

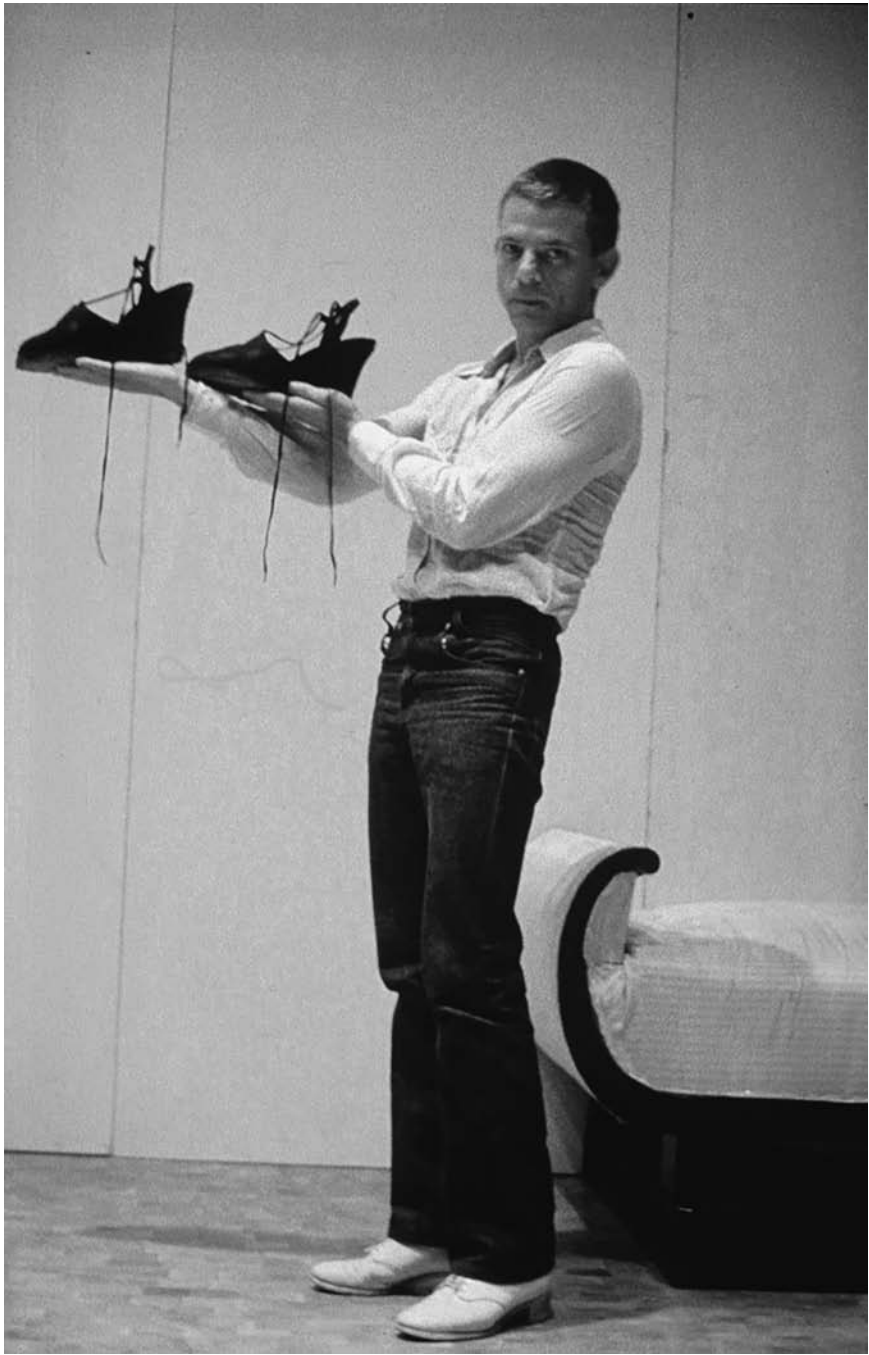
# QUEER BEHAVIOR

Scott Burton and Performance Art

**DAVID J. GETSY**



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Scott Burton, Kassel, June 1977. Photograph © documenta Archiv / Ingrid Fingerling.

