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ear, escola tècnica superior d'arquitectura de reus  
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# GORDON MATTA-CLARK: DUMPS AND INTERVENTIONS DESTRUCTION? Luiza Tristão de Araújo

Introduction  
**Juan Navarro Baldeweg**



Durante a impressão destas páginas atingiu-nos a morte, em Brasília, neste dia 22 de Setembro de 2008, da nossa companheira Luiza Tristão Araújo.

Com esta nota, seus amigos e companheiros de trabalho saúdam os seus familiares e entes queridos, partilhando da sua dor.

Também lhes transmitimos alegria pela sorte de ter conhecido a Luiza, nossa amiga.

Barcelona, 22 de Setembro de 2008,

Adèlaïde, Alexander, Anna, Carlos, Emiliano, Ester, Fernando, Fina, Guillermo, Isabel Maria, Josep, Juan, Kokes, Laura, Maria Pia, Miguel, Moisés, Mónica, Montse, Nadia, Pite, Rodolfo, Roger.

### GORDON MATTA-CLARK BY MARIA LUIZA TRISTÃO DE ARAÚJO

The New York artist Gordon Matta-Clark is principally known for his building-cuts where he made splits, cuts, empty spaces or holes in the three-dimensional structure of buildings. Gordon Matta-Clark was a trained architect, graduating from Cornell in 1968, but within his work it is difficult to distinguish between the arts. His work may be thought of as sculpture, installation art, performance or architecture, but his objectives were conceived on ground that was common or even indifferent to these distinctions. Underlying his vision is the idea of architecture as a constructed continuum, a readily available material, a building element the size of a house or a warehouse with which to form, by subtraction, a new space, another house. These openings widen the vision, let light in, foster a moving experience of gravity, excite an ambiguous feeling of weight, of the above and of the below.

In Gordon Matta-Clark's work it is essential to note his immense physical consideration of architecture, the awareness of bodily experiences and the setting in motion of an endless game of spatial perceptions. We can understand his work as a kind of radical realism which is right at the margins of the cultural power struggles in which the academic medium of architecture and urbanism were and are still debated. However, his work is enormously relevant to the artistic medium and also to the architecture of today. It is especially relevant in the face of much of the architecture of our times, which obeys an unsubstantial formalist rhetoric.

This text by Maria Luiza Tristão de Araújo centres on Gordon Matta-Clark's film work. Some of these films also show the processes, the characteristic act of

making cuts and holes in buildings. On seeing his films we see the amazing episodes in these acts which serve to clarify the goals of the artist, the methods employed and the enormous creative energy used in carrying them out. According to the author, we can see in Matta-Clark's work how these small acts can be so effective, and how the economy and poverty of the media can exceptionally enrich how the constructed medium is understood or experienced. He went profoundly and rigorously into the physical nature of architecture, and literally got his hands dirty in the rawest urban reality. He thought about social space and all the processes of change in the constructed environment. The urban transformations of New York city, the deterioration of many of its areas, the abandoned buildings, the dumps, the marginality of certain places, all this was an inspiration and profoundly stimulating to his creative activity. He was interested in constructing and above all deconstructing. His work, as the author says, can be thought of as a commentary on and questioning of waste, of the hyper-production and exacerbated consumption of our society. Gordon Matta-Clark's work supersedes the ecological idea and provides a fundamental change in attitude when understanding the artificial environment. The building-cuts return the object/house, the form/house, to its formless constructive origin and to the experience of powerful flows of energy. In contrast to Gordon Matta-Clark, the architect generally works with small building blocks and creates buildings by accumulation, through an integral organization of small material elements. Gordon Matta-Clark's takes as his building block an edifice that is just about to be demolished and creates "another thing", something which serves as its background and is made up of radical energies such as light and gravity, in which a strong organic experience is promoted and in which there is clear awareness of the visual. He reveals one house within another.

The author shows Gordon Matta-Clark's interest in silent movies, and how he learns from them an unconventional analytical capacity, a distinct sense of action within places. He takes the ambiguity and the absurd in these films as an instrumental guide for eliminating the prejudices that come with habitual ways of perceiving and using spaces.

