psychic activity on photographic film.

Around one small island in the Detroit River I discovered what seemed to be the remains of a dumpsite from the 1920s or '30s. The water was cluttered with metal, glass, and ceramic debris. In 2001, I went back and collected a considerable supply of this material, initially intending to roll a large amount of it into a giant lump, in the manner of a dung beetle, stuck together with black silicon rubber (black like the absent "memory-zones" in the river photos). I was attracted to this debris because it is similar to the kinds of material I have been using in a series of recent sculptures of expansive biomorphic forms decorated with costume jewelry and other shiny and colorful items. They were inspired by a bottle made in the tradition of memory ware, coated with buttons and beads, that I found at an antique fair in Toronto.¹⁰

In the spirit of memory ware, I decided to coat an object that was recognizable, like the bottles and ashtrays utilized in that craft form, rather than an ambiguous, bloblike form as I had been doing. So, I used the dredged debris to construct a statue of the astronaut John Glenn.¹¹ As in my original conception, the shards have been set in a black adhesive—a color that accentuates the individual nature of each piece of debris so that the figure has a disconnected, multipart feel to it, somewhat like a stained-glass window.

I chose Glenn, in part, simply because he is such a recognizable public figure—a male counterpart to the popular, fictional Land O' Lakes Girl. I also intended an ironic comment on the "nostalgic" aspects of the project, for the figure is based on a statue of Glenn that was in the library of my high school—which was, in fact, named in honor of the astronaut and future senator. Executed in a strange lumpy manner—probably in emulation of the pinched surface style of

modernist sculptors like Alberto Giacometti¹²—the school statue always reminded me of the astronaut in the 1959 science fiction film *First Man into Space*.¹³ After an ill-fated mission to space left him covered with a rocklike coating, the astronaut returned to Earth as a blood-sucking vampire. He looked like a human clinker, and that's exactly what the statue of Glenn in my high school looked like.

My version of the Glenn statue is much larger than the original, and has the imposing presence of the heroic statuary of socialist realism. It is grouped with several large color photographs: one depicts the original statue from my high school; another shows a carving of the mythical Bigfoot from the Redwoods area of northern California. Both photographs have been colorized in a very unnatural manner that does not conform to the shape of the statue depicted. Their fractured, spotty coloration mimics the mosaic surface of the Glenn statue, the form of which is destabilized in a similar way. Another pair of large-scale photographs shows debris scattered on two of the Detroit River islands, in a manner that is once again reminiscent of the surface treatment of my statue. Finally, a video loop of the moaning, existential figure of the astronaut from *First Man into Space* will be displayed. As with the photos, but in a manner that changes constantly—like a computer screen-saver—this image will also be colorized.

The statue of John Glenn is linked to the two cabinets containing the *Pictorial Guide* by a series of low, ramplike structures that hold the materials left over from its construction. The ramps are organized so as to produce a walkway around the figure, with the cabinets acting as entry houses at each end. One of the colorized photos of Glenn and Bigfoot hangs on each cabinet. The entire assemblage is titled *John Glenn Memorial Detroit River Reclamation Project (Including the Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968–1972, Wayne/Westland Eagle)*. The project's remaining photographs surround this central unit.

A related group of sculptures, titled the *Lingam and Yoni* series, after the Hindu iconography representing the male and female principles, was constructed using the soil samples I collected from each island. Each work consists of a phallic “lingam” set within a vaginal “yoni” basin, atop a round pedestal. The lingam's size was determined by the amount of clean soil in each sample, and that of the yoni by the amount of stone and detritus, which was arranged within the yoni basin in a naturalistic recreation of the groundcover of the island from which it was collected. I chose to sculpt the island soil into the forms of the lingam and yoni to emphasize the sexual fantasy nature of my original desire to explore the islands of the Detroit River.

NOTES

- 1 For a more extensive discussion of Repressed Memory Syndrome, see Kelley's "*Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered*," in this volume.
- 2 For discussion of *Educational Complex*, see Kelley's essay "Architectural Nonmemory Replaced with Psychic Reality," in this volume.
- 3 See the "Video Statements" section of this volume for a description of *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)*.
- 4 The exhibition and its themes are discussed in "*Missing Time*," in this volume.
- 5 See note 1 to "Land O' Lakes/Land O' Snakes," in this volume.
- 6 The photograph emulates the aesthetic of the infamous Bigfoot film footage shot in northern California by Roger Patterson and Robert Gimlin in 1967. For believers in the existence of Bigfoot—the Sasquatch, or giant primate—the grainy film footage is the ultimate proof. See Coleman Loren, *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1983).
- 7 Bob-Lo Island is a Canadian island eighteen miles downriver from downtown Detroit. Bob-Lo (which became the official name of the island in 1949) is the anglicized pronunciation of *Bois Blanc* (island of the white wood), named by the French for the birch and beech trees that covered the island. The island was acquired in 1949 by wealthy Americans who transformed it into an amusement park with a roller coaster, exotic animal zoo, and other attractions. The park closed in the mid-1990s, and the attractions have been razed.
- 8 The title for the series comes from a *Wayne Eagle* newspaper article from mid-May 1967 on an exhibition of photographs by Joe Clark, a.k.a. the Hill Billy Snap Shooter, an "internationally known photographer and illustrator." Joe Clark has published several books of his photographs.
- 9 For more on Gerome Kamrowski, see note 22 to "*Missing Time*," in this volume.
- 10 For a description of this series, see Kelley's "*Memory Ware*," in this volume.
- 11 John Hershel Glenn (b. 1921) piloted the Mercury-Atlas 6 "Friendship 7" spacecraft during the first U.S. manned orbital space mission, launched on February 20, 1962. In 1974 he was elected to the first of four terms as U.S. Senator from Ohio. He retired from politics in 1998, but returned to space the same year (October 29 to November 7) as a member of NASA's Shuttle STS-95 Discovery mission.
- 12 Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) was an associate of the surrealists between 1929 and 1934, and had his first one-person exhibitions in Paris in 1932 and in New York two years later. Giving up his earlier surrealist "objects," Giacometti returned to the human figure in the later 1930s, developing a sculptural project powerfully focused on scale, texture, and psychological intensity.
- 13 *First Man into Space* (dir. Robert Day, 1959).

ON SOME FIGURATIVE ARTISTS OF THE LATE 1960S: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FOR *EYE INFECTION*

JCW This discussion was the result of a set of questions sent to Kelley (similar questions were posed to the other artists in the exhibition) by Jelle Bouwhuis on the occasion of the exhibition *Eye Infection*, curated by Christiaan Braun at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (November 3, 2001, to January 20, 2002). The exhibition (whose title is borrowed from a 1967 drawing by Los Angeles artist Ed Ruscha) placed Kelley's work alongside that of Robert Crumb, Jim Nutt, Peter Saul, and H. C. Westermann. Robert Storr in his catalogue essay calls the group a "loose confederation of contrarian sensibilities" who issue a torrent of "slangy distortions" (p. 14) and "indigenous grotesquerie" (p. 24) against what they perceive as the masquerade and false comfort of mainstream America's cultural self-imagination. Works exhibited by Kelley included *Pay for Your Pleasure* (1988) (for further discussion of which, see "Three Projects," in this volume); pieces from the *Incorrect Sexual Models* series (1987); *Territorial Hound* (1984); *Trickle Down* and *Swaddling Clothes* (1986) and *Exploring* (1985); and the twelve-part *Sad Sack Series* (1998) done in pencil, colored paper, and pen on paper. The discussion with Kelley was published not in the *Eye Infection* catalogue but in the *Bulletin of the Stedelijk Museum* (vol. 14, no. 6, pp. 6–11), where it appeared in Dutch and English. Both Storr and Bouwhuis acknowledge the importance to the ex-

hibition and its context of Kelley's essay "Foul Perfection: Notes on Caricature," first published in Artforum (January 1989), and reprinted with minor changes in the companion volume of Kelley's writing, Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism.

The discussion was continued, between Kelley and Storr, in January 2002, with the addition of three more questions (nos. 5–7, posed by Storr) and responses. This longer version, published with brief deletions under the title "Obscured Visions" in Artforum (March 2002), pp. 114–19, is reprinted here with minor changes and notes.

Q 1 In your article in *Artforum* published in 1989, more than a decade ago, you seem to take the history of the caricature as an introduction to then-recent American art. How does the work of artists like H. C Westermann, Peter Saul, Robert Crumb, and Jim Nutt relate, in your opinion, to this history and to your work?¹

Mike Kelley In that article I was primarily addressing "postmodern" trends in the art world in the late '80s. Despite the fact that they made superficial reference to modernist tropes, my premise was that many artworks from that time were exaggerations or parodies of modernist traditions and, as such, should more appropriately be thought of as caricatures than as a real extension (or rejection) of those traditions. Neo-geo is a good example: I do not believe that the paintings of Peter Halley have much to do with the history of hard-edge abstract painting. So I was not discussing works that looked like traditional caricature. Since the artists in *Eye Infection* engage more overtly with the pictorial tradition of physiognomic caricature, I don't think that my article has much bearing on their work.

The works of Westermann, Nutt, Crumb, and Saul are, I think, part of the avant-garde modernist tradition. Their deformations of the human figure can be related to the figurative distortions found in expressionist or surrealist art, for example. In my opinion, the one thing that separates these artists from those traditions is that distortion is desublimated in their work. The deformation of the figure in works by de Kooning or Picasso is generally ascribed to formal exploration, not cruel intent. Coming at the tail end of modernism, the artists

in this exhibition could no longer subscribe to such sublimated readings of modernist practices of distortion. All their works have elements of black humor, and they overtly embrace cruelty and parody. In this sense, their works could be seen as part of the historical tradition of caricature—but it is also obvious that this is not the whole story. I do not believe that these artists relate in any important way to the overtly caricature-like practices of, say, Otto Dix. With the exception of Crumb, whose work is complicated in this regard by the fact that it is generally narrative, I do not think of these artists primarily as “figurative.” Abstract, compositional motivations figure largely in their work—though this aspect of their practice seems purposely problematized.

As far as their influence on my own work is concerned, they are all artists I very much admired when I was young, in the late 1960s and early '70s. In one way or another, they all had an effect on me. When I was in my early teens, Robert Crumb was a god to me. Before I saw Zap Comics, I had little interest in “fine art.” I would argue heartily that the underground cartoonists were fine artists—both ideologically and formally, their works are so much in contradiction to the history of mainstream cartooning that they could not be seen as otherwise. Also, their adoption of the comic book form as a presentational forum outside of the gallery system links them to other radical avant-garde movements in the '60s, such as the Happenings artists and Earth artists, who also sought to escape the confines of the gallery system. This is a point not often made relative to the practice of the underground cartoonists. Without the influence of Crumb it is possible I might never have become an artist, since I had not been confronted with “radical” or avant-garde art before seeing underground comic books.

Later, in college, I was particularly enamored with the paintings on Plexiglas by Jim Nutt. I saw them as very amusing comments on the Greenbergian obsession with flatness, a problem solved by Nutt's application of the paint onto the rear of a clear support so that the surface was completely free of texture. I also preferred Nutt's usage of found images to the prevailing mode, as exemplified in the paintings of Robert Rauschenberg—who was, and is still, considered one of the major “geniuses” of the '60s. Rauschenberg used mass cultural images that were so omnipresent that they could be understood as analogous to abstract paint gesture—they could be looked through as signs emptied of meaning. This is an atti-

tude that continued into the 1980s with painters like David Salle. What I liked about Nutt's paintings was that he chose mass cultural material that was so low and degraded, such as the abject advertisements found in the back of tabloid newspapers, that they were simply impossible to render invisible. I think of Nutt (at least in this period), like Rauschenberg, as primarily a formalist painter. Yet I find his play with abstract/representational signficatory tension to be far more radical and complex than the tasteful, Hans Hofmann-inspired compositions of Rauschenberg and many other compositional pop artists of the period (Larry Rivers for example).

I was also a huge fan of Peter Saul's early gestural paintings of commodities and war subjects. I never thought of Saul as a political, social realist artist as he is generally portrayed. His depictions of these subjects revel in their cruelty, and are too formally perverse to be believable as liberal social commentary. Anyone who sees them as such is obviously projecting those sentiments upon them in an attempt to sublimate, to make socially acceptable, imagery that Saul has gone out of his way to render impossible to accept as socially responsible. This was his game, as I understood it. I thought his paintings were amazing deconstructions of the pretentious transcendentalism, and the ahistorical nature, of abstract expressionism—and also the "elevated," self-righteous position of "political" art, though I think the second of these readings is the less important of the two. For, again, I think Saul is primarily a formalist, not a caricaturist, at heart. He reveals the lie of the dominant painterly theories of compositional order of his period. Compositional foregrounding, abstract motivation, is a game that renders signification, and thus moral readings, meaningless. Yet Saul does this in an overtly desublimated, unapologetic way. In Saul's hands formalism, the exemplary "socialized" mode of aesthetic production at that moment, itself is rendered as a cruel, dehumanizing practice—yet he partakes in it. For this reason I believe Peter Saul is one of the most important formalist painters of the 1960s.

I must say, though, that I was most interested in the works of Nutt, Saul, and, to a lesser extent, Westermann (though I do admire Westermann's parodies of folksy Americana), during my undergraduate student years when I was primarily a painter. The problematic issues raised by their work relative to formal composition and moral readings continues to interest me to this day, however, and still informs my work.

Q 2 The work of these artists might easily be taken as a counterpart to the mainstream abstract art in America in the 1960s and '70s. Do you think that your work, or at least the narrative aspects of it, helped to pave the road to the current recognition of their work?

MK It is only the current historical construction of the 1960s art world that renders these artists as peripheral. As I have pointed out above, as a student, I was as familiar with these artists' works as the works of the '60s heroes of today—artists like Warhol, Stella, etc., etc., who have been institutionally glorified. The reason for these artists' historical exclusion probably has to do with the fact that their works too overtly questioned dominant aesthetic standards of the time. I suppose the recent acceptance of my work may have something to do with a critical reevaluation of these artists. I have, in some cases, written about their work myself, or spoken of them in interviews. But their reevaluation is probably simply the by-product of our "postmodern" period, in which many modernist canonical assumptions and figureheads are being reassessed.

Q 3 Do you think the social and political criticism, the low (or bad) art attitude and narrative aspects in the work of the older artists in *Eye Infection* today are better off in other media than painting and drawing, for example with regard to *Pay for Your Pleasure*?

MK All of these artists work with specific mediums, and the "content" of their work must be considered in relation to those mediums, and their attendant discourses and histories. It is unfair to judge their work based on considerations outside of their practices. Coming out of the conceptualist milieu myself, I invested far less in specific materials than they did. So, our works are not really comparable in that regard; any comparison between us would have to be based on more general intentions.

Q 4 Your work also seems to employ a socially critical point of view toward the "American way of life." Do you feel the American way nowadays is as ugly as it was in the '60s? Has it improved or gotten worse?

MK Europeans tend to see my work as being more specifically about anti-Americanism than I do. I think that is their desire. My work concerns many aspects of American life, and my concerns

are just as often about poetics as they are about “critical” commentary. The critical aspects of my work are generally purposefully conflicted and unclear, allowing for readers to establish their own positions. This is overtly the case in *Pay for Your Pleasure*. This work only adopts the look of didactic propaganda; it does not successfully function as “message art.” It is really a play with the pictorial conventions of political art. I would say that my work is more generally analytical than it is critical. I am interested in playing with, and exposing, the conventions of visual language. Sometimes this is critical in intention; sometimes it is simply playful. Though, I must admit, I have a tendency toward black humor.

Q 5 You’ve emphasized the formal aspects of these artists’ work and downplayed the element of overt caricature. Nevertheless, the content of the work was, and is, transgressive. Granted the need to avoid clichéd humanism, what do you make of the social and political aspects of the work?

MK In relation to fine art production, “transgression” is a complex topic. Most Americans, I believe, would find the works of Ellsworth Kelly, Richard Serra, or Robert Rauschenberg far more transgressive, because of their reductive nature, than the works found in *Eye Infection*. The artists in *Eye Infection* purposely utilize popular illustrative tropes. One hundred years ago that might have seemed transgressive (within the fine art world)—but surely not now. Saul and Nutt, for example, have made cruel and ugly depictions of the human form, but they are no more ugly than the graffiti found in every public bathroom in the country (or de Kooning’s paintings of women for that matter)—and such drawings are not meant to be transgressive, they are designed to be funny or erotic. If the works of Saul and Nutt from the 1960s were transgressive, their transgression was aimed specifically at the art world itself. American pop art, as exemplified by Lichtenstein and Warhol, was extremely “cool” and overtly classical in its outward appearance. Obviously, the artists in *Eye Infection* were reacting against such tasteful restriction. Now, this negative reaction is itself a form of social commentary, for social forces were certainly at play in the coolness of American pop (and one need only look at such European pop artists as Öyvind Fahlström and Erró to see the difference).² But this is hardly social commentary in the general sense of the term. As I pointed out before, in relation to Saul’s Vietnam paintings (which certainly do not function as propaganda art), I do not

believe it is proper to see these artists' works primarily as addressing social, rather than aesthetic, concerns. Of course, one cannot truly separate the social and the aesthetic, as both relate to all art production and I do not wish to fall into an endless well of generalities. I am simply trying to point out here that if these artists really wanted to make effective political art, or construct images of social realities, they would have done so. But they did not, and instead they made works that refer overtly to their own status as *art objects*. Robert Crumb is the exception here. Many of his drawings and narrative strips depict very specific social milieus, with very specific critical intent, which could be understood as politically (or at least ethically) motivated. However, this is not always the case. In other works Crumb plays, instead, with the conventions of the narrative strip in a far more formal and playful way. That would represent a different kind of politics—a politics of the formal—as such works address the social conventions and historical construction of the comic strip. I believe that this is the kind of politics more generally engaged in by the artists included in *Eye Infection*.

Q 6 Has the divide between New York pop and these essentially Midwest or West Coast artists been overstated? Besides geography, are there more substantial dynamics of class and taste at issue?

MK Artists are a mobile lot and generally well aware of national and international developments in art. All of the artists included in *Eye Infection* have shown internationally, including exhibitions in the American art capital, New York City. Of course, taste is an issue, and in a sense this is linked to geographical centrality and power. Contemporary art history has been constructed in America primarily with reference to the powerful institutions centered in New York City. The historical conditions that have led to the domination of New York styles is far too complex to describe here. But I will say that New York regionalism is, in effect, presented as national sentiment. If the artworks of Saul, Nutt, Westermann, and Crumb are labeled aberrations, it is simply because they lie outside of what has been deemed proper New York aesthetics. To link their “strangeness” to other geographical locations in the United States is just an easy way to explain it away. But no city in America is full of Peter Sauls or H. C. Westermanns.

You can't really determine the class of an artist by the look of a work. There's too much facade in art production. I think it's safe to say that none of the artists in *Eye Infection*,

at least in their early works, attempt to look “classy” (though Jim Nutt’s later paintings do look “classy” to me: they are a mixture of old master portraiture and elegant Picassoesque distortion—definitely a “classy” combination). If these works are not “classy,” there are plenty of other signifiers of “quality” present in them—even if they are often used in the service of perversity. No one, for example, could contest the fact that Westermann is an exceptional woodworker, but few would embrace his aesthetics.

Q7 What effect has the “wise-guy” stance of Saul and Westermann had on the treatment of their work, and do you think that your interest and that of other more conceptually-oriented artists has changed things?

MK I don’t think the “wise-guy” stance of Saul and Westermann has anything to do with their “marginal” status in the American art world. That would have to be a result of the work itself, because the romantic image of the ornery anti-intellectual artist is the one popularly embraced in America—Pollock is the standard model.

NOTES

- 1 For further information on Robert Crumb, see note 24 to *“Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered,”* in this volume; on Jim Nutt, see *Jim Nutt* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Milwaukee Museum of Art, 1994)—Kelley also discusses Nutt’s work briefly in *“Missing Time”*; on Peter Saul, see *Peter Saul* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d’Art, 1999); and on H. C. Westermann, see *H. C. Westerman*, the catalog of an exhibition curated by Lynne Warren and Michael Rooks at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, June 30 to September 23, 2001 (traveling to other venues including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 2002).
- 2 On Öyvind Fahlström, see Kelley’s essay *“Myth Science,”* in *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). Erró was born in 1932 in Olafsvik, Iceland. He moved to Paris in 1958 where, between 1961 and 1966, he exhibited at the Salon de Mai, and staged the Happening *Catastrophe* with J. J. Lebel (1962). His paintings combine elements of the comic and science fiction with stylistic techniques influenced by surrealism to form pictorial political manifestos. For a compendium of Erró’s work, see *Erró* (Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1998).

VIDEO STATEMENTS AND PROPOSALS

MK The statements on video that follow are straightforward descriptions of the various videotapes I have made, participated in, or (in one case) described in the form of three proposals. Until around 1992, most were written for the presentation of "Videotapes by and with Mike Kelley" (titled My Life and Media) held at the Broadway Kino in Cologne on November 14, 1991. This screening was organized to coincide with an unrelated exhibition mounted at Jablonka Galerie. The selection of videotapes presented at the Broadway Kino was picked up for distribution, as a package, by Electronic Arts Intermix, and some of these statements now function as video descriptions in their catalogue. Because they were originally conceived for a survey screening, some of these writings contain more biographical and contextual information than might normally be expected in a simple, introductory statement. It also explains why, in some cases, I am describing works of which I am not the author. In my brief comments on individual videos by Tony Conrad, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler, and Raymond Pettibon, and on my collaborations with Ericka Beckman, Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose, Paul McCarthy, and Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, I do not discuss the complexity and importance of these artists' careers. In most cases the texts were written before their work had circulated widely and functioned as little more than

introductory notes. We decided to incorporate these minor writings in this section to give a sense of the history and reciprocal influences that inform my work in video.

My first solo videotape, The Banana Man (1983), was produced at the time I was primarily engaged with performance work. As I suggest in the accompanying statement, the tape experimented overtly with characterization, which was never a central concern in my performances. But The Banana Man also functioned as a way to present my performative activities to a larger public, since I never allowed my live performances to be videotaped. I felt that real time was such an integral part of my performance work, and that video documentation of in situ temporal experience misrepresented it to such a great degree that oral descriptions of the performances were preferable to the "inaccuracies" of a videotape recording. No one would ever confuse an oral description of a live performance with the original event, as they might with a video or film document. Videotapes utilizing montage, however, have no relation to "real" time and thus interested me in their own right.

As can be seen from the statements below, until recently most of my videotapes have been collaborations with other artists. Collaborative activity allows me to explore interests I might not otherwise develop because of self-imposed restrictions stemming from my own notions of "progressive development." Beginning around 1996, I began to produce solo videotapes again. This was motivated, in part, by a desire to reexplore my performative concerns, but also as a reaction to my disgust with the single image, or single shot, video projection works so prevalent now in galleries and museums. These "real time" stand-ins for photography or painting have compelled me to attempt to make works that address narrative issues, montage, and the complexities of durational experience.

THE FUTURIST BALLET (1973)

Mike Kelley

27 mins.

MK This is the only surviving tape from the period; I destroyed all of the rest. It survives only because artist Susan Morningstar, one of the participants in the event, had a copy of it, which found its way to me a number of years ago. Unlike my later tapes, most of which use montage, this tape was shot in real time on a reel-to-reel portable video system. It is a meandering affair, with much dead time and technical malfunction, which suits the random junk aesthetics of the performance.

The Futurist Ballet was a "guerrilla" noise/junk "Happening" presented, without permission, in a University of Michigan lecture hall in 1973. The cast consisted of Jim Shaw,¹ various friends, and me. Posters for a number of nonexistent events of an "intellectual" or "aesthetic" nature were posted around the college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan. When the audiences for these fake advertised events arrived at the theater, they were confronted by a neodada performance consisting of a series of absurd, simultaneous events. These included a man reciting selections from his



19. Production still of Mike Kelley in costume for the *Futurist Ballet* (1973).

pornography collection; a live enactment of an interview with Pat “The Hippy Strippy” Oleszko (queen of the Ann Arbor Hash Bash) from the underground newspaper the Ann Arbor Argus,² and so on. The “events” were accompanied by lots of noise generated by talentless musicians, vacuum cleaners, and tape loops. Performances such as this led to the formation of Destroy All Monsters—a proto-punk noise band that included Shaw and me.³

NOTES

- 1 On the work of Jim Shaw, see the exhibition catalogue for *Jim Shaw: Everything Must Go: 1974–1999*, curated by Noëllie Roussel and Farice Stroun (Santa Monica: Smart Art Press, 1999). The exhibition ran from May 8 to July 4, 1999, at the Casino Luxembourg and traveled to MAMCO in Geneva.
- 2 Pat Oleszko is a performance artist famous for her elaborate, sometimes balloon-like, inflatable costumes. She began her career in Ann Arbor in the late 1960s, performing at the Ann Arbor Film Festival as well as at less traditional venues. She was dubbed “Pat the Hippy Strippy,” because of her experience as a stripper in a burlesque house in Toledo, Ohio, where she won an amateur striptease contest and went on to perform as a regular. Oleszko moved to New York in the early 1970s and has exhibited consistently ever since. The Ann Arbor Hash Bash began as a gesture of support for radical poet and political organizer John Sinclair, who was sentenced to ten years in prison in 1970 for the possession of two marijuana joints. The illegal marijuana “smoke-in” has been held on April 1 on the grounds of the University of Michigan ever since—though it is not condoned by the university. The event attracts up to 10,000 participants, and celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2002. The underground newspaper the *Ann Arbor Argus* was first published in 1968 by Ken Kelley (no relation to MK), and was named after the first newspaper in pre-statehood Michigan, founded in the 1830s.
- 3 On *Destroy All Monsters*, see note 19 to “*Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered*,” in this volume.

BEHOLDEN TO VICTORY (1980–83)

Tony Conrad

26 minutes

Beholden to Victory is an edited video version of the full-length Super-8 “war movie” genre picture *Hail the Fallen*. The longer film is normally presented interactively, that is, the act of screening the film is theatricalized by requiring the audience to wear costumes and penalizing them if they refuse. The reels are also screened in random order, a gesture that cannot be duplicated on video. The film was not directed in the traditional sense, as there was no script, and the actors were required to play as in a game—to follow certain rules, or, more precisely, to observe certain restrictions. They were told only what they were not allowed to do. Because of this strategy there are few edits in the film, and the only parts edited out are examples of the actors doing what they were not supposed to do. The film thus consists of a series of scenes that are examples of correct behavior.

I met Tony Conrad when I did a presentation in his class while he was a visiting professor of media in the visual arts department at the University of California, San Diego. I was a great admirer of his position in the 1960s New York art music scene and also of his early structural and demonstrational films (such as the famous “flicker” film and his “cooked” films).¹ So I was surprised to see him tackle the genre film, an act that he told me was not looked upon kindly by his peers. At

this time I was sharing an apartment in Hollywood with the video artist Tony Oursler² and we were, among other things, making noise music. Tony Conrad would sometimes stay with us when he came up to Los Angeles, so it was only natural that Tony and I would end up in this film. We were outfitted in military gear and taken to the desert for a mission. Then we were informed of what we were not allowed to do and were left to struggle with what we could do.

NOTES

- 1 Tony Conrad (b. 1940) made the 30-minute film *The Flicker*, one of the key productions of the structuralist film movement, in 1966. Formative in both the minimal music and underground cinema scenes of the 1960s and early '70s, Conrad has been teaching in the department of media study at the Center for the Arts, Buffalo, since 1976.
- 2 Media and installation artist Tony Oursler (b. 1957) received his BFA from Cal Arts in 1979. He and Kelley founded the band The Poetics in 1977. For more on Oursler's work, see *Tony Oursler* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2001), which publishes an interview/discussion between Oursler and Kelley, as well as essays by Raymond Bellour, Tony Conrad, Constance DeJong, and Tony Oursler, and an interview by Dan Graham. On Oursler's recent media projects, see Marina Warner et al., *Tony Oursler: The Influence Machine* (London: Artangel, 2002).

THE BANANA MAN (1983)

Mike Kelley

28.15 minutes

Written in 1981 and shot in 1982 while I was teaching a performance/installation class at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design,¹ *The Banana Man* was my first completed video work. Basically it is a one-person affair, though several of my students assisted and performed in the project. The tape was my attempt to deal with the problem of character, the subject of much discussion at that time in relation to performance art.² In my own performance work, character was a function of language. As ideas shifted, so did one's understanding of who was talking: unlike traditional theater, there were no consistent characters. I realized I could never deal with all the material I had written about the Banana Man in a live performance because it was character-based. I felt that the character would ground the piece too much, and prevent the kind of temporal confusion I was interested in. No matter what happened or how the ideas would flip, the viewer could always resort to this stable character as the "logic" of the piece. This is why I decided to present the work in video. Because of the conventions of editing, video and film tend to normalize fracture. The viewer is expected to jump from one image to the next and experience it as a seamless development. To me, this experience of seamlessness seemed to correspond to the notion of unified character. As film viewers try to normalize time, so they also attempt to normalize character. No matter how incon-



20. Mike Kelley as The Banana Man (n.d.). Photo: Jim McHugh.

sistent their actions are, actors are seen as portraying “beings” driven by some unifying “psychology.” The viewer’s job is to figure out what that is. In *The Banana Man*, I was interested in this impulse toward unification. The tape is a series of scenes about one character, and it is up to the viewer to come to terms with what this character is.

The Banana Man character derives from a minor figure on the *Captain Kangaroo* children’s television show, named Banana Man.³ When I was young, this character was the object of discussion and jokes within my group of friends. However, because the character was rarely on the show, and never happened to be on when I was watching, I never actually saw him. Thus, everything I know about the character is hearsay. This is what I was told:

1. The Banana Man had many pockets out of which he pulled long things, such as toy trains and strings of hot dogs.
2. Whenever he did this, he made an “ooohing” sound (and this was the only sound he made). He did not speak.

Given this small amount of information, *The Banana Man* is my attempt to construct a psychology of the Banana Man.

NOTES

- 1 The Minneapolis College of Art and Design was founded in 1886. The art school offers programs in design, fine arts, and media arts.
- 2 Kelley is alluding to the disparagement of “theatricality” in the LA performance scene at this time; for another view, see Frantisek Deak, “The Use of Character in Artistic Performance,” *The Dumb Ox* (Los Angeles), nos. 10/11 (Spring 1980), n.p.
- 3 Brainchild of Bob Keeshan, who previously had appeared as Clarabell the Clown on *The Howdy Doody Show* during the 1950s, the children’s TV show *Captain Kangaroo* was on the air from 1955 until 1984, making it the longest-running program of its kind. The Banana Man, a.k.a. A. Robbins, was a vaudeville performer who appeared occasionally on *Captain Kangaroo*.

EVOL (1984)

Tony Oursler

28.58 minutes

By the time this tape was made, Tony Oursler,¹ who attended Cal Arts at the same time as me, had moved from Los Angeles to New York City. Oursler's tapes have a strange air of privacy—in part because they are so obviously limited to what he can accomplish unassisted in front of the camera (often all you see of him are his hands moving objects about), and also because of their relentless, almost stream-of-consciousness voice-over monologues). Oursler masterfully manipulates their puppet show-like quality to engage global concerns with the lowliest of means and materials. *EVOL* is one of his first attempts to apply this aesthetic to the whole body, not only the body part, and this requires other people: actors. Tony received a grant to produce a tape in Buffalo, New York, and I flew there to help him out. He had constructed a group of large sets, and arranged them roughly in a circle in a big loft space. I recall that some of the shots were grueling because he was attempting to move fluidly from one set to another without editing. The action had to be continuous as the camera moved from one staged scene to the next. This sometimes required many takes. Also, because the shots were very pictorial, designed just for the camera, we were often required to hold very unnatural poses for quite a long time. *EVOL* is still one of my favorite Oursler tapes. (And yes, it is the inspiration for the Sonic Youth album of the same title).²

NOTES

- 1 For more on Oursler's early work, see Deborah Rothschild, *Tony Oursler Introjection: Mid-Career Survey, 1976–1999*, exhibition catalogue (Williamstown, Mass.: Williams College Museum of Art, 1999). Kelley and Oursler discuss his videos in Mike Kelley, "An Endless Script: A Conversation with Tony Oursler," in *ibid.*, pp. 38–55.
- 2 *EVOL* was released by Sonic Youth in 1986; Oursler also made the rock video *Tunic (Song for Karen)* for *Sonic Youth* in 1990.

KAPPA (1986)

Bruce and Norman Yonemoto and Mike Kelley

26 minutes

I collaborated on this tape with Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, the well-known deconstructionist video production team, who are second-generation Japanese-Americans.¹ Finding ourselves on the suddenly important Pacific Rim, the Yonemotos and I decided to make an East/West tape. The Yonemotos took the West half and I took the East. They wrote an adaptation of the Oedipus myth, enacted by famous B-movie actress Mary Woronov and Eddie Ruscha, son of artist Ed Ruscha, and shot it in the manner of a television soap opera.² I wrote about, and played, the Kappa, a minor Shinto god who is still a very popular figure in Japan.³ The Kappa is the subject of many folk tales that are often extremely violent and sexual. In contrast to the Oedipus scenes, the Kappa takes are shot in an "art film" manner to underline the cultural "otherness" they represent. That the tape is a Freudian burlesque is made more than obvious by the inclusion of a scene from a Hollywood portrayal of the life of Freud starring Montgomery Clift.⁴ Aside from collaborating on Kappa, I have acted in other Yonemoto productions, including *Garage Sale II* (1980), *Green Card: An American Romance* (1982), and *Made in Hollywood* (1990).



21. Bruce and Norman Yonemoto and Mike Kelley, *Kappa* (1986). Video still.

NOTES

- 1 On Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, see the exhibition catalogue for their retrospective, *Memory, Matter and Modern Romance: Bruce and Norman Yonemoto* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1999). Objects by Kelley related to the Kappa project were exhibited at the Third International Triennial at the Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan; see the exhibition catalogue, *Toyama Now '87: New Art around the Pacific* (1987).
- 2 For more on Woronov, see Richard Herskowitz and Cynthia Baughman, *Mary Woronov: Cult Film Star* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Cinema, 1990). Eddie Ruscha is a musician; he has been a member of the bands Medicine, Maids of Gravity, Future Pigeon, and Dada Munchamonkey.
- 3 For variations on the Kappa myth, see Richard M. Dorson, *Folk Legends of Japan* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1962).
- 4 *Freud* (dir., John Huston, 1962).

FAMILY TYRANNY AND CULTURAL SOUP (1987)

Paul McCarthy

15.03 minutes

Long important to the performance art world, Paul McCarthy is an artist who is finally starting to become more visible in the general art world.¹ I have been a fan of his work for years. I suppose you could say that Paul is an automatist, though his work is grounded not in Jungian archetypes but rather in everyday social conventions. His version of the primal is the one found in store-bought Halloween masks and embodied in plastic dolls. *Family Tyranny* and *Cultural Soup* were made during one taping session in a public access television studio, where Paul built a rough set approximating the type seen in TV situation comedies. He called me up to help out, and when I asked what I was supposed to do, he said, "I'm the father, and you're the son." That was it. When I arrived at the studio, the cameras were turned on and, I would guess, at least six hours of tape was shot. The two tapes produced from the session are just short sections from this mass of material. At the time we discussed my doing an edit as well, but I never got around to it.

NOTE

- 1 When Kelley wrote this brief introduction, Paul McCarthy had not yet emerged as the widely exhibited and respected artist he is today. For more on McCarthy's work, see *Paul McCarthy* (London: Phaidon, 1996); and *Paul McCarthy*, exhibition catalogue, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001). For more on the collaborations between Kelley and McCarthy, see *Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy: Collaborative Works*, exhibition catalogue (The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, March 18–May 28, 2000).

SIR DRONE (1988)

Raymond Pettibon

55.37 minutes

Raymond Pettibon's intelligent drawings have long been favorites of mine. He is one of the only artists I know who uses subcultural voices in an interesting way—so that they transcend being merely “hip.” In 1988 he decided to expand into filmmaking, and in quick succession shot a number of feature-length tapes on home video equipment. All of them concern radical American subjects: the Manson Family, the Patty Hearst kidnapping by the SLA, the Weather Underground, and the beginnings of the American punk movement.¹ This last is the theme of *Sir Drone*, in which Mike Watt (of the Minutemen and FIREHOSE fame) and I play two teenage punks trying to start a band in the 1970s. We struggle with various ethical and aesthetic questions raised by our endeavor. I find it a very funny tape. However, many of the in-jokes are so obscure that they are only understandable to the most serious students of LA punk history. The tape was shot in two days and all of the dialogue was read from cue cards. Despite their crudeness, Raymond's tapes are strangely moving; he is a brilliant scriptwriter. We had planned to do another tape together, the Jim Morrison story, with me starring as Morrison. However, by the time we got to it, we sadly discovered that Oliver Stone had started shooting the story and we decided to can the project.² I did work with

Raymond on one other project, a record album of songs written by him, *Torches and Standards* by Raymond Pettibon and Super Session (London: Blast First, 1990). The songs are scripted in various voices and performed in different styles appropriate to them. For example, "The Stoners of Venice" is a Jim Morrisonesque poetic rant recited over an improvised psychedelic jam, while "Ricky's Pickle" is in the voice of a disenchanted Ricky Nelson fan and the music is performed in a laid-back, country rock style.

NOTES

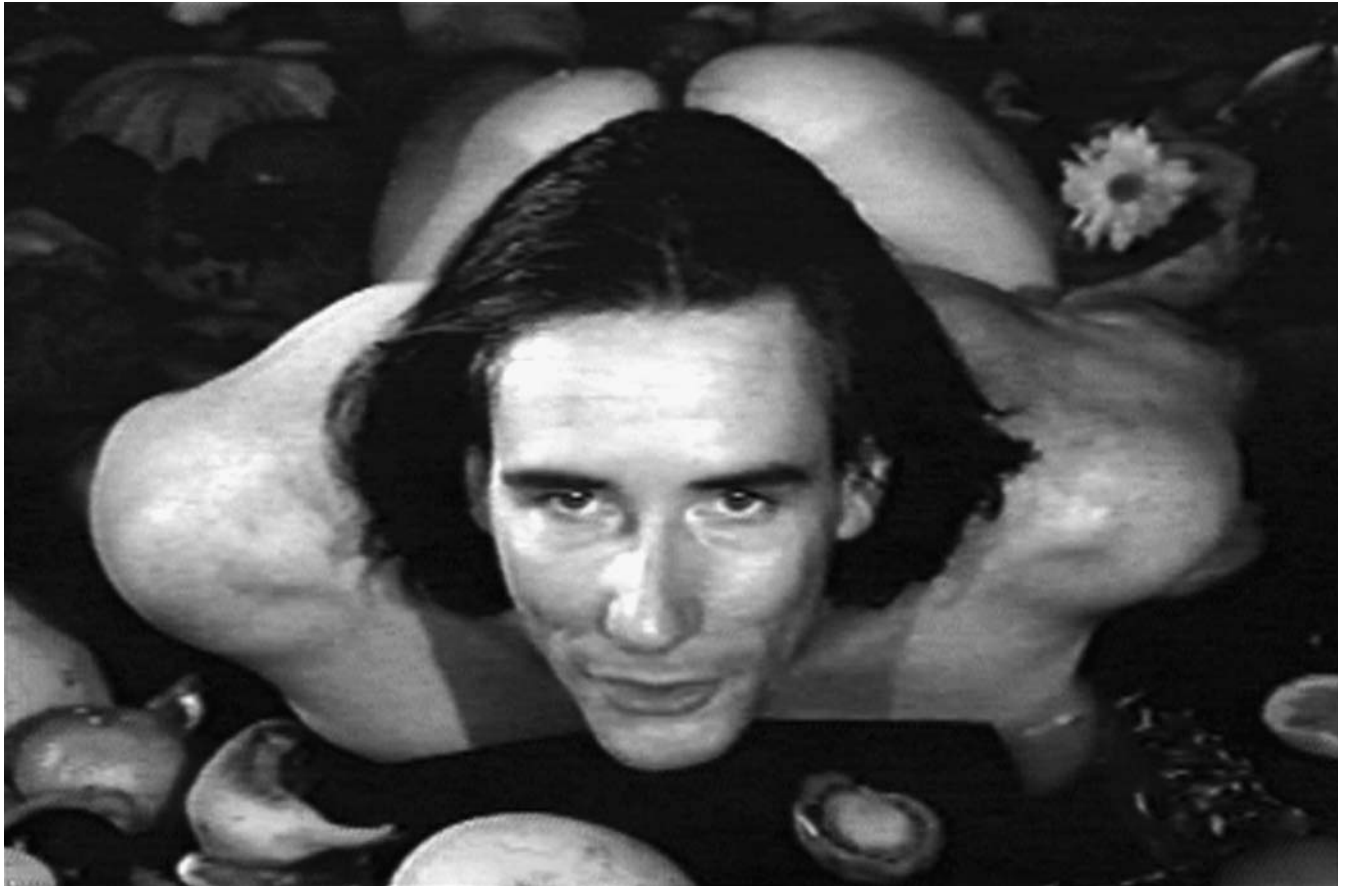
- 1 Raymond Pettibon's videos on these subjects include *Citizen Tania: As Told to Raymond Pettibon* (1989); *Judgment Day: The Book of Manson* (1989); and *The Whole World is Watching—Weatherman '69* (1989). See Jack Sargeant, "Human Wave: The Videos of Raymond Pettibon," fringecore, <<http://www.fringecore.com/magazine/m4-4.html>>. For more on Pettibon's art, see Robert Storr, Dennis Cooper, and Ulrich Loock, *Raymond Pettibon* (London: Phaidon, 2001).
- 2 *The Doors* (dir. Oliver Stone, 1991). A portion of Pettibon's script for *Morrison* (1988–89) is reprinted in *Raymond Pettibon*, pp. 108–9.

BLIND COUNTRY (1989)

Ericka Beckman and Mike Kelley

19.57 minutes

A collaboration between filmmaker Ericka Beckman and me, *Blind Country* was inspired by the H. G. Wells short story “The Country of the Blind,”¹ one of my adolescent favorites. I was both fascinated and repulsed by this tale of a man obliged to give up his eyes to live in an alien, sightless society. Rereading it as an adult, I was struck by the fact—to which I was oblivious as a boy—that it is a castration story, informed by thinly veiled sexual and racial fears. *Blind Country* makes no discernible reference to the Wells story, but instead plays with these subtle underlying themes. The designation of sight as a male attribute and the other senses as female ones is the starting point of the tape. I have known Beckman for many years and have acted in some of her other films, including *You the Better* (1983) and *Cinderella* (1986).



22. Ericka Beckman and Mike Kelley, *Blind Country* (1989). Video still.

NOTE

- 1 H. G. Wells, *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: T. Nelson, 1911).