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**DAVID J. GETSY**

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After arriving at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005, I returned to my early interest in Burton's work (inspired by the presence of the first *Bronze Chair* in the Art Institute's collection), and began collecting research, which I was fortunate to share with students and colleagues on many occasions. The Goldabelle McComb Finn Distinguished Chair in Art History, which I held for over a decade at SAIC, directly supported the research and publication of this book in its many phases. I sketched the form of the present book during a residency at the Roger Brown House of SAIC, and that very special place (designed by Brown's partner George

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I have been thinking about Burton's work ever since I first encountered the second cast of *Bronze Chair* in the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College as an undergraduate in the early 1990s. For one of the first of the annual "Day Without Art" events commemorating the losses of the ongoing AIDS pandemic, the museum darkened their galleries so no art could be seen that day. The solitary exception was *Bronze Chair*, spotlit in the central courtyard of the museum. I didn't know anything about art or art history then, but I still understood the direct and powerful statement this sculpture made that day. It has taken me a long time to make sense of that experience and to learn about and to come to terms with Burton's complex, erudite, dissembling, and queer work in all its varieties. This book, ultimately, grew from that encounter in which I saw myself in his sculpture's demotic and humble address.



# INTRODUCTION

## Scott Burton's Queer Postminimalism

Late one night in the summer of 1971, Scott Burton rode his bicycle to Donald Judd's loft building on Spring Street in Manhattan and hurled a brick through one of its floor-to-ceiling windows. Burton's close friend Eduardo Costa called the act a "secret art," but for Burton it wasn't art. It was rage: "Me and the rock and Donald Judd's window was pure hatred."<sup>1</sup> Burton's postminimalism drew from that same anger, which was not directed solely at Judd but at Minimalism more broadly. He saw in artists like Judd and Carl Andre a profound hypocrisy between their rhetoric and their actions.<sup>2</sup> As Burton's friend Mac McGinnes recalled, "Scott's hostility was more towards the posturing of Donald Judd."<sup>3</sup> In particular, Judd's acquisition of an entire building in the gentrifying area known as SoHo was, for Burton, a symbol of excess and elitism.<sup>4</sup> "Scott had no tolerance for gentrification," as Costa explained it.<sup>5</sup> McGinnes agreed: Burton's visceral act was generated by the visibility of Judd "sitting there gloating in the midst of his own piece."<sup>6</sup> For Burton, the building was proof of the hollowness of Judd's claims to have rejected received traditions and to have leveled hierarchies. A few years before the window vandalism, Burton had written that Judd's sculpture was a "parody of rationality" and that "sometimes this work even seems to mock us."<sup>7</sup> Judd and others who had been grouped together (however reductively) as "Minimalists" had asserted cold rationality as equitable and open, but Burton saw it as authoritarian and closed.

The exclusiveness Burton disliked in many Minimalists was found not just in the dogma of their formal convictions but also in their performed masculine and heterosexual identities.<sup>8</sup> They had claimed to want to remove the presence of the artist, but in their work—and in their participation in the New York art world—they asserted their experience and their

perspective as universal. This left little room for women, artists of color, or openly lesbian or gay artists like Burton.<sup>9</sup> As many argued at the time and after, the neutrality and lack of historical indebtedness claimed by some Minimalists were often tied up in a rhetoric of power and masculinity.<sup>10</sup> Burton recognized this dominance for what it was, and he sought to undermine it. He turned to performance art; he made work that was explicitly about queer sexual cultures; and he lampooned the macho posturing of Minimalist artists like Andre. For Burton, what was needed after Minimalism was a departure from its exclusions, imposed universals, and hierarchies of gender and sexuality.

At the same time, Burton did not wholly reject the ideas that were associated with Minimalism and its moment. Since the mid-1960s he had been an art critic participating in debates about minimal art and its alternatives. When he started making art in 1969, he pursued central questions that Minimalism raised. He believed that art should embrace fully the radical idea that he saw as its greatest promise: that of the shift from the artist to viewer. He aligned himself with artists who sought to question the universal rather than coldly illustrate it, as he thought Judd did. These artists, who would soon be labeled “postminimalists,” included a contingent of important women artists (such as Lynda Benglis, Hannah Wilke, and Jackie Winsor) who similarly rejected Minimalism’s masculinist universalisms and sought to find a place for difference. Burton identified with this version of the postminimal and with their critical voices. Performance became a way to reconsider the relationship between artist and viewer and, more importantly, to thematize the queer experiences that informed his perspective (and that made him inadmissible in many circles of the New York art world).