The text uses a comparative method to define the singularity of the American artist's work. Thus, the text analyzes the confluences and divergences between Gordon Matta-Clark's work and that of other creators such as Piranesi or Schwitters.

Maria Luiza Tristão de Araújo establishes, in my opinion, a very interesting artistic link with Piranesi's etchings, with his idea of special continuity. In Piranesi's *Carceri*, one space leads to another, he offers an accumulative system of perspectives which insinuates an infinite space. He explores the ruptures in confined spaces and all this is subsumed in the strong tectonicity suggested by

his images. In Piranesi, as in Gordon Matta-Clark, there is a peculiar contrast between heaviness and uttermost lightness; an apparent absence of gravity is experienced. In his work on buildings, Gordon Matta-Clark's work attracts the presence of another much more distant and enveloping house, it opens on to a background of flowing essential energies and an all-embracing and, in a certain way, universal horizon. You can appreciate a certain redemption or suspension of the categories of the dilapidated, the deformed, the abandoned, and a real transfiguration occurs which leads you to experience certain essential coordinates lying hidden in the interior of this world which is fully accepted in its limited reality.

This study is, in my opinion, highly valuable. By studying and analyzing the interventions in Matta-Clark's films within the more widely known general context of his work, she has made an important and clearly original contribution to broadening the body of knowledge regarding the work of an extraordinary artist.

**Juan Navarro Baldeweg**

Architecture Design Professor  
Madrid School of Architecture

#### KEYWORDS

Art, Architecture, Film, Gordon Matta-Clark, Piranesi.

#### ABSTRACT

This valuable essay studies the work cinema filmed by Matta-Clark within the general context of his work. Gordon Matta-Clark is principally known for his interventions in buildings, he made cuttings, empty spaces or holes. Those actions return the object back to his constructive origins. Maria Luiza Tristao de Araújo focuses on the filmed work by Matta-Clark, in order to compare the convergences and divergences with other art works from Piranesi or Schwitters.

# **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: DUMPS AND INTERVENTIONS DESTRUCTION? Luiza Tristão de Araújo**

Gordon Matta-Clark was an architect from Cornell University who graduated in 1969, moved to New York and abandoned his architectural tools to make interventions in the field of art. He died of pancreatic cancer in 1978 aged 35. I will present three of his interventions/works here.

The dump is the great protagonist in practically all his works. From his first essays in 1968 to his intervention in Chicago in 1978, his material came from dumps. In some instances, he manipulated the very material of the dump in order to transform it, as he did in *Fire Child* (1971, super 8, 9'47'') and in the works he produced in the 112 Greene Street Gallery, where he manipulated the bottles, seaweed and material he had gathered. His early pieces are a true culinary works which transform waste and detritus. Material taken from a dump is to Matta-Clark what a block of marble or alabaster is to a sculpture. He manipulates detritus or rubbish to alter its state in a process resembling alchemy. He works in marginal and destroyed neighbourhoods, abandoned or completely derelict buildings, as well as dumps and underground sewers.

Two questions can be raised: Is it possible to make a moral judgement about what construction or destruction in a dump means? Why is his work, extraction, thought of as a destructive exercise?

I maintain that rather than being destructive gestures, his works are critical, analytical and creative actions. With his work, Matta-Clark not only ques-

tions the art industry, but also questions the existing instruments used in architecture-urbanism and their relation to the property market.

First, I propose a double approach to his film *Fresh Kill* (1972, 16 mm, 12'48'') and a Brazilian documentary directed by Marcos Prado called *Estamira* (2005, 35 mm, 115'). The parallel view, a kind of provocation, will allow us to see from close up the consistency of two dumps and to understand the impact of the actions carried out in each one of them, in particular those carried out by Matta-Clark. In the second part I will analyze two interventions on buildings which Matta-Clark carried out in 1974 and 1975, called *Splitting and Conical Intersect* respectively.