ONE HUNDRED REASONS (1991)

Bob Flanagan, Sheree Rose, and Mike Kelley

6.41 minutes

Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose are old friends of mine whom I met at Beyond Baroque, a Los Angeles poetry and performance center.¹ Bob is a respected Los Angeles writer and Sheree Rose a photographer known at first for documenting the LA poetry scene, but who now documents the LA piercing and S & M scenes.² In recent years their work has come to reflect their sadomasochistic sexual relationship—Bob’s work now openly detailing his lifelong masochism, which has its roots in a childhood illness from which he still suffers. In recent years he has branched out into doing live performances which sometimes include demonstrations of self-inflicted pain. What separates this work from much of the recent spate of S & M performance is its humor, its deadpan truthfulness, and its refusal to fall into dimwitted neoprimitive expressionism. This tape grew out of an event that Bob and Sheree put together to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of their relationship. They invited many of their writer friends to read from their works. In my case, Bob asked me specifically to read a section of my book *Plato’s Cave, Rothko’s Chapel, Lincoln’s Profile*. The section he requested is “One Hundred Reasons”—a list of one hundred names appropriate for a paddle.³ Bob was surprised at the event when “Mistress Rose” pounded his ass with a hefty paddle for every name, one

hundred times. Which, of course, he didn't mind. The result was so popular that we decided to recreate it for video. The tape is simply a tight shot of Bob's ass being pounded while I recite each reason. In addition to this video, Bob and I played together in a band called Idiot Bliss. Sheree Rose is now compiling a photo book consisting of one hundred spanked, red asses, each one titled after a reason.⁴

NOTES

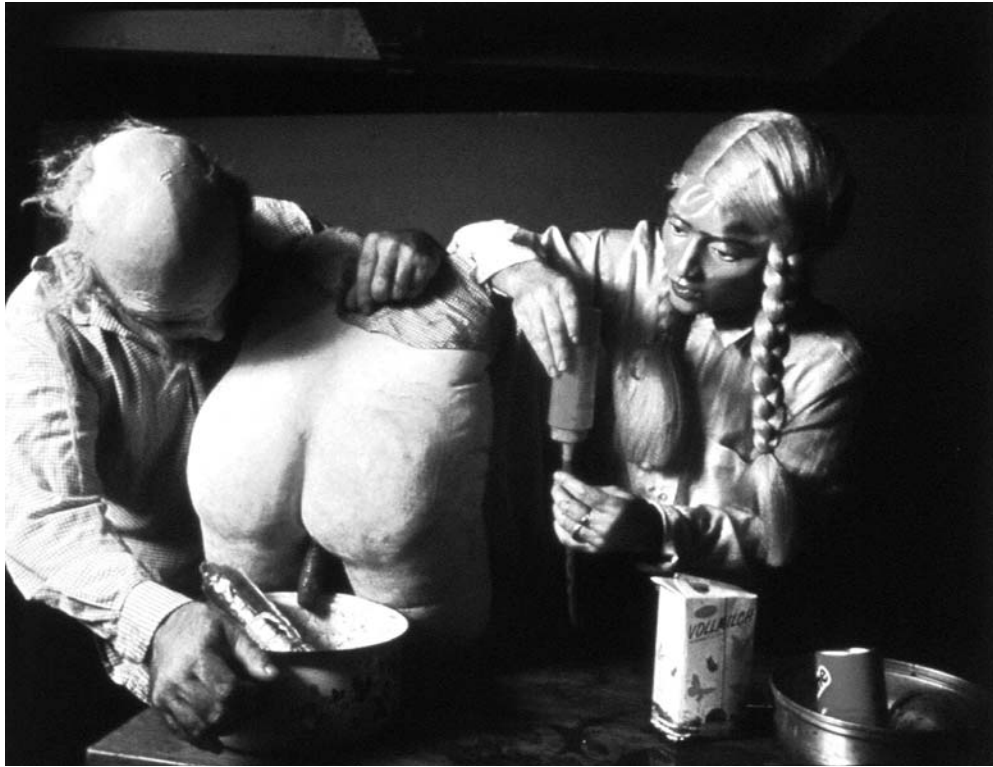
- 1 Beyond Baroque was founded by George Drew in 1968 in Venice, California, as a site for literary and performance art events. Part of its mission was to publish a magazine of new writing and to provide a reading room and bookstore as a literary resource for Los Angeles. The space still functions as a venue for poetry and fiction readings, as well as new music performances and art exhibitions.
- 2 Bob Flanagan's (1952–1996) writings include *The Kid Is the Man* (1978), *The Wedding of Everything* (1983), *Slave Sonnets* (1986), *Fuck Journal* (1987), and *A Taste of Honey*, written with David Trinidad (1990). For an account of his life and art, see Andrea Juno and V. Vale, eds., *Bob Flanagan: Supermasochist* (San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 1993).
- 3 Mike Kelley, *Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile* (Venice, Calif./New York: New City Editions/Artists Space, 1986). The "One Hundred Reasons," and their opening poem, are on pp. 48–50.
- 4 This book was never made, but a number of individual photos were completed in which the number and name of the reason, printed on a metal faceplate, was mounted on the photo's frame.

HEIDI: MIDLIFE CRISIS TRAUMA CENTER AND NEGATIVE MEDIA-ENGRAM ABREACTION RELEASE ZONE (1992)

Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy

62.34 minutes

Paul McCarthy and I were among the roster of Los Angeles artists invited to participate in the exhibition LAX at the Krinzinger Galerie, Vienna, in late 1992. We did a collaborative work based on Joanna Spyri's novel *Heidi*.¹ Our work consisted of a set, a group of partial and full lifesize rubber figures, and a videotape shot entirely on the set. One of the things we were striving for was that the set itself maintain its presence as a sculpture, even when paired with the tape, and that the figures, props, and other items used in the production of the tape, in conjunction with the set, be seen as a whole rather than an accumulation of leftovers. Rather, we wanted the tape itself to come off as being made up of parts. We were interested in addressing the fractured nature of filmic language, the fact that films are composed of pieces edited together, but experienced as a seamless whole. So we foregrounded this fracture in our treatment of the actor. In films, horror films particularly, it is often necessary to have sculptural stand-ins for actors. Depending on their function, these doubles may be parts of, complete replicas of, or smaller or larger than the actor; or, in the



23. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi* (1992). Production still. Photo: Peter Kasparak.

case of cell or computer animation, the doubles may not exist three-dimensionally at all. They are simply tools in the production of an illusion, and are not meant to be seen outside of the film context. In *Heidi* we toyed with their illusionary nature by treating the doubles and stand-ins for the actors as obvious sculptures, more in the manner of a puppet show than traditional film.

We chose the novel *Heidi* because it offered many opportunities to work with doublings and polarities, which seemed appropriate for a collaborative work. The novel is a parable of the curative qualities of the “natural” life and sets up an overt schism between city and country, with urban life depicted as pathological. Paul and I played with inverting the various themes and image tropes in the story. I generally worked with the “city” and Paul with the “country” material. I suggested, for example, that we combine the facade of the American Bar, designed by the Austrian architect Adolf Loos (in Vienna, and still open), with the chalet. Inspired by American functionalism, the early modernist Loos was profoundly opposed to decoration, which he considered decadent and primitive. His aesthetic therefore reverses the healthy country model offered by Spyri in *Heidi*, since the folksy, embellished chalet would be a negative example to him. The bedroom of the sick city girl, Klara, the inverse of the healthy mountain girl Heidi, is modeled after a bedroom designed by Loos that looks, in its simplicity, much like a contemporary motel room.² It is paired with a backdrop painting of a “city of the future” derived from a science fiction illustration from the 1930s.³ We based the figure of Klara on a painting by Otto Dix, *Kleines Mädchen vor Gardine* (1922),⁴ which I have heard popularly referred to as *The Sick Girl*. The large ears on the Klara statue are a literalization of the expressionist exaggeration in the Dix painting. Besides these aesthetic inversions, Paul and I also experimented with character inversions. We swapped roles in the tape, sometimes playing the same character at once, and sometimes replacing one of us with dummies. The horror film overtones are purposeful.⁵ We had the rubber figures of Klara, Peter, Grandfather, and Heidi made at the Universal Studios special effects department. They are all, in fact, the same figure altered by the addition of rubber character masks bought at joke shops on Hollywood Boulevard.

The videotape was shot in three days, and edited in three more. In the original installation, the tape was screened in a room separate from the set/sculpture in an attempt to give the tape and set equal importance, and to increase the viewer’s involvement in the mental space between the two sections.

NOTES

- 1 Johanna Spyri, *Heidi* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1945). Kelley discusses the choice of *Heidi*, with its doublings and polarities, especially the opposition between what he terms “pathological” urbanism and the “curative qualities of the ‘natural’ life,” in “Playing with Dead Things: On the Uncanny” (1993), reprinted in Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- 2 See Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos: Theory and Works* (Milan: Idea Books, 1982). The American Bar (1907), also referred to as the Kärntner Bar, is presented on pages 117–119; the bedroom is from the Khuner country house (1930) and is pictured on p. 206.
- 3 The city of the future depicted in the backdrop painting was taken from an illustration by famed science fiction artist Frank R. Paul, originally printed on the back cover of *Amazing Stories* (April 1942); reprinted in Joseph J. Corn and Brian Horrigan, *Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), p. xviii.
- 4 Otto Dix's *Kleines Mädchen vor Gardine* (1922) is reproduced in Serge Sabarsky, *Otto Dix* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1987), p. 70.
- 5 Of special interest, because of its inversion of Spyri's notions of city and country, Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) is an obvious inspiration for the splatter film overtones of *Heidi*. In contrast to Spyri's bucolic and curative rural vision, the countryside in Hooper's film is depicted as dangerous and horrific.

HEIDI'S FOUR BASKET DANCES (1992)

Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy

- 1 Forest Green
- 2 Sea Green
- 3 Coral Pink
- 4 Dusty Pink

The *Four Basket Dances* were originally performed for inclusion in the videotape, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone*, made in collaboration with Paul McCarthy. Due to length restrictions, only one of the dances made its way into the final edit. This tape presents all four improvisational dances, which were attempts at interpretive representations of the formal relationships between the color of each costume and the form of the basket paired with it.



24. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi's Four Basket Dances* (1992). Two production stills. Photos: Peter Kasparak.

THREE PROPOSALS FOR ZOO TV (1996)

Mike Kelley

JCW *The three stories that follow were outlined in a fax sent on April 1, 1996, by Kelley to Roger Trilling, an editor at Details magazine, who was developing Zoo TV for MTV. The show was to deal with the mass marketing of youth culture. The proposals were not accepted.*

Here are three rough ideas relating to the “repressed memory” issue for the Body section of your Zoo TV project. They are fairly similar in attack, the shift in focus being mainly in the visuals. In all three cases one version of a story is revealed as a “screen memory,” shielding a repressed, more traumatic, version of the story.

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Story 1: The Purple Glob

As a child I read a supposedly true account of policemen witnessing a large purple glob of gelatinous material falling from the sky. As I remembered the story, the glob fell into the front yard of a woman. She called the police, who took it away and denied that it had ever been there. Recently, I found the original story and it was somewhat different: the police saw the blob descend them-

selves; no other people were described; and the blob disintegrated, leaving no evidence of itself.¹ Obviously, I had projected the paranoid and antiauthoritarian aspects onto the story. In the film, I will accentuate these aspects, as well as the shifting nature of the protagonists, by having the gender of the homeowner change.

In one version, the homeowner would be a solitary “lonely man.” When the police come, they are revealed as CIA agents, who not only retrieve the glob, but empty the house of all other gelatinous materials: jam, jelly, hair gel, KY jelly, Vaseline, butter, etc. They also beat, torture, and rape the man. Before the fall of the blob, the man has mysterious nosebleeds and “anal periods” revealed by red stains seeping through the back of his white jeans and staining his white couch. This version of the story is revealed as a screen memory. The protagonist remembers that she is not male but female. The mysterious visitors are not CIA agents but aliens who perform intrusive medical experiments on her. And the purple glob itself is revealed as being a screen memory for the woman’s child: the by-product of alien breeding. The woman projects her love for this abducted baby onto a child-sized wad of goo that she has constructed from household materials.

In the film, I want to play with various television and filmic styles, especially those of “reality television.” The film will start with the protagonist recounting the story, represented in the manner of a protected crime witness—as a backlit silhouette, face digitized out, and voice distorted in a robotic fashion. His or her gender is thus uncertain. The stories are directed like the re-creations on *America’s Most Wanted*² and are intercut, depending on which gender the “witness” remembers him/herself to be at that moment. The two versions will be shot in different styles to play up the contrast. The digitalization of the face will be purple, matching the glob. I would also like to play with the digitalization in an overtly arty way—and have way too much of it. For instance, whenever the action in the stories is too sexual or gruesome to show, it would be covered over with digitalization in the manner of Japanese pornography. I have never seen more than one piece of digitalization in a scene. I’d like to be the first to have more. Long shots of mayhem would be good, so the whole TV screen would be filled with purple spots of digitalization covering the various atrocities being performed.

The robotic voice is something that can also be used to advantage. Since this is for MTV, we might as well play up the musicality of the film as much as possible. The distorted voice is very much like the vocoder effects used in old school techno rap, like the Egyptian Lover, Zapp, etc.³ I would like to construct a soundtrack in that manner. It could function like the idiotic reggae theme

song for *COPS*,⁴ with the techno drone falling back into general background ambience after the beginning.

Story 2: Repressed Memory Spurred by Viewing a Popeye Cartoon

This film would be a more simple play with contrasting live action and animation. The Popeye cartoon in question is from Fleischer Studios,⁵ probably from the 1930s or '40s. In it, Popeye finds his father, who abandoned him at birth, jailed on Goon Island.⁶ Popeye is upset that his father has no feelings for him. The man watching this cartoon has a mysterious sense of déjà vu and realizes that it is a sanitized version of his life. Scenes from the Popeye cartoon are intercut with flashbacks of the man's traumatic biography as it comes back to him.

The man's story is this: he is sent to Alcatraz, where he ends up being the jailhouse punk of a man he soon realizes is his father. In turn, his father is equally abused by the prison guards. Scenes of Popeye's mistreatment by his father in the cartoon are mirrored by prison incest scenes; scenes of the Goons from the cartoon would be paired with scenes of the father's abuse by prison guards.

This mixing up of depictions would be more interesting if there was some confusion between them. At times, for example, the prison guards could be played by female body builders dressed as native girls (since the Goons on Goon Island are all female). It would be even more interesting to recreate the Goons using Hollywood makeup effects, and introduce them into the live-action prison scenes. Things could get very screwy and interesting with these kinds of crossovers.

The big question here is: Why does the cartoon so clearly mirror the man's life? Answers: his father is Max Fleischer; or, he is being guided to believe the cartoon depicts his life by whatever conspiratorial group we choose: aliens, CIA, organized satanists, psychiatrists, Scientologists, right-wing Christians, liberal new-agers, or all of the above.

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Story 3: Abuse by Giant Animals in the Basement

This story responds to a common theme in repressed memory abuse scenarios. Abuse by giant animals in subterranean cells was described, for example, in the McMartin Preschool case—and explained as being an induced screen memory, that is, a false memory implanted by perpetrators in

order to protect themselves. One theory suggests that satanic cult members dress as giant animals to hide their identities and also to make the children's stories not credible, when they abuse children.⁷

What I want to do in this film is to set up a connection between organized sports and organized satanic abusers. I have a piece of film of a soccer game played by two teams of mascots.⁸ It's especially interesting in that the mascots (you know, those people dressed up as giant chickens or tigers to clown for the audience) are not only team mascots, but product-related mascots as well. One of the team members was the Kool-Aid smiling pitcher logo.⁹ Again, a television viewer would be spurred by some pop culture image to remember traumatic repressed memories. Seeing the soccer game would bring back memories of a black mass in an underground playroom decorated with murals of Hanna-Barbera-style cartoon figures.¹⁰ The mass would be acted out by people in mascot outfits. The film should be cut in the manner of a jokey beer commercial with a schlock heavy bar-rock soundtrack. The aesthetic is sports bar. The mass is televised and announced by sports broadcasters.

I know that you have an interest in focusing somewhat on the authoritarian end of the repressed memory controversy—on those that interpret the phenomena for their own gain, whether financial or ideological: the legal system, religious pressure groups, mental health establishment, etc. Personally, that seems fairly obvious to me and need not be stressed too much in this film. The hinted-at presence of a police satanic crimes unit interrogator, therapist, or religious counselor is enough to raise that issue. I am more interested in the stories and how they are told visually. Many of these repressed memory abuse stories are negative inversions of popular culture archetypes. I am more interested in pointing toward and playing with the various televisual and filmic languages used to tell the tales. Extreme, inappropriate visual language usage is what I'm after, as in my example of the television screen being filled with purple blobs of digitalization. The visual pleasure of that is only sweetened by the addition of a dose of paranoid conspiracy theory.

NOTES

- 1 Frank Edwards, "Police and the Purple Glob," in *Strange World* (New York: Ace, 1964).
- 2 *America's Most Wanted*, a nationally televised crime program, began its long run on February 7, 1988. The show's host John Walsh spearheaded the program after the loss of his own son who was kidnapped and murdered in an unsolved crime. The purpose of the program is to post photographs of suspected criminals and lost children so that viewers may call in with information for local authorities and the FBI. It also offers dramatizations of various crimes.
- 3 The musical genre described here as "techno rap" has been termed "electric funk" by Steve Yano and Brian Foxworthy in their compilation CDs for Rhino Records. Listen to the series, *Street Jams: Electric Funk* (Rhino Records, 1992).
- 4 One of the longest running programs on television, *COPS* pioneered the reality-based TV entertainment genre. The show features graphic "video-vérité" sequences of drug busts, car chases, domestic disputes, and barricaded suspects. The infamous theme song, a tune called "Bad Boys," is performed by rap-reggae band Inner Circle.
- 5 Fleischer Studios was formed in 1921 by the brothers Max and Dave Fleischer. Along with another brother, Joe, they invented the rotoscope, a device in which live-action footage is traced to produce lifelike animation. Fleischer Studios is credited with producing the first sound cartoon and the first feature-length cartoon.
- 6 The Popeye cartoon referred to here is *Goonland* (1938). While directorial credit for Fleischer Studios' cartoons is given to Dave Fleischer, the cartoons were in fact directed by their head animators. *Goonland* was animated by Seymour Kneitel and Abner Matthews.
- 7 On the McMartin Preschool case, see note 5 to "*Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*," in this volume.
- 8 The first Celebrity Mascot Olympics was held at Tinker Field in Orlando, Florida, in 1993. Mascot soccer sometimes functions as an entertaining opener for indoor soccer games; at other times the event is used to raise money for charitable organizations. See *MascotNet* at <<http://www.spagetti.com/mascot/games.html>>, a Web page devoted to mascot events.
- 9 The popular soft drink powder mix Kool-Aid was introduced in 1927. In 1954 the image of the Kool-Aid pitcher, a smiling face drawn onto a frosty pitcher of Kool-Aid, made its first appearance. The Kool-Aid Pitcher Man, a personified version of the smiling pitcher, was born in 1975. A popular product icon in the late 1970s and '80s, Pitcher Man would burst through brick walls to deliver Kool-Aid punch to thirsty children.
- 10 See note 6 to "*Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*," in this volume.

FRESH ACCONCI (1996)

Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy

45 minutes

Fresh Acconci was a direct response to the resurgence of body art in the 1990s. The video and production stills document re-stagings of several of Vito Acconci's video performances from the 1970s.¹ Through a series of mass-cultural devices and conflations, we present the Acconci of the '70s through an approach to the body common in the art world of the '90s.

Acconci's performances are re-staged and intentionally misrepresented through contemporary art direction, which mimics soft-core pornography, the use of professional actors, and genre formulations such as the haunted house film. Acconci's work is narrativized and stylized through an approach to the body that has more in common with artists such as Matthew Barney or Vanessa Beecroft, thus drawing a distinction between two generations of body art and its art-world reception.

Mirroring then-current concerns, *Fresh Acconci* postulates that the body art of today performs the function of a specialized subcultural erotica for the art world despite what could be construed as its deconstructive pretensions.



25. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Fresh Acconci* (1995). Production still. Photo: Paul McCarthy.

NOTE

- 1 The following video performance tapes by Vito Acconci were reenacted in Kelley and McCarthy's *Fresh Acconci: Pryings* (1971), *Focal Point* (1971), *Contacts* (1971), *Theme Song* (1973), and *Claim* (1971). See also Timothy Martin, "Fresh Acconci, Beautiful Acconci," in Phillip Monk, ed., *Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy: Collaborative Works* (Toronto: The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, 2000); and Cynthia Chris and John C. Welchman, "The Making of *Fresh Acconci*," *Texte zur Kunst* (Cologne, Germany, September 1999), pp. 276–80.

THE POLE DANCE (1997)

Choreographed by Anita Pace after original notes by Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler

31.18 minutes

The Pole Dance is a dance work originally performed by The Poetics (Mike Kelley, Don Krieger, and Tony Oursler) in 1978.¹ Kelley and Oursler asked choreographer Anita Pace to reinterpret the work based on their original notes. Pace's reconfiguration of *The Pole Dance* is much more dancelike than the first version by The Poetics (which was closer in feel to sports or play activity), and should be considered a new piece of choreography. This videotape documents the final taping of *The Pole Dance* as performed in a rehearsal studio and was used in *The Poetics Project: 1977–1997 (Documenta Version)*, a multichannel video projection installation. *The Pole Dance* is performed by Anita Pace and Carl Burkley.²

NOTES

- 1 On Tony Oursler and *The Poetics*, see note 2 to Kelley's statement on Tony Conrad's video *Beholden to Victory* (1980–83), in this section. Kelley describes the original dance work as follows: "The Pole Dance, a choreographic work parodying Bauhaus-style structural theater. In it, Oursler and I worked at shoving poles into each others' stretch pants-suit outfits until we were barely able to move, accompanied by Krieger who played live on the 'Orgatron'—an adapted toy organ that was hard-wired to produce a piercing electronic tone." Mike Kelley, "Poetics: Introduction to an Essay Which Is in the Form of Liner Notes for a CD Reissue Box Set" <<http://www.mikekelley.com/poeticintro.html>>.
- 2 On Anita Pace, see note 20 to "The Meaning is Confused Spatiality, Framed" (1999), in this volume. Carl Burkley is a Los Angeles-based dancer who has worked with Pace on numerous pieces.

OUT O' ACTIONS (1998)

Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy

4.25 mins.

JCW *The curatorial initiative of Kelley and McCarthy in the Visitor's Gallery at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, is discussed in "Statement for the Visitor's Gallery: Out of Actions" (1998), in this volume.*

Out O' Actions chronicles the development of the project that Paul McCarthy and I organized for the Visitor's Gallery of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, for the inaugural exhibition of *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949–1979*. In 1997, chief curator Paul Schimmel and the education department of MoCA invited us to design a presentation for this space, which normally contains educational displays related to the main exhibition. In an attempt to refocus public attention on live performance, we responded by inviting seven artists associated with various performance genres to use the space throughout the run of the exhibition. Artists John Malpede, Allan Kaprow, Tony Conrad, Carolee Schneemann, Michael Smith, David Antin, and Anna Halprin were invited to participate.

The videotape documents our preliminary activities in organizing these events. Discussions and meetings with Paul Schimmel, the education department, and museum staff, as well the installation of the exhibition and the Visitor's Gallery, were videotaped. This footage was edited to mimic the structure of Kurt Kren's documentation of Otto Muehl's action *Mama und Papa* (1964).¹ Seen through the filter of Kren's editing structure, curatorial preparations are presented as performative activities themselves, though thoroughly institutionalized and definitely at odds with Muehl's utopian and Dionysian aesthetics.

In its installation format, two separate cuts of this documentation, both using the editing structure of Kren's film, are projected simultaneously on opposing walls. It is impossible to be certain that the two edits truly sync up, since they can only be experienced simultaneously in one's peripheral vision. The single-channel version of *Out O' Actions* presents these two versions side by side, in a letterbox format, with split stereo soundtracks.

NOTE

- 1 On Kurt Kren, see the exhibition catalogue *From Action Painting to Actionism Vienna 1960–1965*, 2 vols. (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1988–89). *Mama und Papa* is number twelve in the series of Otto Muhl's "material actions." The performance took place in the Perinet Cellar in Vienna on August 4, 1964, where it was filmed by Kurt Kren. Kren's film is not a straightforward document of the event; its many fast edits and fractured style produce a disorienting effect. See Muehl's "Material Action Manifesto" (1964), in Malcolm Green, ed., *Brus Muel Nitsch Schwarzkogler: Writings of the Vienna Actionists* (London: Atlas Press, 1999), p. 87.

*TEST ROOM CONTAINING MULTIPLE STIMULI
KNOWN TO ELICIT CURIOSITY AND
MANIPULATORY RESPONSES (1999) AND A
DANCE INCORPORATING MOVEMENTS DERIVED
FROM EXPERIMENTS BY HARRY F. HARLOW AND
CHOREOGRAPHED IN THE MANNER OF MARTHA
GRAHAM (1999)*

Mike Kelley

Test Room 51.18 minutes

A Dance 8.32 minutes

Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses was produced for inclusion in the architecturally scaled sculpture of the same title. Measuring roughly 60 × 25 feet, the structure is a large steel cagelike room with an overhead observation ramp. The room contains sculptural elements derived from the playroom objects used in Harry Harlow's famous experiments with primate affection conducted in the 1960s. These objects have been en-

larged to human scale and arranged in such a way as to evoke the abstract sets designed in the 1950s by Isamu Noguchi for the American choreographer Martha Graham.¹ The videotape documents a dance piece done in collaboration with choreographer Anita Pace.² The dance was performed on the same set, but was videotaped against a seamless white backdrop. The spatial ambiguity of this image contrasts sharply with the steel room the set now occupies. This videotape is incorporated into the sculpture as a life-size projection on a Plexiglas wall, which is mirrored by a clear picture window of the same dimensions framing the empty set. The choreography uses movements related to Graham's mythological dance pieces, actions derived from characteristic monkey behavior observed in Harlow's experiments, and "cathartic," violent behavior evocative of the films made by psychologist Albert Bandura as part of his experiments with the effect of televised violence on preschool children.³

Viewers interact with the sculpture in a number of ways: the cage can be entered, allowing access to two parental "surrogates" that may be played with; and there is a tetherball game. This interior action may be viewed from the overhead observation ramp or from outside of the structure through the large Plexiglas window, which presents a proscenium view of the stage set. The sculpture is an exploration of the aesthetics of Harlow's experiments, extending and linking them to the Jungian archetypal symbolism of Noguchi's nonillustrative sets for Martha Graham's dance work.

The video version of *Test Room* is in color. The dance piece is intercut with actions performed by four actors. Two women gesture in manners evocative of anger or tenderness. Two men imitate the movements of monkeys, sometimes dressed in gorilla suits, sometimes dressed in street clothes. This color video is followed by a black-and-white version that presents the complete dance piece, minus the other actions. This is titled *A Dance Incorporating Movements Derived from Experiments by Harry F. Harlow and Choreographed in the Manner of Martha Graham*. This version of the dance was shot on film in emulation of Martha Graham's dance films of the late 1950s and early '60s. Anita Pace and Carl Burkley perform the dance.



26. top: Mike Kelley, *Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses (Full Cast) [1]* (2001). Color photograph. 28 × 49 in. bottom: Mike Kelley, *Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses*. Installation view at Le Magasin—Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, 1999. Photo: André Morin.

NOTES

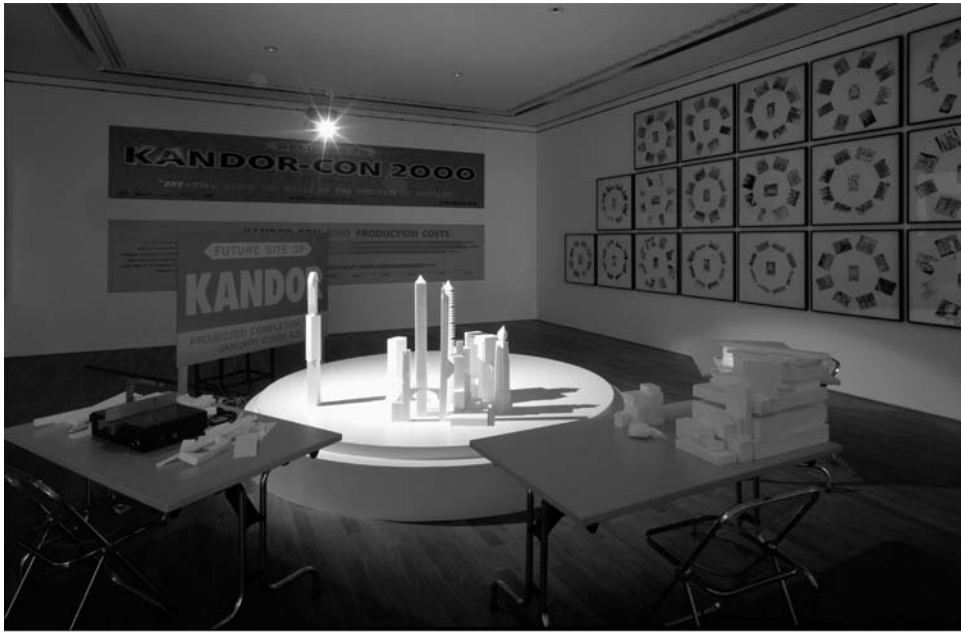
- 1 On Harry Harlow, Isamu Noguchi, Martha Graham, and the wider contexts for these videos, see Kelley's essay "The Meaning Is Confused Spatially, Framed," in this volume.
- 2 Anita Pace's choreographic works include *Only Shallow* (a four-part ballet, Renaissance Society, Chicago, 1996); *Mono* (Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles, April 2000); and *Combat de Boxe* (Patrick Painter, Inc., July 2001). In addition to *Test Room*, Kelley collaborated with Pace on other projects, including *Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof* (1989); *Beat of the Traps* [with Stephen Prina] (1992); and *Pole Dance* [with Tony Oursler] (1997).
- 3 Albert Bandura was a behavioral psychologist famous for his experiments on the effects of media violence on children. In one Bandura experiment, an adult was filmed beating a doll; subsequently, a group of children was shown the film, then introduced to the same doll, and they proceeded to beat it as well. See Albert Bandura, *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973).

SUPERMAN RECITES SELECTIONS FROM THE BELL JAR AND OTHER WORKS BY SYLVIA PLATH (WITH REFERENCE TO KANDOR-CON 2000) (1999)

Mike Kelley

7.19 minutes

This videotape was originally produced as an element for the installation *Kandor-Con 2000*, presented as part of the exhibition *Zeitwenden* at the Kunstmuseum Bonn in 2000. The title mimics the term “comic-con,” as conventions of comic book collectors are called, and the piece is meant to be reminiscent of the kinds of displays found at such events. The main body of the project consists of two renderings of a fictive futuristic city, named Kandor, found in Superman comic books.¹ The miniaturized city depicted there sits inside a bell jar in Superman’s secret Fortress of Solitude. It is a constant reminder of his lost homeland and functions metaphorically as a symbol of his alienated relationship to the planet where he now resides. In my exhibition, one rendering of Kandor consists of a computer animation of the city by Martin Middelhaue, presented as a video projection; the other is a collection of architectural models of various buildings from the city arranged on a large circular base. Architecture students continued to create these models during the run of the exhibition.



27. Mike Kelley, *Kandor-Con 2000*. Installation views at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, 1999. Photos: Nic Tenwiggenhorn.

My proposal for this work originally included a website where fans of Superman comics could log on and make proposals for the construction of a virtual version of Kandor. One of the things that interested me most about Kandor is the lack of continuity that attends its depiction in Superman comics. The skyline changes from story to story, making it impossible to reconstruct with true “accuracy.” An interactive computer program allowing the city to be changed continuously, based on fans’ input, would be a perfect reflection of the ambiguous nature of the city, and an appropriate model of memory’s elusive nature. Presenting multiple overlays of various versions of the city, Middelhaue’s animation is a compromise solution. Part of my interest in having an Internet component in the work was to stress the alienation metaphor associated with Superman’s city in a bottle and to align it with Sylvia Plath’s use of the image of the bell jar as a symbol of psychic disconnection.² I wanted to draw a comparison between the bell jar and the net, presenting the net surfer as a lonely, disembodied individual. To counteract this pathological reading of the net, I also proposed to bring all of the Superman fans who met online via this project physically together. *Kandor-Con 2000* would then truly have functioned as a real celebration and meeting place for like-minded people. Of course, this was impossible. So, a number of large graphs and charts reveal the economic impossibility of bringing everyone together. Budgetary restrictions did not allow for even a tiny portion of the various versions of the city to be built, virtually or physically. Middelhaue’s computer reconstructions of the myriad cities and the few finished architectural models barely scratch the surface of this immense endeavor. The project as a whole then became a mirror of the failure of modernism’s vision of a technological utopia.

In *Superman Recites Selections from The Bell Jar and Other Works by Sylvia Plath*, an actor portrays Superman and does exactly what the title describes. In a dark, no-place evocative of Superman’s own psychic “Fortress of Solitude,” the alienated Man of Steel recites sections of Plath’s writings that use the image of the bell jar. Superman directs these lines to Kandor, the bell jar city that represents his own traumatic past, for he is the only surviving member of a planet that has been destroyed. Kandor now sits frozen in time, a perpetual reminder of his inability to escape that past and of his alienated relationship to his present world. For us, Kandor is an image of a time that never was—the utopian city of the future that never came to be.

NOTES

- 1 The Superman character first appeared in *Action Comics #1* (New York, June 1938). In his guise as Clark Kent, Superman worked as a reporter for the *Daily Planet* newspaper in the fictional city Metropolis. Kandor is the capital city of Krypton (Superman's home planet), stolen prior to the destruction of Krypton by the arch-villain Brainiac. The city was stored in a bottle in the Fortress of Solitude after being reduced in size by Brainiac's shrinking ray.
- 2 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Other uses of Plath's bell jar metaphor (and related tropes) were taken from her poems and unabridged journals.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PROJECTIVE RECONSTRUCTION #1 (A DOMESTIC SCENE) (2000)

Mike Kelley

29.44 minutes

Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 is the first in a projected series of 365 videotapes and video installations related to my sculpture *Educational Complex* (1995), an architectural model made up of replicas of every school I have ever attended. In this model, all of the architectural sections that I could not remember were left blank. My inability to recall these sites is explained through the pop psychological theory of Repressed Memory Syndrome, which postulates that extremely traumatic experiences are repressed and forgotten. Thus, these empty architectural zones are designated as sites of abuse. The *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction* series is designed to fill in these memory blanks with standardized abuse scenarios based on descriptions in the literature of Repressed Memory Syndrome. Details are provided by my own biography, intermixed with recollections of popular films, cartoons, and literature. Personal and "mass cultural experience" are treated equally as "true" experience.



28. top: Mike Kelley, *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)* (2000). Mixed media with video. 120 × 344 × 288 in. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen. bottom: Mike Kelley, *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)* (2000). Production still. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

The *Educational Complex* was meant to evoke such utopian architectural projects as Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum.¹ Steiner's metaphysical organizing principles have been replaced with a formalist base: specifically, the "push pull" compositional ideas of Hans Hofmann,² which I present as a form of institutional indoctrination and mental abuse. This choice stems from my own rigid undergraduate painting training in the Hofmann manner. As detailed in repressed memory literature, abuse becomes the underlying organizational rationale for all aesthetic production in my *über*-architectural world. Like Steiner, I desire to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a unification of architecture, theater, dance, painting, etc. Repressed Memory Syndrome and "push pull" are the unifying theories at the root of all of these varied productions.

The *Projective Reconstruction* series consists of re-stagings for video of photographs of "extracurricular activities" found in high school yearbooks. I purposely chose images that are ambiguous. Outside of the context of the yearbook, they would not necessarily be recognized as school-related activities. Many of these images have "artsy," "cultish," or perverse sexual overtones. They do not look like standard school events and can be read as "carnavalesque" productions, symbolically at odds with the ordered world of education. I am not interested, specifically, in the aesthetics of high school and the age group associated with it. Rather, I am interested in common, socially accepted rituals of "deviance"—Halloween rituals, for example. This project focuses upon yearbooks as a common source for such imagery, but similar photographs may be found in local newspapers, and I am working, simultaneously, on another project utilizing photographs taken from that source.³ To downplay the tendency to see this work as reflecting a "teenage" mindset, I plan to use actors of a variety of ages in the video re-stagings of these photographs.

Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 takes as its starting point a photograph of what looks to be a play. Two men interact in a set depicting a shabby apartment, the centerpiece of which is an open oven. In keeping with my reading of the image as a play, I wrote a script and shot a half-hour production of it in the manner of early television dramas, which were basically plays performed live on television. My script is a playful, melodramatic reading of this image and reflects the influence of Tennessee Williams⁴ and the paranoid worldview depicted in Saul Bellow's novel *The Victim*.⁵ The oven acts as an associational lead-in to a fetishistic portrayal of a ghostly Sylvia Plath, who famously committed suicide by gassing herself.⁶ This particular image was chosen to be the first of the re-stagings because it was one of the most complicated, as far as production

demands were concerned. I envision other tapes as being, simply, moving tableaux with little or no spoken dialogue.

The *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction* project is ambitious in scale and meant to rival such grandiose productions as Max Reinhardt's theatrical spectacles.⁷ My goal is to eventually make one tape representing each day in a year, and, finally, to re-stage the tapes live, consecutively, in a twenty-four-hour period. I want to create a grand public ritual, designed specifically for, and mimicking, "victim culture," yet unrepressed and ridiculous in nature.

NOTES

- 1 See Wolfgang Iser, *Rudolf Steiner: Goetheanum, Dornach* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1991).
- 2 Hans Hofmann (1909–1966), the German abstract painter, opened a painting school in New York in 1933 and became famous as the teacher of many of the New York School painters. He outlined his theory of “push and pull” composition in “The Search for the Real in the Visual Arts,” in Hans Hofmann, *Search for the Real and Other Essays*, ed. Sara T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 40–48.
- 3 This project was realized and presented as *Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968–1972* (Wayne/Westland Eagle), part of Black Out, Kelley’s contribution to the exhibition *Artists Take on Detroit: Projects for the Tricentennial* curated by MaryAnn Wilkinson and Rebecca Hart at the Detroit Institute of Arts (October 19 to December 31, 2001), which was recreated at Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles, April 20 to May 31, 2002. For Kelley’s description of this work, see “Black Out” in this volume.
- 4 Mississippi-born author and playwright Tennessee Williams (1911–1983) wrote about southern culture at its most lurid and excessive. His plays *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1958), and *The Night of the Iguana* (1961), among others, were made into feature films.
- 5 Saul Bellow, *The Victim* (New York: Viking, 1947). In this dreary novel, Bellow’s protagonist, Asa Leventhal, is accosted by a “stranger” who accuses him of ruining his life, and talks his way into letting him stay in Leventhal’s apartment with him while his wife is out of town.
- 6 Sylvia Plath committed suicide on February 11, 1963.
- 7 Reinhardt’s theatrical presentations were often staged outside traditional theaters. One of his most grandiose projects was *The Miracle*, a vast wordless, religious spectacle-play staged at the Great Hall at Olympia, London, in 1911. See Margaret Jacobs and John Warren, eds., *Max Reinhardt: The Oxford Symposium* (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic, 1986).

RUNWAY FOR INTERACTIVE DJ EVENT (2000)

Mike Kelley

48.23 minutes

This videotape documents an event staged on the evening of September 3, 1999, at the Kunstverein Braunschweig on the occasion of the opening of my solo exhibition.¹ *Runway for Interactive DJ Event* is a lighthearted response to the current embrace of DJ and rave culture by the art world. In Europe, especially, there has been an explosion of artist/DJs and an attendant move by art institutions to bring the party atmosphere of the dance club into the hallowed halls of the art museum and gallery. Because of its festive nature, the art opening is especially suited to such activities. For my exhibition at Braunschweig, a large tent was set up on the lawn behind the museum for the purpose of dancing on opening night. I decided to make use of this situation.

With no particular purpose in mind, I had brought a suitcase full of doll clothes with me to Braunschweig, leftovers from the production of *Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites*, a large sculpture constructed from hundreds of stuffed animals organized by color into planet-like lumps, on view in the exhibition. The miniature clothes had been stripped off of these objects so that they were pure colors. At the Kunstverein, I discovered an especially appealing room in the basement—a long dungeon-like corridor ending with a small, high window that looked onto the rear lawn of the museum, where the opening party was to take place. The window is hidden behind a hedge.



29. Mike Kelley, *Runway for Interactive DJ Event* (1999). Performance at Kunstverein Braunschweig, September 3, 1999. Photo: Andrea Stappert.

This unusual room inspired me to make a new sculpture: a model ramp with a small stage platform situated below the window. On this platform, all of the doll clothes were arranged into loose categories. As the room was not accessible from the museum, the piece could only be viewed by crawling into the hedge behind the building and viewing it through the small window situated there. *Runway for Interactive DJ Event* was an unannounced performance done during the opening and visible only through this window.

The performance took the form of a fashion show. Kalin Lindena, an artist living in Braunschweig, and I were the ramp models, clad only in our underwear, as if ready to be fitted with the undersized clothes. DJs Oliver Blomeier and Marco Olbrich provided musical accompaniment. Oliver was stationed in the cellar with us, while Marco spun records in the party tent. The two DJs communicated with each other through an intercom system. Oliver had no turntables or records; his role was as an “interpretive DJ,” describing to Marco the activities taking place on the model ramp and possible choices of musical accompaniment. The performance was unrehearsed and improvisational. Kalin and I discussed the formal and associative qualities of the various outfits, and attempted to “model” them. Oliver conveyed his interpretation of this activity to Marco in the party tent. Marco’s music mix was sent back to speakers set up in the basement room and spurred further response on our part. Marco could not hear or see the activities taking place on the model ramp; he was reliant on Oliver’s information to make his musical choices. The performance was a kind of interpretive dialogue between the various participants, and the people dancing in the party tent were unaware that the dance music was determined by secret “fashion-related” activities taking place simultaneously in the depths of the Kunstverein. Those who did chance upon the performance had to crowd around the window hidden in the bushes. The performance dialogue was only audible through small speakers situated there.

Runway for Interactive DJ Event was shot on three cameras: a stable camera set up at the foot of the ramp, a mobile one operated by the ramp models, and a roving camera that moved from the performance site to the exterior window and party tent. A still photographer, Andrea Stappert, was also integrated into the action, shooting continuously throughout the entire performance. A sequence of her photographs is included in the videotape as a kind of condensed visual recapitulation of the event.

N O T E

- 1 Kelley reconstructed the model ramp in an installation that used the original doll's clothes and video with two elaborate new dresses at the Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan, Italy, 2002.

SOD AND SODIE SOCK (WORKING TITLE, 1999–2002)

Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy

Sod and Sodie Sock is a feature-length video shot on site at the Secession in Vienna, Austria, concurrent with the installation *Sod and Sodie Sock Comp O.S.O.* (1998), a large encampment of military tents, tunnel systems, and shower room.¹ Like *Heidi*, the video uses the installation as the set for the production of a video. The installation serves as the primary site for all activities, and is then narrativized through various cultural and historical references such as the original *Sad Sack* comic strip,² task-oriented performance, the military comedy, and the theoretical writings of Clement Greenberg, Georges Bataille, and Wilhelm Reich.³

The tape documents a squad of costumed performers and museum crew engaged in the actual construction of the encampment and in numerous scripted and improvised scenarios such as theater warm-up exercises, “monument” building, and alien abduction. The piece also includes a re-staging of the “peeping in the shower room” scene from *Porky’s*,⁴ substituting a group of transsexuals for the high school girls in the original film. The approach taken in the single-channel version of *Sod and Sodie Sock* is somewhat of a departure from previous works. In its construction, the tape adopts a more standardized filmic approach utilizing cross-cutting and montage.



30. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Sod and Sodie Sock* (1998). Production still, Wiener Secession, Austria, September 23–November 8, 1998. Photo: Angelika Hausenblas.

NOTES

- 1 For more on this collaboration, see Martin Prinzhorn, “*Sod and Sodie Sock Comp O.S.O.*,” in the exhibition catalogue for *Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy: Collaborative Works* (Toronto: The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, 2000), pp. 50–57.
- 2 On the *Sad Sack* comic strip, see note 4 to “*Three Projects*,” in this volume.
- 3 For relevant essays by these three writers, see Clement Greenberg, “Avant-garde and Kitsch” (1938), in Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4 vols., ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986–1993); Georges Bataille, “The Psychological Structure of Fascism” (1933), in Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); and Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), originally published as *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* in 1935.
- 4 The randy film *Porky’s* (dir. Bob Clark, 1981) initiated the genre of bawdy loss-of-virginity teenage films.

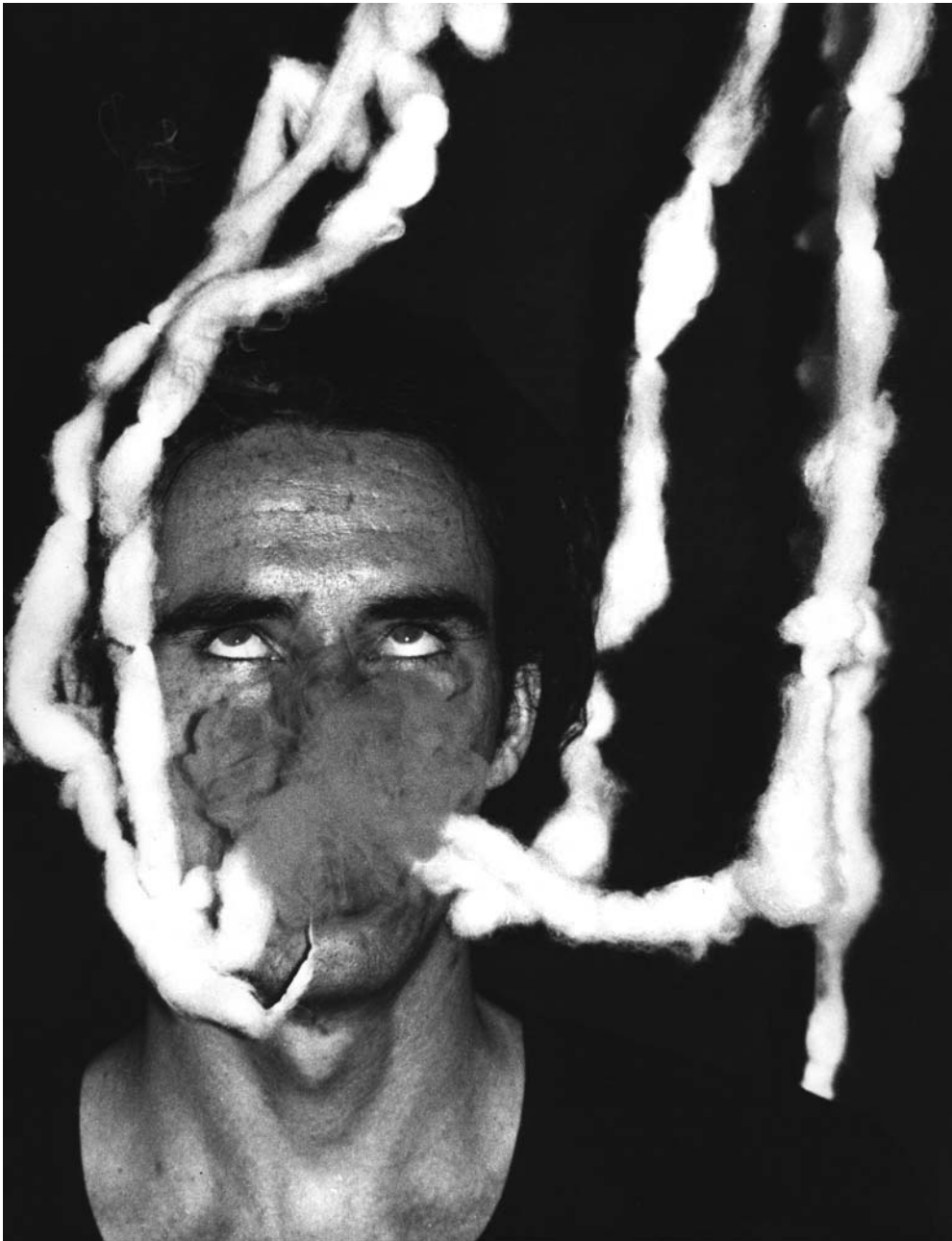
I M A G E - T E X T S

THE POLTERGEIST

JCW This text functioned as a text panel included in the seven-part black-and-white photographic work The Poltergeist, made by Kelley in 1979. Kelley worked on this theme simultaneously with David Askevold, an artist who had been one of Kelley's instructors at the California Institute of the Arts. Askevold's project consisted of six large-scale color photographs. Both works were exhibited at the Foundation for Art Resources in Los Angeles in 1979 as The Poltergeist: A Work between David Askevold and Mike Kelley. Much of the language in the text is lifted from the voluminous literature on the subject of the destructive spirit. Kelley and Askevold's shared interest in the history of spirit photography was, in part, a response to the primacy of documentary photographic style in the conceptual art movement. "The Poltergeist" was reprinted in Journal: Southern California Art Magazine, no. 28 (September-October 1980), published by the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art.

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For more on Askevold, see Mike Kelley, "David Askevold: The California Years," in Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).



31. Mike Kelley, *The Poltergeist*, detail (1979). Seven parts: two photographs, 40 × 27½ in., 40 3 62½ in.; text photograph, 40 × 33 in.; four photographs, 40 × 30 in. each.

Fire and Water

The Poltergeist is born in heat; it comes from the inside, where it's warm. The ghost comes from the outside. You feel a blast of icy air when it's near. The Poltergeist is a resident of the subconscious and is freed in a fever—*Brain Fever*—born like a vision in a fevered state. It comes in *the ecstatic state* or in a fit of depression, when the door is open, whether by choice or under duress. Sometimes it's *The Love That Burns*; the "Incendium Amorous," ecstatic heat like Tumo, mysterious Tibetan warm spots. Other times it's the *Heat of Pain*—the pounding heart—red hot from friction—about to explode like an overheated engine, perhaps resulting in *Spontaneous Human Combustion*.¹

All they found was a smoldering chair and a few teeth. In the front room was found a hole burned through the floor into the basement. There, a pile of ashes, the remains of a fire, so hot that no bones remained except for a few whose outline in the dust had not yet been disturbed. The home was checked after the neighbors, not seeing him for several days, called the police.

But nature, providing the illness, also provides the cure. Like white blood cells rushing to fight a foreign body, the paranormal heat is accompanied by the unexplained appearance of water. Water shoots in streams from the walls with an explosion from where there are no pipes, sometimes rhythmically—a primitive rhythm. Water to Combat Heat?

Three and a half gallons of water hissed into steam upon contact with one saintly woman in a burning passion. The heart of a dead saint burned the hands of those who touched it after it was removed from her body. Its immersion in water caused boiling. It never became corrupt—it had survived trial by Fire and Water.

The corrupt body is attacked by antibodies, swelling is the accumulation of these agents (an army encamped around a foe). The Poltergeist is also an antibody—anti- the body it is associated with. It functions like a fever to burn out internal sickness, but it is an all-encompassing sickness, not assigned to any particular part of the whole. In a state of confusion, the antibodies rush from here to there, en-masse, in a hopeless attempt to purge. *A Traveling Lump*—huge, distortive swelling of first one, then another part of the body. *Tongue—Then Foot*. The Poltergeist is autistic, obsessional—it always splits a dish in the exact same place. The Poltergeist is "The Dummy of the Un-

conscious”: The dummy speaks, while the ventriloquist plays the straight man. A Monkey-Like Phantom . . . A Yahoo . . . A Shit Slinger—Dance Little Monkey, Dance Little Monkey. “Bo Bo Cuck Cuck, Bo Bo Cuck Cuck”²—repeat endlessly—Dance Little Monkey-Like Phantom.

Energy Made Visible

The Poltergeist is a force and not a being, like a ghost; but sometimes it has been seen to take form—an allegory made concrete—a Monkey-Like Phantom, small like a child but always in heat, not innocent at all . . . this is “The Spirit of Adolescence”: little enough to fit in your pants, but not staying contained—always making itself obvious, popping out, slinging shit, breaking dishes, staining the carpet. This phantom looks like a cat when young—messy but lovable—but develops into a red hot “Weirdo” of the kind once favored by adolescents, where every feature is tumescent: bulging eyes, lolling tongue, thousands of erect lumps all over the face—the embodiment of frustration—riding hot rods all over the house—no longer lovable—too obtuse to be tolerable—everything destroyed—sex energy released: A Monkey-Like Phantom—A “Rat Fink”—A Poltergeist.³

The Dream State

There is a teenage term “dreamy,” meaning beautiful . . . like the beauty of the relaxed and unassuming expression of one asleep. The adolescent is drawn to the beauty of the dreamer, and is also susceptible to the Poltergeist: *The Dream State Made Material*. One can become “dreamy”—strange, though, how the idea is calm, the actuality, chaos. She says, “No one likes me; even the absence of people dislike me.” She had *Paranoid Fantasies Of Attack By Unknown Forces*.

The Poltergeist Rises Out of Conflict

The stage of human development where there is most conflict is adolescence—the conflict between generations, the conflict between inner and outer reality. With the Poltergeist, inner and outer reality become the same thing—*The Reality of Conflict*. What kind of conflict? “She was embarrassed by outbreaks of acne, but much more embarrassed by outbreaks of ecstasy, when streams of Ectoplasm would pour from her orifices and rise from her pores. Her house was a battery where energy was stored, where conflict built up until it exploded and that explosion was the *poltergeist*.”

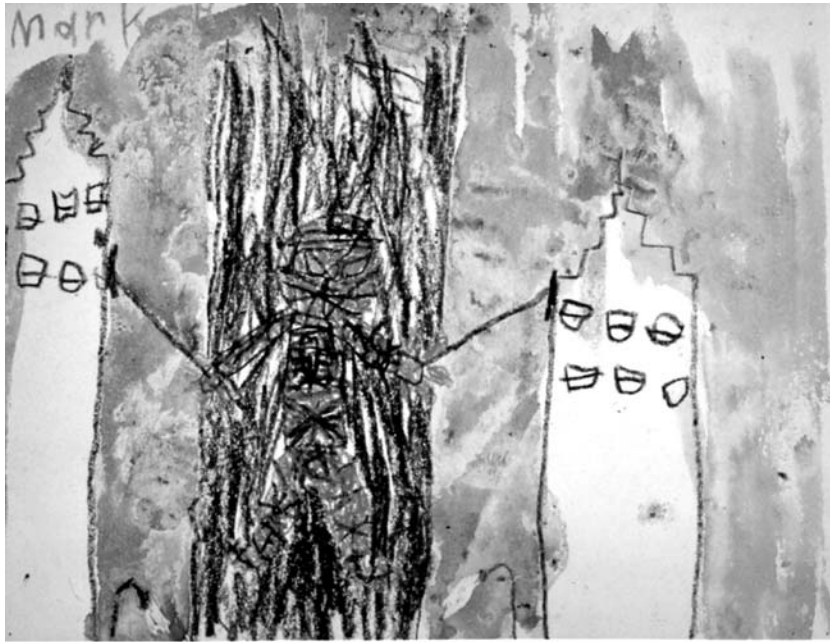
NOTES

- 1 On the disputed subject of "spontaneous human combustion," see Michael Harrison, *Fire from Heaven: A Study of Spontaneous Human Combustion in Human Beings* (New York: Methuen, 1976).
- 2 See Raymond Bayless, *The Enigma of the Poltergeist* (West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 1967), p. 82. "Bo, Bo Cuck" (in other accounts, "bo, bo" and "kick, cuck") is a poltergeist's verbal communication documented in Bayless's chapter on "Talking Poltergeists." The phrase was uttered by a poltergeist haunting the city of Ringcroft, Galloway, Scotland, in 1695.
- 3 Much of the imagery in this paragraph references the imagery of the "weirdo" cartoon style, primarily associated with the hot rod/surf culture artists Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, and Stanley "Mouse" Miller. Popular in the late 1950s and throughout the '60s, the dominant features of the monstrous weirdo figure are its bulging eyeballs, pimply face, and lolling tongue. By far the most famous of the weirdo characters is Rat Fink, Ed Roth's horrific inversion of Mickey Mouse. Weirdos were marketed as T-shirt designs, plastic model kits, decals, etc. Kelley drew a similar figure, named "The Spirit of Adolescence," in the panel with the headline "energy made visible" from *The Poltergeist* photo series. See Ed "Big Daddy" Roth with Howie "Pyro" Kusten, *Confessions of a Rat Fink: The Life and Times of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth* (New York: Pharos Books, 1992)

WE COMMUNICATE ONLY THROUGH OUR SHARED DISMISSAL OF THE PRE-LINGUISTIC: FOURTEEN ANALYSES

JCW This project consists of a series of fifteen color photographs that document paintings made under Kelley's tutelage by kindergarten students while he was an undergraduate art student at the University of Michigan in the early 1970s. He was taking courses in art education and, as part of his studies, worked as an assistant teacher in the Ann Arbor public school system, where he taught kindergarten and elementary grade art classes.

*Kelley saved these particular paintings because they were all somewhat unusual. In 1995 he photographed them, and each color photograph was accompanied by a written analysis accessible from an adjacent computer station. Kelley wrote all the analyses based on his extensive readings in child art analysis and art therapy. Notes are provided for the more developed concepts alluded to in the texts. In addition to sources mentioned in the notes, the following books and articles also formed the core reading for this work: Rhoda Kellogg, *Analyzing Children's Art* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Nation Press Books, 1969); Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing: An Introduction to a Theory of Unconscious Perception* (New York: Braziller, 1965); and Tessa Dalley, ed., *Art as Therapy: An Introduction to the Use of Art as a Therapeutic Technique* (London: Routledge, 1996).*



32. *top*: Mike Kelley, *We Communicate Only through Our Shared Dismissal of the Pre-linguistic #1* (1995). Color photograph mounted on museum board, 24 × 29 in. *bottom*: Mike Kelley, *We Communicate Only through Our Shared Dismissal of the Pre-linguistic* (1995). Installation view at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, 1996. Fifteen Ektacolor prints mounted on museum board, Xerox papers, and computer disk. Each print 24 × 29 in.

Part of Kelley's larger project Missing Time, We Communicate explores the general tendency in this literature, and in the psychological practice it informs, to explain unusual aesthetic traits as by-products of psychic or physical abuse. The contradictory nature of these texts suggests a significant amount of projection on the part of the analyst. Kelley, however, allows art viewers to counter his analysis with their own projected readings of the paintings by means of a computer program that enables them to edit the texts as they wish. The children's "unconscious" productions may now be consciously interpreted by viewers to fulfill their own ideological needs.

The fifteen-piece series was shown in the group exhibition Multiple Pleasures at the Tanya Bonakdar gallery, New York, February 17 to March 16, 1996; and two of the texts, no. 2, "John P.," and no. 11, "Alex," were published in John Welchman, Isabelle Graw, and Anthony Vidler, Mike Kelley (London: Phaidon, 1999), pp. 132–33.

1 Mark R.

A teacher-influenced work, obviously. The stereotypical rendition of the skyscrapers is unnatural to a child of this age. Mark's choice of subject, the popular comic book character Spider-Man,¹ reveals he has a withdrawn personality. He is unable to feel at one with living people, so he replaces them with synthetic heroes. He is cut off, and unable to show affection for human beings. His love of Spider-Man, a figure associated with darkness and lower evolutionary development, indicates that Mark is uncomfortable with adult males. Spider imagery is symbolic of negative feminine attributes. Mark has incorporated feelings of self-loathing from a dominant and unloving mother, and he hates his weak and submissive father. His attempts to mimic adult modes of drawing show that he seeks to please figures of authority, yet his choice of negative subject matter reveals a buried hatred and fear of authority figures. The orderly web designs of Spider-Man's costume are rendered as chaotic slashes, and the webs shooting out of his hands, which could be signs of stability, look more than anything like ropes binding the central figure in position. Spider-Man is the crucified Christ. Mark's attachment to such negative imagery shows that he has formed an identification with the aggressive family member who torments him. He has internalized, and seeks to act out, sadistic leanings,

but is too repressed to do so. The shading that surrounds the Spider-Man figure is a common indicator of anxiety. He is enclosed in a “mess package,” a projection of inner disorder.² Also, the perfect symmetry of the painting is unusual in children’s art. Irrational perfection, and a horror of asymmetry, is common among children whose inner balance is precarious.

2 John P.

This work says as much about John’s teacher as it does about John. The painting is obviously the by-product of a school holiday assignment. Assigning holiday subject matter in art classes is not recommended. A weak student like John seeks to please his master by hiding behind a mask of compliance. The result is antiart on the aesthetic level, and hypocrisy on the moral level. This student has an uncanny ability to produce stereotypical art geared toward such occasions as Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and so on. He produces an art that is of an exceptionally ugly, saccharine vulgarity. This weak child’s facile performance bolsters his self-esteem, and could lead eventually to a career in an intensively socialized field such as commercial art. But at what cost? By producing work meant to please his teacher, this child has become emotionally and aesthetically stunted. A jack-o’-lantern is the subject matter of a three-year-old, and John should have moved beyond this kind of imagery long ago. There is a definite problem when older students continue to produce only bland and conventional artworks. John’s teacher’s preference for stereotypical art could be a sign that he is warding off dangerous negative fantasies himself, a supposition supported by his preference for Halloween assignments which focus on antisocial imagery and depictions of death. The obvious intent is to produce a flattened emotional climate in the classroom. The deliberate encouragement of this kind of pseudoart is a defensive maneuver on the part of the teacher, who does not have the strength to confront his students’ mutilated and distorted personalities. The teacher’s inability to respond to his student’s distress results in the creation of a consciousness hostile to understanding. A lack of true response in interpersonal relationships creates a worldview that is divested of meaning. This is experienced by the child as “nameless dread,”³ which explains the child’s attraction to conventionalized images of horror, like ghosts. The clichéd depiction of the terrible masks the true terror of actual interior emptiness.

3 Laura

This lovely painting by Laura is free of adult-influenced image tropes. However, disturbing elements are present here. The figures are typical of the “cephalopod,” or tadpole stage,⁴ in the pictorial evolution of the human figure, and are normal for a child of this age. At this stage, pictorial primacy is given to the human head. But look at the facial expressions on these figures! All have been outfitted with huge, demonic fangs. These depictions do not conform to the stereotypical renditions of the monstrous found in Halloween drawings, and the painting is too unconventional to be explained in terms of that genre’s influence. Like figure no. 1, this work is atypically symmetrical, revealing a child who craves balance. The painting is composed in an implied triangle, a balanced figure; yet the triangle is topped by the menacing figure of a large, threatening bird or bat. The three figures have short “wing arms,” which imply that Laura feels ineffectual. Also, the wing arms mirror the wings of the menacing, dominant, batlike form, which could indicate that the figures have bonded with that which they fear. This is a defense strategy commonly found in children who have been abused. Despite their graphic diversity, the three threatened figures are similar in size, which means they probably do not represent different figures, but are repetitions of the same figure. They are multiple self-portraits. Compulsive, obsessive repetition indicates the presence of constricting mechanisms of defense. All of this leads me to think that Laura was sexually abused, perhaps by a satanic cult. This painting might not be symbolic at all, but could, in fact, depict some sort of ritual in which cult members pose as winged “satanic” figures in order to frighten the child into silence. Theatrical depictions of supernatural events are common practice in cults. They are used to shock child victims into a state in which fantasy and reality are mixed up. Their abuse is thus safely hidden behind an impenetrable wall of confusion. The success of this tactic of repression explains why Laura’s drawing is, on the surface, socialized and does not bear the normal signs of dysfunction easily visible in the artistic output of abused children who remember their abuse.

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4 Albert

A painting similar to the one produced by Laura. Again, there are three figures, which could be repetitions of the same figure. Once more, they are monstrous personages equipped with long fangs. Again, they have wing-like arms, and in this case feet as well, symbolic of feelings of powerlessness.

It is another night scene, though this time the enclosing area is much more sloppily painted, revealing a child whose inner life is a “mess.” This child suffers from intestinal problems due to stress. His perception of the universe is confined to the toilet bowl and sewer system, which he describes these figures as inhabiting.⁵ They are anal creations, reflecting the common children’s misconception that babies are born of the anus. The three reptilian figures are quite unusual, however, and do not conform to the typical, fecal “blob” personages created by children, most often in clay. Nor do they conform to common “dinosaur” stereotypes. Like Laura’s painting, it is possible that this painting contains imagery resulting from a cult staging session. Another possibility—one I am somewhat nervous about introducing—is that this painting could be an actual portrait of alien beings. The way the figures seem to float in the air and emerge out of a dark cloud is consistent with descriptions of alien visitations described by people under hypnosis. These are events not remembered except in a trance. Even if these monstrous personages are not actual portraits of alien beings, they could be screen memories implanted in the victim’s mind, conforming to social expectations of what an “alien” being looks like, and used to bury memories of the actual abduction scene. In this way, screen memories function analogously to cult dramatizations. When hypnotized, many alien abductees describe examinations of their bodies. Aliens seem to be particularly interested in the human anus, and painful anal probes are often performed. This could explain Albert’s fixation with scatological imagery and his psychosomatic intestinal symptoms.

5 Chuck

Until they are influenced by their kindergarten, children before the age of five rarely draw animals; then the human figure is simply switched from a vertical to a horizontal position, and extra legs added onto its underside. This occurrence reverses the evolutionary development that initially produced art. Because of the adoption of the erect human gait, there was a crisis of male optical pleasure when the voyeur libido was deprived of the sight of the female genitals from the rear. To make up for this loss, a pan-genital significance was projected onto every object in the external world. At that moment, all forms acquired a sexual significance, and the new aesthetic principle could be likened to a kind of “fig leaf.” All works of art, objects of visual pleasure, are censorial replacements for the sight of the female genitals.⁶ At this young age, Chuck is obviously unaware of the genital significance of his reversal of verticality. Chuck’s pleasure is still rooted in anality. Despite his

adoption of a stereotypically adult depiction of an alligator, the focus of the work is on the animal's environment, which is a fecal swamp. The freedom with which Chuck covers the paper with an all-over wash of brown shows that he has not yet repressed the pleasure of, or become self-consciously embarrassed by, the fecal gift. This is unusual for a child of this age and shows that Chuck is stuck in an infantile stage, though he is not dangerously unsocialized. Notice, though, that the swamp-dwelling alligator is pointed in the direction of an area of darkness along the left side of the paper. This could be read as representing a desire to return to the safety of the mother's womb, which children confuse with the anus,⁷ or to return to the primordial chaos of undifferentiation that is the condition of the fecal universe. When drawing the one tree with a trunk, Chuck pointed to the brown form and stated, "It looks like shit." Notice, however, that the rest of the trees have been rendered trunkless, another gesture of antiphallic verticality, and have been arranged in an orderly horizontal row. So, despite the overall fecal universe that Chuck inhabits, he has found ways to give it boundaries, and, most importantly, has not totally repressed its fecal nature or become guilty about it. The "shit" which makes up Chuck's worldview is not negative, rather he depicts it as healthy "soil."⁸

6 Joe H.

First of all, it is quite unusual to see a child position the sheet of paper he is working on in a vertical orientation. Children almost always find comfort by positioning the paper with the widest side toward them. This roots the child, and is an indication of a stable personality. On the surface, this painting is fairly typical of a child of this age. The figure is an advanced form of the "tadpole," and the depictions of the houses are also quite normal. The monster is not so typical, and is probably a teacher-inspired image. Note that the houses and figure all lean toward the right, while the monster is vertically balanced and points toward the left. Right-side orientation is the dominant compositional mode, just as right-handedness is dominant. Thus, the left-side orientation of the monster is telling. Its verticality tells us that the monster is a dominant figure in the child's life, and is probably symbolic of a parent or teacher. The fact that the monster points toward the left reveals that the child fears this figure and perceives it as dangerous. It could be an abuser. The yearning for the right says that the child craves power, masculine qualities, and goodness. In biblical terms, the child wishes to sit at the right hand of God, and fears the left side of weakness and damnation. The

color of the painting is unusual, especially seen in light of the overt tension of the imagery. The color is saccharine and more appropriate for a good little girl at Sunday school than for a boy.⁹ The effeminate atmosphere of this background reveals a boy who is totally submissive to his main authority figure, probably his mother, and he has taken on the sweet and feminine nurturing qualities he wishes his mother had, but which she obviously does not.

7 Michael S.

Michael claims that this painting illustrates a “dream” in which he is pursued by a dinosaur while riding on horseback. While purported dreams are generally negative fantasies, they are sometimes recollections of real-life situations which the child cannot consciously deal with. On the surface, Michael’s fantasy is terrifying, though in actuality it is an erotic fantasy that cannot be confronted consciously. Despite the danger of the situation, notice the look of pleasure on the face of the young horseman. I would think that this fantasy is shared with an adult. Overt narrative construction in the art of children occurs most often when works are done in the presence of an adult. The large figures in the painting, the horse and dinosaur, are adult substitutes. In this fantasy construction, they are under the control of the child. The horse is being ridden, and the monster is being easily evaded, in fact, teased. Clearly, the “child calls the shots” in his relationship with his adult collaborator. Michael, however, does show strong homosexual tendencies. The horse is almost solely the subject matter of young girls and generally represents desire for the father. And the entire painting, from edge to edge, is soaked with lurid purple. Flowery exoticism of this intensity reveals a boy who is unusually aesthetic. Yet Michael has no shame. He is outgoing, sure of himself, and playful. He is however, a Daddy’s boy, and wishes to be his father’s wife.

8 Ross W.

Another example of unusual, unstable, vertical orientation. And, again, more dinosaur imagery. As has already been noted, recognizable animals, including dinosaurs, are not the natural products of the child artist, and reveal a certain amount of guiding by an adult. Unlike the painting by Michael S., this painting indicates a child who is not in control of his situation. Even the color scheme illustrates conflict. Seemingly engaged in battle, the two figures are each associated with a color:

the dinosaur with blue, and the brown figure with red. Blue is generally considered the color of control and order, while red is indicative of dangerous, fiery emotions. Thus, the monster could represent a controlling adult figure. Yet, I believe that in this case the monster represents a wished-for adult figure, one that would bring order to a disordered psyche. I draw this conclusion because of the presence of the brown “fecal” figure, which I believe represents the child, who has depicted himself as a disorderly “mess package.”¹⁰ There are no discernable human characteristics in this blob, but the depiction of the monster shows that this is a child well advanced in the depiction of socialized forms. Thus the self-portrait as fecal mess is a willful infantile regression, probably an act of defiance against a figure of authority. In the upper left of the “mess package” is the recognizable form of a crucifix. As in popular vampire films, this sign is being used to keep the monster at bay. Yet, as I have already stated, the monster is a desired symbol of control. This leads me to believe that the dysfunctional adult figure in the child’s life is a religious fanatic who uses such symbols as the crucifix to beat down and control the child through guilt.

9 Tina

Yet another use of the dinosaur image. This time the adult-instigated image is engaged in battle with another pop icon—a flying saucer. Here we have a “war of the clichés.” The conventionalized subject matter of the painting makes commentary difficult, except to note that it is an attempt to please an adult who is pushing the child to adopt popular forms. I have a feeling that this struggle between adult and child is causing the child much anxiety. The composition tells the story. The centrally located flying saucer dominates the painting, pushing the dinosaur flat against the right side of the paper. Flying saucers are symbols of order. The negativity often projected upon them in surrounding narratives is indicative of a child who is frightened of order. This is generally the outcome of being overly dominated. The saucer’s “force lines” are an encasing scribble. The technologically advanced, symbolically pure, and adult form of the saucer has been graffitied over with a signature of chaos. Scribbling is primitive, symbolically corresponding to the brutal and primitive animal form of the dinosaur. Regressive scribbling is often used to gain access to latent ideas not otherwise easily accessible. The terror of this struggle to gain access to repressed material is graphically presented here in the bloody battle. The child substitute, the monster, shoots out jets of blood from

wounds incurred in the struggle. The violence of this picture is striking for a girl and shows the amount of inner tension kept at bay. I believe the subject of repression in this case is particularly violent toilet training. The action in the painting takes place in a “valley” surrounded by earthy-colored “mountains.” It is a hellish rectal stronghold ringed by fecal triangles of brown anality. This battle represents a regressive tantrum of repressed fecal disobedience.

10 Lori

Another painting utilizing the image of the flying saucer. But this is quite a different work from Tina’s. Whereas her painting employed the saucer as a socialized symbol of order, here the image has been completely obfuscated. At first glance, the painting reads as an abstract composition, but closer viewing clearly reveals the presence of the saucer, turned upside down by the child in an attempt to conceal it. In this case, the saucer signifies something completely buried in the child’s consciousness. Indicators of order dominate the painting, both in the symbology of the saucer itself and the mandaloid concentric construction of the composition. These ordering devices are used to mask problem material. The spots of “light” on the saucer are akin to the decoration of images with “jewels,” another example of the aestheticization of primary pleasures. Normally, I would read this painting as typifying problematic toilet training. The act of defecation is one of great importance and reflects children’s sense of power in their ability to give or withhold. As they get older, children face the catastrophic discovery that their feces are not as lively, beautiful, and boundless to others as they are to themselves. Once this joy of giving has been squelched, the children themselves feel as if they are trash. This accounts for their later cravings for images of order, and explains their attraction to socialized imagery and insipid and sentimental, third-rate artworks. In Lori’s painting, the symbols of order have been slathered with sloppy, primitive regressive markings. What could account for such willful defilement of signs of order? One explanation would be a trauma so severe that it has forced recognition underground. The fact that the image was turned upside down, and was not recognized by the artist, reveals the amount of terror held at bay. This painting is one of the rare cases that I am tempted to interpret as a result of brainwashing. Someone has implanted in this child the need to forget. As much as I am embarrassed to say so, I believe this painting might actually be the result of alien abduction. Usually, works that employ UFO imagery and speak of great

trauma are the result of adult attempts to cover up their own abuses under the implanted fiction of alien abuse. This is done in order to cover up their own crimes. Lori's painting is so unusual in its regressive strategies and avoidance of stereotypical UFO imagery that I think it might be the rare example of a child who actually was abducted by beings from elsewhere who have the power of inducing forgetfulness. Images of such intense traumatic experience can only surface in the most unconscious art production.

11 Alex

A very regressive painting, more typical of a child of a much younger age. A central "fecal" mess painted in fiery, emotional colors is surrounded by a circle of blue, an attempt to establish boundaries. A preponderance of circular and softly rounded shapes and a scarcity or absence of decisive straight lines are characteristic of the dependent personality seeking oral gratification. I believe this painting represents a regressive search for the comforting "proto-face," the murky infantile image of the mother's face that is linked to the oral gratification of breast-feeding. At this early stage, the circular image of the breast and mother's face are confused. Here, the paint spreads messily across the paper, producing a "jelly face"¹¹ with only very loose boundaries. It lacks even the eyes, which are the first "human" attributes added to early diagrammatic drawings. This addition signals the beginning of socialized image production. The painting at hand is only a shifting nebular mass. Messy works such as this are often made specifically for the teacher. They are aggressive attacks on the orderly aesthetics of the adult, with which the child is quite familiar, but resents. The creator of such works has a compulsive need to handle and examine internal chaotic feelings where "good" and "bad" are indistinguishable. Hopefully, a child such as this can progress to the point where the "gift" can be relinquished, and the receiver allowed to throw the mess away. Only then can the child begin to use materials to represent and express fantasies that are more closely linked to their current relationships with external reality. For children like this, who can't let go of their infantile messy products, I believe it is advisable to provoke a more conscious connection between the true infantile sources of their production and their aesthetic output. The children should be asked to clear their bowels before the beginning of class, and if this proves to be a problem, I recommend stool-softening medicines.

12a and 12b Erika

Two typical depictions of a house and surroundings, normal for a child of this age. Buildings and houses are drawn in a similar manner by children all over the world, and are constructed naturally, without adult prompting. The two paintings are similar enough to be considered repetitions. The main difference between the two is the color of the washes that designate one, a day scene, and the other, a night scene. Repetitious aesthetic output is often a sign of repressed traumatic memories. Compulsive, obsessive repetitions indicate the presence of constricting defense mechanisms. These result in meager, stereotypical production. In the night scene, the house is flanked by two types of plant forms: on the right, stereotypical depictions of flowers; and on the left, an idiosyncratic depiction of a tree. The flowers are based on adult models and indicate a desire to please authority figures. The tree is another story; it is obviously a covert representation of the female genitals. The trunk depicts the vaginal opening, while the foliage clearly represents the pubic hair. Genitalia are rarely represented in children's drawings, even in those of the most uninhibited children. Thus, they cannot be considered intrinsic to child art and are generally present only in narrative works based on actual experiences in which the genitals figure prominently. The vagina in this case is "secret," disguised as a tree because the scene it refers to has been repressed; perhaps it is a scene of abuse. This vaginal opening leads to an internal space housing things to find, things which the child has camouflaged but wishes to be brought into the light. Notice that the daytime scene has been signed by the child—in fact, twice—while the night scene has not. This leads me to believe that the abuse happened at night. The fact that the child has not put her name on the night scene shows that she has cut herself off from the experience. This would explain the addition of the stereotypical "adult" flowers to the scene as well. Abused children become expert at keeping secrets and creating false impressions. Like illusionists, they make things appear to be other than they are. These scenes of surface normality are not what they appear to be. Houses are symbols of security and stability. Even though these paintings of houses are upright and secure, the surrounding "natural" scenery reveals the hidden sexual nature of their interior life. And this secret has been so carefully buried that it only finds the light of day hidden within peripheral and seemingly unimportant details.

13 Elaine

Another painting of a house by a female child, but how different from the facades of order set up by Erika. The house is a crudely scrawled heap surrounded by dark messy slashes of color. The surrounding shading produces an atmosphere that screams with anxiety. No German expressionist has depicted the black torture of the soul better. Although Elaine is obviously an unhappy child, she is, at least, able to express this state of mind openly and need not hide behind the mask of socialization. She need not pretend to be the “good little girl.” The adult world of rules and order, symbolized by the house, is sinking back into an infantile fecal mound that Elaine has the capacity to control. Notice that this house lacks windows and doors. Elaine has problems with the depictions of entrances, and is herself incapable of allowing entrance to her secret, morbid interior world. She can only express herself by defiantly acting out. And just as “entrance” is not allowed, nor is “exit.”¹² Elaine barely speaks. The house is sinking into the ground, into the realm of repressed, underground thoughts that find no release. Art is painful for Elaine. Just as home offers no solace for her, neither does school. As part of school culture, art exercises are perceived by the child as a form of abusive probing. School is the mirror image of the home, and the teacher is the substitute parent, perceived only as an uncaring disciplinarian. Elaine has constructed a pyramid of sorrow. Like the ancient pyramids of Egypt that are eternal reminders of the cruelty of the state, testimonials to the thousands of slaves who died creating them, so this tottering heap is a symbol of the totalitarian family and repressive educational systems.

14 Scott

Divested of meaning, the frightened part of him has sought shelter in the corner, at the far left of the page—the part associated with abandonment, with complete terror of social interaction. It is the place of the outcast. Scott has been brought up in a world that never responded to his needs. Now he experiences this mismatch of feeling and reaction as “nothingness.” He is unable to make sense of himself or the world. The terrain of emptiness he inhabits is unknowable and experienced as “nameless dread.”¹³ He has spent the majority of his life in hiding. He denies all emotions; he fears anything that would make him feel real. He is a zero. Yet, even in his nothingness, he seeks to please. Since he is nothing, he tries to find himself in others, to become them. The depiction of the

human form in this painting is quite unusual. It does not conform to the general tendency of children this age to draw figures that fit within an implied circle. Mandaloid composition reflects wholeness, as the circle is whole. Here the figure is strangely elongated in an attempt to conform to adult proportions. It is, in fact, in proper adult proportion, and is meant to please adult observers, to reflect their desires rather than Scott's. The outcome is dissolution. The body is proportionally correct, but the head explodes into parts. It does not reflect a unified personality. Rather, it is an unconnected grouping of marks, shooting in every direction, centered around a howling mouth of pain. The arms are absent, signifying feelings of ineffectualness, and the whole body is encased in a "mess package"¹⁴ of anxious shading. The interior of the body is a hemmed-in blot of fiery, red emotion with no avenue of escape. The rest of the page is empty. And unlike children suffering from a typical horror of the vacuum, who strive to fill every empty space with markings in order to ground themselves, this child has simply given up. He exists in a void. Cut off from the world, he has pictured himself residing in the emptiness of a destroyed and vacant psyche. "Nothing" is all there is for Scott.

NOTES

- 1 The comic book *Spider-Man* chronicles the adventures of high school student Peter Parker, who gained incredible, arachnid-like powers from the bite of an irradiated spider, and vowed to use his amazing abilities to protect his fellow man. The character first appeared in Marvel Comics' *Amazing Fantasy*, no. 15 (1962); Sony Picture's movie version was released in May 2002.
- 2 On the "messy package" (which has been altered by Kelley's analytic persona to "mess package"), see Carol Sagar, "Working with Cases of Child Sexual Abuse," in *Working with Children in Art Therapy*, ed. Caroline Case and Tessa Dalley (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 92.
- 3 The idea of "nameless dread" is outlined by Martha Harris, after the work of W. Bion, cited in Aleathea Lillitos, "Control, Uncontrol, Order, and Chaos: Working with Children with Intestinal Motility Problems," in Case and Dalley, eds., *Working with Children in Art Therapy*.
- 4 In chapter 7 of *Young Children and Their Drawings* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1996), Joseph H. Di Leo notes that the "basic concept of man is likened to a cephalopod in which the dominant element is the head out of which issue the limbs" (p. 50).
- 5 Edith Kramer reproduces a photograph of clay figures of "anal people mass-produced by ten-year-old Gregory, a boy whose universe at the time was confined to personages inhabiting the toilet bowl and sewer system." Edith Kramer with Laurie Wilson, *Childhood and Art Therapy: Notes on Theory and Application* (New York: Schocken, 1979), p. 118, fig. 24.
- 6 This theory is summarized by Herbert Read in "Psycho-Analysis and the Problem of Aesthetic Value," in *The Forms of Things Unknown: The Problem of Aesthetic Value* (New York: Horizon Press, 1960), p. 91; he cites Anton Ehrenzweig, who developed these ideas after Freud.
- 7 See Sigmund Freud, "On the Sexual Theories of Children" (1908), trans. Douglas Brian, in *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children* (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1963), pp. 25–40.
- 8 This passage derives from the analysis of "Jimmy" by Margaret Naumburg in *An Introduction to Art Therapy: Studies of the "Free" Art Expression of Behavior Problem Children and Adolescents as a Means of Diagnosis and Therapy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973), p. 149.
- 9 Edith Kramer uses this phrase when discussing a painting by ten-year-old "Herman"; see her *Art Therapy with Children* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 51.
- 10 On "mess[y] package," see note 2 above.
- 11 The representation of a "face" "like jelly" with "no structured boundary and spread messily across the page, with the eyes being the only recognizable feature" is discussed in the analysis of the eleven-year-old "David" in Lillitos, "Control, Uncontrol, Order, and Chaos"; see plate 25.
- 12 Though rather different from the use made of "entrance" and "exit" here, Tilman Furniss's ideas of "entrance ritual" and "exit ritual" are discussed in Sagar, "Working with Cases of Child Sexual Abuse," p. 105. It is in this context that Furniss also discusses what he terms the "out-of-time mode" in which a victim of abuse appre-

hends apparently normal, ritualistic phrases that connote an abusive episode. See Tilman Furniss, *Surviving Child Sexual Abuse* (London: Routledge, 1988). This form of out-of-time perception clearly relates to the cluster of temporal pauses and absences brought together in Kelley's *Missing Time*.

- 13 On "nameless dread," see note 3, above.
- 14 On "mess[y] package," see note 2, above.

TIMELESS/AUTHORLESS: FOUR RECOVERED MEMORIES

JCW *Timeless/Authorless is a series of fifteen black-and-white photo-text works. Generally, the works mimic the appearance of blowups of newspaper clippings. Each panel is topped by the masthead of a local newspaper from cities where Kelley either has lived, has attended school, or regularly exhibits his artwork, including Wayne, Westland, and Ann Arbor in Michigan. The content of the individual panel texts varies between actual newspaper restaurant reviews and “recovered memories” of personal childhood abuse. They are illustrated by photographs lifted from high school yearbooks depicting extracurricular school activities such as sporting events, school plays, and carnivalesque productions designed to break the monotony of general institutional order through symbolic reversals of power and displays of nonsensical action. The texts were used in multiple photo-texts so that their narratives were apportioned between them.*

Kelley chose the format of the newspaper clipping because of the sense of truthful reportage it signifies, while he used restaurant reviews because they are the newspaper formats we most commonly experience, on restaurant walls or windows, in isolated and enlarged forms. By pairing this “naturalized” blowup with the “recovered memory” blowups, Kelley is attempting to avoid the connotations of artistic “gigantism” associated with pop art. This series, shown in Toward a Utopian Arts Complex, Kelley’s solo show at the Metro Pictures gallery, New York, in 1995, along with Entry Way (Genealogical Chart), Timeless Paintings, and Educational Complex

The Westland Eagle

Official Newspaper of Westland

In Catholic elementary school, I was often warned of the dangers of chumming around with Protestant boys. I was told of their warped views of our Lord's teachings, their callous disregard for the mother of Christ: the holy Virgin Mary, and the horrible fact that their "priests" did not practice celibacy. The protestant's inability to curb their animal instincts make them susceptible to the sins of the flesh, perversions of every kind. It is common knowledge that young protestant boys are chronic masturbators. And, sadly, the girls too. I heard of one neighborhood Lutheran girl, nicknamed Sugar Bear, who had to be taken to the hospital to have

a section of broken-off hot dog removed from inside her. The boys are unable to keep their hands off themselves, and as they get older this libidinal urge shifts to anything else they can get a hold of: inanimate objects, animals, whorish girls, and, worst of all, dead things. Protestants are deeply resentful of the Catholic's ability to keep the temple of our Lord, our bodies, free from sin. They are envious of our holy restraint and thus seek to harm us whenever they can. They want to sully us as they are sullied. Their greatest pleasure comes from seeing a Catholic sink to their evil ways.

I heard all of this, yet I paid no heed. It was hard to believe that anybody could do the things my teachers described to me. Such practices were simply unthinkable to a truly Christian mind. The Protestant boys in my block seemed like regular fellows. Though I didn't know them well, they were friendly enough, and in one instance, a few Protestant boys my age stopped a teenage Protestant girl from beating me to a pulp. This bruiser was staunchly anti-Catholic and had tried several times to catch me. Finally, she succeeded and I was getting a severe "ass-kicking" until I was saved by these boys. Despite their own taunts, which I shrugged off as simple bravado, they let me go. For this I rewarded them with my lunch money. I had never seriously thought that this girl's cruelty was religiously motivated. Instead, I assumed she was an atypical juvenile delinquent. I was wrong. Religious prejudice, as I was to find out, was the norm.