It is easily forgotten how few openly lesbian or gay artists there were in the 1970s New York art world, despite the emergence of the gay liberation movement during the decade.<sup>11</sup> As Michael Auping (the curator of Burton’s final performance) reminded me in a conversation, “Scott’s dealing with gay issues was so radical in the 1970s.”<sup>12</sup> There were plenty of lesbian and gay artists in the New York art world, but few made work overtly *about* their queer experience, and even fewer were allowed to exhibit it in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Burton understood this terrain and made queer performances that infiltrated sanctioned spaces such as the Whitney and Guggenheim Museums. But he also increasingly made work that left no doubt about its queer themes, as when he exhibited a work in 1975 that fantasized about fisting artistic competitor and erstwhile Minimalist Robert Morris “up to the elbow,” as I discuss in chapter 4.

Burton advocated for lesbian and gay artists, and in the mid-1970s he

attempted to organize one of the first compendia of their history (see chapter 4). He drew support from other gay men in his circle of artists and critics, such as Costa, John Perreault, and Robert Pincus-Witten. Of equal importance, however, was the inspiration Burton drew from feminism and the seismic shift it was enacting in the 1970s New York art world. In a 1980 interview, Burton remarked about the conditions of the 1970s: “There are a number of gay dealers and curators and museum directors and a number of gay artists, but absolutely nothing equivalent in the art world—in relation to gay liberation—of the feminist movement which has had a tremendous impact on contemporary art. It changed everything, in the 1970s and all for the better. It was so healthy.”<sup>14</sup> His feminist friends such as Jane Kaufman, Marjorie Strider, Sylvia Sleigh, Wilke, and Linda Nochlin all provided models for how to value difference and critique structural inequities. At a moment when artists were not allowed to foreground queer experience or desire (or were not taken seriously if they did), Burton looked to (and supported) the work of feminism and its denunciation of exclusion. Consequently, his story offers a link between the art histories of feminism and those of gay male artists, often assumed to be unrelated. For Burton, both were allied in their fight against hierarchies and biases operative in the art world—and in society at large.

Burton saw promise in postminimalism—a term coined by Pincus-Witten—as an open project, initiated by temporality, the lived body, and above all the capacity for differences and variability. These elements resonated strongly with his own experiences in an art world that still expected and enforced the silence of gays and lesbians. Burton developed tactics of infiltration and confrontation as means to undermine the art world’s omissions, gendered hierarchies, and sexual normativities. More than that, he began to envision a utopian mode of artistic practice that would not just embrace differences among viewers but, more precisely, reject art’s elitism and be approachable across class lines. As he would write in 1974, he sought a new conception of art that would “relate to more than a small part of the rest of the people” and have a “vital relation to the energies—expressed or frustrated—of the whole culture. Only if we do so can we serve the better of those people and energies.”<sup>15</sup>

This book charts the untold story of Burton’s art in the 1970s. In the multiple practices he developed in this decade, his central concern was *behavior*. Burton sought to catalyze behaviors and the viewer’s self-awareness of them through performances, editorial projects, and objects. For him, behavior was inculcated; it had expectations, deeper meanings, and rules. It could also be subverted or hijacked, and he took his own queer experience as the starting point for understanding how to propose a mode of



resistance to the expectations of how we are told to behave. Burton pursued these ideas through multiple modes. Some of his performances went undercover to question accounts of the “normal,” while others would be bombastic and explicit about their queer themes. He created works that referenced fisting, dildos, and bathhouses even as he was making arch performances that taxed their viewers by withholding narrative and psychology. Concurrently, he began making sculptures of furniture that prioritized dissemblance, submission, and use.

My argument is that Burton’s art took his queer experiences as core resources. In particular, he looked to street cruising, exploring the ways in which coded communication could occur in public spaces underneath the gaze of the unwitting. The activity of cruising blurs class distinctions (however temporarily) and affords opportunities for new contacts, communities, and solidarities. Burton studied this activity seriously, and he turned to behavioral psychology and anthropological studies of nonverbal communication to better understand how acts and actors could have very different meanings to those who knew how to look. Ultimately, this research into cruising would be what he transposed from performance to sculpture as he began to make functional sculptures that were open to all, hiding in plain sight as benches, tables, and chairs. As I will argue throughout, any account of Burton’s work that denies the centrality of queer themes is not just impoverished—it has been duped by the camouflage that he wryly deployed. Those practices of infiltration *were* the content of his work, and he learned about their complexity from the tactics of survival and pleasure involved in navigating public streets queerly in the 1970s.