## 1

### ESTAMIRA

The stills of the Brazilian should accompany us now.<sup>1</sup> *Estamira* –two hours long and made in 2004– is a film by Marcos Prado about a woman of the same name, Estamira, who collects rubbish in Rio de Janeiro's city dump, called paradoxically the Gramacho Garden. In this dump 85% of the city's rubbish is deposited. It is approximately 2 km<sup>2</sup>. Rubbish started to be dumped there in 1976 but this has stopped recently and the aim is to rehabilitate the area. Approximately 1000 people directly work collecting rubbish and 14000 do so indirectly. All of them subsist thanks to the dump.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about Estamira and Gramacho Garden visit [www.estamira.com.br](http://www.estamira.com.br) or consult the book by the film's director: Marcos Prado, *Estamira*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Argumento, 2004.



The documentary denounces the system of consumption and waste of contemporary society. The people's actions in the Gramacho Garden are a form of subsistence and are directly related to recycling. The central character, Estamira, makes an incisive analysis of everything that signifies the society of hyperproduction and waste, and the consequences of living in this society. As with Nietzsche in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (1872), Estamira demands the dismantling of consumer society. She uses the expression "sanguine remote control" to explain how the actions of this system are carried out or determined. Among the madness and sanity, the protagonist

<sup>2</sup> Estamira, Gramacho Garden dump, Rio de Janeiro, 2004



struggles to keep herself lucid and thus survive in the system. She is one more among the excluded who are pushed into living on the other side of the system, the side of waste and degradation. The glamorous side is on the other side of the mirror, together with the discourse on fashion, youth and the “welfare state” present in urban centres.

This was not merely a place where rubbish, broken bottles, tin cans and organic waste were dumped, but also lives, memories and the corpses of people and animals. It is a perfect reflection of the city of Rio de Janeiro: the social differences, the criminality, as well as the daily struggles are and can be seen in the dump.

Prado makes this portrait of the dump in parallel with that of Estamira. The dump gives off its gases and explosions, and extends like a sore which is corroding the countryside. Estamira, ill through living with the dump’s toxicity, talks about her feelings and her ideas, speaks of her family and relates the events of her life: violation, scorn, poverty and exclusion. Her companions or friends tell of the hardness of their work and of living in a threatening environment on the point of explosion. In the middle of the sea of detritus, discarded lives, toxic gases and corpses, Estamira emerges as a survivor, with an acid and penetrating lucidity, but to her relatives she is simply crazy. The dump, as much a leading character as Estamira, keeps up a constant dialogue with her: it is her fountain, her interlocutor. For the audience the dia-

logue is apocalyptic. Estamira, and all the other people with her in the dump, dig about to drag their own survival out of it. The scale and the distance of the audience is disproportionate, as is the excessive and exaggerated scale of all megalopolis.

### FRESH KILL

As if he was opening a refrigerator and with the typical sound of Country music in the background, Matta-Clark drives us in his pick-up to a dump five times the size of Gramacho Garden. We are in the film *Fresh Kill* (1972) and in the similarly named Fresh Kills dump of New York City. It is to the south of Mahattan, on Staten Island. The rubbish dump began in 1948 and lasted until 2002. When the city council decided to close it and turn it into a park<sup>5</sup> it had reached 9 km<sup>2</sup>. The company employed to recover and convert the site, Field Operations, gave an idea of the quantity of rubbish that had accumulated when it asserted: “Even amongst 150 million tons of human waste and trash, life persists”.

Conveyed through his film, Matta-Clark’s action in the dump is real. He drives his pick-up along a minor road until he reaches Fresh Kills. Once there he crashes repeatedly into a tractor until the pick-up is completely destroyed.

<sup>3/4</sup> Estamira, Gramacho Garden dump, Rio de Janeiro, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> By way of curiosity, the rubble from World Trade Center was deposited at this dump, which was reopened especially for the purpose.





The artist exposes himself to the collision, putting his life at risk. In the act there is direct exposure to death. Death is what supposedly inhabits the dump. Death is the loss of a body, of a materiality, of the capacity of presence.