Every day, I rode my bike home from school across the bridge spanning the Rouge River. In actuality, the Rouge River is little more than a stream, yet I loved to stop on the bridge and stare down into its green waters. Across the bridge, on one side of the road, was a fire station. Sometimes the firemen would be there, busily polishing the shiny red fire truck; but generally the station was locked up, as they were often out on call. Then the station had a lonely, deserted aura. On the other side of the road was a soda fountain/candy shop run by two old brothers. The shop was a vestige of another time. It didn't carry many of the candies and snacks then currently popular with young people. The proprietors were so hard of hearing and slow that no one wanted to deal with them. Also... their smell was intolerable. The brothers were mirror images of one another: they were over seventy years old, white as dead fish, thin and frail, and wore matching white soda jerk uniforms. They lived in their own world; neither one could understand a word uttered to them, and both were so feeble they could barely speak. All transactions had to be conducted in the point and grunt method.

Consequently, they hardly ever had customers in their shop. The only group of people to frequent the place on a regular basis was a gang of four young toughs from the local public high school. Their names were Meat, Eddie, Lumpy and Pee Wee. If the old men still had their wits about them, they would have closed the business long ago because these "customers" never paid for a thing and constantly demeaned the pair. I was unlucky enough to enter the shop one afternoon when this band of ruffians was there, and was horrified, permanently scarred, by the scene I witnessed. The pack of leather-jacketed thugs had trashed the shop, destroying all of the merchandise except for what they were calling or readying to carry off. One old fellow was still being slapped around and taunted, while his brother was laying on the floor, face up, having already been beaten. His pants were down around his ankles and his face was smeared all over with gooey chocolate bars. Meanwhile, the old fellow still standing was being marched around the vandalized store by Meat who propelled him forward with swift knee-kicks to his butt. Then, after a final powerful wedge which elicited a howl of pain from the elderly gentleman, Meat stripped this old man's pants off too. Then, switchblade to his throat, the bewildered codger was forced to squat upon the candy-smeared face of his brother. The crew

of delinquents stepped back and laughed uproariously, all the while pointing at the tableau they had created. This, the "shitty-faced candy-man can can," as they called it, was the finest scene they had ever devised.

If it wasn't for the fact that these scum were so engrossed in their foul play, I'm sure I would have met with the same fate as the two aged soda jerks. Blessedly, I escaped without notice. This was the event that changed my conception of the world. After seeing the brutal actions of these public school boys, I knew the world was not as rosy as I had before imagined. I knew now, I was in constant danger.

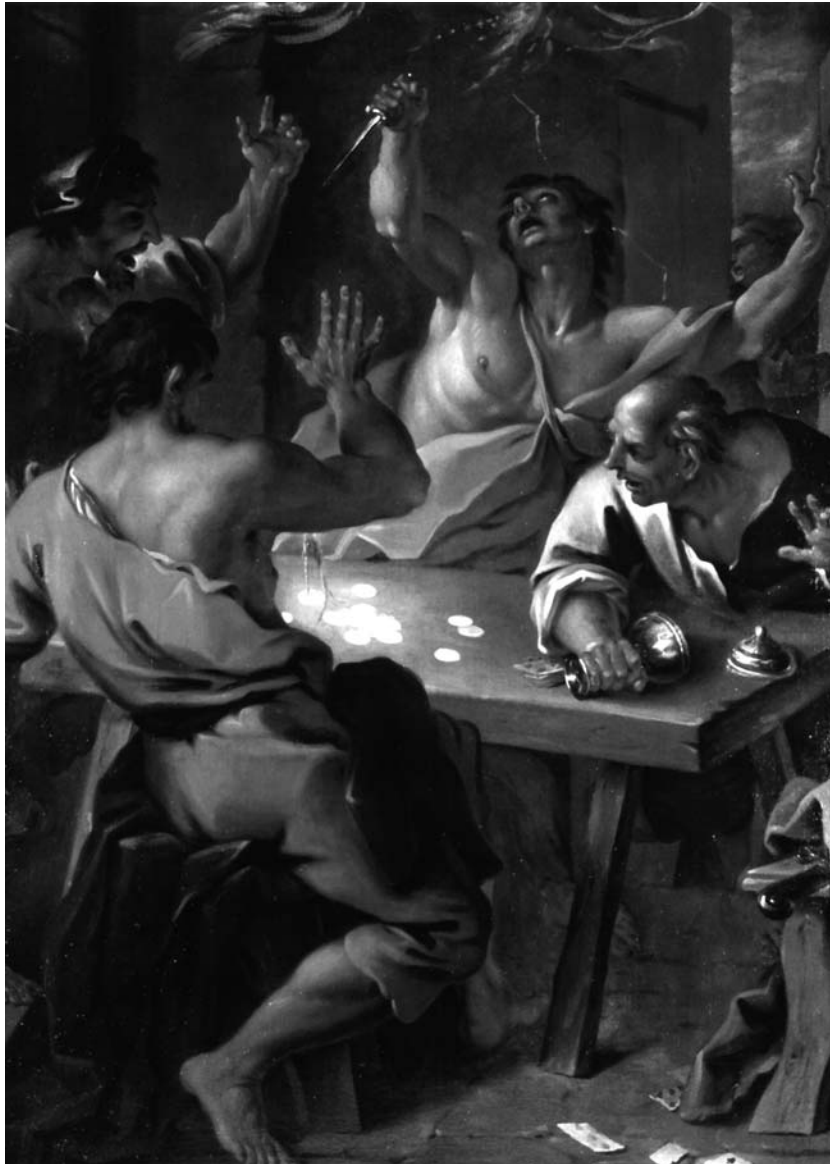
Soon my new world view was confirmed. After the soda fountain incident, I always rode my bike home across the bridge on the fire station side of the street, naively believing this was a safer route. Sometimes I would pull around, into the alley, behind the station, because it allowed access to a path that led down to the river's edge. This particular spot by the river was always deserted. I could while away an hour or so watching leaves drift by on the current, or read a book until the sun started to go down, telling me that dinner time was near. This day, though, the alley was not deserted. On making the turn around the side of the fire station into the alley, I was set upon by a gang of seven or eight Protestant boys who quickly knocked me off of my bike and subdued me. These guys were my own age, younger than Meat and his buddies, but just as cruel. Initially I thought I might escape with only a beating and the loss of my bike, but I soon realized these fellows had different intentions. They recognized me as a Catholic. I had stupidly forgotten to remove my tie after school. This article of clothing was a dead giveaway as to my religious affiliation; now I was doomed.



(all 1995), is part of Kelley's larger project Missing Time, which is generally concerned with Repressed Memory Syndrome. For more on the wider project, see the texts "Goin' Home, Goin' Home" and "Missing Time, Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered," in this volume; and their accompanying catalogues, Mike Kelley: The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on the Winter), Jablonka Galerie, Cologne, 1995; and Mike Kelley: Missing Time, Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered, Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, 1995. Three of the narratives were published as "Bee, Gang, P Eye," along with writings by twenty-three other LA-based artists, critics, and writers, in asteroid impaired: righteous american fiction, vol. 1, ed. Alexis Hall, Catherine Sullivan, and Benjamin Weissman (Pasadena: Art Center College of Design, n.d.). The texts address primal scenes of "re-called abuse": gang rape and torture fueled by religious bigotry; abduction and incarceration; and a scene of father-son incest and paternal tyranny. Unlike some of Kelley's other persona-driven fictions, the voices here modulate between plausibility, fantasy, and wild projection so that the reader becomes ensnared in their delusional crescendos. The resulting monologues are powerful, obsessive, and disquieting.

Recovered Memory #1

In Catholic elementary school, I was often warned of the dangers of chumming around with Protestant boys. I was told of their warped views of our Lord's teachings, their callous disregard for the mother of Christ, the holy Virgin Mary, and the horrible fact that their "priests" did not practice celibacy. The inability of Protestants to curb their animal instincts make them susceptible to the sins of the flesh, perversions of every kind. It is common knowledge that young Protestant boys are chronic masturbators. And, sadly, the girls too. I heard of one neighborhood Lutheran girl, nicknamed Sugar Bear, who had to be taken to the hospital to have a section of broken-off hot dog removed from her insides. The boys are unable to keep their hands off themselves, and as they get older this libidinal urge shifts to anything else they can get a hold of: inanimate objects, animals, whorish girls, and, worst of all, dead things. Protestants are deeply resentful of Catholics' ability to keep the temple of our Lord, our bodies, free from sin. They are envious of our holy restraint and thus seek to harm us whenever they can. They want to sully us as they are sullied. Their greatest pleasure comes from seeing a Catholic sink to their evil ways.



34. Giacomo Pallavicino detto il Gianolo (Casparo di Civo, active 1660–1729), *L'ostia trafitta dagli ebrei manda sangue* (*The Host Stabbed by the Jews Spurts Blood*). Oil on canvas. 87 × 62 in. M.D. 2001.046.003. Museo Diocesano (provenance Milan, Arciconfraternità Santissimo Sacramento). Courtesy Museo Diocesano di Milano (Italy).

I heard all of this, yet I paid it no heed. It was hard to believe that anybody could do the things my teachers described to me—practices that were simply unthinkable to a truly Christian mind. The Protestant boys in my block seemed like regular fellows. Though I didn't know them well, they were friendly enough, and one time, a few Protestant boys my age stopped a teenage Protestant girl from beating me to a pulp. This bruiser was staunchly anti-Catholic and had tried several times to catch me. Finally, she succeeded and I was getting a severe "ass-kicking" until I was saved by these boys. Despite their own taunts, which I shrugged off as simple bravado, they let me go. For this I rewarded them with my lunch money. I had never seriously thought that this girl's cruelty was religiously motivated. Instead, I assumed she was an atypical juvenile delinquent. I was wrong. Religious prejudice, as I was to find out, is the norm.

Every day, I rode my bike home from school across the bridge spanning the Rouge River. In actuality, the Rouge River is little more than a stream, yet I loved to stop on the bridge and stare down into its green waters. Across the bridge, on one side of the road, was a fire station. Sometimes the firemen would be there, busily polishing the shiny red fire truck; but generally the station was locked up, as they were often out on call, and the station had a lonely, deserted aura. On the other side of the road was a soda fountain/candy shop run by two old brothers. A relic from another time, its proprietors were unwilling, or unable, to keep up with the current tastes of their young customers. The two brothers were mirror images of one another: they were over seventy years old, white as dead fish, thin and frail, and wore matching white soda jerk uniforms. They lived in their own world; neither could understand a word uttered to them, and both were so feeble they could barely speak. All transactions had to be conducted in the point and grunt method. Also . . . their smell was intolerable. Consequently, the shop was nearly always empty.

The only people to frequent the place on a regular basis were a gang of four young toughs from the local public high school. Their names were Meat, Eddie, Lumpy, and Pee Wee. If the old men still had their wits about them, they would have closed their business long ago because these "customers" never paid for a thing and constantly demeaned the pair. I was unlucky enough to enter the shop one afternoon when this band of ruffians was there, and was horrified—and permanently scarred—by the scene I witnessed. The pack of leather-jacketed thugs had trashed the shop, destroying all of the merchandise except for what they were eating or readying to carry off. One old fellow was still being slapped around and taunted, while his brother was lying on the floor, face up, having already been beaten. His pants were down around his ankles and his face was smeared all

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At first, they just slapped me around while taking turns riding my bike up and down the riverbank. It was obvious they had no interest in stealing my bike, for they took every opportunity to run it into rocks and potholes until the frame was dented, the paint scraped off, and the wheels bent. Then they removed the seat from the bicycle and forced me to ride the damaged vehicle up and down the alley. They found this pathetic parade hilariously amusing. Because the bicycle wheels were so bent, and the surface of the alley so irregular, the seat shaft painfully poked me in the anus

as I peddled. One of the despicable bullies then got the idea that I should perform this same trick "bare-assed." Their squeals of laughter intensified as they saw the increased pain on my face. The metal shaft bounced repeatedly against my naked and tender orifice until blood began to drip down and spray off the spokes of the wheels. Tiring of this game, they broke into two groups: one stomped my bike to pieces, while the other kicked me about the head and genitals until I was a bruised and bloody mess. I thought I was dead, but they were far from finished with me. No, they were not interested in destroying me, they wanted to destroy my faith.

One of the two groups dragged me, naked, several blocks to a garage "club house" behind an abandoned house. Above the door was a crude sign that read "No girls allowed." Its interior was decorated with strangled cats hung from the rafters, and three-gallon mayonnaise jars, containing their "piss collection," lined the walls in careful rows. The other group left with my wallet. When these boys returned several hours later, one of them was carrying a small portable cassette recorder that I recognized as my own. The rest were carrying other objects of value taken from my home. They had used my school ID card to find my address and, using my own key, had broken into and burgled my parent's house. Besides the standard items easily saleable on the street, they had stolen some religious articles. These were worth nothing monetarily; they only wanted to defile them. One of the objects was a ceramic statue of the Virgin Mary, much loved by my mother. They took turns defecating on it, while forcing me to watch the despicable act. All the while they snickered about the "lie" of Christ's virgin birth. "The Virgin wasn't a virgin and neither are you," one of them snarled. He then sadistically "popped my butt cherry," as he called it, with the sacred statue.

Then came the cruelest twist of the knife. Turning me back over, they shoved my cassette player into my face and turned it on. Out of it came the unmistakable sound of my dog, Duke, whining in agony. With his face right in mine, one of the louts spat: "We've got your little dog, you fuck, and if you ever want to see him alive, you'll do something for us." I was beyond caring if I lived any longer, in fact I was hoping for death, but the sound of my dog's torture was unbearable. I was willing to agree to anything to prevent any mistreatment of my beloved Duke. The boys then produced a schedule of Catholic masses from my church. One of them spoke: "We picked this up at your house. And look, there's a service tonight! We're going to fix you up pretty, and you're going to go and bring us back a host." I did not argue.

Stuffed into some fresh clothes, I was escorted to my church. The bells were tolling, signaling the beginning of mass. In the pew, on each side of me, was one of my tormentors. Throughout the service, the cries of Duke preyed on my mind. Sickened as I was by what I was about to do, I felt Jesus would understand, would approve of any act that saved the life of one of his beautiful creatures. When it came time for communion, I knelt before the altar and received into my mouth the wafer of bread that is also the body of Christ. I did not swallow. Immediately, upon my return to my seat, I was led outside. I was then compelled to spit the precious host into the waiting hand of one of the monsters.

Back at the “club house,” the real horror began. Faced with the perversions being acted out, I regretted my decision to follow my captors’ orders. I would have rather died, seen my dog’s—even my parent’s—death, than the atrocities performed on the body of Christ that I was forced to witness that day. First, the entire gang had a “circle jerk,” ejaculating en masse onto the host, an activity they sickeningly dubbed “cum on the cookie.” Then, they took turns masturbating onto our Lord in another game called “Oreo,” which called for me to suck the “cream” off of the host after each perverted act. Then they would flush the wafer out of my mouth by urinating into it as a group. The defilements escalated. I was forced to suck the host out of the anus of every one of them, one after another. Then they each took a turn pushing the host deep into my rear end by sodomizing me. Then they caused me to defecate our Lord out by giving me a Coca Cola enema—first shaking, then inserting, the exploding bottle into my rectum. They repeated this action again and again until my sphincter was so loosened it ceased to give them pleasure. An old yardstick, the full thirty-six inches, was inserted into my rectum, then turned sideways. The ruler was rotated like a propeller, stretching my anal muscles beyond the point of contraction. When the ruler was removed, my sphincter hung to my knees like a deflated inner tube.

I was barely alive when they introduced my dog Duke into the action, repeating many of the same offenses with him as they had against me. New tricks were introduced. Since my rear end could no longer provide any sport, they shifted their attention to my genitals. My penis was covered with bacon grease that the starving Duke eagerly licked. Uncontrollably, I became erect. How mortified I was at my inability to prevent this shameful occurrence. Thankfully, the erection did not last long. As soon as my penis stiffened, Duke would begin to gnaw on it as if it were a rawhide chew. The pain was tremendous and allowed me to regain control. Then the roles were reversed. Duke

was held in position while cherry-flavored, Lickem Aid powdered candy was sprinkled onto his crotch. I was compelled to lick up the sweet red material until Duke's shiny crimson penis swelled out of its sheath and into my mouth. Gagging, I regurgitated brightly dyed vomit all over myself and the dog. This game they called "seeing red."

At this, the zenith of my abuse, an incredible thing happened. While Duke and I were being tortured, another group of boys was busy defiling the host. They had pinned the body of our Lord to the center of a target and were entertaining themselves by throwing knives at it. At the first bull's-eye, the host began to miraculously bleed and cry, alternating between shedding blood and tears. Despite the bullies' best attempts, the miracle could not be stopped. When the host was chopped to pieces, it reassembled itself. When it was flushed down the toilet, it floated again and again back to the surface. Every time they turned around, the host was back in the center of the target giving forth its precious body fluids.

The Protestants began to shake in uncontrollable fear as a black cloud oozed out of a crack in the earth. Within this mist a portal opened, revealing the fiery pits of Hell. At the same time, a fluctuating image of Christ the Judge, and the wondrous bread that is also He, appeared in the sky. The perverts screamed, tore at their hair, wet themselves, and fell upon the ground, flailing. Releasing Duke and me, they got down on their knees and begged for forgiveness. "That," I said, "is something only Jesus can grant." I instructed the gang to pick up the host and, together, we carried it back to the priest of the church from which it was stolen. The fate of these criminals at the hands of worldly law is a story I will not recount; and their fate according to the laws of Heaven, I will discover only at the time of my own death.

Recovered Memory #2

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I was kidnapped by hillbilly greasers.

Oh, it's all because our parents wouldn't let us go to the T-shirt booth at the state fair. Now I am sequestered here, away in a manger, in the "dilapidator" . . . trailer home of chicken hawks who seduce by posing as groovy revolutionaries. It is decorated in the style "Greaser Fear." Crude scrawlings cover 360 degrees of the sheet metal tube of terror. Head to foot is horror: Magic Marker flies, wavy stink lines, and pot-bellied "old ones" (gods before the coming of Christ) swirl around the skull gear shift knob. Singing "Mothers, don't let your children grow up to be cowboys," they

grew up to be pervs instead. They use us, who are branded forever: youth negatively traumatized by the sight of a rubber shrunken head slowly revolving in a carnival souvenir stand. Who would have guessed it? Here: the Pick N' Save of the soul.

The public toilets there are a magnet for those who have a secret side. Before you knew what you were, you knew. At least you knew where to go to get it—that which you didn't yet know what it was.

It's a public curiosity, lavatory as laboratory, with educational murals tracing the trajectory of our shared culture. Wisdom is etched in Formica panels there. Expressionistic finger-painting on chrome sheets—public mirrors, they overlay onto your blank slate the face of our "community." Our gang equals our persona. We are family.

Out of the communal pot come hot and steaming "pigs in a blanket" of an uncommon kind. We don't care what they are composed of, as long as they conform to the required compositional mode: wet, semihard lumps in sauce. We festoon them with homecoming float flowers made of pink facial tissue by pixieish cheerleaders. At least they are dressed as such. They are the ones that made the rendition of Arshile Gorky's *The Liver Is the Cock's Comb*¹ in something wet on the ceiling; the ones that grease makeup butt prints on the walls, and write their fuck list of boyfriends' names in nicotine on top; they make crafts out of soggy toilet paper. They are giggling, they are a gaggle, they are mysterious geese in hallowed goosing sessions. Are they even girlish, or what? They are not enrolled in Home Economics because this dish is learned only through experience.

An initiation ceremony is going on right now in the basement presided over by characters from Hanna-Barbera cartoons. Follow the flashing blue light, and the wafting scent of the cabbage cook-off; they will lead you there. Plum Street bohemian mods, filed-teeth conga players, grunge rockers, all share in the nose-to-the-go cart-gas tank-chic. Wow. They're glue-sniffin', stink-fingerin' KMart denizens—blue light specials.

And come on down to the wrecking yard for some fun. It's where you can perform the entire Kama Sutra with a beanbag chair, have a three-way with two pillows, do some bean dippin'. For a hot time, Ben Gay on the balls, and call, for a hot time, this little number . . . the leaky Glad sandwich-bag condom. Oh, my swan! Toothless old zip lock undentata with a pube hair hanging from your chin. Ease on in; but the sheets crackle and give off dust. There's too much dried cum in them, so it's hard to breath in here.

I, a man. My shit is no longer baby shit, no longer swishily liquid. Now I emerge in hard phallic rods. My pants seat frames delicate, limp-wristed, brown watercolors no longer, no longer. Rather, they are long, and the rear window showcases a variety of macho bulges. Staff of life, rod of the law, go down moseying? Uh uh, walk tall sir.

Forward, to the White Castle: the fortress that protects the soft pseudo-oysters. Their limp shell is the steamed bun. They are bite-sized, weak; they need Big Brother. And now that I am now that Man . . . I will a man be. I, a man. I was raised to be that by my parents, who are not my real ones. I don't remember, but I think they sold me to Gypsies.

Recovered Memory #3

"I'm sorry." What else can I say? And I know these are only words; speaking them cannot make up for the immeasurable suffering I have heaped upon the world since I was born. Yet, only recently have I become aware that saying this simple phrase was even necessary. You see, I was unaware of what a beast I was. I was not conscious of this fact. I was living a lie. My dirty little life was a secret to me; the pond-scum of my psyche had been erased from the index of obtainable references. While my perversions were handed down to me, I was sleepily unaware. All the while I was. Yes, they were by-products of a lifetime of miserable abuse, an abuse which, in order to protect itself, hid in the deepest recesses of my mind. My recalled life is only a screen memory, a cheap stage set built to pretty-up the slum of my true biography.

I was a happy child . . . what a laugh! Yet that is what I believed. I remembered nothing bad, so I filled the blanks in with family romance: with summers spent in the sun; with winters playing in the snow; with springtimes full of flowers—and, best of all, the falls, when I shared the companionship of school chums. I remember all of their sweet names. But they didn't exist. I've never had a friend. All of it is fiction, a pack of clichés culled from television and spoonfed to me with sugar on top. None of it ever happened. Instead, I grew up in a drum of toxic waste welded tightly shut. I was, in fact, never born. I still reside in the home of my parents: the dank, dark, and poisoned cavity of my mother's and father's anal womb. This is an elastic architecture that stretches forever, encasing me always, even to the very ends of the earth and time.

But to the point at hand. You will hear enough of my sordid past shortly enough. How unfortunate for you, for I know that you are not in the least bit interested in my problems. But I must,

to the best of my recollection (a recollection that, I remind you, cannot be trusted because it was formulated by brainwashing and torture) recount every disgusting tidbit of my sorry life. I must do this because my recovery demands it. My recovery has put forth the order: “Track down and apologize to all of those that you have treated wrongly in the past.”

Interestingly enough, the first instance of cruelty that pops to mind is one against a “lower life form.” This should not really be a surprise, and I reveal the incomplete state of my recovery in my shocked reaction to the recollection. I should be willing to face the fact that I am a piece of shit. Everyone at peace with the world knows it is all of one skin. This supermatter, this protoplasmic unity, treats all life as equally important. It turns a blind eye to the supposed hierarchies of life forms. Anyway, a disquieting image rushed into my mind all at once: I am putting a single honeybee into a small plastic pill container. Now, I am dropping this bottle into a pit being filled with wet cement. And now I watch as the delicate being is swallowed up by tons of hungry concrete. This hole, this abyss, being filled, was the foundation for an add-on to the house I was raised in. And how my heart sank as I realized I had just completed an evil and irreversible act. The honey-thing was now permanently encased in the soil, the very ground on which I was to spend the rest of my days. I have to stand on top of this site of my sin day in and day out, year after sorry year.

Ever since that eventful day I have been plagued by the image of that primal act, and an accompanying terror: my all-consuming fear of internment while still alive. As long as I have lived—since this time and perhaps, as we shall see, from even before—I have felt as if I were buried alive. I suffer every day from claustrophobia, a type so severe that even the air that surrounds me feels as if it is smothering me. How I wish I could turn back the hands of time. How I wish I could dig down and break open the tomb of concrete to release the poor bee, if only to give it a proper and respectful funeral. And, I would hope, in doing so, to release the weight that sits upon my own chest, a weight so enormous it threatens to sink into and demolish the whole planet. I wish I could burn that house down, with all of its interior secrets. I wish I could incinerate my memory of all of the tinder of my youth. My greatest wish is for a cleared lot: a razed mind.

But certain embarrassing negative engrams refuse to die. There is a memory, for instance, of a group of photos of the very young Cher, dressed in Native American–style fashions, cut from *TV Guide*. They have been arranged on poster board in a weird composition, glued down with jism. And this fetish object became the center of a group of activities, the grounding point . . . meant to . . .

Oh, why go on?

Recovered Memory #4

Mother and I were abandoned by my father at the moment of my birth. I was raised by her alone, though we shared a small house with her three sisters: my spinster aunts. As an only child, lacking brothers, or even female siblings, my entire youth was spent in the company of older women. It was as if I had multiple mothers. Yet I craved male companionship and sought out fatherly role models, often with disastrous results. The memories of some of these attempts at male bonding are so painful that I have trouble to this day confronting them. In fact, in many cases I can only remember certain places or situations, while specific interactions remain beyond the grasp of my recollection.

I do remember a very kind elementary school biology teacher who took an interest in my mournful state. The anatomy of amphibians was a subject I was enthralled with; that, the mysterious properties of electricity, and Norse mythology were my passions. This man and I would spend long hours after school working together on our special project: the dissection of frogs and the animation of their disembodied legs through the application of electric current. Before long, I was invited to visit him at his home, where he lived taking care of his aged mother. This crabby and demanding old woman was an invalid who had been confined to a wheelchair for many years. Her crippled legs caused her constant agony and in desperation she had turned to quack medicine for relief. Over the years she had acquired a large number of mail-order gizmos that supposedly helped ease pain through the application of ultraviolet light. My teacher (I'm sorry, but I can no longer remember his name) would place attachments of glass tubing into an electrical holder that caused them to illuminate with eerie black light. The different tubes were contoured to conform to the body's various curves, and with these glowing purple bulbs he gently massaged the skin of his mom. She swore that this numbed her pain. I don't know if this was true or not, but I looked forward to the procedure for I longed to see the special light. I was completely enamored with the strange forms of the glass bulbs and the exotic lovely glow they produced. This light mesmerized me.

Like two youthful Abraham Lincolns, my mentor and I studied using this dim illumination as our candle. Its plum rays guided our way through the pages of books recounting the exploits of the old Viking gods and heroes.

Then, one day, my teacher offered me his greatest treasure: his own childhood collection of rare Thor comic books. Thor was, by far, my favorite of all the super heroes. With his long blonde

hair, strong muscular build, and perfect Aryan features, he was the image of masculine perfection to me. Frail youth that I was, Thor was all that I aspired to be.

I can recall vividly, my heart anxiously thumping in my chest the entire time, our descent down the rickety wooden stairs into my benefactor's cellar. I felt so excited; it was as if I were crossing the rainbow bridge into Asgard itself. This place we were entering was where the tomes of my desire were stored. I can still feel the dampness of the crumbling plaster walls; I can smell the musty odor of mildewed paper; I can taste the swirling dust upon my tongue; and I can see the massive antique chest just ahead of me. Its heavy lid slowly cracked open to reveal its secrets. All of this was illuminated by, charged with, throbbing purple energy. The room pulsed, I . . .

I can recall no more. All else is buried in the hidden recesses of my mind. My surrogate father is no longer a part of my history. Nothing tangible remains to substantiate my memories. After that last pregnant image . . . no more, no more.

The storehouse of my childhood recollections is peppered with many more half-forgotten tales of wrong turns taken in my search for a father's love. I will recount some of them, at least as much as I can remember, at a later date. But now I want to push ahead to my adulthood, and the most momentous experience of my life.

I left home at a tender age and joined the merchant marine, for this had also been my father's profession. And though it was not a conscious decision, I'm sure, on some level, this way of life was chosen in hopes of discovering the fate of my lost daddy.

The life of a sailor was a new, and pleasant, experience for it afforded the friendly company of many supportive men who were more than willing to guide me into manhood. Every voyage to strange lands increased my sense of comfort with the world; I seemed to be more and more a part of humanity. Then (I cannot face the misery of recounting the long and complex set of circumstances that led to it) I was dashed again upon the rocks of my painful childhood. For the winds of chance led me, long after I thought I had ceased to care, to the shores that held my long-lost dad. Oh, what a painful delusion it was that told me that my soul was free of desire for my father! How I wish I had that mistaken sense of freedom today.

I found myself shipwrecked on a small speck of land far from anywhere. My home on this dismal island of solitude was a hellish cell made of cold stone. And the only other prisoner there, my cellmate, was my . . . my **FATHER!**

Our reunion was not a happy one. Unlike the Prodigal Son who was welcomed home with cries of joy, I was greeted with a sneer of disapproval. My father cared as much for me, the product of his loins, as he did for the handfuls of shit he threw out the barred window of our “home” every day. To make matters worse, the series of horrific events that led to my capture and confinement in this hovel also resulted in the loss of one of my eyes. I was in a physically weakened state. With only a gaping, sightless hole on one side of my head, I was prey to my father’s attacks. If I refused to follow his commands, I was blindsided. It was impossible to anticipate his blows. More times than I can recount, I found myself lying on the floor regaining consciousness after one of his surprise beatings. It didn’t take too long before the pecking order of this foul coop was established. The prison was *his* territory and I was *his* jailhouse punk.

My food was his food. His work was my work. I was at his beck and call. And then there were those horrible times, and they were not that rare, when my father felt the “call of nature.” Then the crushing blows would come upon my dark side and I would awake again to find myself sore from being “used.” How loathsome! My father was old and ugly, but he was as randy as an old goat, and still quite strong. All of my moralistic arguments against the sin of incest fell upon deaf ears. Dad’s logic was a simple one: “I spawned you, so you’re mine to do with as I please.” This seemed only natural and right to him. He was God in this domain.

A few moments of peace were provided by my father’s own abuse at the hands of our captors. My heart was lifted by the sight of his torture, and the sounds of his cries and whimpers were music to my ears, for these were the quiet moments when I was free of his cruelty. This was the price my father paid for his domination over me. I, on the other hand, was never tortured by our keepers. I assumed that I was considered just too insignificant to bother with.

Strangely, we were the only men on this atrocious island. It was populated entirely by a race of white-skinned female natives. They never spoke to us and I do not know if they even had the power of speech. Every once in a while a high-pitched cooing passed from their lips, which I understood as a sound of satisfaction, but no other vocalization did they make. Their appearance was frightful. They were almost entirely bald, with only a few long strands of hair hanging off their scalps. But in other places they were quite hairy. They had rings of fur around their wrists and ankles. And they had extremely full pubic bushes, so even though they wore no clothing, there was the impression that their nakedness was covered by a pair of furry underpants. Actually, they did wear one article of clothing—a hat, much too small for their heads. This ridiculous item looked

more than anything like a tiny flowerpot perched atop their hairless domes. Their long noses hung like sausages over their top lips, and their eyes were beady and unintelligent. All of them were physically huge, with the physiques of football players, and each and every one of them had the same deformity of the arms and legs, the lower portion of which swelled out larger than the upper half in a bell-bottom manner. Thus they had huge hands and feet. They walked like apes, swinging their heavy arms side to side as they shuffled about.

On occasion a group of these women would come into our cell. Dad knew exactly what this meant and it sent him scurrying about like a rat looking for escape. All of his screams and cries were wasted on these brutes, however. They easily cornered him, stripped him down, and tied him, naked, to a cross. Then their “fun” began as they proceeded to degrade the old coot, poking and prodding him all over, in every soft spot and hole. They slapped his face until he blubbered, yanked on his dick, and fisted him with their massive arms, all the while cooing like a flock of pigeons. They seemed to have no interest in genital gratification at all. In fact, they exhibited no sign of emotion whatsoever. They approached my father’s debasement as if it were the simplest everyday chore, and got no pleasure from it as far as I could tell.

At these times, I found my old sympathies for my father returning. After his torture I would nurse him back to health, and my childhood love for him would swell again. It was sad to see this mighty oak of a man reduced to a little gray mouse, and I did my best to make him strong again, even though I knew he would show me no gratitude. As soon as he was strong enough, my abuse resumed.

The most unpleasant thing about witnessing my father’s mistreatment at the hands of the natives was seeing him made subservient. After all, he was my father, and it didn’t seem correct that he be put into the submissive role. That was my job, both as son and as jailhouse punk. Then it dawned on me, perhaps the island women did not torture me because they perceived me as female. My submissiveness to my father told them as much. I was, in a sense, one of them.

But, unlike them, I was truly female for I was a nurturer. This is why, despite the many reasons to not do so, I sought to help my father become well after his abuse at the hands of these “women.” I had a biological imperative, an interior core of tenderness, that forced me to care for him. The women of this island were phallic women. Their war with my father was over symbolic power. Theirs was a struggle to become the **LAW**. And I, as the only real woman on the island, was the prize in this game. Their whole existence became centered on taming the old patriarch. He was

to be "pussy-whipped" at all costs. I then realized it was my duty to strengthen him, to bolster his position of male power, and thus preserve pure and natural femininity as exemplified in me. Otherwise, "bad mothers" would take over. Their example would become the norm, and femininity would be forever spoiled, to be preserved in a perverted form. So, when my father was again strong, I approached him with the big question: I asked him to take me as his wife. "Forget," I said, "that cold woman who was your wife and my mother. Forget the surrounding hordes of phallic torturers. I will be your mate and I will bear you a child, and your power will live on through me, even after your downfall."

And, despite his father's cruelty, this child will be sweet and loving. I will make it so. This child will be the embodiment of love. This child will be the Messiah.

NOTE

- 1 On Arshile Gorky's painting *The Liver Is the Cock's Comb*, see "Land O' Lakes/Land O' Snakes," in this volume, note 2.

A STOPGAP MEASURE

JCW The text for A Stopgap Measure was printed in red headlines and black capitals against a yellow ground on the recto of a highly charged “protest poster” that also announced and was shown in Kelley’s exhibition at Patrick Painter, Inc., Los Angeles, January 23 to February 20, 1999. Inset at the center is a reproduction of a juvenile, anthropomorphized drawing of a dinosaur. The verso of the poster is printed against a red ground with the appropriated texts that follow in this volume, collectively titled “Meet John Doe.” Kelley described the works in the show, including Odd Man Out, Timmy the Tooth, ’69 Action Heroes, and Untitled (Priest/Yankee Zulu) (all 1998)—which include found and modified movie posters; floor arenas set with clothing, cushions, and in one case a tent; and boom boxes playing multiple tape loops—as “pleasure stations.” A millennial essay in social satire, Kelley’s modest proposal and its allegorical accoutrements offers quite literally to perform a “69” on the “fantasy figures” of celebrity culture, harvesting their vanity and allure to feed and thus dissipate the repressions of a “sex-starved” general citizenry. The most thorough discussion of this work and its contexts to date is in essays by Shep Steiner (“Mike Kelley: The Use-Value of Irony, or Sexual Revolution the Monkish Way,” pp. 35–41) and William Wood (“Final Answer,” pp. 43–50) in the catalogue for the exhibition Consolation Prize: Mike Kelley and John Miller, curated by Roy Arden at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, University of

British Columbia, Vancouver (January 12 to March 14, 2000), which reproduces the works listed above.

The greatest tragedy of President Clinton's administration has been his inability (or refusal) to enact the health care reform that he promised as part of his campaign platform. Obviously, the well-being of the nation's populace should be government's primary concern. The maintenance of the people's health is of far greater importance than the care of public property because the nation's populace itself is its greatest national resource. It is unforgivable that any person in America should die because of his or her inability to pay for health insurance. Health care must be provided, absolutely free of charge, to all residents of the United States, and this coverage should, of course, include mental health care. Part of this expanded notion of national health would be a heightened concern for sexual well-being.

It's time we, as a people, tossed aside our nation's Puritan heritage. America has to be realistic and accept the fact that we are a sexual people. We must also recognize the sad connection between physical and mental dysfunction, and emotional and sexual frustration. Being a healthy and productive member of society is only possible if one is a satisfied, sexually functioning member of society. Thus, prostitution should not only be decriminalized, it should be socialized and made available, at no cost, to every man, woman and child.

Unfortunately, the damage has already been done. We are a population so sex-starved that we have created for ourselves a popular culture industry that constantly bombards us with a pantheon of fantasy figures of desire. Elite movie and television actors, porn stars, pop singers, rock musicians, athletes, supermodels, and the pampered children of the wealthy are the object of our collective masturbatory dreams. These figures are paid enormous sums of money and live in a magical world to which you and I can never gain access. They are free from the rules and obligations that apply to everyday people. They are granted all that society has to offer, yet give back nothing tangible in return. In the end, these "superheroes" provide only frustration. The time has come to eradicate the remote cultural zone these persons occupy. It's time these "stars" became citizens and provided a real social service, the very one they only hint at right now. It's time they actually *please* the population they continually titillate.

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY OF PRESIDENT CLINTON'S ADMINISTRATION

HAS BEEN HIS INABILITY (OR REFUSAL) TO ENACT THE HEALTH CARE REFORM THAT HE PROMISED AS PART OF HIS CAMPAIGN PLATFORM. OBVIOUSLY, THE WELL BEING OF THE NATION'S POPULACE SHOULD BE GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY CONCERN. THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH IS OF FAR GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN THE CARE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY BECAUSE THE NATION'S POPULACE ITSELF IS ITS GREATEST NATIONAL RESOURCE. IT IS UNFORGIVABLE THAT ANY PERSON IN AMERICA SHOULD DIE BECAUSE OF HIS OR HER INABILITY TO PAY FOR HEALTH INSURANCE. HEALTH CARE MUST BE PROVIDED, ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE, TO ALL RESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES, AND THIS COVERAGE SHOULD, OF COURSE, INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH CARE. PART OF THIS EXPANDED NOTION OF NATIONAL HEALTH WOULD BE A HEIGHTENED CONCERN FOR SEXUAL WELL-BEING.

IT'S TIME WE, AS A PEOPLE, TOSSED ASIDE OUR NATION'S PURITAN HERITAGE. AMERICA HAS TO BE REALISTIC AND ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WE ARE A SEXUAL PEOPLE. WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THE SAD CONNECTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DYSFUNCTION, AND EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL FRUSTRATION. BEING A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY CAN ONLY BE POSSIBLE IF ONE IS A SATISFIED, SEXUALLY FUNCTIONING, MEMBER OF SOCIETY. THUS, PROSTITUTION SHOULD NOT ONLY BE DECRIMINALIZED, IT SHOULD BE SOCIALIZED AND MADE AVAILABLE, AT NO COST, TO EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE DAMAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE. WE ARE A POPULATION SO SEX-STARVED, WE HAVE CREATED FOR OURSELVES A POPULAR CULTURE INDUSTRY THAT BOMBARDS US CONTINUALLY WITH A PANTHEON OF FANTASY FIGURES OF DESIRE, THIS ELITE, COMPRISED OF MOVIE AND TELEVISION ACTORS, PORN STARS, POP SINGERS, ROCK MUSICIANS, ATHLETES, SUPER MODELS AND THE PAMPERED CHILDREN OF THE WEALTHY, IS THE OBJECT OF OUR COLLECTIVE MASTURBATORY DREAMS. THESE FIGURES ARE PAID ENORMOUS SUMS OF MONEY AND LIVE IN A MAGICAL WORLD YOU AND I ARE DENIED ACCESS TO. THEY ARE FREE FROM THE RULES AND OBLIGATIONS THAT APPLY TO EVERYDAY PEOPLE. THEY ARE GRANTED ALL THAT SOCIETY HAS TO OFFER, YET GIVE BACK NOTHING TANGIBLE IN RETURN. IN THE END, THESE "SUPER HEROES" PROVIDE ONLY FRUSTRATION. THE TIME HAS COME TO ERADICATE THE REMOVED CULTURAL ZONE THESE PERSONS OCCUPY. IT'S TIME THESE "STARS"

BECOME CITIZENS AND PROVIDE A REAL SOCIAL SERVICE, THE SAME ONE THEY ONLY HINT AT PRESENTLY. IT'S TIME THEY ACTUALLY PLEASURE THE POPULATION THEY CONTINUOUSLY TITILLATE.

I PROPOSE THAT THESE RITUALIZED PUBLIC FIGURES BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO PUT IN TIME AT GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED SEX CLINICS, WHERE THEY WILL BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. OBVIOUSLY, IT IS NOT PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE FOR THIS SMALL NUMBER OF CELEBRITIES TO ENTERTAIN, IN PERSON, EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO THEM THROUGH THE MASS MEDIA. THE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM IS TO MAKE

AVAILABLE, TO ANYONE WHO WANTS IT, FREE PLASTIC SURGERY ENABLING HIM OR HER TO BECOME THE "DOUBLE" OF ANY CELEBRITY THEY WISH. THE ONLY PRICE FOR THIS OPERATION WOULD BE SERVICE IN THE PUBLIC SEXUAL-SATISFACTION WORK FORCE. THIS MOBILIZATION OF POPULAR ENTERTAINERS AND THEIR FANS, INTO A SEXUAL WORK FORCE IS ONLY MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY, FOR ONCE THE GENERAL POPULATION FINDS SEXUAL SATISFACTION THERE WILL NO LONGER BE THE NEED FOR A MASS CULTURE INDUSTRY. ONCE EVERYONE FINDS WITHIN THEIR GRASP THE MEANS TO PLEASURE ON A DAILY BASIS, A RITUALIZED ARENA OF SPECTACULAR FANTASY FIGURES WILL SERVE NO CULTURAL PURPOSE. PEOPLE WILL CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN DESIRE FREE FROM THE EFFECT OF ANY PREFABRICATED STANDARD. WITHIN



A GENERATION, SEXUAL REPRESSION WILL CEASE TO BE A MAJOR FACTOR AS A CAUSE FOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ILLNESS. AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN, IT WILL BECOME AS INCONSEQUENTIAL AS THE COMMON COLD.

IN THE MEAN TIME, BEFORE THESE SOCIAL PROGRAMS ARE PUT INTO EFFECT, I OFFER UP SOME HAND MADE CELEBRITY SURROGATES AS A STOPGAP MEASURE. THE PEOPLE ARE DAMAGED AND SHY; THEY ARE UNWILLING TO TAKE THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD FREEING THEMSELVES OF SEXUAL REPRESSION AND THEIR RELIANCE ON FANTASY SEX OBJECTS. KNOWING THEIR LIMITATIONS, I HAVE PROVIDED THEM WITH SIMPLE, SQUARE ONE, TACTILE PLEASURES, HOPING THAT THEY MAY USE THESE AS SPRINGBOARDS TO MOVE ON TO MORE COMPLEX EROTIC ONES.

SPEND A LITTLE TIME WITH THESE INANIMATE FRIENDS, LISTENING TO THE MUSIC, EXPLORING YOUR FEELINGS. TAKE A FEW BABY STEPS. BUILD UP THE COURAGE TO LEAVE ART, AND THE FETISH, BEHIND. MOVE FORWARD INTO REALITY, THEN MOVE ON TO ECSTASY.