I believe the story of Burton’s first decade as an artist is important because it revises and expands our received histories of art of the 1970s, complicating accounts of Minimalism, postminimalism, performance art, and queer art. Burton modeled a distinct mode of performance in which queer experience was a key framework, and he did this in dialogue with sculpture theory and in contrast to other forms of performance art that privileged the artist-as-performer. He presented major performances at the Whitney, documenta, and the Guggenheim (which, in 1976, represented the museum’s most extensive commitment to live art with a six-week run of performances). Consequently, his works were among the more widely seen performance artworks of 1970s New York. Received histories have registered neither this visibility nor the queer content of much of Burton’s work in the decade. When Burton’s performances have been discussed, by and large the complexity of their durational and relational experiences have become reduced to single, static images that tell little about the events. One of the aims of this book is to redress this situation by recon-

structuring the history and themes of Burton's performance practice. Using firsthand accounts and oral history interviews with performers, attendees, and curators, I provide a more replete analysis of the experiences of these works and Burton's ambitions for them. However, this book is not strictly about the kinds of live art normally considered under the heading of "performance art," and I (like Burton) pursue the ways that performance can capaciously enfold sculptures, pictures, objects, spaces, and audiences into scenes of behavioral negotiation.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will lay out the foundations for Burton's work of the 1970s in six sections. First, I will provide a biographical account of Burton up to the 1970s. This detailed history is necessary because it has not been fully narrated elsewhere, and because his work of the 1970s is indebted to influences and networks that shaped him in the decades before he began making art in 1969. Second, I will briefly examine Burton's art criticism of the 1960s, focusing on its engagement with central debates around Minimalism and theatricality. Third, I discuss post-minimalism and the ways that it was employed by artists who embraced difference—as with Burton's alignment with women artists and feminism in these years. With these foundations established, I will then turn to what I see as the primary resource for his multivalent work of the 1970s—street cruising. The sexual, erotic, and social elements of cruising underwrote the central concerns for his artistic practice and its focus on behavior and public space. Fifth, I then turn to a discussion of my usage of "queer" in this book as a way to understand the range of Burton's performances and artworks, from the confrontational to the infiltrating. I conclude with a discussion of the ways in which Burton's queer work has become obscured from view in its reception.

Rather than an account of an artist making work *about* their identity, this book is about how Burton made work *from* his experience. His aim was not only to bring to light themes that had been excluded from cultural representation but also to develop from queer experience a more wide-ranging reevaluation of art's role and potential. Burton's significance lies in how he made work that cultivated its forms and priorities from queer content and queer methods with the ultimate aim of being demotic, approachable, and—he hoped—open to all.

### **Detours and Mentors: Burton's Path through the 1950s and 1960s**

Burton's artistic career started when he was thirty, in 1969, after being an art critic and a (less well received) playwright. His earlier life—and espe-

cially the years leading up to his turn to making art—are important to understanding why he came to performance and why he chose queer experience as its terrain. Both choices were based in his confrontation with bias and exclusion as a youth, his teenage tutelage by modernist artists and poets, and his education in important gay artistic and literary circles of 1960s New York.

Burton was born on 23 June 1939 in Greensboro, Alabama, and spent his youth in the town of Eutaw (at the time, population three thousand). His mother, Hortense Mobley Burton, had largely been on her own since Burton was an infant. He was born prematurely, undersized, and with many health problems, but he rebounded to become precocious, intense, and intelligent. When Burton was twelve, his mother decided to move closer to her brother, Radford Mobley, in Washington, DC, to give her son more opportunities.<sup>16</sup> Radford was a journalist and bureau chief for the Washington office of the Knight newspaper chain, and he supported the family in adapting to the capital.<sup>17</sup> Burton attended public school, while Hortense worked as a typist and later as an administrative assistant for the Democratic National Committee. They struggled throughout his teen years, but Hortense later worked her way to a job in the White House, where she ran the social correspondence department for First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy (and for her successor, Lady Bird Johnson, before leaving to work in the Division of Protocol at the State Department). Until her death in 1982, Hortense was a central person in Burton's life. The painter John Button, who was Burton's long-term partner throughout much of the 1960s, wrote: "Hortense always had the intelligence to sense that whatever strange mutations Scott went through, he was developing. She never complained about his weird contacts, or his homosexuality . . . which she is surely aware of. She only was concerned that he be successful."<sup>18</sup> In the same letter, Button remarked that Hortense's devotion was even more remarkable because of the young age at which Burton announced his sexuality: "Scott came-out at 12."