His camera does not stay focussed solely on the destruction of the pick-up, but also shows us the dump and its more than 100 million tons of rubbish. In contrast to Gramacho Garden, here nobody is working for their own survival. The seagulls, the vultures and the tractors are the only things moving among the detritus.

What is Matta-Clark trying to say through the act of destroying and by risking his own destruction?

Among many other things, it may be noted schematically that Matta-Clark questions our act of consumption, our daily assassinations.

He displaces art to the sewers and to the dumps, he takes it out of the institutionalized space, the 'dead' space of the galleries and museums, and takes it to living spaces. He stimulates another aesthetic and material relation with our reality. He questions and analyzes the place where the intervention occurs (the dump). He understands its consistency and how it has come to exist. Matta-Clark puts forward a critique of the way of life generated by the capitalist system, above all its concept of time and space and the relationship between them. We have to stop; to wait until our automatism, our acceleration halts before we can find out what all this means.

What kind of time is this? It is a lineal time, short in duration, fragmented, conditioned by an idea of youth and novelty that rejects any possibility of lengthy duration. It is a time of brief, rapid intervals, a time clad in the promise of novelty, of fashion. It is a time that leads, or leads us, to death. In this sense it is lineal, always heading towards death. It is an accelerated time which systematically removes our bodily materiality from both us and our world. It transforms everything into merchandise, be they ideas, thoughts, people, objects or spaces. It places us in permanent transit, among public spaces without any materiality, simply in product distribution channels and private hyper-compartmentalized corners, where we are continuously questioned, where they extract us and reduce us to existing in the smallest possible living space. This is the time of consumption, of hyper-production, where everything must be replaced with something new before its functionality is exhausted.

According to Paul Virilio, every invention causes an accident [*The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 1991]. The train caused derailments. The invention of walking caused twisted ankles. The invention of capitalism causes hyper-production and consequently the dump. The dump is a direct accident of the

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark, *Fresh Kill*, stills, 1972, New York

capitalism, the consumption, of the fashion of these times. We have only just realized that all the rubbish we produce falls back on us.

And the space? It is a space that promises security. It is the space of individual isolation. It is a space of containers which are systematically sold as homes with an aura of protection and hideaway. It is a space that promotes the concept of property, which raises walls, establishes dichotomies between the private and public, interior and exterior, open and closed in order to authorize, or not, our access. Foucault defines it very well in *Of Other Spaces and the Heterotopias* (1967), as does Kafka in *The Trial* (1925). This space is also a piece of merchandise like any other. It is systematically replaced by new promises which are also transformed into waste.

By going to the dump and destroying an object Matta-Clark makes a critical/analytical act of the idea of recycling. Recycling is an invention of the capitalist system of hyper-production: it allows us to continue our daily dumping without instigating a change in our attitudes.

In relation to the art market, the action and place are the true protagonists of his artistic proposal. Matta-Clark does not propose aestheticizing or monumentalizing daily objects, on the contrary, he dismantles the idea of the object of art to turn it into a consumer object and then destroy it – in complete contrast to Marcel Duchamp and his *ready mades*.

Through his actions in areas in decay or in condemned buildings, Matta-Clark reflects on where and how we live. His relationship with these wasted spaces/materials has nothing of the romantic about it, but is basically a dialogue where object-building-space is transformed into material-subject. This is the case with *Splitting*, (1974) where the object-house is transformed into material-subject.

In *Fresh Kills*, Matta-Clark makes visible the other side of the spaces, the dumps, we live in, and invites us to reflect on our daily habits. The act and the place have the same prominence. There is no figure or background. Action and place are the two subjects which directly strike up the dialogue. Matta-Clark makes the act of destroying/discarding and the place where the waste

is discarded coincide in time and space. This is something that the consumer system manipulates so that actions and consequences do not coincide.

Matta-Clark and show Estamira the other side of the mirror, that is, the reflection of the discourse regarding novelty: waste. Matta-Clark does not collect or recycle, but transforms so that we question our aesthetic and ethical attitude in the face of our own constructions. Estamira collects rubbish to survive and in her monologues, she tells us of the poverty and the perversity which humanity stores up.