MIKE KELLEY

JANUARY 23 - FEBRUARY 20, 1999 PATRICK PAINTER, INC. 2525 MICHIGAN AVENUE SANTA MONICA, CA, USA 90404 TELEPHONE 310.264.0000 FACSIMILE 310.264.0004

35. Mike Kelley, *A Stopgap Measure* (1999). Exhibition poster, Patrick Painter Inc., Los Angeles, 1999. 36 × 24 in.

I propose that these ritualized public figures be required by law to put in time at government-sponsored sex clinics, where they will be accessible to everyone. Obviously, it is not physically possible for such a small number of celebrities to entertain, in person, everyone who has been exposed to them through the mass media. The solution to this problem is to make available, to anyone who wants it, free plastic surgery enabling him or her to become the "double" of any celebrity they wish. The only price for this operation would be service in the public sexual-satisfaction workforce. This mobilization of popular entertainers and their fans into a sexual workforce is only meant to be temporary, for once the general population finds sexual satisfaction there will no longer be the need for a mass culture industry. Once everyone finds that the means to pleasure is available to them on a daily basis, a ritualized arena of spectacular fantasy figures will serve no cultural purpose. People will construct their own desire free from the effect of any prefabricated standard. Within a generation, sexual repression will cease to be a major cause of mental and physical illness. As a public health concern, it will become as inconsequential as the common cold.

In the meantime, before these social programs are put into effect, I offer up some hand-made celebrity surrogates as a stopgap measure. The people are damaged and shy; they are unwilling to take the first steps toward freeing themselves of sexual repression and their reliance on fantasy sex objects. Knowing their limitations, I have provided them with beginner's level tactile pleasures, hoping that they may use these as springboards to move on to more complex erotic ones.

Spend a little time with these inanimate friends, listening to the music, exploring your feelings. Take a few baby steps. Build up the courage to leave art, and the fetish, behind. Move forward into reality, then move on to ecstasy.

MEET JOHN DOE

JCW *"Meet John Doe," the text printed on the reverse of the "protest poster" that also features "A Stopgap Measure," is a concatenation of paragraphs and sentences drawn from national and international newspapers describing or commenting upon the Steven Spielberg stalking case. An article from the London newspaper The Sunday Telegraph, (Sunday, October 18, 1998) is set with torn-paper edges at the bottom right quadrant of this side of the poster, under the publication's banner title, rendered in its archaic font. For details of the exhibition and context, see the headnote for "A Stopgap Measure."*

Hollywood Wins Fight to Tame Paparazzi

California now has some of the toughest privacy laws in the world to protect its wealthy movie stars from prying cameras, writes James Langton

HOLLYWOOD stars have won an important victory in their campaign against the paparazzi with the passing of tough laws to prosecute them for trespass if using telephoto lenses, even on public property.

The legislation, just passed by state authorities, is a victory for a lobby of movie stars in-



36. Mike Kelley, *Odd Man Out* (1998). Blankets, pillows, socks, movie poster cutouts, fake fur, clothing, audio deck, speakers, speaker cable, and framed movie posters. Sculpture, 16 × 111 × 122 in.; poster, 41¼ × 55½ in. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

cluding Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Hanks and George Clooney, who want to curb the intrusions of the media into their personal lives.

California now has some of the toughest privacy laws in the world to protect its privileged wealthy stars. The legislation could become the model for similar laws to cover the rest of America.

The state is responding to pressure from the Screen Actors' Guild, which represents many of the biggest names in the film industry. California's law is aimed specifically at the paparazzi and the "stalkerazzi" who, using video cameras, attempt to record the intimate moments of celebrities.

Pete Wilson, the governor of California, said last week: "The so-called stalkerazzi will be deterred from driving their human prey to distraction, or even death."

The law, which takes effect on January 1, makes it possible to take action when a person is photographed or filmed "in circumstances where they had a reasonable expectation of privacy."

Photographers can also be charged if the subject felt "in physical jeopardy." Photographs and film shot from long distances using telephoto lenses could be included, using a controversial new definition of trespass.

California media organisations who, with the paparazzi, would be liable for triple punitive

damages if found guilty by a court, have attacked the measures. The California Newspaper Publishers' Association and the American Civil Liberties Union say that it threatens the freedom of the press under the American Constitution.

Film stars in the US have become increasingly combative over intrusions, particularly after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, which they say shows the deadly consequences of rogue media.

Perhaps more significantly, there has been a huge increase in paparazzi in Hollywood and Los Angeles, as hostile reaction to the Princess's death in Europe drove many to lucrative new markets in the US.

American courts have become increasingly sympathetic to public figures who prosecute intrusive photographers. In February, two photographers were sent to prison for three months after hounding Schwarzenegger and his wife Maria Shriver.

The paparazzi had chased Schwarzenegger and his pregnant wife shortly after his heart surgery last year as they drove their three-year-old son to the nursery. The two men, a stills-photographer and a video cameraman, were working for Splash, an agency based in Santa Monica and founded by expatriate Fleet Street tabloid journalists. One of the lawyers for the men later described the verdict as "movie star justice."

Last July another film star, Alec Baldwin, was ordered to pay a photographer \$4,500 (£ 2,720) after a fight outside his house. The case was seen as a moral victory for Baldwin, who is married to the actress Kim Basinger. The photographer, whose glasses were broken in the scuffle, had claimed \$85,000 (£ 53,000) for medical treatment and loss of earnings, but a court held him partially responsible for the incident.

California's film stars have exerted enormous influence to secure the new laws. Among those lobbying a committee of state lawmakers was Barbra Streisand, who said she was "a prisoner in my own home."

The actress Sharon Stone, who married a San Francisco newspaper editor earlier this year and is best known for her role in the film *Basic Instinct*, said she was "a citizen who cannot safely walk down the street, safely drive alone in her car or share a movie date with her family on a Sunday afternoon."

Tom Hanks, a three-time Oscar winner, said: "Ordinary family events such as shopping for shoes in the neighborhood has often found our family being pursued by professional photographers who are specifically seeking a picture of myself with my children."

Many news organisations see more than a hint of hypocrisy from stars who are more than

anxious to court publicity when it suits them, especially if there is an expensive movie to promote.

Even publications which do not use paparazzi photographs have said the law is a threat to free speech. Tom Newton, the head of the California Newspaper Publishers' Association, said the bill would "give those who would punish the press for aggressive news-gathering a new tool."

"It is an undeniable fact that if newspapers are doing their job, people are going to become upset," he said.

Despite the objections, there is every sign that the California law will become the model for similar legislation before the American Congress this autumn.

A bill to jail or fine photographers who "persistently" follow celebrities was proposed by Sonny Bono, a Congressman and former pop star, who died during a skiing accident this year. It is being promoted by Mary Bono, his widow, who succeeded him in Washington. Other proposals include a ban on the sale of "visual or auditory enhancement devices"—microphones and telephoto lenses.

James Langton

Meet John Doe

Three times in recent months, the supervising judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court's criminal division has taken the highly unusual step of sealing all documents in high-profile cases—the latest involving director Steven Spielberg.

A man newspapers say has been charged with stalking filmmaker Steven Spielberg planned to handcuff and rape his victim, according to court papers released Wednesday. The papers—transcripts of a grand jury hearing—refer to the alleged victim only as “John Doe,” although it has been reported that he is the Oscar-winning director.

Media reports have accused officials of giving Spielberg special treatment by keeping his name secret and sealing all documents.

Two months after the county grand jury indicted Jonathan F. Norman, 31, for allegedly stalking Spielberg, both the indictment papers and the transcripts of the grand jury proceedings remain under seal. Further, at the request of the district attorney's office, Judge John Reid removed Spielberg's name from the indictment after it was issued and replaced it with “John Doe,” a source said.

Deputy district attorney Rhonda Saunders said the case was not about “celebrity. This was about someone who was frightened, frightened for his family and frightened for himself.”

The sealing orders on grand jury transcripts have been agreed to by both the district attorney's office and the public defender's offices.

“It's extremely unusual to do any of this,” said Santa Monica defense attorney Charles English, whose clients have included Jack Nicholson, Alex [*sic*] Baldwin, and Robert Downey Jr.

Without commenting on the merits of the actions to date, English said they do reflect part of a growing trend toward secrecy in what once were routine, though still sensitive proceedings.

And in this particular case, he said: “It certainly gives rise to the notion Steven Spielberg is getting some special treatment by the system. Knowing Judge John Reid, I don't think that is the case. But when the case finally becomes public, that is something the courts and the D.A.'s office will have to answer. Why was the secrecy deemed necessary?”

The authorities sealed the evidence, as is usually the case in the secret proceedings of grand juries, but it has now been made public because of a legal petition by the media. Spielberg has declined to discuss the matter, but stalking has now become a significant fear among Hollywood celebrities.

The release of the court records—which date from October—followed a challenge from the *Los Angeles Times* and other media organizations over the secrecy surrounding the investigation. They argued that the secrecy was unwarranted and that Spielberg had been given special treatment because of who he was. They also noted a growing tendency for celebrities to be given anonymity in court cases. The judge described the secrecy in this case as “overkill” and ordered the records unsealed.

A HOMOSEXUAL stalker with a fixation on Steven Spielberg was found near the director’s house armed with a knife, and carrying handcuffs and adhesive tape, authorities in Los Angeles have disclosed.

Jonathan Norman’s letters, verbal threats, and unwarranted visits were not aimed at a former wife or girlfriend, nor even at a woman he wanted to date. Instead, the 31-year-old body-builder and would-be screenwriter spent two months last summer stalking another man: film producer and director Steven Spielberg.

LOS ANGELES—A violent ex-con with sexual fantasies about Steven Spielberg stalked the superstar director while armed with razors, duct tape, and handcuffs.

A 31-year-old former body-builder is accused of stalking Steven Spielberg last year because he was sexually fixated on the famous film director.

An unemployed man who prosecutors said wanted to handcuff and rape filmmaker Steven Spielberg was convicted yesterday of stalking the famous movie director.

Jonathan Norman, a body-builder and would-be actor who was arrested near the filmmaker’s home, will be sentenced at a later date.

On July 11, the guard, an off-duty police officer, again saw Norman’s four-wheel vehicle, which was in the driveway facing the gates, as if Norman was gauging how to crash them. As the officer approached, Norman fled, but a neighbor found him with his “eyes on fire” in her back garden, holding a curtain rod over his head “like a javelin.”

Police arrested Norman last July outside the director’s gated mansion in a Los Angeles seaside suburb, where the director lives with his wife, the actress Kate Kapshaw [*sic*], their seven children, and his mother. Mr. Norman was carrying a “rape kit,” including handcuffs and duct tape. He had backed his 4×4 vehicle with the apparent intention of crashing the gates.

Mr. Norman was arrested in July near the Spielberg home in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles carrying a list of the names of Mr. Spielberg’s seven children and a “rape kit,”

containing a knife blade, razor blades, tape, and handcuffs. In his car were two more pairs of handcuffs.

“I was concerned that he brought so many handcuffs . . . I could only speculate that what he wanted to do to me, he might also want to do to someone else in my family,” Spielberg said, taking his one and only glance at the defendant [and] letting out a deep breath.

Police also discovered a book with a shopping list of tools they say Mr. Norman planned to use on Mr. Spielberg, including three eye masks, three sets of handcuffs, four pairs of nipple clips, and three dog collars.

Specifically, authorities charge, Norman first attempted to enter Spielberg’s property on June 29, driving a sport utility vehicle. But he was turned away about 6 p.m. by off-duty Los Angeles Police Det. Steve Lopez, who has worked for 10 years for a private security company that guards Spielberg’s residence. Lopez, who was the first witness called Thursday, also was one of about 20 people summoned before the grand jury, most of them police officers or private security guards.

Their testimony, contained in a 209-page transcript of the grand jury proceedings, depicts Norman as a sexually obsessed stalker who used a variety of stories to try to gain access to Spielberg, including telling others that he was the director’s adopted son.

On July 11, Lopez testified, he again saw Norman just outside the property. This time, however, Norman was driving a blue Land Rover that was almost identical in color and style to one driven by Spielberg’s wife, actress Kate Capshaw, according to authorities.

Spotting Norman outside the property, the officer said he first called the police and then watched as Norman backed the large vehicle up against the huge front gates of Spielberg’s residence as if to find out how much force would be needed to break through them.

Later, authorities allege, he abandoned the vehicle and ran through the neighborhood in an unsuccessful attempt to escape. One resident told the grand jury that she saw Norman in her back yard, his “eyes on fire.” At the time, she testified, he also was holding a drapery rod over his head “like a javelin.”

Mr. Norman discovered the filmmaker’s address by buying a \$4.50 tourist map of stars’ homes and spent a month watching the mansion. He failed to gain admission by telling security guards he was a worker there.

He also carried a diary with the names of Mr. Spielberg’s family and business associates. Prosecutors claimed that Norman was sexually obsessed with Mr. Spielberg, and planned to rape

him and even make his wife, the actress Kate Capshaw, watch. The court heard that he went to the Spielberg estate at least four times, once driving a Land Rover similar to Ms. Capshaw's, and told people he was the director's adopted son.

Police officers and private guards told the grand jury that Norman was found lurking outside Spielberg's home several times in late June and early July and was sent away.

During the trial, several police officers testified that Norman, who was caught lurking near Spielberg's Pacific Palisades, Calif., estate, told them he planned to rape the movie director for a sexual "turn-on." Spielberg was in Ireland filming a movie at the time of the incident.

Once, Norman told a guard he worked for Geffen. Another time, he said he was Spielberg's adopted son.

On the evening of July 11, he was seen running through one of Spielberg's neighbor's yards. When police caught and frisked him, they found duct tape and handcuffs tucked in his pants, and a box cutter in his pocket. Norman had been using methamphetamine, or speed, and had not slept for three days, police said.

The evidence states that Norman, aged 31, had been on a sleepless, three-day methamphetamine ("speed") binge when he was arrested after several visits to the Spielberg home in a private estate in the seaside community of Pacific Palisades.

Citing Norman's bizarre behavior and evidence of a methamphetamine binge before his arrest, defense attorney Lawson says he found it unconscionable that his client could be imprisoned for decades.

Norman should have been treated as a drug abuser—he purportedly was on a crystal methamphetamine binge at the time of his arrest—with psychiatric problems but not a criminal, the lawyer added. Lawson said Norman was "delusional" and believed if he could meet Spielberg he could get into show business.

"I would characterize my client as being mentally ill and being mentally ill you cannot leapfrog into saying that that person is naturally a predator, or an evil person or a bad person," Lawson said. He said he did not pursue an insanity defense for Norman because it is too difficult to [be] supported under the law.

And the part-time writer and actor's efforts to reach Spielberg, Lawson said, were part of a "delusional, drug-induced" belief that if he could get close enough to the director, he could succeed in the film industry.

Norman's lawyers argued their client was not stalking Spielberg and never intended to rape him. Instead, they said, he simply wanted to get the attention of the Oscar-winning director in hopes of getting a job with his studio.

But Norman's companion, Chuck Markovich, an unemployed accountant, testified that Norman had mused on raping Spielberg. He went to act out a screenplay, to be recorded on the security camera, Mr. Markovich said. Then Spielberg would say, "This guy is creative," and Norman would break into movies.

Norman allegedly told his best friend and former lover that he viewed the director both as a "father figure" and as a rape target.

"He did say he wanted to, that night, go there to rape him," Charles Markovich testified.

Markovich said Norman even confided he fantasized he was the baby Tyrannosaurus rex in the movie *The Lost World* and that Spielberg and Geffen were the father and mother in the film's dinosaur family.

Markovich also said that Norman's book contained sexually explicit pictures, including one in which he cut the head off a naked man and pasted Spielberg's head in its place.

Norman's lover, Charles Markovich, told the grand jury: "He is schizophrenic."

Norman, 31, was found guilty in March of lurking outside the award-winning director's Pacific Palisades estate in July armed with handcuffs, duct tape, and a box cutter. Spielberg was in Ireland at the time. After his arrest, Norman told cops he wanted to rape the director.

The UCLA graduate had in his possession sets of handcuffs, duct tape, and box-cutting-type razors that Saunders dubbed "a rape kit." Norman was also found with a day planner that included a list of sex toys he wanted to use on Spielberg and a cutout picture of Spielberg's face taped to a picture of a younger man's body.

Norman purportedly said he planned to restrain Spielberg's wife, actress Kate Capshaw, and make her watch while he sexually assaulted the director.

He was apparently intent on raping the director and had written details about the Spielberg family, and a list of items to obtain that included eye masks, chloroform, and dog collars.

At the time of his arrest last year, according to testimony, Norman had handcuffs, duct tape, and a box-cutter knife. Further investigation turned up a day planner that not only contained details about Spielberg and his family but also a bizarre shopping list that included eye masks, dog collars, and chloroform.

Norman was arrested on July 11 when Spielberg happened to be in Ireland working on a film. But police believe that Norman, who had tried to enter the estate near the end of June but was turned away by a security guard, posed a danger to the Spielberg family.

Norman was arrested at the star's Pacific Palisades home with three sets of handcuffs, duct tape, a razor blade, and pictures of Spielberg's family.

Earlier, Spielberg's security adviser, Rick Vigil, testified that he asked Norman "what he was going to do with the handcuffs and the duct tape" in a jail house interview after Norman's arrest on stalking charges.

Norman told him "he planned on using them to tie up Mr. Spielberg and rape him," Vigil said. He said he explained to Norman that "Mr. Spielberg was a heterosexual and would not be interested in such an encounter."

"He (Norman) told me he had an obsession. . . . He said he believed that (Spielberg) wanted to be raped by him," police detective Paul Wright told the secret panel in October.

Prosecutors said Norman was sexually obsessed with Spielberg and went to the filmmaker's gated estate on four different occasions, the last time with a "rape-kit" consisting of handcuffs, duct tape, and a knife.

He also had a notebook containing a list of sex toys such as nipple clips he allegedly wanted to use to rape Spielberg, deputy district attorney Rhonda Saunders said during a two-week trial.

Saunders also contended that Norman wanted to handcuff Spielberg and his actress wife, Kate Capshaw, and force her to watch as he sexually assaulted the filmmaker.

The man, Jonathan Norman, was detained in July after a chase through the elite Los Angeles suburb of Pacific Palisades. Police found a *Jurassic Park* sticker, a videotape of the film *E.T.*, and cut-out pictures of dinosaurs in his car. He was on parole after serving a prison term for assault. A police detective, Paul Wright, said Norman told him he had an obsession: "He believed that Spielberg wanted to be raped by him."

Norman, 31, carried a black book filled with pictures, personal data about Spielberg and cutouts from *Jurassic Park*, one of Spielberg's many blockbusters.

Norman's black book contained a shopping list for the intended crime that included "eye masks, three sets of cuffs . . . and three dog collars," Wright testified.

In addition, Norman had scribbled the names of Spielberg's children, noting two were adopted and that son Max was "by ex-wife Amy Irving." It also included the names of Spielberg's

three sisters, his mom, and the names of his DreamWorks SKG business partners Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, with the notation “learn more about Geffen.”

The obsession continued after his arrest, and in January, prison guards found papers in his cell that included the names of Mr. Spielberg’s family and a map of his neighborhood marked with a heart and the initials “S.S.”

Mr. Norman had also written the names of some of Mr. Spielberg’s friends and business associates, including actor Tom Hanks and his partners in the DreamWorks SKG film studio, David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg.

Spielberg, who won an Oscar in 1994 for *Schindler’s List* and also directed the *Jurassic Park* films, testified before a grand jury last summer about the stalker, Jonathan Norman, who is to go on trial next month for stalking.

The director said: “He was on a mission. Thank God he was caught—he would have completed his mission. I really felt my life was in danger.”

SANTA MONICA, CA. A visibly shaken Steven Spielberg yesterday glanced quickly across the courtroom at the muscular man who had stalked and plotted to kidnap him and said he would “live in fear” if the man ever gets out of jail.

The dark-haired Norman, who was dressed in bright yellow and blue jail garb, was wired with an electric shocker device in case he misbehaved in court. But he remained calm and looked sad when the movie mogul asked the judge to throw the book at him.

Norman was wired with an electronic shock device, hidden under his jacket, to prevent him from lunging at Spielberg during his testimony. The device, controlled by court officers, was not used.

“I ask that Jonathan Norman be given the maximum sentence. May I please be excused from court?” a nervous Spielberg asked at the conclusion of his statement.

The judge dismissed Spielberg, and he left with his head in his hands, flanked by several private guards and assistants.

Norman’s lawyer, Charles Kreindler, begged for leniency, asking the judge to negate one or both of Norman’s previous felony convictions so he wouldn’t face California’s mandatory 25-years-to-life sentence as a three-time felony convict.

Before his July arrest for alleged stalking, Norman was convicted of assault with a deadly weapon for a March 1995 assault on a group of Jewish immigrants in Santa Monica.

Norman, who pleaded no contest to the assault charge, was sentenced to three years in state prison and was released shortly before his arrest for allegedly stalking Spielberg, a Pacific Palisades resident.

Norman is being held on \$1 million bail pending his next court appearance in the stalking case January 13.

At the time of his arrest, he was on parole for two accounts of assault with a deadly weapon, including a March 1995 attack on a group of Jewish immigrants.

In 1995, Norman pleaded guilty to two counts of assault. He allegedly plowed his red Jeep Wrangler into a group of Russian immigrants walking down a Santa Monica alley and then beat a man and woman.

Norman could face 25 years to life in jail under California's three-strikes law because the jury, in a separate hearing after the verdict was announced, decided it was his third felony offense. He had been convicted and jailed for two previous accounts of assault stemming from the same incident when he started a fight with a group of Russian Jews as they were crossing a street.

Because Norman pleaded guilty two years ago to two accounts of assault, the jury went back into deliberations yesterday on whether he should qualify for the harsh sentences prescribed by the "three strikes" law—a minimum of 25 years. Even without it, Norman faces a substantial jail term.

The jury in Santa Monica found Mr. Norman guilty after deliberating for little more than three hours.

They had heard Mr. Spielberg testify that he and his family still live in lingering, daily fear of Mr. Norman, who boasted to police that he wanted to rape Mr. Spielberg while the director's wife, actress Kate Capshaw, watched.

Notified in a telephone call from his longtime attorney and friend that Norman had been arrested, Spielberg said he was first stunned and then terrified over the alleged assailant's plans to attack him.

"I reacted to the information at first with disbelief . . . and then I became quite frightened," Spielberg told the seven-woman, five-man jury.

The verdict, reached in less than four hours, sets the stage for an April 22 sentencing that could send Jonathan Norman to prison for 25 years to life.

The jury of six men and six women left the courthouse without discussing the case with reporters.

Jurors reached their verdict after four hours of deliberations on Tuesday, but the reading of the verdict was delayed until yesterday.

Norman, who did not blink when the verdict was announced, has been in custody in lieu of \$1 million bail since he was arrested last summer outside Spielberg's Pacific Palisades estate for violating parole. The violation arose from a 1995 Santa Monica case in which Norman pleaded no contest to assault after driving his car toward a group of tourists during an argument.

The judge then sentenced Jonathan Norman to 25 years to life in prison, the maximum penalty allowed.

The sentence in Santa Monica, California, means Jonathan Norman, an unemployed body-builder, aged 31, cannot get parole until he is 56, and he could remain behind bars for the rest of his life. He was sentenced under California's "three strikes and you're out" rule, which is intended to remove career criminals from society.

In sentencing Norman, Judge Steven Suzukawa said: "I find his behavior obsessive and frightening. I think he does present a danger to society."

Norman must serve 25 years before he is eligible for parole.

Spielberg seemed uneasy as he stood at a podium about ten feet from Norman and read quickly from a typewritten victim-impact statement.

"Had I encountered Mr. Norman, I genuinely believe I would have been raped or maimed or killed. . . . The thought of him on the street is beyond frightening to me. If he's out on the street, I'll live in fear that he's prowling my neighborhood," said Spielberg.

But as his client sat quietly, sometimes scribbling on a note pad, deputy public defender John C. Lawson II portrayed Norman as a fanatical follower of Spielberg whose sexual fantasies, however bizarre, were never directly conveyed to the director.

"As far as I know, our legislators have not made it illegal to be weird, to have strange thoughts, to have strange fantasies," Lawson told the courtroom of Steven C. Suzukawa.

"Stalking," he added "is not a crime about thoughts."

"I'm absolutely elated," Deputy Dist. Atty. Rhonda Saunders told reporters after the verdict was announced. "Number one, it shows that in California we can protect victims of stalking. And number two . . . that our stalking law really, really works."

California became the first state to institute an anti-stalking law in 1990. Celebrity stalkers range from cold-blooded killers to lovesick losers. Most often they are male, and their victims

are female. Male stalkers are most prone to want to destroy their targets, or commit a violent act as part of a game plan of gaining more fame or notoriety.

JONATHAN Norman, the homosexual bodybuilder facing life in prison for stalking the movie director Steven Spielberg, is part of a growing trend of obsessive harassment in America. Every year, hundreds of cases of stalking—perhaps the greatest fear for a Hollywood star—are investigated by Los Angeles police.

Male stalkers tend to be violent and predatory, driven by a desire to control their victim.

Many Hollywood celebrities have been stalked, according to the criminologist Mike Rustigan, a university professor who teaches a course on stalking to police in California.

He said: "It is an increasing trend because of America's celebrity-obsession and the increasing isolation of many individuals."

Little so far has come out about Jonathan Norman's thinking in pursuing Spielberg. "He probably idolized Spielberg and wanted a piece of that," said Rustigan, adding that his intent to rape must mean that he also wanted to punish and humiliate the film director for his fame.

"In effect, raping Spielberg would be an attempt to bring him down. It's not a love obsession."

ARCHITECTURE

PROPOSAL FOR THE DECORATION OF AN ISLAND
OF CONFERENCE ROOMS (WITH COPY ROOM)
FOR AN ADVERTISING AGENCY DESIGNED BY
FRANK GEHRY

*JCW Kelley wrote this proposal in a letter to Aleks Istanbulu of Frank Gehry and Associates in May 1990. Designed by Gehry, the then new Chiat/Day office building in Venice, California (1985–91), with its eccentric entrance frontage in the form of monumental binoculars (developed in collaboration with the artists Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen), quickly became a signature example of his playful postmodern style. Kelley's proposal works with rather than against the aim of the interior design, which, with its open plan, numerous skylights, standard furniture, and cubicle walls of varying heights, was intended to facilitate both interaction and the expression of individual "creativity" by employees. Kelley discusses the project in "Missing Space/Time," a conversation with Kim Colin and Mark Skiles, *Offramp (Los Angeles)* 1, no. 6 (1996), also in this volume, noting that "I proposed to 'deconstruct' this space, to cut holes from one room to another, remove the ceiling, etc. But, unlike Gehry, my intention was not to reveal the formal structure of the building, but to expose the hierarchy of the workplace."*

The project was eventually cancelled, but Kelley built it as a full-scale model, Mike Kelley's Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Room) for an



37. Mike Kelley, *Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Rooms) for an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry* (1987). Two installation views at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, January 26–April 26, 1992. Photo: Douglas M. Parker Studio.

Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry, for the exhibition Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1992).

Aleks Istanbulu
Frank O. Gehry & Associates, Inc.
Santa Monica, CA 90404

May 17, 1990

Dear Aleks:

The area that I'm proposing to work with is the island of conference rooms, including a copy room, on the second floor of the new Chiat/Day building—specifically rooms 206, 231, 208, 232, and 233. My proposal is to execute wall murals directly onto the walls of the conference rooms, or attach pre-painted panels, completely covering them floor to ceiling. The wall paintings are blowups of office cartoons of the type usually found in secretarial cubicles or pinned up next to the office copier or fax machine, which is why I chose this particular block of conference rooms containing the copy room. Office cartoons interest me greatly in that they are circulated for the workers' own pleasure during company time, and at the company's expense. I want to use these drawings as dominant design motifs in public areas, shifting them out of their normally peripheral position as personal office decoration. I have included with this proposal a few examples of the type of cartoons to which I refer.

The overall style of the five conference rooms will be the same. Each room will be painted bright white, and the cartoons painted in black acrylic on top of this ground. The rooms must be restricted to a stark and consistent black-and-white coloration. Thus, the chairs and conference tables must also be white, and of a design which I approve. The ceiling tiles will be removed, but the suspended grid used to support them will be left in position. The floors will be covered with gray industrial carpet. To work against the normal isolation of one conference room from the next, I will cut a small, circular, porthole-like window into the wall of each individual conference room so that

there is a visual connection with the rooms adjacent to it. This will also reveal the stylistic unity of the block as a whole and allow visual access to the murals in each room. The progression of windows is as follows: a large picture window will be cut into the wall separating the copy room from the main conference room (206); from there a window will be cut looking into room 231; then the same looking into room 207, into room 208, and into room 232. The copy room will not have cartoon supergraphics like the conference rooms, but will be left in its natural state. The large picture window will have a pane of glass in it; the small, circular windows will not. Opening a picture window between the main conference room and the copy room connects the office cartoon supergraphics back to the place of their production. The copy machine will be visible through the window from the main conference room. Also, the disarray of the copy room will offer a nice contrast to the orderly space of the conference rooms.

Thank you for your consideration, and if you have any questions, please give me a call.

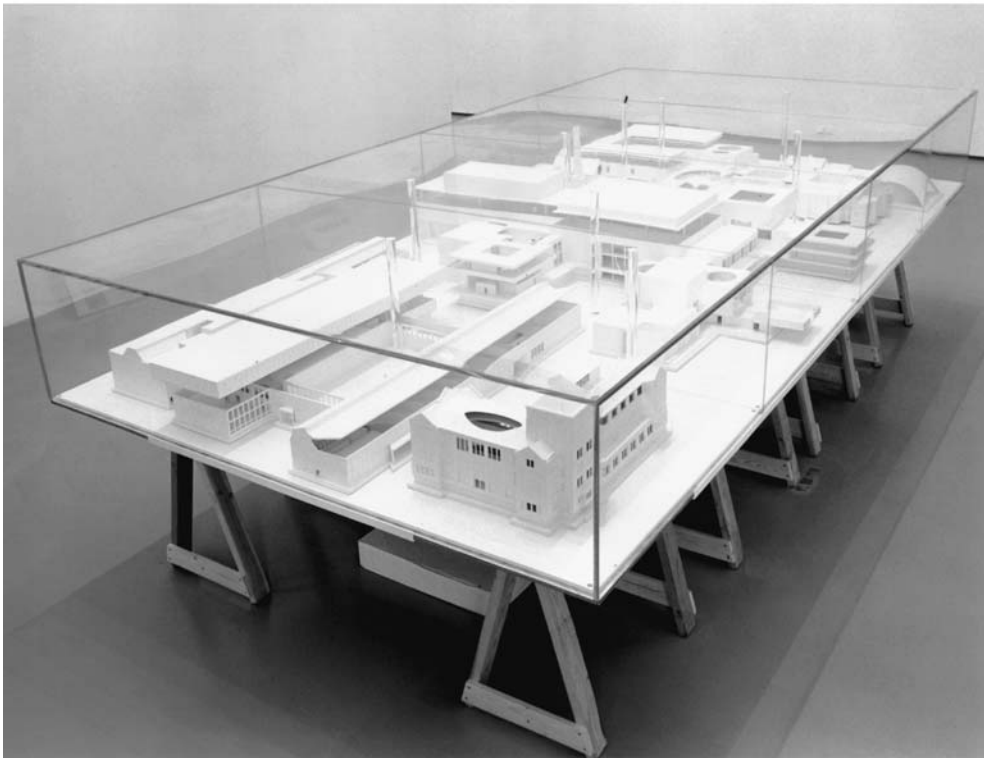
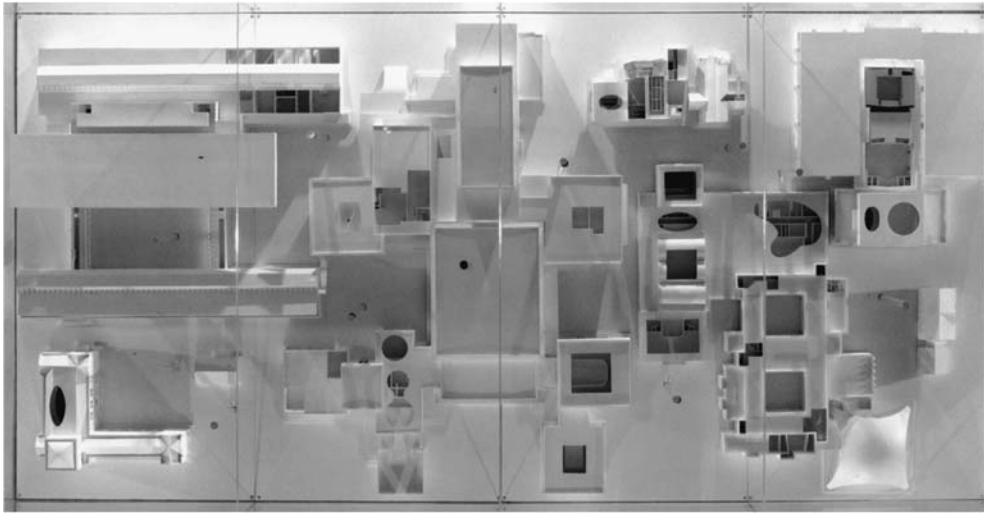
Sincerely,

Mike Kelley

ARCHITECTURAL NON-MEMORY REPLACED WITH PSYCHIC REALITY

JCW *Kelley's discussion here focuses on Educational Complex, first shown in his solo exhibition Toward a Utopian Arts Complex at the Metro Pictures gallery, New York, in 1995. This essay was first published in Architecture New York, no. 15 (1996), pp. 36–39. For further discussion of Kelley's work on architecture and memory-space, see Anthony Vidler, "Mike Kelley's Educational Complex," in John Welchman, Isabelle Graw, and Anthony Vidler, Mike Kelley (London: Phaidon, 1999), pp. 94–105.*

In a recent exhibition, *Toward a Utopian Arts Complex* at Metro Pictures in New York, I showed a number of works relating to my own education in the arts, and to the sites of my education in general. The show consisted of the following elements: paintings mimicking the style I was trained in—Hans Hofmannesque “push-pull” exercises, but with “cultish” overtones; photographic blowups of what looked to be newspaper reviews, which in some cases were actual newspaper restaurant reviews but in others were “recovered” memories of childhood mental and sexual abuse, illustrated with decontextualized photographs of extracurricular activities taken from high school yearbooks (*Timeless/Authorless*, 1995); photographs of paintings done by kindergarten students under my



38. Mike Kelley, *Educational Complex* (1995). Acrylic, latex, foamcore, fiberglass, and wood. 48 × 384 × 36 in.

tutelage, which were accompanied by “art therapy-style” analyses of their compositions and subject matters; a large entrance sign to an unspecified town (*Entry Way [Genealogical Chart]*, 1995), the composition of which was determined by a genealogical chart of my immediate family; and a model of what looked to be an institutional complex, something on the order of a junior college, titled *Educational Complex*.

Educational Complex is a large architectural model made up of individual models of every school I have ever attended, plus the house in which I grew up. The schools include a one-room kindergarten schoolhouse; a Catholic elementary school with adjacent church and gymnasium; a junior high school; a high school; two undergraduate art schools; and a graduate art school. The exterior elevations of the models are fairly accurate, based on photographs and, in some instances, floor plans. The interiors, on the other hand, are radically incomplete, reflecting my inability to remember what was there. These unremembered sections of architecture are left blank, represented as inaccessible, filled-in blocks. I would estimate that a good 80 percent of the buildings are filled in in this manner.

At first, my intention was to construct the models of my various schools completely from memory. But it soon became apparent that my memories of the structures were so poor that it was impossible to construct three-dimensional models based on them. My attempts at drawing floor plans resulted in incomprehensible sketches of disconnected rooms with no information as to their spatial relationships. I was also incapable of placing them, even roughly, within the approximate shapes of the buildings’ exteriors that I could recall. These thumbnail sketches were so formless they defied architectural actualization. Thus I decided to rely on photographs and floor plans to help me reconstruct the school’s architectures more accurately. In contrast to the exterior detail, I hoped that the partiality of my memory of the interior spaces would be rendered more striking.

The interior distortion of the building is most extreme, of course, in the instances where I did not have access to floor plans. For example, I remembered that the main entrance hallway that bisected my Catholic elementary school was situated toward the left side of the structure. Based on the exterior images I was able to get of the school, such a location was, in fact, impossible. But I stuck to my memory in the construction of the model. This resulted in a completely unusable interior architecture, set with three times as many classrooms as there really were, all of which were too narrow to be functional. When I was able to obtain floor plans of buildings, I followed them, but deleted the sections I did not remember. This produced an architecture of isolated rooms held within

a maze of inaccessible blocks. Since the majority of the space is made up of these unremembered, blocked-out sections, they become the primary architectural components.

After I determined the interior spaces of the models, my main problem was how to reveal the small amount of remembered space encased within the unremembered blocks. My initial idea was to flay the buildings, or cut them into sections. To do so, however, would have destroyed the sense of the buildings as *buildings*, and returned them to the unarchitectural, abstract condition of the original thumbnail sketches. Instead, I opted for the use of elaborate cutaways and liftings in the manner of exploded diagrams. This radically transformed the exterior architecture, but the models maintained the sense of being historical buildings. An interesting by-product of this strategy was that previously mundane institutional school buildings were transformed into quite complex, even beautiful, structures.

While it had not been my initial intention, this aesthetic transformation did reinforce one of the readings that I wanted from the work: that the *Educational Complex*, as a group of separate buildings merged into one superstructure, be seen in relation to the tradition of utopian architecture. The new, more extravagant, construction of the schools took them outside the realm of functional architecture and placed them more within the tradition of ritual architecture—alongside churches, theme parks, and “aesthetic,” nonfunctional, public buildings (like the Guggenheim Museum in New York). I was thinking, specifically, of utopian “social” architecture, like Paolo Soleri’s Arcosanti project,¹ or Rudolf Steiner’s mystically based, anthroposophical architecture.² What interests me about these projects is that, unlike most “functional” work, their architectures overtly present the public building as a symbol of social and aesthetic rules, something which the traditional skyscraper refuses by hiding behind the facade of functionalism. Ideological, or psychic, functions are clearly dominant over workaday concerns in fantasy architecture. In utopian projects, moral and aesthetic dimensions are presented, often openly and dramatically, as mirrors of each other. Of course, my project is a perversion of such an attitude: I present an obviously dystopian architecture, reflecting our true, chaotic social conditions, rather than some idealized dream of wholeness.

My original impulse to make the *Educational Complex* grew out of my fascination with the controversies surrounding so-called Repressed Memory Syndrome. Simply stated, the advocates of Repressed Memory Syndrome believe severe traumatic experiences (especially in children and especially in cases of sexual abuse) are repressed and can no longer be recalled. This repression results in pathological conditions ranging from simple neurotic symptoms to the complete psychic fracture

of Multiple Personality Syndrome. Some therapists, however, believe these repressed memories can be recovered through the aid of hypnosis, and this type of therapy is now quite common. At this moment, Repressed Memory Syndrome is the most hotly debated issue in the mental health community, with some mental health professionals challenging the credibility of “memories” recovered through hypnosis, and others even denying that memories of severe trauma can be repressed at all. This has resulted in a new term, False Memory Syndrome, and accusations that therapists themselves are responsible for implanting “false memories” that conform to their own ideological predispositions in the minds of their patients. The existence of Repressed Memory Syndrome has, however, become so commonly accepted that some states have enacted new laws changing the statute of limitations for cases of sexual abuse that are “recovered” later in therapy.³

I was made aware of the popular fixation on child abuse through the responses to my sculptural works composed of old stuffed animals. My intention in these works was to present the objects as adult products and to raise questions about their formal construction in relation to their social use. I found that it was impossible to bypass the audience’s tendency to project onto stuffed animals. Viewers invariably desired them to be pseudo-children, and were unwilling to give up this belief. Generally, the worn and dirty condition of the toys was read, not as the result of child’s play, but as a symbol of adult mistreatment of children. The toys became sculptures of abused children. In order to explain my supposed fascination with abuse, viewers also tended to project onto me—the maker of these objects—some presumed historical trauma. They could not allow that my artistic role in relation to these loaded objects was analytical; there must be a “true” psychological—and pathological—connection between my materials and me. I was viewed as an infantilist, possibly a pedophile, or victim of abuse myself.

I had to abandon working with stuffed animals for this reason. There was simply nothing I could do to counter the pervasive psycho-autobiographic interpretation of these materials. I decided, instead, to embrace the social role projected on me, to become what people wanted me to be: a victim. Since I am an artist, it seemed natural to look to my own aesthetic training as the root of my secret indoctrination in perversity, and possibly as the site of my own abuse. I say secret, because I was not knowingly trained to do such things; I thought I came up with them myself. My education must have been a form of mental abuse, of brainwashing. How else could I have engaged for so long in activities that pointed so overtly toward my own repressed abuse without becoming consciousness of it? Looking to my own memories of the geography of my education, I was sur-

prised to discover that little was retrievable. I could scarcely recall buildings that I was in almost every day for many years. And the teachers, courses, and activities that took place within them were a vast, undifferentiated swamp. There were only a few nuggets of clarity in this mess, and their very clarity caused me to be suspicious. The mental images were too perfect, and the scenes too staged-looking, to be real: they must be implanted fictions.

My Educational Complex can be seen as analogous to the McMartin Preschool, the site of the first major instance of so-called ritual abuse to hit the media. 1983, the year of the original charges against the school, signaled the beginning of an epidemic of complaints pointing to the existence of organized abuse of children in schools. These complaints range from the implausible (the ritual sacrifice of infants) to the seemingly impossible (the rape of children by large animals). Among the few instances of real physical evidence in the case against the teachers at the McMartin Preschool were the children's recollections of hidden tunnels and rooms beneath the school. But no evidence of such tunnels was ever found, apparently proving that the children's memories were fantasies, or the by-products of coaching by their witch-hunting parents or lawyers. To this day, however, the existence of the tunnels is still being disputed.⁴ A group of parents of McMartin students commissioned a limited archaeological survey of the site, and claimed to find evidence of the existence of tunnels under the building. The McMartin Preschool is ground zero in the repressed memory drama. It is a site of warfare over the difference between, or interpenetration of, reality and fantasy. Because of these ideological disputes, the McMartin Preschool is no longer a real building but a symbolic architecture. It is more akin to an amusement park, like Disneyland, built as a ritual site to reveal the political and moral convictions of its users. Whether one considers oneself "outside" or "inside" of time in such a place, whether the experience is seen as true or false in relation to everyday life, depends on the ideological position of the user.

Lately, I have noticed increased interest by the fine art world in what had previously been relegated to the world of commercial art. There seems to be an attraction for the nostalgic, for the idealized, longed-for, or lost, and for the beautiful. Conversely, popular culture seems to embrace, or at least fixate upon, the taboo, the dysfunctional, and the fractured, more than at any other moment in my lifetime. The popularity of Repressed Memory Syndrome is a case in point. Reading Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* recently, I found that many of the architectural spaces he defines as homey and intimate were also sites associated with the horrific.⁵ The nesting space of the cubbyhole becomes the ominous shuttered room of the inbred sibling, Dad's bottom-drawer porn

collection, or Mom's enema tool cabinet. A major cultural shift has turned the homey into the uncanny. The old-fashioned "family romance," where the fantasy parental replacement is with figures better than your real ones (my real parents are royalty), has been replaced with its opposite (I suddenly remember my parents are members of a satanic murder cult). The treasured past is now the albatross around your neck. Perhaps this is the hidden return of modernist progress, of the desire to destroy the past, yet all the while wallowing in it.