Despite Hortense's support, Burton's sexuality meant that he was often ostracized (including from the rest of his family). His youth was "intensely difficult," as he recalled, adding, "I had a very unhappy childhood."<sup>19</sup> Throughout his life he felt like an outsider. Being an only child to a single mother contributed to his sense of being different. His feelings of alienation would, as I will discuss, contribute to the loosely autobiographical references he laced throughout his performances and his early furniture sculptures.<sup>20</sup>

He also became sensitized to class differences as a child, and for him this was exemplified in design and furniture. He first encountered modern

design in the homes of his wealthier schoolmates in DC, and this fostered a deep awareness of how design signified.<sup>21</sup> Burton would go on to develop a vast knowledge of design history with a particular interest in the vernacular styles among modernism's roots. His later anti-elitist priorities for public art were grounded in his early experiences of how class determined the ways that people behaved with one another. He became cognizant of how the categorizations of class and sexuality were connoted and how those signals could be adopted and manipulated. He strove to remove traces of his Alabama upbringing from his accent, and he worked hard to advance his education. His lifelong interests in infiltration, dissemblance, and camouflage have their origins in his teenage years when he learned an array of survival tactics. Years later, Pincus-Witten would sum up Burton's motivations by telling me in an interview that a key thing to remember about Burton was that he had an "underdog complex."<sup>22</sup>

Burton's critical awareness of class stratification was interwoven with his rejection of the racism of his birthplace in the Deep South. His mother's choice to move away from rural Alabama came from a desire to distance her son from that milieu—even if they relocated to a still-segregated DC. When Burton was eighteen, he made his first trip back to Alabama after many years in order to attend his absent father's funeral. The homecoming ignited his memories of the South's unapologetic racism, and he wrote to his mentor, the painter Leon Berkowitz, "I feel very existentially guilty about something. The race problem—it is awful, really bad—and you can only feel this. I do not know any constructive step to take—can't put my feeling to use."<sup>23</sup> Burton, as an adult, would later remark, "In some way, of course, I'm a Southerner, but I don't identify with it. I hate it there. I hate the racist, classist society that it is."<sup>24</sup> However, Burton rarely addressed race directly in his work (with a few conflicted exceptions that I discuss later in the book), and he remained largely tacit on the topic. Like many in his circles, he generally left his own whiteness and its privileges uninterrogated, meaning that his antiracism, while sincere, was circumscribed by this limited view and failure of self-criticism. Nevertheless, from the accounts of Burton's attitudes I have heard from friends, his rejection of discrimination was deeply felt and consistent. For instance, in 1974, his friend Costa wrote a thesis entitled "Racial Conflict in Recent Poetry from the US: Analysis from a Third World Perspective" and singled out Burton in his prefatory remarks. Costa cited Burton as an example of an alternative view to prevailing racist attitudes in the United States: "As I talked with [Burton], I got the impression for the first time that there were North Americans opposed to racism and conscious of the interminable social illness that is the result of this kind of thinking."<sup>25</sup>

Burton began to develop his critical attitudes toward sexuality, race, gender, and class in his teen years. In response to the move to Washington and the new opportunities and demands it presented, Burton threw himself into the study of literature and art. He cultivated relationships with adults to mentor him, and he developed a sense of independence and precocious purpose. Of crucial importance during this time were Berkowitz and his wife, Ida Fox. Berkowitz was associated with the Washington Color School painters, and he would later be chair of the painting department at the Corcoran School of Art throughout the 1970s and 1980s; Fox was a poet. The couple offered Burton an introduction to contemporary conversations about art and literature. Together, Berkowitz and Fox had established the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts in 1945, and Fox was its director from 1947 to 1955. Until it closed in 1956, the center was a hub for Washington artists as well as a conduit for ideas and art from New York City. A loner, Burton had been spending time in the Phillips Collection and the National Gallery looking at modern art (in particular Paul Klee), and this interest in art prompted him to ask his mother if he could take classes at the center. His first class was with Morris Louis.<sup>26</sup> While he did not meet Berkowitz at that time, the painter later became Burton's high school art teacher.

Berkowitz and Fox became surrogate parents to Burton, with the blessing of Hortense. He spent much time with them. He began writing poetry with Fox's encouragement, and she and Burton regularly read each other's work. Fox was particularly interested in thinking about how poetry could evoke painting, and she wrote a series of poems in response to individual works of art (something the teenage Burton also undertook). Berkowitz was then allied with conversations around Abstract Expressionism (it would only be in the 1970s that he would develop the color field works that are considered characteristic). He provided firsthand accounts of the work of contemporary painters and introduced Burton to the artists and critics who came through DC.