## 2

When Matta-Clark intervenes in buildings which have been abandoned or condemned, his intention is not to destroy, but to make the most of the last moments of waste-remains to reflect on space, structure, light, our way of living in and arranging our spaces, in order to question the instruments and tools used by architecture.

Furthermore, the interventions clearly intend to abandon the equipment and the tools of the architect. Matta-Clark seeks to dismantle the plane as a means of planning and as a constructive form. His intention is to abandon the project and its abstract scale. His dialogue gives itself over to a bodily and direct scale.

The film by Bruce Nauman, *Bouncing in the Corner* (1969), explains very well the bodily scale which interests Matta-Clark. For an hour, Nauman repeatedly bounces his body against the corner of a room in a repetitive dialogue with space, with frontiers, with its structures and with the body. The permanent attempt to use his body to go beyond the three dimensional planes, transforms the place into subject and interlocutor.

The search for ways to question the instruments of architecture, especially the plane as a means of planning, can already be seen in *Reality Properties, Fake Estate* (1973). On this occasion Matta-Clark buys a series of tiny plots



9

of land from New York City Council in an auction. The advert said “small and inaccessible plots of land”. Matta-Clark orders his deeds, takes photos of them and collects soil from each one to exhibit in an art gallery. Through his actions he shows the mistakes of the plane: its abstraction, its remoteness in relation to the places and the inhabitants it deals with.

Another of his objectives is to dismantle the place as a constructive structure. Here the referent is Sol LeWitt and the lines and construction of spaces which he uses to dismantle the box. LeWitt’s intervention is a kind of makeup; his lines and his volumes do not go through the wall, but remain on its surface. In Matta-Clark, on the other hand, the lines do not stop at the surface, but cross and extract part of the walls to establish a completely different physical space within the building. LeWitt’s intervention is mural painting, in which the body cannot enter, only the gaze may enter its spaces. On the contrary, in Matta-Clark’s work, it is the body which is crossed and which crosses space.<sup>7</sup>

In order to make his extractions, to approach construction through the empty space, Matta-Clark made a lengthy study in the form of drawings. He began these drawings with studies of trees, fixed hierarchical structures. He then gave them movement, until they transformed into energy in a process that went from *Tree Forms* (1969-1971) to *Energy Forms* (1971-1974). At the

<sup>7</sup> We can see some antecedents of this search to dismantle the plane in *Bichos (Animals)* by the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark and in the series of sculptures “desocupación del espacio” (de-occupation of space) by the Spaniard Jorge Oteiza. We see the act of putting sculpture in movement in Clark, and the inclusion of the empty in Oteiza.

<sup>8</sup> This condemned house was given by Horace Solomon. It is in a neighbourhood in Englewood, New Jersey, which was being regenerated.

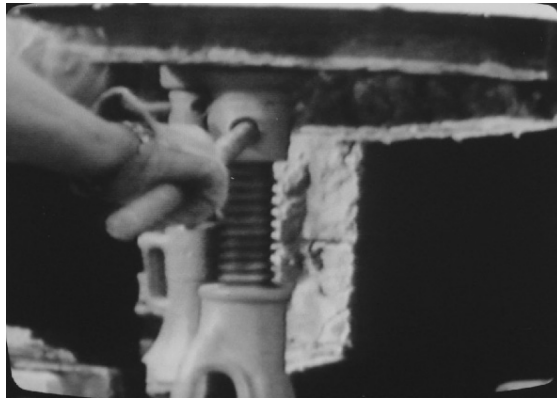
same time he did *Cut Drawings* (1971-1975), where he displayed his extractions using foam core cardboard.

Sections and extractions clearly intend to investigate space, structure, the relations between interior and exterior, open and closed, public and private, light, rhythm and composition.

In *Splitting* (Englewood, New Jersey, 1974), Matta-Clark intention is to investigate and question the structure of the house. The intervention<sup>9</sup> is very simple: he divides the house in half; cuts part of its foundations along an angle dictated by a course of concrete blocks and then tilts one of its parts to one side with the aid of a hydraulic jack. By dividing it and moving it, he transforms the house into a dynamic structure. As he observed himself, the house becomes its own dancing partner. The taboo of the static house, the place of protection falls away.