I find myself constantly thinking about the bottled city that Superman keeps safely stored in his Fortress of Solitude. Inside a bell jar is an entire city filled with living people from his home planet Krypton—a planet that has exploded. Krypton is the home that can never be returned to, the past that can never be revisited. Yet there it is, shrunken to the size of a dollhouse—an ageless memento in real time. I wonder if the eternal Man of Steel ever feels the desire to smash this city and finally live in the present.⁶ That would put a stop to the fear of ending up in the shuttered room.⁷

NOTES

- 1 The experimental town of Arcosanti was begun in 1970 in the high desert of Arizona seventy miles north of Phoenix. Intended, eventually, to accommodate some 7,000 people, it was conceived in response to Paolo Soleri's concept of "arcology" (architecture + ecology); see Paolo Soleri, "The City of the Future," in Michael Katz, William P. Marsh, and Gail Gordon Thompson, eds., *Earth's Answer: Explorations of Planetary Culture at the Lindisfarne Conference* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
- 2 The two Goetheanum buildings built by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, near Basel, Switzerland, exemplify the architectural vision extending from his "anthroposophical" metaphysical principles. The first, wooden structure was based on a design of intersecting circles, with interpenetrating hemispherical domes of different dimensions. Designed in 1913, the building burned down (some suspect by arson) on New Year's Eve 1922–23, before its final completion. The second building was designed in 1924 and completed in 1928, after Steiner's death in 1925. Built in reinforced concrete on the same site as the first, the second Goetheanum has been described as a "forked wing over a trapezium shape." Both buildings were intended as public spaces for the presentation of mystery plays and performances of eurythmy—a kind of dance form in which "the sounds of speech and music can be made visible." Steiner believed that art, science, and religion should be inseparable from one another and that his various visionary artworks, whether dramatic, architectural, or sculptural, did not function symbolically but conveyed direct spiritual meanings according to some "secret law of nature." See Stewart C. Easton, *Rudolf Steiner: Herald of a New Epoch* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1980); and Wolfgang Pehnt, *Rudolf Steiner: Goetheanum, Dornach* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1991).
- 3 The main sources for Kelley's investigation of Repressed or False Memory Syndrome are Richard Ofshe and Ethan Watters, *Making Monsters: False Memories, Psychotherapy, and Sexual Hysteria* (New York: Scribner's, 1994); Renee Frederickson, *Repressed Memories: A Journey to Recovery from Sexual Abuse* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); and Dr. Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
- 4 On the McMartin School tunnel, see Roland Summit, "Digging for the Truth: The McMartin Tunnel Project versus Trenchant Disbelief," *Treating Abuse Today* 4, no. 4 (July/August 1994), pp. 5–13. See also "Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas," in this volume.
- 5 Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962), *The Poetics of Space* (1958), trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964).
- 6 This idea was expanded into an installation, *Kandor-Con 2000*, first presented as part of the exhibition *Zeitwenden* at the Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany, in 2000. See the statement for Kelley's video *Superman Recites Selections from The Bell Jar and Other Works by Sylvia Plath* (1999), in this volume.
- 7 The allusion here is to H. P. Lovecraft's story, collected in *The Shuttered Room and Other Tales of Horror* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1959).

MISSING SPACE/TIME: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MIKE KELLEY, KIM COLIN, AND MARK SKILES

JCW *This conversation was first published in Offramp 1, no. 6 (August 4, 1995), pp. 80–99. Kim Colin and Mark Skiles were architects who assisted Kelley in the construction of the elaborate architectural model Educational Complex. Offramp is a journal associated with the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), where Kelley presented a lecture on this work around the same time.*

Kim Colin Will you begin by tracing the role of architecture in your work, and specifically describe how your most recent project, the *Educational Complex*, addresses architecture, both spatially and institutionally?

Mike Kelley Architecture isn't something I've dealt with directly as a subject until recently, although in early exhibitions—*Monkey Island* in particular¹—I tried specifically to respond to the architecture of the exhibition space. In this regard, I was influenced by installation artists from late

1960s and early '70s, who worked against the tendency of the “white cube” of the exhibition space to fade into the background. In this work, the gallery space itself was incorporated into the artwork. I tried to think of my own shows as networks of information, and my presentational systems were based on the specifics of the gallery architecture—I played up the architectural idiosyncrasies of the room.

In *Monkey Island*, the artworks were hung Salon-style, positioned where architectural elements met, above doors, for example, or in the corners. Associated artworks were dispersed about the room, which evoked “sight line” connections between them. In effect, the hanging of the work was a map of the room; but there was a secondary map of connections based on the subject matter or visual motifs used in the works, superimposed on the space. In a subsequent installation, *Australiana*,² I materialized these sight lines by running strings between various works, literally connecting them. The disparity between the system of hanging, which reiterated the architecture, and the system of associational ties between the various artworks was much easier to see in this instance. But up to now I have avoided making specifically architectural works because I associated that practice with public art, and I’ve always had an aversion to public art, which I feel is too often imposed upon the viewer.

Mark Skiles This recent project seems to me to be more about your point of view as an inhabitant of the buildings made up by the “educational complex”—what those buildings did to you, what it was like to be affected by them, as opposed to being the designer of them. So it’s interesting to hear how you talk about designing an exhibition—that’s more about being in the position of setting things up for other people to use.

MK With this project I’m dealing with my bias *against* architecture, but a couple of projects warmed me up to it. . . . I actually did two public works, [laughs] which I said I’d never do. One was *Pay for Your Pleasure* (Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1988), which was designed specifically for a hallway at the University of Chicago³—though now it’s built as a freestanding structure. Because it was designed for a certain space, the banners are different widths and have scars where holes were cut in them for water fountains and things like that.

The second project was a proposed intervention in the offices of the Chiat/Day advertising agency. Frank Gehry designed the building, and asked a number of artists, including me, to create works specifically for the space.⁴ Frank said that I could do anything I wanted; in fact his intention was for the work to be somewhat intrusive. The heads of Chiat/Day had the idea [laughs] that an environment that made it harder for people to work would force them to be more creative—which is arguable. When I received the floor plan of the agency, I saw that there were a number of idiosyncratic spaces that were very “Frank Gehry.” These tended to be the spaces that the other artists wanted to use. I decided, instead, to take a section that was *un-Gehry*, and perform Gehry-like operations upon it. I chose an island of functional spaces as the site I wanted to work with.

This block consisted of four small individual meeting rooms, an office supply/copy room, and a slightly larger room designed for group meetings. It was a chunk of interior architecture obviously designed by underlings in Gehry’s office, as they were unimportant, work-oriented spaces. I proposed to “deconstruct” this space, to cut holes from one room to another, remove the ceiling, etc. But, unlike Gehry, my intention was not to reveal the formal structure of the building, but to expose the hierarchy of the workplace. To this end, I cut a picture window into the wall separating the main “boardroom” from the copy room [laughs]—which would be truly annoying and obtrusive, because this room also functioned as a worker’s coffee room. Designed to designate prestige, the boardroom was the most public of these spaces—the boardroom table was designed by Gehry himself. With my “modifications,” it now looked into what was probably the messiest room in the building. Workers, drinking coffee or searching for office supplies, would be on view during high-level client meetings. I also cut portholes between the individual meeting rooms so there wouldn’t be any privacy—the missing ceiling would produce the same noisy effect. On every wall I painted supergraphics derived from common office cartoons, the kind that workers fax to each other endlessly. These were often antimanagement or anticustomer in sentiment.

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KC The murals of office cartoons have such a “used” quality.

MK Right, they’ve obviously been faxed four, five, six times—they are very degraded. And that degradation proves the popularity of the cartoon—that it was faxed several times by differ-

ent workers. The degraded look was actually a lot of work for the sign painters to mimic. It's much easier to tighten an image up than to depict that decay. We had to devise ways to produce that effect.

Anyway, the project was canceled for budgetary reasons. But I built it, as a full-scale model of the actual office space (*Mike Kelley's Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Room) for an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry*, for the exhibition *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1992).⁵ That got me interested in architecture-out-of-context, and thus in dealing with architecture itself.

I became interested in the psychological overtones of the "cubbyhole" when I read Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*.⁶ All the spaces in the house that he describes as homey and intimate—under the stairs, the closet, the bottom drawer—are the same spaces often described in "recovery literature" as sites of abuse.⁷ Such "uncanny" spaces are also the staples of horror literature. Bachelard chooses to repress such negative overtones.

Earlier, I had made a series of wooden sculptures designed specifically for the viewer to enter or lie upon. Some of these, such as *Primaling Cabinet* or *Orgone Shed* (both 1992), were small solitary spaces.⁸ The *Orgone Shed* is a combination orgone box and backyard garden shed, so it has overtones of the proverbial "woodshed"—where one is taken to get a spanking, or goes to "play doctor"—but conflated with new age self-help references.

Following such explorations of "cubbyhole" architecture, with their attendant "psychoanalytic" or pathological overtones, I began to concentrate on my own "uncanny" spatial memories—or, to be more precise, my "nonmemory" of spaces that I could not recollect at all. I was reading a lot of texts related to Repressed Memory Syndrome at this time. RMS theory fetishizes what can't be remembered and assumes this is the by-product of abuse. So I thought, okay, I'll just assume that all the things that I can't remember are traumatic, and I'll fill in the holes in my memory with traumatic fictions—reversing the traditional "family romance";⁹ instead of replacing my boring biography with an idealized past, I would replace it with a dramatically worse one.

MK . . . Romantically worse.

The *Educational Complex* is a model of every school I have ever attended and my family home, with all of the parts I cannot remember left blank. I chose to focus on the dominant architectures of my childhood: home, church, and school. I wanted to package the whole thing as utopian architecture, as a kind of comment on the idealization of childhood. Rudolf Steiner's architecture was on my mind.¹⁰ It seemed to me that, with his Goetheanum, Steiner was attempting to make a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—an architectural complex that functioned as a macrocosm mirroring the aesthetic laws of the individual artistic productions held within it. The building's aesthetics are the same as the painting aesthetics, which are the same as the dance aesthetics, and the literature aesthetics, etc.—it's all one total artwork.

MS Kind of like the Bauhaus?

MK Right. And I replaced Steiner's overarching metaphysical aesthetic laws with Hans Hofmann's "push-pull" theory as my organizational principle.¹¹ The school models are positioned in relation to each other with that theory in mind. I also made paintings based on the same concept, and I am going to do a theatrical work as well. The model is a kind of *über*-architecture proposing Hofmann's formalist compositional theory as a worldview—a religion.

KC Do you think that the models really operate in the same way that the paintings do?

MK No, the visual effect is not really the same. Because the model is a complex three-dimensional space that changes as you walk around it, composition can never be completely controlled as it can be in a painting. But, in its rough organization, the *Educational Complex* is composed formally in a manner similar to the "push-pull" approach. As this is the manner in which I was schooled, I tend to compose that way unconsciously anyway.

KC I've heard you describe the *Timeless Paintings* (1995)¹² as being the result of institutional indoctrination, and that they represent "black holes" in your thinking. In the same way, the models are copies of institutional architecture, and there are also "black holes" in them. Within the models are blocked-off sections that are visually unenterable, which operate as

repositories of that same unconscious “mind space.” If they had been left open, perhaps they would have evoked the kind of homeyness that you talk about in relation to Bachelard, and this “institution” that you have built might be understood as “utopian.” But because they’re closed, the imagined darkness of their interiors does intimate danger and abuse.

MK Those spaces have definitely been made nonfunctional. About 80 percent of the space in the buildings has been rendered useless because it’s closed off—it’s missing. I simply don’t remember about 80 percent of these buildings. But the paintings’ “dysfunction” has more to do with their subject matter—which tends to be “cultish”—than with how they’re composed, because actually they’re composed correctly according to “push-pull” principles. In relation to that methodology, subject matter isn’t really an issue. Because they are composed correctly, the paintings are, in fact, “functional.” I see the perversity of the imagery in these paintings as operating analogously to “carnavalesque” activities—that only symbolically threaten the institutions they confront.¹³ It’s a kind of infantile, permitted rebellion.

MS Right, because it follows the rules anyway. Within the larger project, the *Timeless Paintings* are what would come out of the school?

MK Yes, they are one example of “proper” aesthetic production.

MS It takes the “trauma” and puts it in a safe place?

MK Right, into totally institutionalized and sublimated aesthetic production.

In the model, I see the blocks of “repressed space” as formally analogous to the rectangular blocks of paint in some of Hofmann’s paintings.¹⁴ In such paintings, “unstructured” organic paint application is balanced by the superimposition of geometric forms. Similarly, the model could be viewed as a kind of mess of architectures—different styles all mixed together. In contrast, the blank, blocked-out spaces are stylistically uniform, and since these zones are present in every component of the model, they are a unifying factor. I don’t think this fact is immediately obvious to the viewer, but I believe it is sensed on an unconscious level as a kind of compositional device that balances the entire structure. The ordering principle of

the *Educational Complex* is, then, a by-product of trauma—represented by the “repressed” architectural spaces scattered throughout it. Abuse is the work’s compositional framework. I plan, some day, to show the floor plans of the buildings in the *Educational Complex* with these repressed areas painted over. The floor plans will read, formally, as *remembered* functional architecture balanced by sections of blocked-out *forgotten* architecture. This is easy to read two-dimensionally, but in three dimensions it is much harder.¹⁵ There’s a kind of cross-over between two-dimensional and three-dimensional thinking in this project. The three-dimensional model that results from this blocking-out process isn’t totally dysfunctional as architecture, but at the same time, it doesn’t look quite normal either.

KC There is a compositional nature to the blocked-out spaces, as they relate to the rest of the building. They are like component pieces to a bigger . . .

MK . . . to a bigger composition that is really almost unreadable. As I said before, the blocks become pockets within this sprawl—grounding areas. I wanted to play up these “repressed” areas formally. That’s why I decided not to chop up the individual models too much. My initial conception was to *remove* all of the forgotten spaces and radically reassemble what was left over into completely new structures. But I changed my mind; this would have completely dispensed with the forgotten spaces, when I really wanted to fetishize them. So now, the buildings have been substantially altered to reveal the missing spaces within them, but they are otherwise intact.

MS Because you wanted the buildings to be recognizable?

MK Yes, I wanted the viewer to be able to see that adjustments had been made to these buildings. Minor shifts in them actually reveal this more than if the buildings are too chopped up, for then they are not recognizable as the same buildings. This artwork is about composition, and to recognize that a compositional change has been made, one must have a sense of what was there previously and has been altered. The changes also have to be substantial enough for the viewer to infer that the original meaning of the building has also been modified. I



39. Mike Kelley, *Untwisted Cross* (1995). Acrylic on wood panel with attached wooden panels. $64\frac{1}{8} \times 78\frac{2}{8}$ in. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

didn't want the *Educational Complex* simply to look like a city made out of collected buildings, like Greenfield Village.¹⁶

KC There was some level of surprise for you once the models were realized—they are different than you initially imagined them?

MK I was totally surprised by how they turned out.

KC Describe more fully how the project itself changed. What was your original conception?

MK Initially, I was drawing the floor plans of these buildings from memory. The drawings were totally gestural, there was barely anything there . . . two rooms with a line connecting them representing everything in between: “okay here’s a math room and here’s a science room, and behind them was a cornfield.” And that was it; it was just mush. My original idea was to try to build buildings that somehow emulated that kind of incomplete thinking. The building I started with was my elementary school. I recalled that the main entrance hallway had been positioned on the left side of the building, when in actuality it was centered. The building had to be re-configured to match that incorrect memory, which produced a very strange structure that did not conform to any of my other spatial recollections. I quickly realized that my drawings simply did not provide enough information to build three-dimensional structures. The model of the elementary school could only be completed by referring to photographs of the original building to forge a compromise between my memory and its reality. I very much liked the ambiguous nature of the sketches I was making from memory, but they did not lend themselves to the production of actual spaces. I wanted to design buildings that could actually be built, and not produce only two-dimensional diagrams of “mental space.” That’s when I decided to collect whatever documentation I could about the buildings—an idea I was completely opposed to at first. The project then became about the specificity of the buildings versus my memory of them.

In my early drawings, I also mixed these school buildings with other recollected spaces as well as fantasy elements, thrown in to make them more pleasurable. For example, in one drawing I combined what I remember of my own high school with elements of the high school in which my father worked. My father was, in fact, in charge of maintenance for the entire

public school system, so I was able to see the hidden underbellies of all the schools in the area. I was taken down into the boiler rooms, and into these kind of secret spaces; and then, on the weekends, when nobody was there, we'd go swimming in the high school pool. Exploring these public buildings when they were empty seemed a weird, creepy, secret thing to do, and I wanted to reclaim that sensation, and make it more sensuous. Like, mix the swimming pool locker-room with a greenhouse to accentuate the memory of it as a steamy place—playing-up that sort of conflation of spaces. I think this approach works better in drawing, because such experience is a by-product of memory and can never be linked to real space. With the models, it became more interesting for me simultaneously to present a real thing and my problematized relationship with it—it could not be remembered in all its detail. But I still wanted to keep a sense of the buildings as historically real; they were not only fantasy projections.

I'm also working on a series of prints that look like enlarged newspaper clippings. In them I use photographs of extracurricular school activities taken from yearbooks.¹⁷ Out of context, you can't tell what the photos depict—it may be avant-garde theater, or ritual activity, you just can't tell. Such ambiguous scenes are the starting points for my "recovered memories" of abuse that took place in the *Educational Complex*.¹⁸

KC Back to your surprise about the models.

MK Well, I was totally naive about the process of model building; I thought they would be quite simple to make. I didn't realize what a craft it is. I thought architecture was standardized enough, especially the kind of institutional architecture that the majority of the buildings in the *Educational Complex* represent, that if I brought in professionals, like you, we could just whip them out, and I could chop them up without any second thoughts.

MS . . . make a couple more . . .

MK . . . if it doesn't work—make another one. Then I found out it was a very complex process, and the models became more precious than I had anticipated. You can't make two or three—or at least not in the amount of time that I had—and play with them like they're building blocks. The models themselves also have a sense of preciousness that I did not anticipate.

Taking a knife to them would read as an extremely negative act, and I didn't want that kind of overt sense of criticality: "here's the institution and I'm going to stab it and cut it up." Instead, I wanted my reorganizations of the models to be read as making the architecture better. As if to say: "this is the way the buildings should have been built; they are now better, architecturally, than they were."

MS You didn't want the project to read simply as an exercise in degradation.

MK I'm going to build another model, using all the scraps left over from *Educational Complex*. This *other* architecture will be based on the conventions of fantasy architecture, specifically sci-fi postapocalyptic architecture.¹⁹ This fantasy architectural model is a by-product of making the *Educational Complex*; it wasn't something I'd planned on doing until I saw the large amount of scrap material left over from the first piece. It has its own architectural sense about it, as a leftover or ruin. A lot of the things I initially thought I might address in the first piece, I am dealing with in this subsequent one. Because I can be totally free with it—you know, be very cavalier because it doesn't matter really what I do with it—I can just heap scraps together. Perhaps the clichés of fantasy architecture operating in the second model will make the first model look more true, natural, and historical by comparison.

As I pointed out earlier, my first inclinations with the *Educational Complex* project—clear from the ambiguous and surreal drawings I initially made—related more to the history of fantasy architecture than to the history of deconstructive architecture. As it exists now, the *Educational Complex* evokes postmodern architecture so emphatically because it's pastiche, even though it's not pastiche done for stylistic reasons.

KC That's the twist.

MK It's a complicated project, and still a work in progress. In the future, I want to explore its fantasy aspects more fully. I'm fascinated by descriptions of the McMartin Preschool tunnels and the interiors of abductor spaceships and things like that.²⁰ I want to build actual spaces like that.²¹ Not within a given architecture, but independently, perhaps as giant crates that can be entered, and shipped easily from place to place.

- KC** You call the show *Missing Time*; but because the project is so spatial in orientation, I wonder why? For me it's more about missing space.
- MK** The title is lifted from a UFO book that deals with the phenomenon of blocked memory in people who have been abducted by aliens and who cannot account for hours of time, until they recover their memories under hypnosis.²² I chose the title *Missing Time* in keeping with the Repressed Memory Syndrome references in the piece. Because this is a work that addresses memory and spatiality, there is an obvious space/time connection. Time strikes me as the dominant factor, however, since in this piece, space is outside of time in a way. Not only because these are spaces that exist only in memory, but because I'm producing timeless architecture—"utopian" architecture that transcends quotidian concerns. The title of the show I'm working on is *Toward a Utopian Arts Complex*. The implication of that title is that the *Educational Complex* is not finished. In fact, it will never be done. As I continue to remember things differently, the model will have to be changed to suit those differences. As I "recover," more repressed bits of the past will resurface—potentially in contradiction to what I remembered before, so the model will have to be constantly adjusted.
- KC** But aren't you also saying that some of the fantasy aspects of the piece lie within the recovery scenarios?
- MK** Well, yes, because I believe that so-called recovered memories are related to wish fulfillment. The recovered past is actually a "screen memory," reflecting present desires. Memories and desires are conflated—you can't separate them. As your desire changes, memory changes, and "facts" change to suit your desire. That's why the model is potentially never complete; as my interests in these buildings from the past change, so will my recollection of them, and the model should, ideally, reflect that changing relationship.
- MS** Let's talk about how you use humor—both to present something that's actually funny, but also as a mode of commentary.
- MK** Jokes often hinge on improper usage. The piece I did for Frank Gehry was based on this principle—I used architectural tropes in a manner that was unsuitable for the environment. Some

of this was in the service of social commentary—to point out the inequality of “choice” space for workers in the office environment, but mostly my project was designed simply to be funny. It often seems to me that “deconstruction” is a joke from which the humor has been drained and a social message attached. Like the authorial voice in documentary, the “deconstructionist” voice in art suggests a removed and impartial commentator—which is a fiction. Subjectivity is revealed in every “deconstructionist” act. The tradition of functionalism in architecture strikes me as bound by a somewhat similar pose of fictional objectivity. I would like it if architects would reveal their subjectivity in their buildings in much more obvious ways.

The general proposition is that there are two kinds of public buildings: functional buildings, and those, like Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum in New York,²³ that are designed specifically to be nonfunctional. But I think you can have something in between, [laughs] something that is functional, yet somehow incorporates the subjectivity of its author. That kind of contextualization *should* be part of architecture. If the authors of buildings were more present in them, buildings could not so readily be seen as symbols of disembodied power.

People don’t like to be beaten over the head with a message all the time. Deconstructionist practice often comes off as preachy, so humor is a way of handling the message more lightly. But there’s also something annoying about architecture that is goofy or exotic on purpose! Michael Graves’s architecture rubs me the wrong way for this reason.²⁴ It’s as if he is a time traveler, mixing up architectural stews. But I don’t get much of a sense of what these mixtures of elements are meant to produce—why such a grouping of period styles is desirable at this time, why these particular architectural histories are being leveled right now. It’s interesting to look back at points in history when there were architectural revivals—Egyptian, classical, etc.—to discover what the social forces were that led to the reclamation of these styles. Postmodern pastiche is too ahistorical for my taste. Less concerned with overt clashes of style, the newest version of pastiche isn’t as campy as the first wave. Now the big thing is “schizophrenic” pastiche. There’s a total lust for the denial of any meaning whatsoever—to make the viewer completely responsible for the production of meaning. I am very much against such a lazy, pseudo-disinterested approach.

NOTES

- 1 *Monkey Island* was exhibited at Metro Pictures in New York (1982), and the Rosamund Felsen Gallery in Los Angeles (1983). See Howard Singerman's "Charting Monkey Island with Levi-Strauss and Freud," in Elisabeth Sussman, ed., *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), pp. 89–110.
- 2 *Australiana* was exhibited at the First Newport Biennial (October 4 to November 25, 1984) at the Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California. See "Assignment: Outback," a pamphlet featuring a text by Timothy Martin and Benjamin Weissman included in the exhibition catalogue, *1st Newport Biennial 1984: Los Angeles Today*.
- 3 For a more thorough description of the exhibition, see *Three Projects*, included in this volume.
- 4 Frank Gehry describes the Chiat/Day project and his plans to use artists to design the interior in Michael Friedman, ed., *Gehry Talks: Architecture + Process* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999), pp. 68–71. Artists Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen designed the main entrance to the building, which is in the shape of a giant pair of binoculars. See also "Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Room) for an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry," in this volume.
- 5 *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s* was curated by Paul Schimmel at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (January 26 to April 26, 1992); the catalogue was edited by Catherine Gudis.
- 6 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964).
- 7 For a partial bibliography of works on Repressed Memory Syndrome consulted by Kelley, see note 3 to "Architectural Nonmemory Replaced with Psychic Reality," in this volume.
- 8 These works were first presented at *Documenta IX* (June 13 to September 20, 1992), curated by Jan Hoet; the catalogue was edited by Roland Nachtigäller and Nicola von Velsen. On the sources for "priming" and "orgone," see, respectively, Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream. Primal Therapy: The Cure for Neurosis* (New York: Delta Books, 1970); and Wilhelm Reich, *Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973).
- 9 On "family romance," see Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances" (1908), trans. James Strachey, in *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children* (N.Y.: Crowell-Collier, 1963), pp. 41–45.
- 10 Wolfgang Pehnt, *Rudolf Steiner: Goetheanum, Dornach* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1991).
- 11 On Hans Hofmann, see note 11 to "Missing Time: Works on Paper 1974–1976, Reconsidered," in this volume.
- 12 On the *Timeless Paintings* (1995), see the headnote to "Goin' Home, Goin' Home," in this volume.
- 13 Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin outlined his concept of the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
- 14 An example of the kind of painting by Hans Hofmann that Kelley is referring to is *Memoria in Aeternum* (1962), reproduced in Cynthia Goodman, *Hans Hofmann* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1990), on p. 146 as plate 105.
- 15 The floor plans used in the construction of the *Educational Complex* were instead used to construct an architecturally scaled sculpture titled *A Continuous Screening of Bob Clark's Film "Porky's" (1981), the Soundtrack of*

- Which Has Been Replaced with Morton Subotnik's Electronic Composition "The Wild Bull," and Presented in the Secret Sub-Basement of the Gymnasium Locker Room. (Office Cubicles),* at Metro Pictures in New York in 2002.
- 16 Henry Ford founded the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, in 1929: The thirteen-acre museum and village celebrates the accomplishments of American innovators, such as Ford himself, Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers, George Washington Carver, and Noah Webster. Greenfield Village is a "town" comprised of the historic homes of Ford's friends and fellow inventors. See http://www.americaslibrary.gov/pages/es_mi_ford_1.html.
 - 17 *Timeless/Authorless* was a series of fifteen black-and-white photo-text works made in 1995 for Patrick Painter Editions; they were first shown in the exhibition *Toward a Utopian Arts Complex*, Metro Pictures, New York, 1995. The texts are reprinted in "*Timeless/Authorless*," in this volume.
 - 18 *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)* (2000) is an example of what Kelley is describing here. The work consists of a videotaped staging of a "recovered memory" of abuse, based on an image found in a yearbook. The work was first exhibited at the Galleria Emi Fontana in Milan in 2000, and then presented in the exhibition *Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art*, curated by Norman Rosenthal and Max Wigram, at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, (September 23 to December 15, 2000); see the exhibition catalogue, pp. 116–29.
 - 19 The model made up from the scraps left over from the construction of the *Educational Complex* became part of the multipart sculpture *Double Contour with Side Bars* (2000), first exhibited at the Galerie Ghislaine Hussenot in 2001.
 - 20 On the allegations in the McMartin Preschool case, see note 5 to "*Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas*," in this volume. For an overview of contemporary alien abduction scenarios, see David M. Jacobs, *Secret Life: Firsthand Documented Accounts of UFO Abductions* (New York: Fireside, 1992).
 - 21 The plans for the supposed tunnels under the McMartin Preschool are incorporated into the sculpture *Sublevel* (1998). This sculpture, which mimics the floor plan of the Cal Arts sublevel, has a long tunnel leading to a metal cubicle, the interior of which recreates a "probing room" found on an alien spacecraft. For more information, see Mike Kelley, *Sublevel: Dim Recollection Illuminated by Multicolored Swamp Gas and Deodorized Central Mass with Satellites* (Cologne: Kunstverein Braunschweig, 1998).
 - 22 Budd Hopkins, *Missing Time* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979).
 - 23 The landmark Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue in New York City, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) in the form of an inverted ziggurat, was begun in 1956 and completed in 1959.
 - 24 The postmodern architectural style of Michael Graves (b. 1934) is based on an ironic version of classicism and humorous dialogues with historical design.

AN ARCHITECTURE COMPOSED OF THE PAINTINGS OF RICHARD POWERS AND FRANCIS PICABIA

with Paul McCarthy

JCW This two-part text pairs statements by Kelley and Paul McCarthy relating to their project combining work by the sci-fi illustrator Richard Powers and the Cuban-born avant-garde artist Francis Picabia, shown in the exhibition Display at the Charlottenborg Exhibition Hall, Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1997 (September 13 to October 19), a group show of twenty-four international artists curated by Mikael Anderson. The catalogue includes a brief essay, "Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy" by Lars Bang Larsen (pp. 46–47), and a double-page spread on which selected lines and paragraphs from the texts below are laid across a photograph of a detail of the architectural model of the installation—with three larger views of it set on the right side. The full Display catalogue reproduced fragments from both authors' texts, but the versions have not been previously published.

The effect of the three-part installation—a corridor of Powers's images connecting two rooms lined, respectively, with mural-sized renditions of the abstract and nude works of Picabia—is to collide experiences of pictorial and architectural spatiality, including inner and



40. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia* (1997). Acrylic on canvas over wood panels. Dimensions variable. Installation view at Charlottenborg Exhibition Hall, Copenhagen.

outer “landscapes,” picture-window vision, flatness, extension, and hierarchy. For more on the installation, see Ann Goldstein, “Painting as Architecture,” in Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy: Collaborative Works, exhibition catalogue (Toronto: The Power Plant, 2000), pp. 39–49.

Commissioned by Joe Ballantine in the 1950s to be the cover artist for the Ballantine science fiction series, Powers illustrated numerous volumes including Childhood’s End and Reach for Tomorrow by Arthur C. Clarke. His artful and prolific adaptations of surrealist space and motifs dominated the milieu of sci-fi illustration for two decades; before he died in 1996, he had produced some 800 science fiction paintings, as well as work in numerous other idioms, including writers’ portraits, record jacket art, political cartoons, medical advertising illustrations, and fine art seascapes and sculpture. On Francis Picabia (1879–1953), see Maria Lluïsa Borràs, Picabia (New York: Rizzoli, 1985); on his later work, see Francis Picabia: The Late Works 1933–1953, exhibition catalogue (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 1998).

The present project (problem) concerns “painting.”

Paul McCarthy has long been intrigued with the idea of blowing up the paintings of Francis Picabia to the size of the billboards on Sunset Strip.

Mike Kelley has recently become interested in the science fiction illustrations of Richard Powers, whose work, he believes, represents a major shift in that genre. Unlike earlier science fiction illustration, which resembles technical illustration, Powers’s work is more “abstract” and psychedelic. Instead of producing naturalistic depictions of “outer space,” he created symbolic representations of psychic, or perhaps biomorphic, corporeal, “inner space” (mindscape or gutscape).

Our decision was to pair the paintings of Powers with those of Francis Picabia. This was our collaborative compromise.

Powers’s work seems to have been influenced by such “fine art” biomorphic surrealists as Yves Tanguy and Roberto Matta.¹ Kelley feels that the decline of interest in surrealist-inspired, biomorphic abstraction in the American fine art world of the late 1940s, and its subsequent replacement by formalist painting in the Greenbergian mode, allowed for its easy usurpation by pop culture. Witness the biomorphic morphologies of many Hollywood filmic depictions of space aliens in the 1950s.

Picabia's painting career extends from modernist abstract paintings to surrealist imagery, and then to the late paintings, which were based on mass-produced erotic photographs—almost indistinguishable from popular “cheesecake” illustration. If Powers could be said to have stolen from fine art, Picabia could be said to have stolen from illustration.

Illustration paintings are windows looking onto a frozen moment.

Many twentieth-century painters have attempted to circumvent this “window effect” by stressing the material nature of their paintings. In so doing, they could be said to aspire to the physicality of sculpture, or architecture.

We plan to use paintings (painted panels) to construct an architecture that will consist of a long hallway connecting two rooms. One room will be composed of early Picabia abstractions, the other made up of later Picabia nudes. The rooms are higher than the hallway. The hallway is composed of nearly twenty illustrations by Richard Powers that morph into each other, giving the impression of a spatially fluctuating, celestial landscape.

One must walk through the Powers corridor to enter the Picabia galleries.

The corridor invites walking, since the images making it up are continuous. There are no discrete, framed sections. The viewer moves through the painting.

Since each wall is a separate painting, the Picabia rooms call for stationary viewing. One looks at one wall at a time, then turns and looks at another wall, standing in a fixed position.

The abstract Picabias that form one of the rooms read spatially as flat. They reinforce the architectural presence of the space. The Picabia nudes, on the other hand, are “window” paintings. They problematize the fixed spatiality of the architecture. They present the wall as giant picture window, or maybe even as a movie screen.

The Powers hallway is an uninterrupted horizontal window, thus an eternal window. It is analogous to an actual landscape. Walking through it makes one more conscious of the passage of time, of the movement of the body through time and space.

The hallway mural depicts an organic space that points toward the body, and at the same time pictures a timeless, emotional, and possibly mentally deranged, mindspace: a frame with no fixed limit—most definitely a non-Euclidean space.

An overt hierarchy is present in this architecture. Hallways are lesser spaces that one passes through on the way to a real destination. The Picabia rooms could be said to be like the galleries in a museum—presentational spaces, the hallways only lead there.

The viewer had to travel through nothing (ambiguous space) to get to the main event. Roaming versus examination. This particular, “spacey” roaming is quite exotic, though.

You must walk through craft to get to the art. The Powers are out in the hall, the Picabias are in the gallery. There are, however, certain formal similarities between the Powers paintings and the early Picabia abstractions.

The architecture has an inside and an outside. The inside is finished and pictorial, the outside is unfinished and sculptural.

Entering from one side, the viewer is almost immediately plunged into the pictorial interior of the space. Entering from the other side, the audience sees a view of several large simple architectural exteriors.

Composed as it is from paintings, the architecture could be said to be a faux architecture—a pictorial architecture, like a giant inside-out backdrop painting. It is an architecture that reinstates the invisible, theatrical, fourth wall: the window wall of easel painting.

Some paintings may be spatial, looking out to the exterior (or emotionally interior) landscape; some may be flat and architectural—defining the enclosing space; but some paintings will be used as signage—as visually transparent information. Hopefully these will make available—point toward—the less obvious informational aspects of all the paintings.

Mike Kelley

Painting as architecture

Painting and its relationship to windows

The painting rectangle determined by its relationship to architecture

Architecture as set

Architecture as metaphor, structure for dialogue

Where is the front door? Where is the back door?

Inside, outside

Labyrinth, confusion, disorientation

Architecture as body metaphor—bodyscape—internal body metaphor—

Stomach, bloodstream, heart, lungs, etc.

Architecture as mind metaphor—mindscape

Architecture as dreamscape

The illustrations of Powers painted onto hallway panels, passageways that you move through—passing fantasy landscapes

The paintings of Picabia forming rooms or galleries

Galleries as fixed positions—the viewer stands still and objectifies

Painting as architecture representation—architecture as set

Picabia talks about emotion

Sexual Abstraction

Erotic emotions and desires disguised in abstraction

Erotic emotions and desires as comical illustrations

Erotic emotions and desires played out as silly abstractions

Painting as interior walls

Painting as virtual space

Surrounding virtual space

Picabia emotions made virtual

Surreal dreamscape

Transition from hallways—Powers's space illustrations to gallery spaces

oversized Picabia paintings is a surreal narrative, a comical narrative.

Paul McCarthy

NOTES

- 1 On Yves Tanguy, see Karin von Maur, ed., *Yves Tanguy and Surrealism* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001); on Roberto Matta, see *Matta*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre National Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art modern, 1985); and *Matta in America: Paintings and Drawings of the 1940s*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001). See also Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), which Kelley consulted in his research on surrealism. Serge Guilbaut is one of the few scholars to address the politics of surrealism's fall from favor in the U.S. and the rise of the New York School of painting; see Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Guilbaut's examination of the rejection of European surrealism in the American fine art world of the 1940s may help to explain why—and how—a surrealist-inspired artist like Richard Powers could move into the popular realm of science fiction illustration.

U F O L O G Y

LIGHT AND COLOR, MOSTLY

MK *The first section of this text consists of edited brief descriptions of UFOs, focusing on the color of their illumination and their sound emissions, culled from the immense literature on the subject and arranged in a kind of poetic lineation. The second section is made up of full quotations (randomly inserted here as endnotes) and introduces other common themes in Ufology. A secondary series of notes follows, identifying the sources of these citations. The text was presented as a lecture at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in conjunction with my survey exhibition Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes (June 30 to August 11, 1994). I read the first part of the text over the soundtrack (a six-channel overlay of various machinic drones and ambiguous text clusters) composed for the sculpture Silver Ball (1994), with quotations from the second section acting as interruptions inserted throughout the talk. The text has not been previously published.*

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*like blood-red bullet tracers
and blood-red traces of bubble streamers
the most peculiar electric light
undulating . . . and shining
undulating in the motion characteristic of propelled objects*

*of highly attenuated ectoplasmic substances¹
capable of dematerialization
and materialization
and whose propellant
is a form of telekinetic energy*

*Oooh, a flaming red cone
trailing green mist
with an observable luminescence
analogous to that of a deep-sea fish
cool lit
the mysterious glow . . .
of the firefly
a purple sun
purple-glowing six-foot globe
falling slightly
and leaving a soapy, "jellied" film
soon vanishing
barely bending the grass with its weight
dematerializing into a jelly-like mass²
emitting a light . . .
like burnished gold
with a halo above*

*long feelers of light
changes in color
like shifting thought processes
blurs of blue light
appearing as red-hot coals
but with clearly defined edges
and a dark, circular shape—behind the glow*

*4 times the light's diameter
and a less brilliant light
shining from a dark undersurface*

*a light as big
as that produced by 20 stars³
a red tail,
with a small, luminescent, white circular spot
at the head of a red tail
. . . accelerating
it brightens considerably
with a slight blue halo around it
like the electrons leaving
the body
at the moment of death*

*Oval, semisolid
and becoming more solid toward the center
6 to 8 inches in diameter
and reddish-orange
purple light emanating from its underside
streaks of light, streak then filters
and then just goes
very quickly
pure flashes then
as if you put a flashcube right up to your eyeball
blinding*

*a rather odd,
brown-shaped thing
dashing in crazy directions*

*all the electricity melted
frozen, and burned up
static electricity recorded on the high frequency channels
wrapped in the misty cloak of sorrow⁴*

*fish-shaped object
emitting a bluish haze
metallic gray
glowing white in the middle
3 or 4 yellow lights underneath
beams of light
and dark fogs
rays of light
absorbed by a floating mass of dark smoke
driving clusters of light beams, unnatural force
from behind
bluish light
switching on and off, regularly
making soft musical sounds
almost like the cooing of doves⁵
skin feeling,
like it has been rubbed with after-shave
cooing noises
becoming very high-pitched
and staccato
red, blinking lights*

*the cosmic root
force's light energy
the one that underlies all creation
the "love vibration"*

*lights bobbing in the forest
night lights, of different colors
and a golden aura
a flash
inside, as well as outside
in a shaft of blue light
preceded by a buzz*

*a bright flash of light
brief and to the point
these colors are vivid and clear
more varieties than on earth
the main color—glorious yellow
oooh, bodies of light
moon light
casting light all around it
very white⁶
and I don't know where it came from*

*light red light
shining over a large surface
rounded
and full of purplish lights all around it
a large red headlight
lights of red, amber, green, blue
and aluminum
glowed red
accompanied by a thick, dark, steam*

*an orange light
circular*

*estimated to be 6 feet high . . .
like a boy's reminiscence of a haystack⁷
mmm . . . reddish color
glowing
cigar-shaped
bright enough to illuminate a whole road
panning
one of the pans going orange
the other . . . red
linked by a trail of luminous green
and accompanied by "guttural" sounds*

*a luminous object
pulsating
in color: between red and white, with a "sizzling" sound
cream-colored⁸
and surrounded by a smoky haze
sound: like a sewing machine
a piercing, whistling noise
giving off a greenish-blue vapor,
blue and yellow flames with faint swishing sounds
sporting a white light
which changes to red, green, then yellow
and dimming nearly out
before repeating the sequence*

*amidst bursts of reddish-yellow flame
and with a deafening noise, silver in color
making a hissing sound
resembling the sound of steam coming out of a boiler
a throbbing sound*

a hissing sound
a high-pitched hum
the sound of elephant's feet falling, glowing greenish-orange⁹
a strange and irritating odor
lingering . . . close to the ground

wrapped in a blue haze
oval
tan or cream in color
I hear a whirring sound
a "spinning" sound
20 feet long
16 feet wide
resembling aluminum
. . . like an egg

a blue flame in the sky
2 loud metallic bangs
an ear-splitting roar fills the air
amidst the dust,
rising 20 feet,
the roar ceased
a high-pitched whining sound
a colorless light issues forth
. . . from the bottom
a cooing, or hooting noise
causes a reaction amongst the two
reddish-orange flickers at the head of it
at about dawn,
when the sun was just starting to get pinkish,¹⁰
thriving without access to radiation

*specifically, in the wavelength range of 300 to 1,100 microns
which excites molecules electronically
and so,
activates photochemical reactions*

*a dazzling, violet-colored light
suddenly,
a bright red can still be seen going off
90 to 120 feet in diameter
and surrounded by a strange, reddish-blue or violet glow
eerie . . .
at the periphery*

*a vibrating, colorful energy body
the electrical state of an organism
bioplasmic bioluminescences
I see a lot of different colors
I hear the most beautiful music
I smell . . .
the fragrance of the flowers¹¹*

*only the aura patterns
the lights, colors, reflections . . .
of the emotions
the pinkish glow that comes from treading on dangerous territory
the color patterns that come along with it
a huge white cloud
and very brilliant light
that seems to envelop
to draw to it the frequency
the wavelength, so to speak*

*the voltage, the intensity, or speed . . .
of the spirit
the lemon yellow
which denotes the balance of love*

*a blue color
the energy flow of all spirit
the strong gray color: reflecting body chemistry¹²
the healing green
the red expanding to 6 to 8 inches in width
at 10 inches . . .
I start to feel insane*

*like a sparkling diamond
under a light
glowing forms, in the shapes of . . .
pears, cigars, spindles, footballs . . .
and half-moons
emitting humming, or hissing sounds
being almost pure energy
glowing at night¹³
shining,
like burnished aluminum by day*

*ultraviolet sensitive
call them angels
call them blips
gizmos
foo
they are self-illuminated
sometimes steady*

*other times flashing
transparent, even to infrared
existing only in two dimensions
having no depth*