Berkowitz also helped arrange for Burton to go to Provincetown, Massachusetts, to study painting with Hans Hofmann for three summers, starting in 1957. Provincetown was important for Burton; he found his independence there. While the town was not yet as openly a locus of gay visibility as it is now, it was already burgeoning as such. Burton recalled, "Hofmann was a very important teacher, and I was one of his last students. I learned something from Hofmann about art, but I learned a great deal more from Provincetown about life—and about art."<sup>27</sup>

Burton went to college in 1957, first attending Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. Goddard was an experimental school based on the ideas

of John Dewey and was considered one of the most progressive colleges in the country at the time. The open curriculum at Goddard expanded his knowledge of literature. In particular, he sought out expressions of queer experience, and he devoured André Gide's writings.<sup>28</sup> Burton lasted only two years at Goddard; he found it too small. He returned to DC and took a few classes at George Washington University. He sent some poems to Lionel Trilling at Columbia University, who "insisted that Scott be admitted at once, and on scholarship," as Burton proudly recalled.<sup>29</sup> Before going to New York he spent one intensive summer in 1959 at the Harvard Summer School studying literature. Burton started at Columbia in the autumn of 1959, and he would graduate magna cum laude in 1962. There, he became close friends with his classmate Terrence McNally and, through him, Edward Albee, McNally's partner.<sup>30</sup>

This restless college period is also when Burton established his first important romantic partnership. When he was eighteen in 1957, he met the choreographer Jerome Robbins. (I have not been able to learn how they met.) Conscious of but not deterred by the twenty-one-year age difference, they cautiously embarked on a long-distance relationship. (Fig. 0.1 is a photograph of Burton taken by Robbins near the latter's home in Water Mill, Long Island.) They saw each other infrequently because of Robbins's many tours and the time he spent in Hollywood working on films.<sup>31</sup> However, by the summer of 1961 they were living together, if briefly. Burton's intense mentorships with older artists Fox, Berkowitz, and Hofmann, and now his relationship with Robbins all provided a framework through which he learned current ideas and also gained entrée into the social networks of art and literature. These relationships were ways for Burton to overcome what he saw as his humble beginnings and queer outsidership.

Burton's relationship with Robbins ended when, in the autumn of 1961, Burton met John Button, who would be his partner for the next seven years.<sup>32</sup> Button was a decade older than Burton and was close with Frank O'Hara and other members of the New York School of poets. Burton became a part of the circle that also included Alvin Novak, Virgil Thomson, and Joseph LeSueur.<sup>33</sup> Through Button, Burton would come to know Lincoln Kirstein, Edwin Denby, John Ashbery, Fairfield Porter, Alex Katz, Philip Pearlstein, Sylvia Sleigh, Robert Rosenblum, and many other artists and writers, some of whom became lifelong friends. Button himself had come from San Francisco, and he introduced Burton to the West Coast poets and artists, most notably (and contentiously) Jack Spicer.<sup>34</sup>

As Button's partner, Burton entered this world just as he was completing his undergraduate degree at Columbia. In a 1961 letter to his friend



**Figure 0.1.** Jerome Robbins, *Scott Burton Standing near the Dock at Jerome Robbins's Home in Water Mill, Long Island, 1961*. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. © The Robbins Rights Trust.

Gerald Fabian, Button described Burton, saying, “he is one of the famous beauties of New York, and fantastically bright too. . . . He is so thoughtful, loving, brilliant, young, full of the most sophisticated charm.” He also explained that Burton had just moved in and that “I guess we can’t rely on Jerry Robbins for an elaborate wedding gift though.”<sup>35</sup>