The act of dividing the house in two and tilting it is risky and dangerous. The house might simply fall on top of him. Before cutting the house Matta-Clark had already got know its structure well. He sensed how it would react to the movement. He knew the structure was a kind of *balloon-frame*, that is, a framework of upright posts covered on both sides with wooden panels, thus making the house’s walls function structurally. It is a traditional building system in the United States and means the building can be easily assembled

<sup>9</sup> Anarchitecture Group, date and author unknown.



10

and moved. This can be seen in one of the images used in *Anarchitecture* (1974), a work which Matta-Clark did with, among others, Richard Nonas and Laurie Anderson. The image shows how the house can be transported by means of a *balloon-frame*. This system also appears in the film *One Week* (1920) by Buster Keaton.

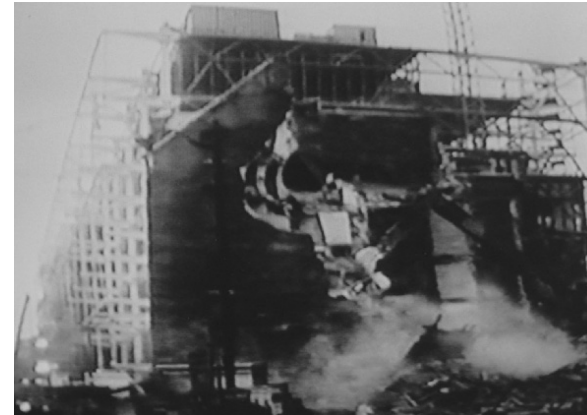
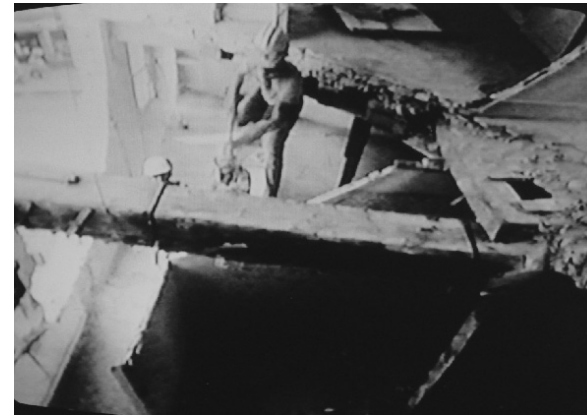
Splitting not only refers to the structure, but also opens up innumerable questions about the relations between the public and private, the domestic space, the way suburban houses are ordered, etc.

After *Splitting* (1974), *Bingo* (1974) and *Day's End* (1975), Matta-Clark's interventions progressively acquire an important spatial complexity. In *Conical Intersect* (1975), dominates the void/extraction and the use of the sculptural process in architecture. This allows him to conceive a space which perverts

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Schwitters, *Catalogue of the IVAM Centre Julio González*, 1995, Valencia, p. 307.