*roughly globular
transparent like glass
about the size of a medicine ball
its surface glitters
seems to be made up . . .
of thousands of minute cells
resembling those of a honeycomb
pulsating
over its entire body an aerial river of electricity¹⁴
the spawning ground of fire falls and fireballs
dropping from unknown heights . . .
spheroids
masses of illuminated gas
condensed energy
expiring with a blast of radiant energy
and intense heat*

*a great column of whirling wind . . .
of a luminous brown color
the whole air seems to be on fire
at scattered locations falls a substance . . .
like ashes
light . . .
fluffy . . .
gray*

*a strong light
as long as a man's arm
forming . . .
only a few feet overhead
emitting a "sizzling" noise
hovering, motionless
lengthening and shortening
several times in succession
a hornets' nest of light¹⁵*

*from pale pink . . .
to amber
then to yellow
yes
lights ranging in color from yellowish-amber . . .
to blue
usually drifting . . .
above the ground
at a speed of about . . .
ten miles an hour.*

*long bluish flames
burning like tiny blow pipes
corpse lights
fox fire
will-o'-the-wisps¹⁶
biological luminescences
radioactive, light-producing mineral deposits
independent
intermittent
and wandering*

weird little flames
leakages
brush discharges of electricity
reddish when positive
bluish . . .
when negative

a flamelike appearance
enveloped
in stormy weather
in a strong electrical field
on the mast tip¹⁷
on the top of a tree
now . . . on a steeple
on all of the elevated objects

a leakage
a violet corona
that which forms along high-voltage transmission lines
the sand is blowing
now
against the bare desert mountains
generating enough static electricity
to cause visible discharges this night

a strange, bobbing, bluish light
about 2 feet in diameter
moving up
and down
with a humming sound
it is moving upward now¹⁸

*whilst emitting blue flashes
it vanished!*

*a mysteriously motivated ball of lightning
a pale gray stain, irregularly shaped
and no bigger than my two hands
a fuzzy-gray shadow . . .
blooming into a clear white disc of clear light
approximately 3 feet in diameter
blossoming
suddenly it contracts . . .
into a brilliant orange-tinted stream
5 or 6 inches wide
and splits into several tongues
of scintillating red . . .
and blue flames*

*these lights . . .
about the size of automobile headlamps
either pale red, or yellow, in color
float
several feet above the ground
inquisitive . . .
but shy¹⁹*

*ooh, a luminous globe of light,
somewhat larger than a man's head
ooh, a ball of fire,
big as a football
and buzzing . . .
like a lumber saw*

*two, minute, Kelly-green meteor-like forms
bright balls²⁰
greenish . . .
like a man suffering from liver trouble
and glittering . . .
at a high altitude
while roving about . . .
slowly*

*a faint white vapor is forming
the daylight, as well as the temperature . . .
begin to lose their intensity
and a fresh breeze . . .
begins to blow*

*mmm, a ball of light
sliding slowly, and majestically, through space
dropping something . . .
like flakes of snow²¹
but round and brilliant
they come down
slowly
in brilliant rays of supernatural light . . .
ones of dazzling brightness
they drift down
like flower petals.*

*a dancing sun
shuddering
and rocking
turning round and round*

*sending out bundles of light beams
changing color at regular intervals
yellow!
now, in succession . . .
green, blue, crimson
a wheel of fire throwing rays²²
of blue, red, violet, yellow,
and green
light in all directions*

*looks like it's made of red-hot iron . . .
in final descent
with the movement . . .
of a dead leaf
scary*

*bright
bluish-white light
Red-yellow color, changing to green
brightness: first magnitude star
producing a trembling, tingling sensation
these are tingling rays of light
enveloping and brilliant
white
my entire body is beginning to tingle²³
with the peculiar sensation . . .
one gets . . .
when the foot goes to sleep*

*a skyquake
a giant shock wave*

*a blast radiating prismatic colors
in the presence of light . . .
as from a smoky diamond:
a sonic boom
sunlight, and the light of stars . . .
fall onto wafers of silicon and mica
large voltage differences are being produced:
solar energy, a piezoelectric effect
high-frequency, ultrasonic waves cause the air to become ionized
. . . typical of the aurora borealis, acting as a plasma²⁴
glowing dull red at the low frequencies . . .
and bluish-white at the high frequencies
conducting electricity
and magnetism*

*tiny ice crystals
floating in a layer of quiet air
reflecting bright sun
little sun dogs
sunlight filtering through ice fog
reflecting in each crystal
a pattern . . .
of bright spots of light
form in the sky
rivaling the sun itself in brilliance
mock sun²⁵
parhelia*

*coming:²⁶
a corona discharge*

luminous ionized air
electrified particles
detaching
dancing
hovering
spinning . . .
as ball lightning does

shaped rather like a half-moon
with 2 tips facing up
pale red
not like a flame
emanating sheets of light
fluttering as water²⁷
a blue-green light on the right-hand side
and on the left . . .
a white light

chemically luminescent
and of low temperature
the light is of varying intensity
and is alternating
from white to green.

swampy²⁸
red, yellow, and green glow
the intensity of the lights . . .
changing
from dim . . .
to brilliant

*tiny flames
about 5 inches long
and not more than 2 inches broad
sometimes,
right on the ground
other ones
floating 4 inches above it
igniting on contact . . .
with the oxygen in the air*

*yellowish, sometimes pinkish
orbs flitting about
emitting a "sizzling," frying sound
about the size of baseballs
streaks
at bullet velocity
changing color
from yellow to orange
baffling, bounding, blobs of light
ghostly dancing orbs²⁹
bluish, pulsating
about the size of basketballs
5 feet off the ground*

*spooky
dim
yellow
light
spraying a fan . . .
of white light behind it*

egg-shaped³⁰

soft

red-glowing

cigar-shaped

moving in an undulating path

"sizzing"

like a high-speed electric motor

three strange, blinking, blue or green lights

moving forward in short lunges

with a deep humming sound

and dribbling

a thin stream of silvery liquid

tilting up

then leveling off

copper-colored

disc-shaped

about 30 feet in diameter

with an odor resembling formaldehyde

the hissing of the stars³¹

luminous

orange-colored

nearly red at times

shooting out bright rays . . .

of green.

wobbling, fluttering red light

250 feet in diameter

shifting to white

trailing blue-green exhaust

a pale lavender glow³²

*like phosphor-coated glass
24 inches in diameter
with an odd,
pulsating sound
and an unpleasant,
suffocating odor*

*first . . .
it is a pale pink
then . . .
it brightens to red
to orange-red
through yellow
to the glow of white-hot metal
colors
corona effects
a jewel box*

*a small ball of red fire
is drifting toward me
sounding
like a well-oiled safe door opening
and as it does
it is expanding³³
into a cloud
of red mist*

*it is
like a round blob of hot metal
all metallic silver
pink . . . to white-hot*

there:
a sprinkling . . .
of gray . . .
in his black hair³⁴

* * *

1. I shall have to accept, myself, that gelatinous substance has often fallen from the sky—

Or that, far up, or far away, the whole sky is gelatinous?

That meteors tear through and detach fragments?

That fragments are brought down by storms?

That the twinkling of stars is penetration of light through something that quivers?

There follows an extract from a letter by the Bishop of Cloyne, upon a “very odd phenomenon,” which was observed in Munster and Leinster: that for a good part of the spring of 1695 there fell a substance which the country people called “butter”—“soft, clammy, and of a dark yellow”—that cattle fed “indifferently” in fields where this substance lay.

“It fell in lumps as big as the end of one’s finger.” It had a “strong ill scent.” His Grace calls it a “stinking dew.”¹

2. Star jelly is still another name for *pwdre ser*, but nothing can be as descriptive as “rot of the stars” . . . The basic phenomenon has been the same since written history began. A meteor is seen to land nearby; investigation reveals a jelly like mass in the approximate location . . . a common characteristic of *pwdre ser* is its smell and general rottenness . . . it seems to evaporate away rapidly, removing all evidence of the unusual phenomenon.

Walter Scott in *The Talisman* puts these words in the mouth of the hermit: “Seek a fallen star and thou shalt only light on some foul jelly, which in shooting through the horizon, has assumed for a moment an appearance of splendour” . . . Poets and divines carry the record of this curious belief far back into the seventeenth century.

[Sir John] Suckling (1541) [sic] says:—

As he whose quicker eye doth trace

A false star shot to mark’t place

*Do's run apace,
And, thinking it to catch,
A jelly up do snatch.*

Jeremy Taylor (1649):—

"It is weaknesse of the organ that makes us hold our hand between the sun and us, and yet stand staring upon a meteor or an inflamed gelly."

Henry More (1656) —

"That the Starres eat . . . that those falling Starres, as some call them, which are found on the earth in the form of a trembling gelly, are their excrement."

[John] Dryden (1679):—

"When I had taken up what I supposed a fallen star I found I had been cozened with a jelly."

William Somerville (1740) says:—

*Swift as the Shooting Star that gilds the night
With rapid transient Blaze, she runs, she flies;
Sudden she stops nor longer can endure
The painful course, but drooping sinks away,
And like the falling Meteor, there she lyes
A jelly cold on earth.²*

3. That, upon the evening of August 13, 1819, a light was seen in Amherst—a falling object—sound as if of an explosion.

In the home of Prof. Dewey, this light was reflected upon a wall of a room in which were several members of Prof. Dewey's family.

The next morning, in Prof. Dewey's front yard, in what is said to have been the only position from which the light that had been seen in the room, the night before, could have been reflected, was found a substance "unlike anything before observed by anyone who saw it." It was a bowl-shaped object, about 8 inches in diameter, and one inch thick. Bright buff-colored, and having upon it a "fine nap." Upon removing this covering, a buff-colored, pulpy substance of the consistency of soft-soap, was found—"of an offensive, suffocating smell."

A few minutes of exposure to the air changed the buff color to "a livid color resembling venous blood." It absorbed moisture quickly from the air and liquefied.³

4. 26 October 1846, . . . a flying object shot over Lowell, Massachusetts, coughed, puffed, and ejected a large lump of evil-smelling jelly, 4 feet in diameter, and weighing 442 lbs. . . . it was “extremely odiferous” . . . experts finally identified it as “odorous” jelly.

The *Annals of Philosophy* report that near Rome in May 1652 a sticky mass of jelly fell at the time of the appearance of a large luminous body. And in March 1796 another great clot of jelly fell at Lusatia from an aerial “fireball.” A huge lump of sticky stuff fell just after some enormous flying object had exploded (or caused an atmospheric explosion) near Heidelberg in July 1811. And the *American Scientific Journal* reports that in 1718 another lump of “gelatinous substance” fell on the Island of Lethy, India, from a “globe of fire” in the sky.⁴

5. Cruising in their prowl car on the night of September 26, 1950, two Philadelphia policemen had an experience which left them somewhat shaken.

As they jogged slowly along a dark and quiet street near Vare Boulevard and 26th, their headlights picked up a shimmering object of some sort which seemed to be drifting slowly downward as it crossed the street about half a block ahead of them. Officers John Collins and Joe Keenan felt that the thing had settled in a nearby field, so they parked the car and got out to investigate.

They had no trouble locating the object. It was about six feet in diameter and about one foot thick at the center. It was only a couple of inches thick at the edge. The entire circular mass was purplish in the light of their flashlights and it quivered as though it were alive. When they clicked off the flashlights, the thing glowed faintly purple.

Keenan and Collins felt that they needed witnesses. Their radio call brought another nearby prowl car on the double and Sergeant Joe Cook and Patrolman James Cooper joined the first two policemen in the field beside this strange object—or creature.

At the Sergeant’s suggestion Collins tried to pick the thing up, only to have it disintegrate as though it were some kind of gelatin. The small pieces that he was able to retain in his hand quickly evaporated, or dissolved, leaving a thin sticky, odorless scum. The entire mass evaporated within half an hour after the four officers reached the scene.⁵

6. Among the most peculiar—and rare—of phenomena associated with UFO sightings is a substance called “angel hair.” The most famous angel-hair case occurred in France in the fall of

1952 . . . strange [flying] objects left an abundant trail behind them, which slowly fell to the ground as if dispersed. For several hours clumps of it hung in the trees, on the telephone wires, and on the roofs of houses. . . . When witnesses picked up the material and rolled it into a ball, it turned gelatinous and vanished.⁶

7. I have heard this said about a similar mysterious substance—a bright, fibrous filament, rather like glass wool—that can be produced out of the body of a medium in a trance in the séance room. No, there is nothing spooky about “ectoplasm,” as this peculiar stuff is called. It has been procured, touched, photographed, looked at under microscopes, and subjected to the whole gamut of analytical tests. It appears to be physical for as long as it lasts. Unfortunately it, too, disintegrates and disappears, “leaving not a wrack behind,” within a period of seven days—more usually within minutes. Ectoplasm is held to be etheric in nature. It becomes physical temporarily, owing to certain biomagnetic processes not yet understood. As ectoplasm is derived from a living body, a fascinating question arises—if the stuff that floated down from the flying torpedo was ectoplasm, is the torpedo itself, not a machine, but a huge living thing?⁷
8. . . . I contended that the “flying disks” (as they were first called) are a form of space animal, or creature, of a highly attenuated (ectoplasmic?) substance, capable of materialization and dematerialization, whose propellant is a form of telekinetic energy.

There is a saying that Nature abhors a vacuum. If the seas of our earth are swarming with varieties of living things, both great and small, is it not logical to assume the “sea” of our sky abounds with sundry forms of living things, likewise both great and small, of varied shapes, but adaptable to their celestial environment? Some may be quite invisible, others translucent, others opaque, still others capable of changing, chameleon-like, from one color to another, from one form to another, from visibility to complete invisibility, all in a moment. . . .

There are reports of tailed saucers which certainly support my space animal theory. On May 16, 1808, at approximately four p.m. a vast procession of dark brown, circular bodies, with tails “three or four fathoms long”, sailed over Skeninge Sweden, causing the sun to turn a deep brick-red by their passage. Occasionally one of the weird objects would fall to the earth, leaving a “soapy or jellied” film which soon vanished (*Transactions of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, 1808-215*).⁸

9. It was at night when I had this vision. In this vision there was a large object flying around with bright colors in a disc form. Immediately I thought of the flying scorpion that I had read about in the chapter of Revelation from the Holy Bible, but when the object started turning I saw that first it was flat then it turned sideways and started to shoot radiant colors at first then it would turn back to the same position. I was running with my brother when it aimed at us but it didn't touch us at all. I guess this is what they are calling the flying saucers. Anyway it was revealed to me that we had the right seal of God Almighty in our forehead.⁹
10. . . . two objects came over his position and fired a beam at him. . . . Every time the light hit him he felt weak and fell. He also smelled a foul odor . . . Manuel attributed his survival to the fact that he had torn off a piece of his shirt to cover his nose, so that he did not breathe the ill-smelling gas ejected by the chupa.¹⁰
11. The first thing they noticed was an unpleasant, suffocating odor . . . her mother noticed a queer oily substance on the boys' faces. Soon after this, their throats began to swell. Later it was suggested that the monster had sprayed the boys with some kind of gas.¹¹
12. I'm sitting on a bench in a little room. . . . And it smells funny. Smells somethin' like cheese in here. Smells kind of nasty, to tell you the truth. It's not clean in here.¹²
13. Karen woke up in the morning with a sticky, gelatinous substance between her legs. She was puzzled about how she got it and washed it off in her morning shower. . . . Hillary's genitals were red, swollen, and leaking a clear fluid. She had a brown substance painted between her thighs. Janet went into a panic and frantically began to wipe the substance off. As she did, she noticed the substance simply dried up, turned white, and then "evaporated" until none was left. She found some flakes and a possible stain on the sheet. She stored the flakes in an airtight jar in the freezer, but within a few days they also had evaporated.¹³
14. After undergoing a physical examination, he stated that his mind was transported to an alien world where he observed more of the strange creatures walking about a planet of jagged peaks in a misty atmosphere. After the mind trip, he was . . . returned to the ground. The last mem-

ory [he] had of the strange craft was a terrible odor, like “rotten socks, as if someone hadn’t taken their shoes off for twenty years.”¹⁴

15. Mrs. Edwards said, “Tru, did you read about the flying saucer, or part of one, that was found somewhere in the southern part of the United States? They said it was very untidy and had a bad odor.”

That burned me, for the saucer from Clarion had always been immaculate, and its people too. And I had the understanding that the saucers landing on our world were all from Clarion.

“No,” I said rather tartly. “It couldn’t have been a scow from Clarion. It, the one I saw, was as neat as a pin.”¹⁵

16. . . . I was sitting in a messy round room. . . . I had an impression that it was a messy living space. . . . As a matter of fact, the thought even crossed my mind that the place was actually dirty. . . . There were clothes strewn about, and two of the stocky ones drew my legs apart. The next thing I knew I was being shown an enormous and extremely ugly object, gray and scaly, with a sort of network of wires on the end. It was at least a foot long, narrow, and triangular in structure. They inserted this thing into my rectum. It seemed to swarm into me as if it had a life of its own.¹⁶

17. The instrument stays in a while, and then he pulls it out. I have the impression there’s a lot of goo involved, but I never remember feeling it . . .¹⁷

18. The art of Charles Seliger is a contemporary extension of the modern morphological tradition. . . . To this observer [Seliger’s forms] suggest more than anything else the viscera. Indeed at this stage of its development, Seliger’s art might be defined as an apotheosis of viscera, contrapuntally punctuated with the image of the phallus.¹⁸

19. The modern painter is not inspired by anything visible, but only by something he hasn’t seen yet. . . . In short, he begins with nothingness. *That is the only thing he copies.* The rest he invents. The nothing the painter begins with is known as Space. Space is simple: it is merely the

canvas before it has been painted. Space is very complex: it is nothing wrapped around every object in the world, soothing or strangling it. . . . All this is space or nothingness, and that is what the modern painter begins by copying. . . . When the spectator recognizes the nothingness copied by the modern painter, the latter's work becomes just as intelligible as the earlier painting. . . . Naturally, under the circumstances, there is no use looking for silos or madonnas. They have all melted into the void. But, as I said, the void itself, you have that, just as surely as your grandfather had a sun-speckled lawn.¹⁹

20. Perhaps something very real had emerged from our own unconscious minds, taking actual, physical form and coming forth to haunt us. Maybe belief creates its own reality. It could be that the gods of the past were strong because the belief of their followers actually *did* give them life, and maybe that was happening again. We were creating drab, postindustrial gods in the place of the glorious beings of the past. Instead of Apollo riding his fiery chariot across the sky or the goddess of night spreading her cloak of stars, we had created little steel-gray gods with the souls of pirates and craft no more beautiful inside than the bilges of battleships.

I wonder what Ishtar really looked like, and if the whole Greek pantheon of beautiful gods and goddesses was not something akin to the beautiful "godlike" beings imagined by people who have made flying saucers their religion. These believers seem to be people who cannot face the stark reality of the visitor experience, and so cloak the fierce, limitless eyes, the bad smells, the dreadful food, and the general sense of helplessness in a very human mythology.²⁰

21. St. Augustine was much vexed by demons. He quotes the pagan thinking prevalent in his time: "The gods occupy the loftiest regions, men the lowest, the demons the middle region. . . . They have immortality of the body, but passions of the mind in common with men." In Book VIII of *The City of God* (begun in 413), Augustine assimilates this ancient tradition, replaces gods by God, and demonizes the demons—arguing that they are, without exception, malign. They have no redeeming virtues. They are the fount of all spiritual and material evil. He calls them "aerial animals . . . most eager to inflict harm, utterly alien from righteousness, swollen with pride, pale with envy, subtle in deceit."

The typical modern extraterrestrial reported in America in the '80s and early '90s is small, with disproportionately large head and eyes, undeveloped facial features, no visible eye-

brows or genitals, and smooth gray skin. It looks to me eerily like a fetus in roughly the twelfth week of pregnancy, or a starving child. Why so many of us might be obsessing on fetuses or malnourished children, and imagining them attacking and sexually manipulating us, is an interesting question.²¹

22. One could read the history of philosophy of mind as an increasingly emboldened attempt to insert mind into the natural world. A critical part of the endeavor was evolutionary theory, in that it co-opted man as an animal. The theory hypothesized a descent of man, but bathetically ended the account with the empathy of “a big brain”

There is a powerful mechanism of evolutionary change called neoteny, or “holding onto youth.” It works in the following way. Genetic variation sometimes causes the juvenile form of an animal to become sexually mature and reproduce, not in the normal course of development, but precociously and whilst retaining its youthful characteristics. . . .

In the 1920s the Dutch anatomist Louis Bolk made a list of similarities between adult humans and the foetal and infantile forms of other primates and mammals. . . .

Bolk’s theory of “foetalization” assumed neoteny to be a process of general retardation. Modern theory sees it in terms of selected retardations but with percussive global effects.

I cite . . . the distinctive character of human sexuality. As is well known, it is recreational, regressive, and what Freud called polymorphous perverse. . . . The regressive nature of human sexuality is evident in its resemblance to nursing behavior. Cradling, stroking, sucking, kissing, fixated eye contact, rapt attention to mammary glands, and supervening sleep—what other animals exhibit these features in sexual congress?²²

23. . . . the UFO phenomenon acts as a *reality transformer* . . . triggering for the witness a series of symbolic displays that are indistinguishable from reality. These displays, which frequently begin with a bewildering series of blinking colored lights of extraordinary intensity, induce a state of intense confusion for the subjects who are vulnerable to the insertion of new thoughts and new visual experiences.

The response of the ufologists to the confusions of the abductees has been disastrous. By taking the symbolic displays at face value, and by hypnotizing the witnesses in an effort to dispel their confusion, many well-meaning researchers have actually reinforced the

alternative reality induced by the UFO sighting, thus exacerbating what may be a spurious side effect and losing sight of the main experience. . . . In the process, investigators untrained in clinical hypnosis have undoubtedly created false memories in their subjects in response to leading questions and subtle cues. . . . As one disgusted UFO witness wrote to me: "You're right to warn people about the dangers of manipulation. . . . Humans are picking up on the control of individuals where the aliens left off."

The abduction experience is real, even if the "missing time" is filled in after the fact with fictitious material. . . . The mind of the witness, to retain its sanity, might later fill itself with an imaginary overlay drawn from collective unconscious material or personal fantasies to account for the discrepancy. . . . When the experience is over, subsequent hypnosis would retrieve and amplify the overlay rather than "what really happened."

We are compelled to conclude that many abductions are either complete fantasies drawn from the collective unconscious (perhaps under the stimulus of an actual UFO encounter acting as a trigger) or that actual beings are staging simulated operations, very much in the manner of a theatrical play or movie, in order to release into our culture certain images that will influence us toward a goal we are incapable of perceiving . . . the more we . . . search [for] a first-order explanation for the overt behavior of the ufonauts, the more we do, in fact, play *their* game and reinforce the artificially projected imagery.

. . . the structure of abduction stories [is] identical to that of occult initiation rituals.²³

24. At IFSB (International Flying Saucer Bureau) headquarters at a meeting held early in March, 1953, we voted to hold what we would term a "World Contact Day," on which we would urge all IFSB members to attempt to send out a telepathic message to visitors from space.

It was after the third attempt that I felt a terrible cold chill hit my whole body. Then my head began to ache as if several headaches had saved up their anguish and heaped it upon me at one time. A strange odor reached my nostrils—like that of burning sulphur or badly decomposed eggs. Then I partly lost consciousness, as the room around me began to fade away. Then small blue lights seemed to swim through my brain, and they seemed to blink like the flashing light of an ambulance. I seemed to be floating on a cloud in the middle of space, with a strange feeling of weightlessness controlling my entire anatomy. A throbbing pain developed in my temples and they felt as if they might burst. The parts of my forehead directly over my

eyes seemed to be puffed up. I felt cold, very cold, as if I were lying naked on a floating piece of ice in the Antarctic Ocean.²⁴

25. The British Acoustical Society has become concerned about the low-frequency vibration produced by motor vehicles running at sustained speed. These “infrasounds” are at the level of 10 to 20 cycles per second, which is below the limit of human hearing, but they can affect us in the same way as flickering lights. The Society warns that these sounds can produce symptoms of recklessness, euphoria, lower efficiency, and dizziness due to loss of balance.²⁵
26. Three common types of synaesthesia are: the gorgeous display of colored spots seen sometimes when you close your eyes; the images of objects that you see in your “mind’s eye” when you think of them; and the habit of having one sense experience suggest another, such as smelling or tasting coffee when you see a picture of it.

As in psychic scent, an odor produced by synaesthesia, the mixing of the senses, does not linger on the air as true perfume does. Since an odor may be produced by the senses other than that of smell—sight, sound-taste, touch, or kinesthetic feeling—why could not a medium’s temporary production of a scent originate in this abnormality of the nervous system?

The variations of sense mixtures seem endless. The word lemon may bring a sour taste to your mouth; a certain word will form a geometric figure before your eyes; a grated chalk on the board may give you a toothache; you may literally see red when angry; spots dance before your eyes when you faint; a certain candy always tastes pink to you; an odor smells brown; a smashed finger makes your ears roar; pressure on your diaphragm causes a ringing sound; the touch of velvet brings a furry taste to your tongue or makes you smell a rose; a stomach ache tinges objects before your eyes with blue or orange; you may have a gray headache, blue toothache, or green rheumatism.²⁶

27. [The Chilean Andes] periodically blaze with weird glows and flashing lights, accompanied by popping, sizzling sound effects. . . . Anomalous energy fields are generated not only by the conductive sediment in mountains but also by that in the large basins considered holy places by Native Americans. . . . [It is believed] that “ghost lights” are simply the luminous electrical manifestations of geomagnetic anomalies or the focal points of tectonic strain. When an

electrical discharge is concentrated in a spot that allows the maximum field and ionization potential—often at the tops of hills and buildings, near power lines, or in swampy overgrown areas where decomposition releases combustible gases—strange lights and power failures can occur. These magnetic field zones can also cause odd psychological reactions. There are written accounts of people who have stepped into such an area, felt fearful, stepped back out, and felt all right again.²⁷

28. The Kalahari desert of South Africa is reputed to be the driest, the hottest, the most terrible desert in the world. In this area travelers often stop in fright at a roaring noise that sounds like distant thunder. It comes from sand dunes, rolling objects, or sands blown by the wind. Bags of this sand have now been taken to Pretoria. When the sand was poured from the bags a roar filled the room. The roar was lost after a few weeks. Scientists have been examining the sand to find out why.²⁸
29. We are physically atomic structures, but we are put together in such a way that in accordance with vibration the thought forces that we use are what build or destroy us physically or spiritually. Now, if you become exceedingly angry the red in your aura will expand to a six- to eight-inch width. If it gets up to a width of, say, ten inches this leads to temporary insanity.²⁹
30. “The strangest sight of all came with the very first ray of sunrise as I was crossing the Pacific toward the U.S. I was checking the instrument panel and when I looked back out the window I thought for a minute that I must have tumbled upside-down and was looking up at a new field of stars. I checked my instruments to make sure I was right-side-up. Then I looked again. There, spread out as far as I could see, were literally thousands of tiny luminous objects that glowed in the black sky like fireflies. I was riding slowly through them, and the sensation was like walking backwards through a pasture where someone had waved a wand and made all the fireflies stop right where they were and glow steadily. They were *greenish yellow* in color, and they appeared to be about six to 10 feet apart.”

The above quotation is taken from the report of Lt. Col. John Glenn in Life Magazine, March 9, 1962, shortly after his epic flight into the stratosphere.³⁰

31. Two of the most puzzling phenomenons of the planet's lower atmosphere are "angels" and "aerial blobs." "Angels" are small white target returns which show up on radar screens. Photographs of radar screens clearly show these targets but the human eye sees nothing where the electronic equipment says "something" is. Aerial blobs are volumes of air of locally altered density, temperature and water content that possess remarkable optical properties. Blobs in combination with the mirrors and lenses of telescopes often bodily displace the images of stars or focus them in points in front or behind the regular focal plane. Linear dimensions of aerial blobs have been observed ranging from millimeters to many meters. Blobs may be globular, lenticular, or cylindrical in shape, thus producing pointlike or linelike extra focal images of stars. Often, hundreds of blobs are quite regularly spaced and drift with the winds at various altitudes up to 50 kilometers and higher. A most amazing feature of the blobs is their durability and stability; some of them preserve their shape for hours.³¹
32. The recent period of UFO phenomena began with the "foo fighters" of World War II. They were not saucers, but balls of light—UFOs. The curious name was derived from the then popular comic strip "Smokey Stover," in which it was frequently stated that "Where's there foo, there's fire." The name stuck. . . . The foo fighters of World War II could be seen by the pilots, but were not revealed by radar. On the other hand, radar frequently detects unidentified objects that are invisible to unassisted human eyesight. These images or "blips" on radarscopes are called "angels" or "gizmos."³²
33. Recently I stumbled upon an amazing similarity between reported saucer sightings and confirmed sightings of ball lightning. Lightning balls are studied under a branch of research physics called Magnetogas dynamics, it concerns the properties of ionized gas particles. The common neon gas discharge tube is included under this branch of physics. The neon tube contains neon gas at low pressure, which is energized to a state of partial ionization. This means that the atoms of neon will form ions and free electrons (free negative and positive charges). Ball lightning is, more or less, formed in the same way. . . .

The typical plasma (fireball) which is seen in the atmosphere is a luminous shape which can be almost any color, dull red, green, gold, orange, or a bluish-grey . . . more commonly

as balls of 5–12 inches in diameter. All plasmas are surrounded by a bluish tinge caused by brush discharges. . . . Plasmas make faint hissing, humming or fluttering sounds, and a peculiar smell is acknowledged if the ball passes within a reasonable distance. The smell is attributed to the formation of ozone. The duration of an atmospheric plasma is from a fraction of a minute to $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour. . . .

Doors and open windows act as wave guides for radiation, which the ball follows with capricious movement, producing heating effects on objects they touch or pass. When a ball passes a conductor it may become attached. . . . Attached fireballs are of blinding brilliance and are usually colored blue or white. It is always seen connected to the highest point of the conductor. The ball may remain scintillating with streamers coming off in all directions until it disappears; or the attached ball may explode immediately on contact with the conductor. An attached fireball can return to the floating form and resume with linear movement through the air.³³

34. Primarily, the physical planes represent light manifesting at a lower frequency than the positive plane. As part of the cosmic plan to continue the process of creation-causing imbalances, each one of the two planes is influenced by a certain amount of opposite force existing in the other. This holds true for male and female physical bodies. The strongest manifestation of the neutral phase of the cosmic root force's light energy, and the one that underlies all creation, is known as the love vibration.³⁴

NOTES

- 1 Charles Fort, *The Book of the Damned* (1919), in *The Complete Books of Charles Fort* (New York: Dover, 1974), pp. 47, 63.
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- 5 Frank Edwards, "Police and the Purple Glob," in *Strange World* (New York: Ace Books, 1964), pp. 212–13.
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- 15 Truman Bethurum, *Aboard a Flying Saucer* (Los Angeles: DeVorss & Co., 1954), pp. 112–13.
- 16 Strieber, *Communion*, pp. 25–30.
- 17 Jacobs, *Secret Life*, p. 110.
- 18 Jon Stroup, quoted in Serge Guibaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 111 (originally published in the catalogue for the first Charles Seliger show at the Art of this Century Gallery, October 30 to November 17, 1945, text by Jon Stroup).
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- 20 Strieber, *Communion*, pp. 96, 124.
- 21 Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 116, 132.
- 22 Michael Smithurst, "The Elusiveness of Human Nature," *Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (December 1990), pp. 434, 436–37, 439.

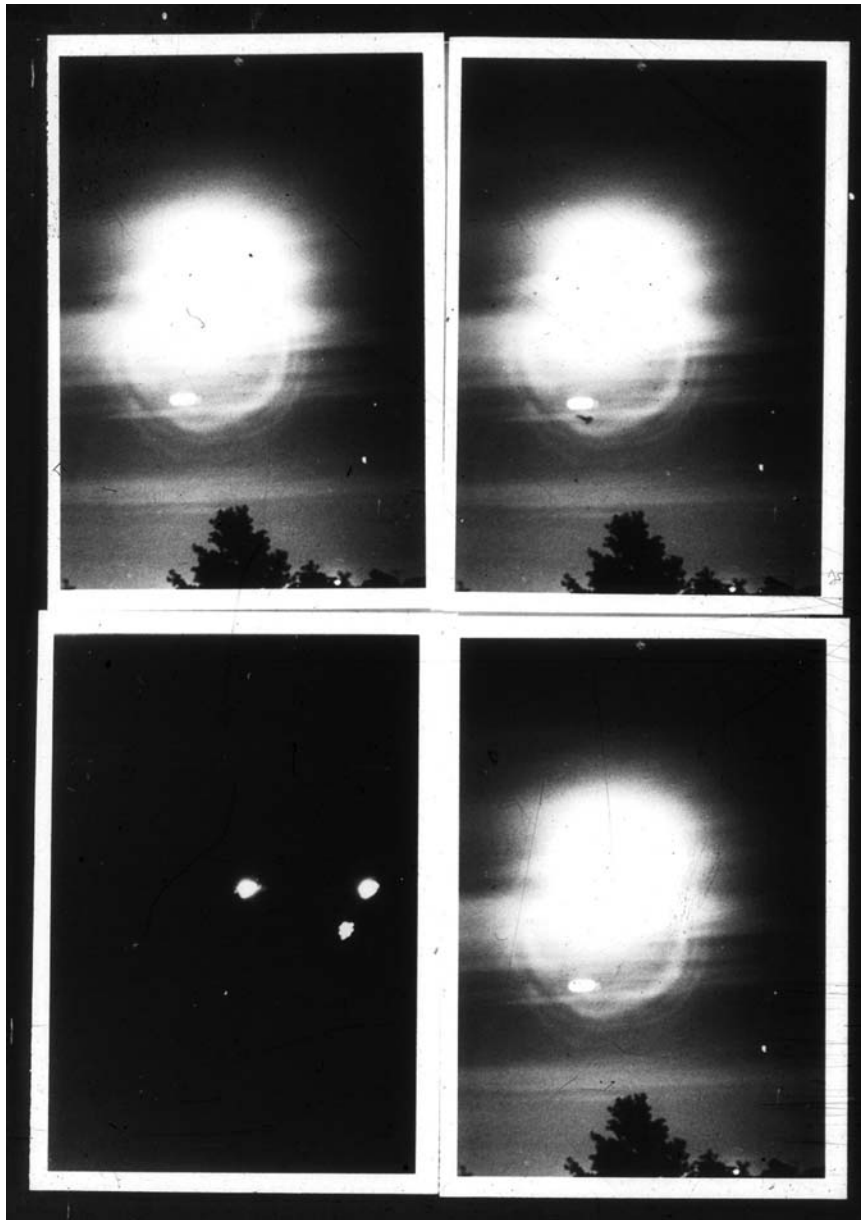
- 23 Vallee, *Confrontations*, pp.142–43, 157, 159.
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- 25 Lyall Watson, *Super Nature* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 82–83.
- 26 Virginia Stumbough, "Do You Hear Colors?" *Fate* 6, no. 5 (May 1953), pp. 88, 90–91.
- 27 Winifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place* (New York: Harper, 1993), pp. 96–97.
- 28 Curtis Fuller, "I See by the Papers: The Roaring Sands," *Fate* 6, no. 5 (May 1953), p. 6.
- 29 The psychic Elwood Babbitt, quoted in Charles H. Hapgood, *Voices of Spirit* (New York: Nordon, 1975), p. 286.
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- 31 Peter Kor, "Probing the Earth," *Flying Saucers*, no. 30 (May 1963), pp. 75–76.
- 32 Vincent H. Gaddis, *Mysterious Fires and Lights* (New York: David McKay, 1967), pp. 13, 33–34.
- 33 Raymond J. Murray, "Saucers and Fireballs," *Flying Saucers*, no. 33 (November 1963), pp. 14–15.
- 34 Steiger, *The UFO Abductors*, p. 118.

WEANED ON CONSPIRACY: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRIS WILDER AND MIKE KELLEY

JCW *This discussion was recorded on January 27, 1998, and first published, in a substantially different version, in Be Magazin, no. 5 [Science and Surfaces] (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, May 1998), pp. 41–53. Chris Wilder is a Los Angeles-based artist whose work addressing the aesthetics of surfer, techno, and UFO fanatic subcultures has been exhibited internationally. The two artists met at the California Institute of the Arts in the mid-1980s, where Wilder was pursuing graduate studies and Kelley was an instructor. Because of their common interest in Ufology, Wilder approached Kelley to participate in this discussion, commissioned by Be Magazin. The conversation was designed primarily to address Wilder’s archive of UFO photographs, acquired from the United States government; his artist’s book Project Blue Book (1995), a reprint of the government agency’s 1966 report of the same title; and related artworks by Wilder, including his solo exhibition Chill Out at the Roger Merians gallery in New York in 1995.*

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Mike Kelley You mentioned Frank Edwards.¹ When I was a boy I was really into his books, which are compilations of all sorts of inexplicable phenomena. He had obviously been influenced by Charles



41. Declassified United States government UFO photographs from Project Blue Book. Courtesy Collection of Chris Wilder.

Fort.² I hadn't heard of Fort at that time, but Edwards's books, which generally included UFO stories, were available at the corner drugstore. I was never a science fiction fan, nor much interested in the technological aspects of Ufology, but I was interested in stories about alien visitations—especially those in which the aliens weren't humanoid. I was extremely taken with one of Edwards's stories. It was about a purple glob that falls out of the sky; and when the police come, it disintegrates, leaving no trace.³ I haven't read the story since, but recently I found the book it's in, and discovered I had mixed it up in my memory with different stories—ones that were more conspiratorial, in which police take away samples of materials that fall out of UFOs and "lose" them. The conspiratorial aspects of such stories interested me.

Chris Wilder That's where my interest in Ufology comes from. My father was a skeptic. He was always feeding me conspiracy theory—talking about the Lincoln murder conspiracies.⁴ It started with Richard Nixon, who he was dead set against, and evolved into a general distrust of the government. Nixon's Watergate cover-ups intensified his beliefs. Recently, my father told me that every 11,400 years the Earth's poles reverse, which may be the result of alien visitation. This event would explain the sinking of Atlantis. We are now nearing the next 11,400-year point, so we're due for a pole shift. I became interested in conspiracy theories because of my father.

There was a compilation of UFO photographs in the small annex library in the town where I grew up. I would go and look through it every day. Its focus was on the inexplicable nature of UFOs—the question of if they were real or not. You created your own conspiracy out of blending different UFO stories together and, in a way, I think the photos that document Unidentified Flying Objects compiled by Project Blue Book produce that effect.⁵ They imply weird narratives. These photographs come off as constructions, but one doesn't know who made them.

MK Project Blue Book is part of a history of the compilation of inexplicable occurrences that our culture is enamored with: ghost stories, tales of life after death, angelic visitations. Primarily, these are oral histories of creepy events. The investigation of UFO phenomena is different, in that it is presented as "science." Ufology became such a dominant cultural mythology that the government felt it needed to step in to lessen people's fears. That is what led to all those conspiracy theories about government cover-ups around UFO information. When I was a

teenager, and engaged with radical politics, I found accounts of government cover-ups extremely attractive. Later, I became more interested in the aesthetics of Ufology—why its visual elements look the way they do. Going through the photos from Project Blue Book, it's obvious to me that many are faked; there is not even an attempt to make them look real. Yet all of the photos are presented equally, as if they carry the same amount of “documentary” weight. J. Allen Hynek, Project Blue Book's consultant in astronomy, admits that the agency was basically a sham—the Pentagon would determine “causes” for UFO sightings without even asking for his professional opinion.⁶ Project Blue Book's uniform treatment of all UFO sightings discredited Ufology as a science, which was, probably, the agency's purpose. Project Blue Book was an enormous collection agency of useless information—a giant dead-letter box.

- CW** The photographs are all the same: an endless roll of images that carry no weight one way or another. After compiling thousands of pages of information in Project Blue Book, the Air Force concluded that UFOs don't exist. The project's aim had ostensibly been to describe the unexplainable, and it ended up producing nothing, which was the real point.
- MK** It seems that little attempt has been made actually to contact the people who sent their photos to Project Blue Book. It would be interesting to establish a history for them focusing on how they are *constructed images*, but one can't get access to their authors.
- CW** I have the reel of microfilm that contains all the pictures, but the people who took them are not named.⁷ It's as if they don't exist; the paper trail is cut off at that point.
- MK** Severed from any historical footing, the UFO photos become pure *image*—but, if the photos are constructed, are “art,” no information is available about what the artist's intentions were. Of course, the motivation behind these images was not to make “art,” but to present “evidence.”
- CW** It's like early conceptual art, which didn't focus on the artist's personal touch—the mark of “art.” The photos in much conceptual art are simply documentation—a picture of someone

digging a hole, for example. In Project Blue Book you might find a photo of a pen, a pack of Salems, and a quarter, and a dent in the ground: it looks like conceptual art, like Doug Huebler's work.⁸ Because the conceptual artists adopted the look of the snapshot, I can't look at snapshots without referring them to conceptual art, which caused me to look at the photos in Project Blue Book in a very different way. That's, initially, why I started printing pictures taken from Project Blue Book. I wanted to pose the question: "What is art?" The photos from Project Blue Book became my art, because they are anonymous. When Sherrie Levine appropriates an image by Walker Evans, the question is always: "Whose picture is it?"⁹ But, in this case, it doesn't really matter who took it—it's all about the image. I decided I just liked UFO photographs—whether they relate to conceptual art, or are faked or not, isn't important. To stress this preexisting quality, I made my own photographs look like prints, not like "real" photographs—they could have been torn out of a book, they look like found images.

MK I think you're right. It is, precisely, because of conceptualism, that UFO photographs are now seen to resemble art. An art form that was somewhat antvisual, conceptualism adopted the snapshot photograph because it didn't have aesthetic value—and because snapshots have the look of "truth." But because of their use in conceptual art, the random quality of amateur photos became a recognizable aesthetic trope. What conceptualism did was make artists very conscious of the formal qualities of the snapshot.

As an aside, I think in the future, once snapshot technology is replaced, snapshots will appear as aestheticized as we now consider the frozen poses of nineteenth-century photography. That look was simply a by-product of having to sit still for long exposures. Because of that, we now tend to think of people in the nineteenth century as moving in a wooden manner, which is often how they are portrayed in contemporary period films.

The average person looking at a snapshot now doesn't notice that a head is cut off in the frame, for example. Essentially, a snapshot is a keepsake of a memorable event—a birthday, wedding, or family trip. They are not really considered as *images*; their purpose is to stir recollection. Conceptualist practice really made me aware of the pictorial tropes of the snapshot. Before that, I just looked right through them to the social ritual presented, oblivious to their status as "compositions." Snapshots are not pictures, and are not meant to be considered pictorially. In order to understand—as an artist—what made them look "natu-

ral," I had to examine them formally; I had to recognize the compositional tropes that made a photograph look like a snapshot. Jim Shaw made some fake UFO photographs in the late 1970s.¹⁰ They are very bland, clumsily composed images of someone standing in a landscape, pointing at light in the sky. They capture the "aesthetics" of the UFO photograph perfectly.

CW At one point I wanted to make fake UFO photos, but I figured there were so many real ones out there I didn't need to. There's already enough crap in the world. I think it's the first place you start, if you're going to make art about UFOs, you make fake documentary photos.