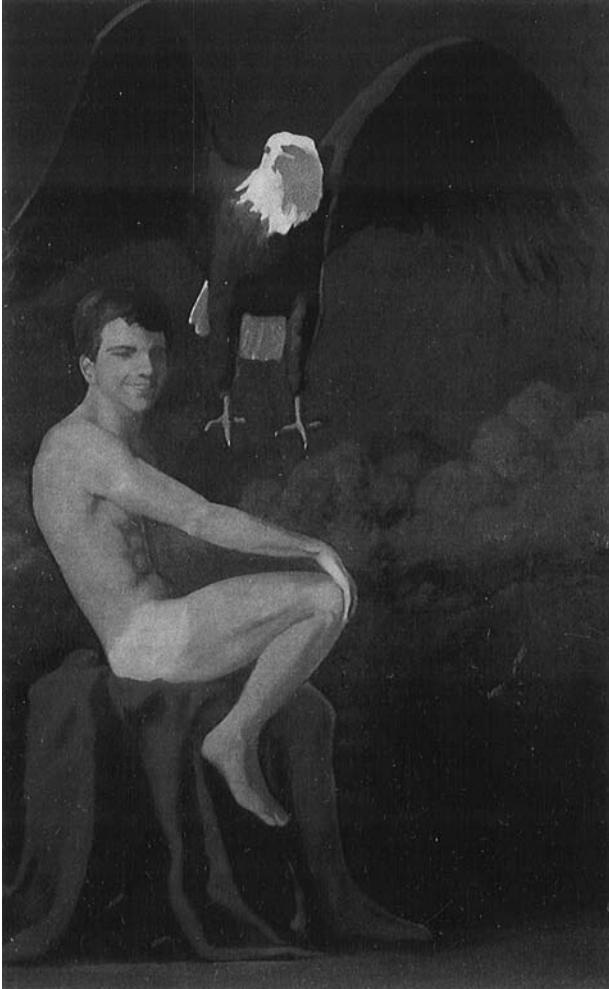
Some of Button’s peers viewed Burton with skepticism.<sup>36</sup> O’Hara’s friend and roommate, Joe LeSueur, remembered the young Burton as “pouty, pint-sized, urchinlike, boyishly attractive Scott” and commented on his “snotty arrogance.”<sup>37</sup> LeSueur’s dismissal of this southern, handsome, boyish-looking writer in his early twenties was shared by others who also sought to discount Burton. All this fueled Burton’s sense of not fitting in, and he began to suspect these circles for their elitism and cliquishness. At the same time, his partner, Button, had an uncompromising and open attitude toward being gay (more so than many of the poets), and this reinforced in Burton the importance of being out. (Button would eventually make, with Mario Dubsky, the ambitious murals for the headquarters of the Gay Activists Alliance headquarters in a decommissioned firehouse on Wooster Street.)

In the 1960s, Burton's ambition was to be a writer. "I spent almost ten years of my life in that detour," he would later recall.<sup>38</sup> After Columbia, he went on for a master's degree in English at New York University in 1963, supported by a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to study dramatic literature. He wrote a number of plays and worked at various jobs, including at the bookstore at the Museum of Modern Art starting in 1963 and the museum's reception desk through to 1967.<sup>39</sup> He also worked as a reader for the notable New York literary agency Sterling Lord from 1964 to 1965. But his focus remained on writing plays, on topics from the conservation of landmarks to emotional struggles of high school students.<sup>40</sup> One of his main projects was a play titled *The Eagle and the Lamb*, based on the Ganymede myth. (He and Burton shared an enthusiasm for the story, evidenced by Burton's heroic portrait of Burton as Ganymede; fig. 0.2.) Few of these plays gained any traction, with the notable exception of his play *Saint George*, which Lincoln Kirstein commissioned for the Shakespeare Memorial Theater in Stratford, Connecticut, in 1964.<sup>41</sup>

Burton's major work of the mid-1960s was the libretto for an experimental ballet created for an Aaron Copland composition staged by the New York City Ballet in 1965. *Shadow'd Ground* was based on Copland's *Dance Panels* (composed in 1959 and revised in 1962). It premiered on 21 January 1965 with choreography by John Taras; Burton had a direct hand in the staging of the ballet. As he relayed in 1975, "I was hired to think up a story that could be danced; also I had to choose 140 images to be projected as décor for the thing. It was the first entrance of story without words into my life, and it changed everything."<sup>42</sup> Burton made the unorthodox suggestion that four screens be installed behind and above the dancers. Onto these screens were projected images such as church cemeteries, a stream with rowboats, a nineteenth-century portrait, and scenes of a relationship between a woman and man. Epitaphs (that Burton wrote) were also projected onto the screens. This multimedia staging of the ballet was not received well.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, this was the first manifestation of Burton's interest in successive still images—a practice that would return in the tableaux he used in his performance art of the 1970s.

Through his connections in the New York School, Burton began writing reviews for *ARTnews* in 1965. At this time, many poets populated the pages of *ARTnews* as critics, and O'Hara, Ashbery, and Barbara Guest were regular contributors.<sup>44</sup> At first he wrote unsigned capsule reviews for the magazine, but soon the editor, Thomas Hess, entrusted him with his first feature-length article, on Tony Smith.<sup>45</sup> Burton built his reputation as an art critic (and occasional curator) through the late 1960s. He wrote not just for *ARTnews* but for major exhibitions, including the introduction he contributed





**Figure 0.2.** John Button, *Scott as Ganymede*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 83.5 × 52 in. Collection of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. Gift of Alvin Novak. © The John Button Estate.