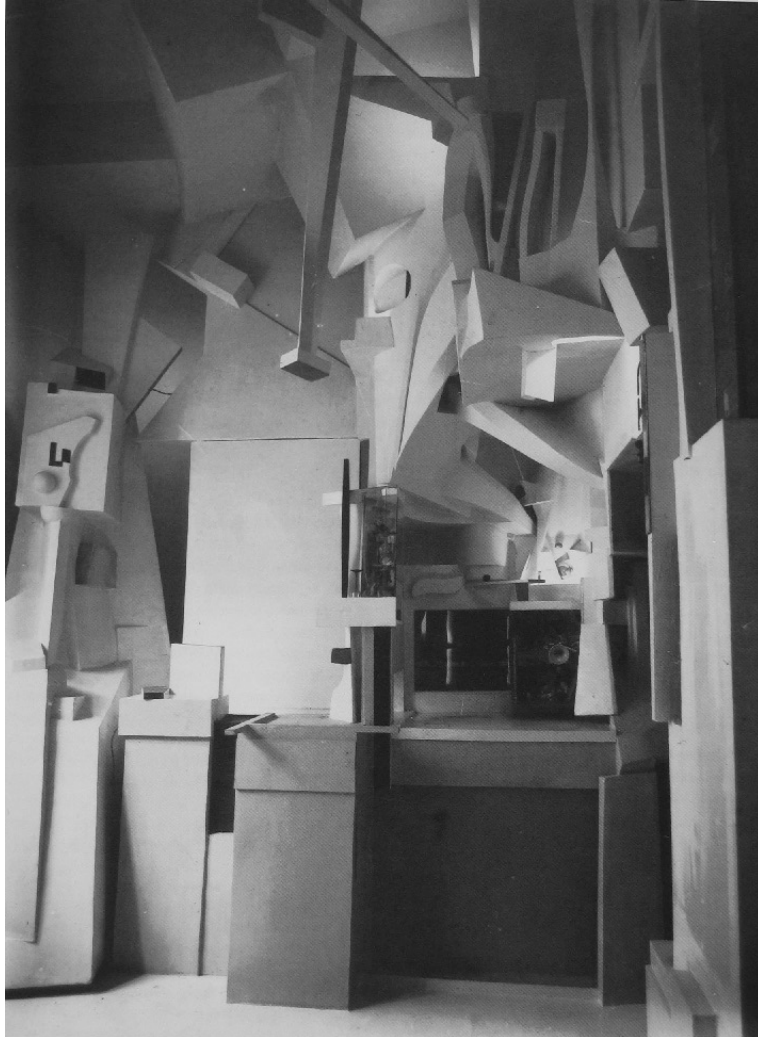
the notion of verticality and horizontality. As he explains, the intervention created a “reflective surface” which dismantles any notion of above and below, left and right. On this occasion Matta-Clark makes an extraction in the shape of a cone from two old adjoining buildings on the future site of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. The buildings, as with the rest of the Les Halles district, were being knocked down to make way for an extensive urban regeneration of Paris following on from that done by Haussmann. The Paris Biennial allowed him to work on these buildings before they were demolished. His references, according to Matta-Clark himself, are *Line Describing a Cone* (1975) by Anthony McCall and once again the work of LeWitt.



11

If we compare *Conical Intersect* with two sculptures by Anish Kapoor, *Bulge* (1992) and *Untitled* (1999), we can clearly see the complexity created by Matta-Clark. In these pieces, Kapoor creates two semi-spheres, one indented and the other sticking out. In these semi-spheres the lines form the outline, they delineate a volume. Matta-Clark does something totally different, he constructs from the abstract: it is the absence, the openings which define its spaces. *Conical Intersect* is an open space, without limits, which expands indefinitely. Matta-Clark does not construct having demarcated a space, but rather after having opened it. There are no outlines, only openings. This conception can be related to the spaces in Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri*

<sup>11</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, stills, Paris, 1975



12

(1761) or to Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (Hannover, 1923). In these pieces the eyes follow spaces which are interrupted only to be open up again without ever reaching an end. Schwitters, in this instance, is especially relevant because he also works with waste materials.

Schwitters worked on the *Merzbau* (1923) for years. The piece was built out of the debris, waste, memories, and materials which he continually encountered and then superimposed over others. He thus created spaces which extended indefinitely throughout the apartment and even broke and passed through the ceiling. The surfaces, having thus been covered with objects, were transformed. The superimposed "fragments of day to day waste" generated distinct lines which were modified daily: "I find any old object that I like [...] I take it home with me, I paste it, I stick it, I paint it trying to adjust myself to the rhythm of the overall effect, and one day it turns out that a new direction was taken which went completely or partly over the object's body. At that point things could be seen mounted all over the place, one on top of the other, obstructing each other, in a clear sign of deterioration as unity itself. As this framework extended, valleys, grottos, cavities emerged which took on lives of their own in the bosom of piece. The union over the surfaces of intertwined lines gave birth to sinuous helicoids forms. The ensemble was sprinkled with a system of strictly geometrically designed cubes over completely fragmented folded and loose forms."<sup>10</sup>

By using waste material, both Schwitters and Matta-Clark suggest different ways of transforming our spatial experience, and of taking art out of the museums and bringing it into our daily lives.