In Project Blue Book, a lot of times the pictures are landscapes where reported UFO sightings took place. It's as if you are supposed to imagine the sighting. The photograph documents the place where the "big event" happened, but now it's just blank terrain. They look like Robert Smithson's photographs.¹¹ It's the same with a "UFO crash site": it looks like any other part of the desert.

MK That reminds me of police photography, specifically the feelings induced by photos of murder scenes after the body's been removed. Because of its association with death, the mundane scene is loaded with heavy energy. And the uncanny effect is heightened when the evacuated scene is especially "normal." UFO photographs are very much like that. They don't look "real" unless the locale is bland. UFO photos set in visually extravagant places don't look natural. For example, I've seen a UFO photo set in Bryce Canyon National Park; it's a place that's simply too weird-looking for me to accept that something unusual could happen there. Such a proposition stretches the limits of plausibility.

CW A UFO sighting is a very specific event, and in that sense it strikes me as analogous to a sculptural presentation—it is not a "natural" event. It's strange that Area 51¹² has become a place where tourists go to watch for UFOs. If you wait long enough, you'll see one. It is an automatic experience rather than a special occasion—a chance event. You just go out to the UFO field and share the experience with the great many; it's like going to an art gallery.

Once I was driving in Mexico and there was an old brick house in the middle of the desert—and there was a tree in the yard painted bright purple. Tires were hanging from the branches. I thought, "What is this? Is this a sculpture? Was the person who made it just

bored, or did they have a point to convey?" I think the photographs in Project Blue Book provoke similar questions—they could be hoaxes; they could just be about wasting time.

MK I believe there are different kinds of faked UFO photographs. For the true believer, faking a UFO photograph is a testament to their faith. The image reflects their experience, their reality. But then other people fake them to amuse themselves. Those people are more like artists, in my estimation.

CW If someone fakes UFO documentation, it's certainly not for money or fame. It causes one to wonder what the impetus is behind their action.

MK I think Dave Chorley and Doug Bower, who made the fake crop circles in England, are good artists.¹³ Faking UFO crop circles posed a challenge, and as they developed their practice, their pictograms became more complex. They followed how their work was interpreted in the press, then responded. For them, maybe, it was just about having fun; but they treated it very seriously. It was far more than simple vandalism.

CW They must have sat down at one point and made drawings for them.

MK It would seem so. The patterns get quite complicated. In a way, I prefer their work to Michael Heizer's.¹⁴ It's more a response to contemporary mythology; it strikes me as less primitivistic.

CW It interests me that most UFO crashes take place in deserts, where earth art is also produced. The UFO wedged into the dirt could be seen as a Michael Heizer.¹⁵

MK The way you present UFO imagery, Chris, is often very gritty, foregrounding a strong physical presence. In the exhibition in which you presented the microfilm machine containing all of the photos from Project Blue Book you also showed a clunky, vortex-like construction.¹⁶ In its use of poor materials, it reminds me of the tree construction you described seeing in the Mexican desert.

- CW** That was called *The Web of Deception*; it is made out of pipe cleaners.
- MK** That sculpture's strong presence seemed to hinge on the fact that the materials were so simple, so unslick. You would think that things with really slick production values would be more "present" than things without them. But the opposite is the case—very slick things fall into a fantasy mental space—are otherworldly.
- CW** Well, I started out with the idea to make something slick, but the more I worked, the more I was repulsed by slickness. So much work, now, is produced by people who only care about slickness—the look of professionalism. I think of myself as being like an amateur scientist, who puts things together any way he can. I want the materials I use in my work to be really obvious, like the phoniness of the UFO photos in Project Blue Book.
- MK** I could see this "direct" approach as a strategy to make something more present sculpturally, which was the point I made before. But I could also see it as pointing toward the folksy—the handmade—which is, of course, something one sees a lot in the "folk art" side of Ufology. There are people who have built "spaceships" in their basement out of materials essentially scavenged from the dump. Obviously, this approach to construction is not some modernist attempt to foreground sculptural materiality. Material issues are not really a consideration in such an object; the idea behind the work transcends its material nature. Folk art is like conceptual art in that regard.
- CW** I believe the people building UFOs in their basements want them to look slick. They want to make things beyond the human; they're not satisfied with the crudeness of life on Earth. Sometimes I feel like that; I want to leave the Earth, and the constructions that I make are a way of removing myself, of not being a part of the planet Earth.
- MK** The prints you made from the Project Blue Book photographs are not exactly crude or folksy—they are all well made, but still have a clunky quality. They are obviously photographic, but because they have been printed in off colors on heavy watercolor paper, the pictorial quality of the photograph is lessened and they almost look like simple marks on paper.

- CW** The image lies directly on top of the paper and gives no illusion of space.
- MK** In your *Chill Out* room installation, you made the walls of the gallery reflective by applying aluminum foil to them. This seemed to be an invitation for the viewer to “fall into” the mirrored space. You also made paintings out of aluminum foil, but the surface is more crumpled.¹⁷
- CK** My aluminum foil paintings started with the image of the foil hats that UFO nuts wear to keep aliens from reading their minds. The next step was to make an arbitrary map, using the material, of a UFO crash site. Then it became completely abstract; the tinfoil painting is really about nothing.
- MK** Are the crinkles in the tinfoil meant to be read like tea leaves; is my relationship to the painting a projective experience?
- CW** Like tea leaves, or a topographic map—but a topographic map that has no reference point.
- MK** The *Chill Out* room installation that was papered with foil mimicked the kind of places set up in discos to relax in and zone out to a techno soundtrack. But this seductive effect was contradicted by the fact that the installation space was just too fucked up to really relax in: the reading material was dog-eared—there was too much physical wear and tear in the environment to allow one to get swallowed up in the “space.” It strikes me that, in a lot of your work, you gesture toward seduction, but then nip it in the bud.
- CW** I didn’t want people to be able to relax in the *Chill Out* room. It isn’t a comfortable place—the lights in the space are hideous colors. It looks like a place where you’re supposed to lie down on the floor and dig the vibes, but you can’t. You are forced to think about where you are. In contrast, a real “chill out room” is where you don’t think about anything. In my *Chill Out* room, I put books about critical theory next to books about UFO theory. You are forced to question if critical theory is any different than any other kind of theory. I don’t see much

difference between them—it's all speculation. A lot of artists now use critical theory as handbooks for the production of art.

MK I think the point you are making by putting critical theory next to crackpot theory is that, in the art world, all theory is crackpot. The art context makes one question the “truth value” of anything put into it.

CW Exactly! To the layperson, critical theory and Ufology are equally bullshit. They're both misunderstood; the complexity of such texts becomes the great leveler. I was presenting them as the same thing.

MK I don't know if this interests you, but I'm interested in how Ufology embraces both the abject and the metaphysical. As in the “purple blob” story, there are many accounts of organic materials falling out of the sky: gooey stuff, like “angel hair,” and gelatinous meteors. And there's a lot of goo in alien abduction scenarios. UFO photographs often depict amorphous shapes that seem to be either blobs of light or gaseous clouds—aerial phenomena that are “formless,” but have no abject undertones. So, UFO mythology accommodates “heavenly” imagery whether it is abject, resembling body waste, or relates to more traditional transcendental imagery—such as halos of light, or cloudy forms.

CW Do you think of spiritualism . . . ectoplasm?

MK Exactly. When I was a student at Cal Arts, I became interested in early twentieth-century spiritualist photography, because I thought it represented a photographic history that related to conceptualism. Ghost photographs are obviously faked; they are photographs designed to prove something, and fail to do so. Similarly, conceptual photography often has a pseudo-scientific or pseudo-anthropological look to it, and often seems to be striving to picture something that's either “dematerialized” or overtly constructed. UFO photographs have the same qualities, but because the social belief systems attached to them are so strong, it is often difficult for people to see them as constructed images, to understand them as a kind of “art.”

That's changing now because Ufology is starting to emerge from the realm of the crackpot into general popular culture. Its pictorial tropes, so recognizable from films and TV, can now be understood as standardized images.

CW It's also interesting that spiritualism came to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century and we're now at the end of the twentieth. There's an interest in what's beyond us; people are looking for something outside of themselves. The new age aspect of Ufology doesn't interest me. I'm interested in the UFO as a literal, sculptural object—but one that isn't present.

Didn't you get interested again in Ufology through abduction stories?

MK Yes, through my interest in Repressed Memory Syndrome. It was the alien abduction scenarios that got me interested. What I thought was interesting about the aesthetics of Ufology was the conflation of the technical and the bodily. In the art world these have often been presented as opposite concerns. For example, the surrealist and expressionist traditions have produced many—often abject—representations of the body—while in the Bauhaus tradition there is frequently a focus on technological concerns, accompanied by utopian sentiments.

I was never interested in the so-called space brother movement of the 1950s, in which the typical image of the alien is an angelic being who, in his technically advanced craft, arrives on Earth to benefit mankind.¹⁸ Such a mythos is just too modernist for me. In more recent accounts of alien contact, the aliens perform anal probes and dump people in pools of goo—completely horrible and abusive acts are performed in their spaceships—yet the descriptions of these vehicles has not changed at all! You'd think the notion of alien morals would change in step with the aesthetics of the technology associated with them. Yet, the flying saucer—a sleek, modernist machinic ideal—remains the norm. But the orderly exterior now hides a corrupt interior. This relationship strikes me as analogous to the socialized exterior of the serial murderer. Such criminals must necessarily look normal in order to “fit in” and to remain unsuspected as they continue their killing sprees.

CW The craft is a minimalist sculpture with a gooey inside.

MK It's an analog for the body—a clean exterior and a wet interior.

I'm interested in the theory that everything that people see in relation to alien contact has nothing to do with aliens at all, that it's all a screen memory for something we cannot even comprehend.

CW Jacques Vallee suggests that these beings aren't traveling here from elsewhere, they are already here, and have been involved with Earth beings for Lord knows how long.¹⁹

MK These beings, or whatever they are, only allow you to see whatever clichés we are already pre-programmed to see. We are incapable of seeing them. Perhaps it is wrong to think of "aliens" as beings at all—perhaps what we are talking about here is closer to what has been called "the unconscious." It's something that cannot be accessed; one can only retrieve archetypes, aspects of a collective unconscious that find their way into our perception as social clichés. That's why UFO stories are always the same: the gray alien is always a childlike figure, a UFO is always a flying saucer. Such regularity of form is reminiscent of the standardized motifs in folk art. The images of aliens, and their spacecrafts, are as undifferentiated as the handmade sock monkey dolls found throughout the United States.

CW Every description of an alien at this time conforms to the model of the typical "gray," with whom conspiratorial types say the government has signed a treaty. This may be true in North America, but have you noticed that South Americans tend to describe aliens as short little hairy creatures? I've read about five or six incidents from Bolivia and Argentina like this.

MK: They sound like the aliens described in Mexico—the *Chupacabras* (goat suckers).

In books on Ufology from the 1960s, there's a lot more variety of descriptions of alien body types: stinking giants, little insect-like men with giant ears . . .

CW *The Mothman Prophecies*—did you ever read that?²⁰ The being is described as headless, with glowing red eyes and batlike wings. Then there are the '50s "space brother" angelic Aryan types. There is the famous "encounter" in Brazil, in which a man was abducted by, and had sex with, a female alien with blonde hair and slanted eyes, who growled like a dog.²¹

MK . . . or Truman Bethurum's meeting with a beautiful female alien.²² Such encounters in the 1950s led to numerous comedic films featuring "space babes."

CW The descriptions have become so uniform.

MK If you said you saw a little hairy man or a blonde space babe now, everyone would laugh at you. It's sad. It only took fifty years for the mythologies of Ufology to become fixed and stale.

NOTES

- 1 Frank Edwards began his career as a radio announcer in 1923, going on to become a political commentator for the Mutual radio network, as well as a popular newspaper columnist. His books include *Stranger Than Science* (1959), *Strange Fate* (1963), *Strange World* (1964), *Flying Saucers—Serious Business* (1966), and *Flying Saucers—Here and Now* (1967).
- 2 Charles Fort (1874–1932) worked full time for twenty-seven years at the British Museum and New York Public Library, researching scientific journals, old periodicals, newspapers, and manuscript accounts to gather material on inexplicable phenomena. See Charles Fort, *The Complete Books of Charles Fort* (New York: Dover, 1974); and Damon Knight, *Charles Fort: Prophet of the Unexplained* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), Fort's biography.
- 3 Frank Edwards, "Police and the Purple Glob," in *Strange World* (New York: Ace Books, 1964), pp. 212–13.
- 4 See William Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).
- 5 In 1947, the United States Air Force formed Project Sign to investigate reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs); in 1948 the title was changed to Project Grudge, and in 1952, to Project Blue Book. The agency collected and examined thousands of oral descriptions, drawings, and photographs related to UFO sightings. The project was terminated in 1969 when the Air Force transferred the responsibility of UFO research to the University of Colorado. For a history of these projects, see Brad Steiger, ed., *Project Blue Book* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976).

Chris Wilder's book *Project Blue Book—1 October 1995* (Ghent, Belgium: Imschoot, Uitgevers, 1995) is a reprint of "Project Blue Book—1 February 1966," an investigation by the U.S. government concerning UFO phenomena.
- 6 Steiger, *Project Blue Book*, p. 17.
- 7 Under the Freedom of Information Act (enacted in 1974 to force the release of secret government documents to the public), Wilder acquired microfilm copies of the UFO-related photographs collected by Project Blue Book.
- 8 On Douglas Huebler, see Kelley's essay, "Shall We Kill Daddy?" in Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- 9 On Sherrie Levine and the appropriation of photographs by Walker Evans and others, see Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine," *October* (Summer 1994); and "Global Nets: Appropriation and Postmodernity," the introduction to John C. Welchman, *Art after Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s* (Amsterdam: G + B Arts International, 2001).
- 10 The three-part photograph, *UFO Polaroid* (1978), is reproduced in the catalogue for Jim Shaw's retrospective, *Jim Shaw: Everything Must Go* (Geneva: Musée d' Art Moderne et Contemporaine, 2000), p. 25.
- 11 See Robert A. Sobieszek, *Robert Smithson: Photo Works* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993).
- 12 Area 51, also known as Groom Lake or Dreamland, is a secured secret military base, covering three million acres, located within the Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range, 90 miles north of Las Vegas, Nevada. The test range has long been associated with UFO activity. Tourists from all over America gather at certain sites in proximity to Area 51 to watch for UFOs, and it is rumored that alien spacecraft, and even living aliens, are held at the base.

- 13 The crop circle phenomenon, and Chorley and Bower's activities, are described in Jim Schnabel, *Round in Circles: Poltergeists, Pranksters, and the Secret History of Cropwatchers* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1994).
- 14 See Mark C. Taylor's essay in *Michael Heizer: Double Negative* (Los Angeles and New York: Museum of Contemporary Art and Rizzoli, 1991).
- 15 Illustrations picturing a flying saucer crashed in the desert most often make reference to the famous Roswell, New Mexico, crash in July 1947. One such drawing graces the cover of *IUR* (International UFO Reporter) magazine 18, no. 6 (November/December 1993), accompanied by the headline. "The Search for the Roswell Archeologists." The Roswell case, in which news reports of a downed UFO were later denied by the government, led to allegations by UFO conspiracy theorists of a government cover-up.
- 16 In his one-person exhibition, *Project Blue Book* (Blum and Poe, Santa Monica, October 1994), Wilder exhibited a microfilm machine that allowed gallery-goers to print out copies of whatever Project Bluebook UFO photo they fancied.
- 17 *Chill Out* was a one-person exhibition by Chris Wilder at the Roger Merians Gallery in New York in 1995.
- 18 On the "space brother" movement, see the documentary film *Farewell Good Brothers* (dir. Robert Stone, 1992).
- 19 Jacques Vallee, author of *Confrontations: A Scientist's Search for Alien Contact* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), served as Steven Spielberg's advisor for the UFO movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977).
- 20 *The Mothman Prophecies* by John Keel was first published in 1975; a film version of the book, directed by Mark Pellington, and a new paper edition from Tor Books appeared in 2002.
- 21 The reference here is to the famous case of Antonio Villas Boas, who claimed to have been abducted from rural Brazil in October 1957; see Terry Melanson, "Antonio Villas Boas: Abduction Episode Ground Zero" <http://www.geocities.com/mevlevi2000/boas-abduction.htm>.
- 22 See Truman Bethurum, *Aboard a Flying Saucer* (Los Angeles: DeVors, 1954).

THE AESTHETICS OF UFOLOGY

***MK** This essay grew out of an invitation in 1997 by the critic M. A. Greenstein to write a piece for World Art magazine on the aesthetics of Ufology, specifically on the relationship between Ufology and the grotesque. Since this aspect of Ufology was not my primary focus, I proposed, instead, a discussion between Greenstein and myself that would address her interests more fully. We met twice and recorded our conversations. After the first audiocassette was sent to World Art for transcription, the magazine decided to cut the length of the feature, so we never sent the second recording. Sections of our first conversation were excerpted and strung together without any editorial input from us. Even worse, Greenstein's voice was completely deleted from the final piece, which resulted in a text that came off as a series of disconnected proclamations by me. Obviously, I was not pleased with this editorial decision. In the new version of the text prepared for this volume, we have combined elements from both discussions. Unfortunately, the first audiocassette was never returned, so I only had access to the version published as "The Alien among Us," in World Art, no. 14 (1997), pp. 48–53. For the sake of continuity, I was forced to emulate World Art's approach and omit Greenstein's voice from the discussion, though I have attempted to incorporate her concerns into this composite text.*

Ufology has long interested me as a cultural phenomenon. It has evolved in many ways since its beginnings in the late 1940s (with the sightings of mysterious airborne lights, the so-called foo fighters, by Allied bombers over Europe during World War II), yet has remained consistent in some respects. I'm particularly drawn to the branch of Ufology that maintains an almost utopian fixation on the high-tech image of the flying saucer, paired with an alien being of monstrous form, or other abject elements. One of the most consistent features of Ufology is this meeting of high-tech fetishism and symbolic body loathing. This aspect of it differentiates the concerns of Ufology from a more general cultural fascination with robotics. In most modern art histories, the aesthetics of technical perfection and those that relate to images of the deformed body are usually in opposition. In Ufology, however, these two aesthetics are set side by side in a less clear relationship.

Ufology pictures an aesthetic collision between a housing structure, the UFO, and an alien element that inhabits this house, in an uncommon aesthetic mixture of the abject and the technological. The 1940s wartime background of the original UFO sightings prompted a fearful apprehension of their technological aspects. UFOs were feared as possible examples of unknown enemy military technology. This concern has faded over time and the technological aspects of the UFO have taken on a different symbolic meaning. The clean, orderly, and machinic nature of the UFO now acts as a foil for the menacing, unformed beings it contains. In my opinion, it is this essentially dramatic pairing (rather than any other association) that constitutes the "grotesque" in Ufology. The word "grotesque" here points to the incongruous, perhaps meaningless, nature of this combination, and is thus a somewhat old-fashioned usage of a term that originally referred to fantastic, decorative motifs. Although "grotesque" no longer bears such playful overtones in common parlance, it strikes me, even so, as an inappropriate word to apply to Ufological discourse. These days, any discussion of Ufology is implicated in a negative aesthetic. Despite the lack of clarity about the symbolic meaning of its technological component, the mythologies of contemporary Ufology are grounded in fear and horror. UFO abduction narratives often describe disturbing intrusive practices performed upon the human body. Thus, it seems more proper that Ufology be addressed using contemporary discourses of the abject, and not the grotesque.

Very few people now hold views similar to those expressed during the "space brother" phenomenon of the 1950s, when a group of UFO devotees drew comparisons between advanced technology and morals. At this time it was assumed that if aliens possessed superior machinery, they must also be more socially advanced. This empathic notion of the alien was underscored by the fact

that they *looked* like us. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (dir. Robert Wise, 1951), a film that depicted a noble alien who came to Earth to save us from our own destructive proclivities, exemplifies this view of the morally advanced alien and its technology. More often, however, Hollywood alien invasion films of that period depict the alien being as evil and totally *other*, like the one-eyed blob monster that inhabits the flying saucer in the film *Atomic Submarine* (dir. Spencer G. Bennet, 1959). I am fascinated by the contrast between the primordial appearance of such a being and the ultrasophisticated device it pilots. It prompts the question of just why there should be such an overt inconsistency in design between the form of the being and its craft. The two are so unlike that they are impossible to reconcile. It's as if I were asked to believe that the pea soup, or refried beans, that inhabit a tin can designed that housing for itself, and that this shell somehow represents its "psychology." On the symbolic level, the two forms simply cannot have similar meaning.

The pleasure provoked by this incongruity evokes Georges Bataille's aesthetics of heterogeneity. Bataille described the similarity he felt between such abject excremental forms as sperm and shit and the "sacred, divine, or marvelous," as a by-product of their shared heterogeneous status as "foreign bodies" in relation to our assimilating and homogeneous culture. They are both, in a sense, equally taboo. He offers the image of "a half-decomposed cadaver fleeing through the night in a luminous shroud"¹ as an example of this unity. The image of the abject, bloblike alien is part of a long history of images of foul heavenly masses, sometimes called "star jelly" or "poudre ser." Literary sources and scientific journals from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries cite descriptions of "gelatinous meteors"—falling stars that, when located, reveal themselves as lumps of stinking, white goo. The evocation of sperm in such accounts is so obvious that such finds were sometimes described as "star shoot."² The mythic relationship between the sky and the abject thus has quite a long history. This conflation of the heavenly with the abject body recalls Bataille's description of the risen Christ, which simultaneously represents a rotting corpse and an ascendant being. Unlike his example, which the social institution of religion has appropriated into culture as a divine image, the abject qualities associated with similar imagery in Ufology have, however, maintained their terrifying, heterogeneous nature. Ufology always invokes this connection between the heavenly and the abject although, so far, this has not been codified to the point where it could be considered a contemporary religion.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre offers an analysis of the "slimy," attempting to explain why such a quality is so repugnant. The fact that slime is base, or dirty, is not the issue.

Slimy things are terrifying, primarily, because they provoke an ontological crisis due to the fact that they *cling*: they threaten one's sense of autonomy, and are thus imbued with an uncanny quality. Sartre writes, "the original bond between the slimy and myself is that I form the project of being the foundation of its being, inasmuch as it is me ideally. From the start then it appears as a possible 'myself' to be established; from the start it has a psychic quality. This definitely does not mean that I endow it with a soul in the manner of primitive animism, nor with metaphysical virtues, but simply that even its materiality is revealed to me as having a psychic meaning. . . ."3 Slime's ambiguous qualities are accentuated by the fact that its "fluidity exists in slow motion";4 it makes a spectacle of its instability. Unlike water, which instantly absorbs into itself, slime does so slowly, giving one the false impression that it is a substance that can be *possessed*. Slime is read therefore, as a deceitful material. Its in-between-ness, its boundary-threatening attributes, provoke a base and horrible sublime experience.

Light, like water, is generally understood as a kind of transcendental "formless" because its undifferentiated qualities are both unitary and actively kinetic, unlike slime's earthy weightiness. This is why it has found such favor in religious imagery in the form of the halo, and why fixed heavenly bodies, despite their ambiguous nature and qualities, are not fear-inducing. In "documentary" photographs of UFOs, this elevated status is threatened and light is imbued with terrifying, negative connotations. For, despite eyewitness accounts that describe "flying saucers" as tangible technical apparatuses, they have rarely been photographed as such. Of the innumerable photographs purporting to document flying saucers collected by the government agency Project Blue Book,⁵ very few reveal any recognizable form. Often, they show only spots of light floating in the sky.⁶ It is not the fact that these photographs image what could be potentially dangerous technologies in the service of unknown beings that makes them terrifying, it is their impenetrable quality. These photographs "picture" that which cannot be seen—or known. They do so by employing the sign of the formless: the blob.

In relation to the image of the alien being, the "unformed" alien is mostly a product of the 1950s and '60s. Many Hollywood films from this time, and even a few eyewitness accounts, feature such beings. John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982; a remake of the Howard Hawks production from 1951) is one of the few films made since the '60s that seriously addresses the unformed alien. The film's shape-shifting alien seems almost like an excuse to show off the wizardry of the special effects crew. The alien can adopt any form, and the film's most chilling moments come when the

being is caught in a transitional phase, between fixed forms. These “slimy” depictions strike me as overtly psychosexual. The fact that alien invasion films no longer function as allegories of cold war political conflicts relocates the symbolic meaning of the alien into the realm of interiorized, psychological conflicts. The moments when the being is discovered in transition are definitely “primal scenes” within the film. Watching them, you feel like the child who has stumbled upon mom and dad in the act of fucking. You understand this is something you’re not supposed to see. You don’t know exactly what it *is* you have seen, but you know it’s something horrible—the merging of two distinct bodies into one.

By the 1970s, the dominant alien type is the childlike “gray” alien depicted in Steven Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). However, abject slimy materials are still an important element in ufological depictions. The current literature of alien abduction is rife with abductee recollections—of their immersion in pools of goo by their captors, of their waking to find themselves stained with inexplicable sticky spots after alien visitations and probings. Less often, the interior conditions of the alien crafts are described as abject, as being dirty or foul smelling. This condition is accentuated in the film *Fire in the Sky* (dir. Robert Lieberman, 1993). The horrific in-betweenness of the slimy in relation to the form of the alien has been replaced in contemporary Ufology with a psychic in-betweenness—reality becomes liquid as abductees come to realize that their memories are perhaps only screen memories implanted by their alien captors. The image of the alien itself is truly unknowable, for it is possible that even that memory is an implanted fiction. The film *Communion* (dir. Philippe Mora, 1989) plays up this aspect of unsure psychic reality by intercutting filmic “reality” with hallucination scenes so that it is unclear what the “real” is. The visage of the alien being is presented as facade—a mask. Reality is indistinguishable from hallucination.

Few films explore this territory; more often there is a clearly demarcated division between “our” space and the space of the alien intruder. Several films of the 1960s do explore this liquidity of space, if only through their “psychedelic” art direction that pictures biomorphic worlds that themselves teeter on abstraction. *The Angry Red Planet* (dir. Ib Melchior, 1959) offers an extremely unusual depiction of the planet Mars, especially given the date of the film. The scenes on the planet’s surface are unnaturally colored and resemble popular psychedelic graphics of the ‘60s. The visual effects produce a space that is gooey and indeterminant, and the planet Mars itself, personified as a giant, crawling, amoebic organism, threatens to engulf the space explorers. *Barbarella* (dir. Roger Vadim, 1968) offers a much more tongue-in-cheek depiction of psychedelic space that obvi-

ously riffs on contemporary drug culture styles. The evil alien city in the film sits atop the seething “Matmos,” a shapeless id-organism. This evil manifests itself, humorously, through sexual perversion in the S & M persona of the city’s she-witch ruler. The film’s conception of the otherworldly is dominated by a biomorphic design sense. Interestingly, a similar “alien” design sense is used in the film *Fantastic Voyage* (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1966) to render the interior space of the human body—which is revealed as resembling the garish insides of a lava lamp.

These visual examples of organic space as depicted in Hollywood films are reminiscent of the graphic work of Richard Powers, one of the most active science fiction illustrators of the 1950s and ‘60s,⁷ and by far my favorite science fiction illustrator. By the early 1950s, he had broken with the tradition of high-tech science fiction illustration, popular since the ‘30s, in favor of a kind of surrealist style rarely used in sci-fi illustration. Powers’s illustrations betray the influence of the biomorphic surrealist painters Yves Tanguy and Roberto Matta⁸ and are extremely abstract. Figure, environment, and machine are all rendered in a similarly organic manner, so that they interpenetrate in a psychedelic miasma. Powers seems responsible for taking the forms discredited in the America painting scene by the rise of Greenbergian formalism—the biomorphic forms of late surrealist abstraction—and transferring them to the world of mass culture. It strikes me as obvious that the success of Powers’s book cover illustrations in the ‘50s paved the way for the explosion of popular psychedelic art in the following decade.

The rise of the acid-tinged, neosurrealist pop culture of the 1960s radically changed the popular notion of the abject; the “natural” was redefined. This is exemplified by the political meaning of the “dirty hippie.” If you were a hippie, this was understood as a “natural” condition; if you were not a hippie, this condition was abject. Popular symbolic representations of disorder, predicated on images of dirt and defilement, were thrown into question. This explains, perhaps, why I so love blob monsters: for, feeling “alienated” myself as a child, I empathized with them rather than being disgusted by them. Also, since the “horrific” nature of many blob monsters stems from their thinly veiled genital appearance, it is only a short step, as a viewer, to strip this veil away to embrace them as overtly erotic images. Not to do so would be to buy into the repressive sexual attitudes of those that would depict the genitals as monstrous and alien. This, perhaps, explains the demise of the amoebic aliens of the films of the ‘50s and ‘60s and their replacement by the childlike, gray alien of today. The infantile, pre-sexually conscious, mindset that the genital blob alien is directed toward has been replaced by one that *is* sexually conscious, but also fearful of sexual victimization. If these

early blob aliens were “uncanny” in the Freudian sense—that is, if they were genital stand-ins representing castration anxieties (this is confirmed, perhaps, by the number of body-part monsters found in films from this period: the crawling eyes, hands, brains, etc.)—they have been replaced by more overt symbolic representations of images of child abuse.

As I pointed out earlier, aliens are most often depicted these days as childlike beings—small, frail, with oversized heads and large eyes—almost like clichéd Margaret Keane illustrations of soulful big-eyed waifs.⁹ But these aliens are not like our children—they are genderless and asexual (though they conform in this regard to the stereotypical image of childhood innocence). They also have no insides or outsides; because the grays don’t have any orifices, we might construe that they are one pure material, a seamless whole. In this sense, the alien itself could be seen as analogous to Jung’s symbolic interpretation of the egglike form of the UFO. Jung read the UFO phenomenon as a “collective vision” reflecting a cultural striving for wholeness and order, represented by the mandala-like shape of the space ships—a symbolic compensation for the “split-mindedness of our age”¹⁰ in the wake of the horrors of World War II. Interestingly, Jung explained the social interpretation of the UFO as a technological construction as a naturalizing device, a way to escape the currently out-of-fashion “odiousness of a mythological personification.”¹¹

This aspect of ufology has not changed; the high-tech image of the UFO is the same now as it was in the ’40s. But the activities performed inside these ships, beginning with the famed “abduction” of Betty and Barney Hill in 1961,¹² are quite unlike those depicted in the films of the ’50s. If the plots in these films reflect the “us vs. them” mentality of the cold war, the new alien abduction scenarios reflect the battleground of the American family itself.¹³ (The recent popularity of the fifties style invasion film *Independence Day* [dir. Roland Emmerich, 1996], however, signals a possible nostalgic resurgence of this genre. In this nationalistic fantasy, the unified defense of the world against alien invasion results in the president of the United States becoming the president of the world.) The unchanging image of the UFO strikes me as something of a conundrum; I would have expected that the technological symbolism of the UFO would have changed in accordance with shifts in social symbolism, but this does not seem to be the case. Jung’s reading of the technological aspects of the UFO as a sign of order remains firm.

The scenarios described in UFO abduction accounts are remarkably similar to the “recovered memories” found in the pop-psychology literature associated with Repressed Memory Syndrome. This form of therapy assumes that most adult emotional problems are the by-products of

childhood sexual abuse, later repressed and forgotten.¹⁴ But in Ufology the roles are reversed: the childlike aliens are the abusers of adults. Alien abduction scenarios often detail painful medical procedures centering on the probing of the body's orifices—that which the alien lacks. The abductees are powerless victims suffering at the hands of diminutive emotionless figures. Obviously, the similarity of the scenarios found both in “recovered” memories of childhood abuse and alien abduction accounts points toward a cultural crisis regarding notions of childhood, sexuality, and power. Even figures within the world of Ufology itself now say that recovered memories of alien abduction are perhaps only symbolic, though they also believe that this aspect of the abduction phenomenon is promoted by, and in the service of, the aliens. One of the most important figures in contemporary UFO research, Jacques Vallee, writes: “We are compelled to conclude that many abductions are either complete fantasies drawn from the collective unconscious (perhaps under the stimulus of an actual UFO encounter acting as a trigger) or that the actual beings are staging simulated operations, very much in the manner of a theatrical play or movie, in order to release into our culture certain images that will influence us toward a goal we are incapable of perceiving.”¹⁵

If the UFO phenomenon reflects, as Jung puts it, “the split-mindedness of our age,” it could perhaps be understood to parallel (though on an unconscious level) the “schizo-cultural” aspirations of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose notion of “the body without organs” could be applied to the uniform materiality of the orificeless alien—though they would surely not empathize with the pathological reading applied to this current wave of hallucination. Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the body without organs is a reaction against the mechanization of the body induced by conventionalized usage of the organs of sense. As they write, “Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and larynx, head and legs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly . . .”¹⁶ Well, yes, it is sad if these experiences are simply reducible to symptoms associated with a group hallucination reflecting a culturally regressive desire to hold on to idealized and outmoded notions of childhood purity.

At this point I want to return to my interest in the blob alien, and my contention that it could be viewed as an “erotic” image—a fanciful depiction, rather than a fearfully sublimated image, of the genitals. For this to be true, the appeal of the image cannot simply be limited to a perverse reading of the blob alien as a “dirty” image that represents a conflation of sexual notions with

defilement. The latter idea would probably be in line with the original intentions behind the design of such creatures, but I would like to argue that we are not limited to such a reading. Now, Sartre's analysis of the slimy most definitely addresses the sexually horrific overtones of such substances, whose clinging qualities he designates as feminine. The female genitals, and in fact all holes, provoke in him the same fear of being swallowed up. The conclusion would be that he must find the sexual act of penetration to be exceedingly horrific. He especially disdains the "sickly sweet, feminine" and states, categorically, that "A sugary sliminess is the ideal of the slimy."¹⁷ Even so, Sartre seems to imply that there is really no hierarchy of sliminess—sticking one's hand into a pot of honey provokes the same amount of revulsion as sticking it into a pot of gooey pus. This doesn't ring true to me.

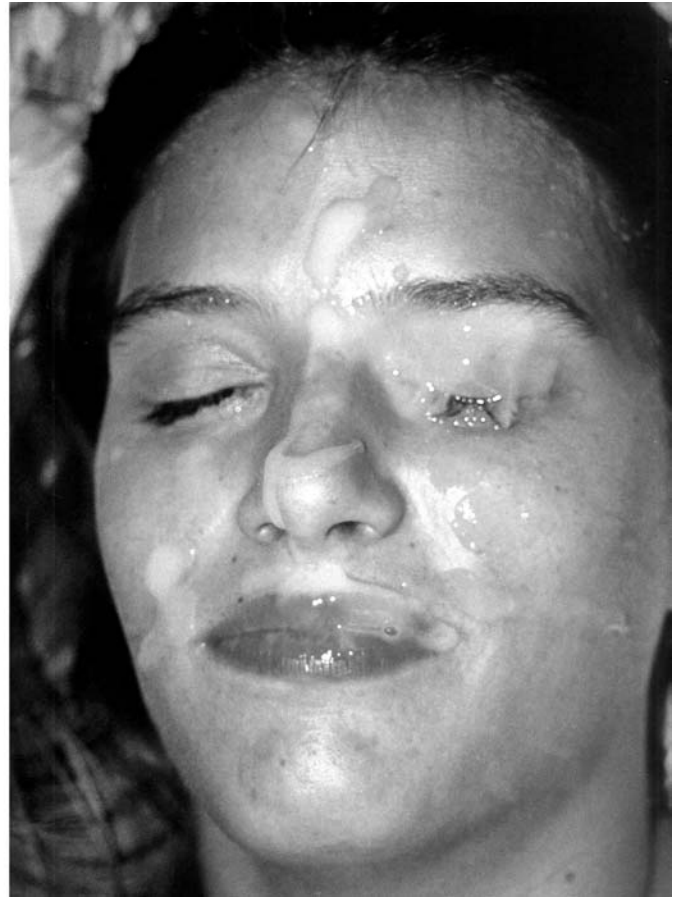
The anthropologist Mary Douglas appears to concur with Sartre when she points out that filthiness is not a quality in itself but is a by-product of a boundary disruption. However, the notions of "boundary" that she suggests operate on several levels: "Matter issuing from them [the orifices of the body] is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body."¹⁸ The problematic nature of these materials lies not so much in their phenomenological qualities (as Sartre would say of the slimy) but that they are confusing materials, being both part of you and separate from you. This is similar to Sartre's slime, which provokes an ontological crisis in its clinging insistence that it is part of you when it obviously is not. But following her statement regarding materials issued by the body, Douglas makes a second point: "The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins."¹⁹ This notion of boundary is less specifically ontological and more one of definition and framework—abject qualities are defined by context. A simple example: dirt in the house is bad, dirt in the garden is good. This notion of boundary is less all-encompassing than Sartre's phenomenological concept and allows for argument about proper usage and definition of boundaries.

Based on Douglas's list of abject bodily materials, it seems obvious that some of these materials are more abject than others. Very few people find tears abject at all, and only the most squeamish would find mother's milk abject—in almost any context. I found myself thinking about this relative abjectness in relation to pornographic depictions, specifically the image of male ejaculation, the so-called money shot, and especially photographic images of the face covered with sperm. Following the success of the first pornographic feature film, *Deep Throat* (dir. Gerard Damiano, 1972), this image has become a mainstay of pornographic iconography. My interest in the

image grew out of the question of whether it was possible to have a sexualized depiction of a blob that was not an image of defilement. And I would have to answer, yes, I do think this is possible. Is a photograph of a puddle of sperm, by itself, abject? Is it necessarily an image of defilement? Some would think so, some wouldn't. Only the most sexually conservative, who feel that intercourse should only be performed for the production of children, could have such a mechanistic view of sex that they would argue that any visible trace of sperm constitutes a transgression. For many others, obviously, the experience of the gooeyness of sperm offers tactile pleasure, is part of normal sexual activity, and has no negative overtones whatsoever.

The money shot has been roundly criticized as an act of defilement of the female countenance; but is it truly so?²⁰ Its function in pornographic films is easy to explain—it proves that male orgasm has occurred, and this is located in proximity to the traditional site of female displays of ecstasy: the face. Presented in one frame, male and female orgasms are simultaneously visible. Pornographic films are participatory; they are designed specifically for men to masturbate. The male viewer's fantasy investment in them is predicated on their "documentary" nature—that they are "real" displays of pleasure, which is proven by the visible act of ejaculation. The viewer's pact with a pornographic film is predicated on this shared experience with the surrogate version of himself acting in it.

An amusing consequence of the development of the money shot in pornography arises from the impact it has had on the reading of earlier "spiritualist" photography, specifically the genre that depicts the medium exuding "ectoplasm," a white substance that is said to flow from the orifices of a medium in a trance. A photo of the medium Mary M., taken in Winnipeg in 1929, shows the cotton-like material caught in her hair and pouring from her ears, nose, and down her chin onto her breast.²¹ Her eyes are rolled up in the ecstatic pose familiar from pornographic photos of the same period, a gesture that seems to derive from the ecstatic countenances found in Christian imagery. Another photograph depicts the material running from between the medium's legs into a heap on her feet.²² The sexual connotations of such imagery is so obvious that it could not be produced now without it looking like it was designed specifically to refer to the money shot, a trope that was not yet present in pornographic photography of the 1920s. The fact that these photographs strike us as funny reveals that such overt sexual connotations are incompatible with spiritualist imagery, that the "sexualizing" of an image is a form of defilement. On the other hand, our present problem with ectoplasm photographs could simply be that the displays of ecstasy depicted



42. *left*: Ectoplasm with impressed extra said to be that of statesman William Gladstone, extruding from the mouth of medium Mary M. Photo taken in Winnipeg in 1929. *right*: "The money shot," *Virgin Pink* #3 (2001). Courtesy Amazing Media Group, Inc.

in them strike us as too mannered to be believable at this time—they are not *convincingly* erotic. If it weren't for that fact, perhaps such imagery could maintain its transcendental value despite its sexual overtones. I prefer this second interpretation; for if it is true, my desire for erotic depictions of blob monsters is a real possibility.

UFO photography has taken the place of early twentieth-century spiritualist photography as the dominant mode of supernatural imagery. The fact that many UFO photographs look as obviously faked as ectoplasm photographs (something that can be forgiven in spiritualist images, since photography was still invested with truth value in the early twentieth century) doesn't really matter. These are images of faith more than they are "documentary" photographs, and in that sense UFO photographs are a true folk art form representing what are, at this point, traditional, commonly held beliefs. Still, as I noted earlier, this belief system has not yet been appropriated into mainstream culture in a "homogenized" way. It does not yet function as a true religion. Despite the commonplace nature of contemporary UFO mythology, it is still held in disdain and considered a "crackpot" belief system. As such, it maintains its "heterogeneous" cultural position and its terrifying overtones.

NOTES

- 1 Georges Bataille, "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade (An Open Letter to My Current Comrades)" (1929), in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 94.
- 2 An overview of this history may be found in the chapter "Gelatinous Masses or 'Poudre Ser'" in William Corliss, *The Handbook of Unusual Natural Phenomena* (Glen Arm, Md.: Sourcebook Project, 1977), pp. 497–505.
- 3 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), p. 772.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 774.
- 5 On Project Blue Book, see note 5 of "Weaned on Conspiracy: A Dialogue between Chris Wilder and Mike Kelley," in this volume. For a history of the project, see Brad Steiger, ed., *Project Blue Book* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976).
- 6 Examples of the kinds of photographs I am describing may be found in Steiger, *Project Blue Book*.
- 7 On the work of Richard Powers, see Jane Frank, *The Art of Richard Powers* (Sterling Publications, 2001); and "An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia," in this volume.
- 8 On Yves Tanguy and Roberto Matta, see note 1 to "An Architecture Composed of the Paintings of Richard Powers and Francis Picabia," in this volume.
- 9 The husband and wife artists Margaret and Walter Keane began producing paintings of soulful big-eyed children in the late 1950s. These images were so successfully mass-marketed that they inspired a legion of imitators. Although the images were initially attributed to Walter Keane, Margaret is now considered their primary author. See Tyler Stallings, *Margaret Keane and Keaneabilia* (Laguna Beach: Laguna Beach Art Museum, 2000).
- 10 Carl Gustav Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Signet Books, 1959), p. 32.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- 12 For a full account of the Hills' story, see John G. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours "Aboard a Flying Saucer"* (New York: The Dial Press, 1966).
- 13 For an overview of contemporary alien abduction scenarios, see David M. Jacobs, *Secret Life: Firsthand Documented Accounts of UFO Abductions* (New York: Fireside, 1992).
- 14 For an account of this phenomenon, see Mark Pendergrast, *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusations and Shattered Lives* (Hinesburg, Vt.: Upper Access Books, 1995), which attacks the claims of the recovered memory therapy movement.
- 15 Jacques Vallee, *Confrontations: A Scientist's Search for Alien Contact* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), p. 159. Vallee served as Steven Spielberg's advisor for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977).
- 16 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 150–51.
- 17 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 777.

- 18 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 122.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 For a discussion of pornography and the debates surrounding it, see Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- 21 This image is reproduced in Fred Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs: The Extraordinary Story of Spirit Photography* (New York: Optimum, 1978), p. 121.
- 22 The photograph is reproduced in Cyril Permutt, *Beyond the Spectrum: A Survey of Supernormal Photography* (Cambridge, U.K.: Patrick Stephens, 1983), p. 152.

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