Matta-Clark's direct actions in dumps, in the street and on buildings extract a kind of ghost from the abandoned building which reinstates its physical consistency. Through the empty space and the absence of parts of the building he generates an uncomfortable and dialectical situation in order to create a physical and mental space which takes the individual out of his perceptive indifference. Not only the building but also the spectator feels transported by the force of movement which the empty spaces generate. The space has been transformed, it is continual metamorphosis and invites the spectator to do the same.

...I see the work as a special stage in perpetual metamorphosis, a model for the constant action of people both on and within the space that surrounds them.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, Hannover, 1923 (reconstruction).

<sup>13</sup> Kurt Schwitters, *Catalogue of the IVAM Centre Julio González*, 1995, Valencia, p.307.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark, *Interview with Donald Wall*, unpublished version, Gordon Matta-Clark Archive, Weston, date unknown.

For his part, Schwitters generates the space in perpetual metamorphosis with a continuous and direct work in his own workshop, in the theatre, in the press or in poetry. Everyday he transforms objects and discourses which have been fragmented by mercantilism and utilitarianism. The Merzbau reinstates the corporeality of objects, texts and spaces and recovers the creative and interactive capacity between the individual and his reality. Its geometries break all boundaries, fill spaces and re-establish the erotic and corporeal relationship between the individual and space. The artist goes beyond space and works in various ambits, making it impossible to mark the boundaries between painting, sculpture, advertising, architecture, poetry, music or literature. In this way he bombards the commercialist option of first constructing the image so as to then stick it on to reality. Schwitters knows that the fragmentation between image and world, discourse and language, favours manipulation. By manipulating the image and discourse of the commercialist system, he can create a world which benefits himself exclusively.

With Schwitters one returns to the problem mentioned at the start of Matta-Clark's work and the same questions are raised again:

Is it possible to establish a moral judgement, in a dump, about what it is to construct or destroy?

Why is addition, the act of adding something, not considered a process of destruction?

Why does extraction, space disturb us and can lead us to think of destruction?

According to Didi-Huberman, space, that is, the absence of material, is a dialectic process which destabilizes us and leads directly to the experience of death. Matta-Clark's work can teach us that extraction, subtraction, disquiets the art market because you cannot sell empty space or a demolished building. What Matta-Clark's work does is use a space in the way the market develops (that is, the way things are used and thrown away, thrown away without being used, thrown away because something new has come out) to intervene in dumps, abandoned buildings and to question the spatial, the structural and the systems of architectural projects themselves. The artist invites us to question the language, the bodily experience, the temporal experience, the relations between individuals, the tools of architecture: that is, the very same programme of living as something which should be thought of in terms of the social, the aesthetic, the geometric, the political, the economic and the metaphysical, among others.

Both Schwitters and Matta-Clark approach alchemistic thought. They look for

something completely valueless in order to transform it into something which transcends material itself. They believe in the importance of dismantling the alliance between linear time and the idea of the new which does nothing but turn everything into detritus; and in doing this they rescue the bodiliness of spaces. For them the present is infinitely more symbolic and important than the future. The whole of eternity can only be found now and it is here where they intervene. They have found part of this eternity in the dumps ... rejected.

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## **GORDON MATTA-CLARK: DUMPS AND INTERVENTIONS DESTRUCTION?**

**Luiza Tristão de Araújo**

**Luiza Tristão de Araújo**, (Brasília, Brazil, 1968). Architect. PhD on Architecture Projects, E.T.S.A.Barcelona and post-doctoral studies on Contemporary Space and Philosophy in the Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Actually she is developing a research on esthetics practice; she administrates l'Associació d'Art i Cultura S.E.A.S., Barcelona and teaches at the "Extraordinary landscpaes" master, Politecnico di Milano, Italia.