to the catalog for Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969.<sup>46</sup> Rejecting the balkanization of the New York art world, Burton wrote about conceptual and minimal art while also curating exhibitions of realism and figurative painting.<sup>47</sup> By the early 1970s, he had secured a strong enough reputation as an art writer for his friend Sylvia Sleigh to include him alongside other art critics such as Lawrence Alloway and Carter Ratcliff in her important feminist painting *The Turkish Bath* (1973; fig. 0.3). In 1972, he became an assistant editor at *ARTnews*, then a senior editor for *Art in America* from 1974 to 1976.<sup>48</sup> While he did not write for *Art in America*, he helped steer the magazine's content during his tenure.<sup>49</sup>

In the late 1960s, however, he could not support himself through writ-

ing alone, and he had to work other jobs. In 1967, after leaving his post in the Museum of Modern Art lobby, he began teaching English literature at the School of Visual Arts, staying until 1972. He even coedited a textbook for art students.<sup>50</sup> He worked as a stage manager and, for a time, copy-edited pornographic fiction for a specialty publishing house.

Burton's financial precariousness was heightened in 1968 when Button ended their relationship. The catalyst was an affair Button had begun with Karl Bowen, an undergraduate at Cornell University (where Button had been teaching); Bowen was a nephew of gallerist Martha Jackson and heir to the Kellogg family fortune. The breakup with Button pushed Burton to cultivate new friendships through his art criticism. He became even more suspicious of the patrician presumptions of his earlier social circles, and his anti-elitist sentiments became galvanized. He began to make new connections with peers in the art world closer to his own age, including



**Figure 0.3.** Sylvia Sleigh, *The Turkish Bath*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 76 × 102 × 2 in. (193 × 259.1 × 5.1 cm). David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago. Purchase, Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2000.104. Photograph © 2021, David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago.

Costa, Kaufman, Strider, Wilke, Steve Gianakos, John Perreault, Joe Brainard, Eva Hesse, Judith Shea, and Lucy Lippard.<sup>51</sup> Burton met his friend Mac McGinnes in 1968 when McGinnes was working as a preparator at Fischbach Gallery.<sup>52</sup> (He installed their mutual friend Hesse's show there, but his subsequent career was in theater.) In contrast with how LeSueur had described him a few years earlier, McGinnes noted, "Scott was never a pretentious person."<sup>53</sup> Now, without the more artistically conservative Button at his side, Burton also found new professional relationships with experimental poets and artists such as Bernadette Mayer, Hannah Weiner, and Vito Acconci.

The compulsion to make a new life on his own transformed Burton's outlook, and his shift to making art in 1969 resulted directly from the new horizons and liberties. Soon after Button broke it off with Burton, the former assuaged his guilt by explaining to his friend Fabian that it would be good for Burton: "But his problem is in finding his *own* life-style rather than having one thrust upon him by me or Jerry Robbins. He had a desire with *both* of us to swallow *whole our* style. *Now* he's on his *own*. This probably frightens him. But I feel sure that he *will* find a way. I just hope it doesn't prove too freakish."<sup>54</sup> "Freakish" was how Button referred to Burton's participation in leather and BDSM, which had grown after Burton became single. These communities would become important to his social and sexual life throughout the 1970s. In a letter from November 1968, Button remarked that "Scott, alas, has gone into a peculiar phase. He wears black leather—head to foot."<sup>55</sup> For all his adventurousness, the older Button was skeptical of the more open culture of sexuality emerging in late 1960s New York. He directed this judgment toward Burton's new life and "the whole cruising-mystique, and a certain allurements from being an art critic (every young artist is anxious to 'get-in-with' young critics)."<sup>56</sup>

Burton was also inspired by the major cultural shift marked by the Stonewall uprising, a two-night protest sparked by defiance to police harassment. Fueled by the new political movement, Burton came to adopt a more public, political, and often confrontational stance regarding what came to be known as "Gay Power," soon after Stonewall.<sup>57</sup> Burton was not at the explosive first evening of the Stonewall riots, but he and McGinnes witnessed its aftermath later that night. "There were these yellow school buses with 'riot squad' written on them," McGinnes recalled. They returned for the next night of protests, and he remembered that these events prompted them both to become politically active: "Everybody did. It was something you did."<sup>58</sup> Already out, Burton became more outspoken. As his friend Jane Kaufman recalled about its effect on him, "he did a lot of work for gay rights."<sup>59</sup>

Burton would emerge in the mid-1970s as one of the few conceptually oriented artists in New York doing work that was explicitly about queer themes. His increasing boldness had its roots in his decade-long immersion in—and later differentiation from—the more discreet gay artistic and literary circles of the 1960s.

### **“Far from the Kind of Art That Declines to Speak”: Burton Writing With and Against Minimalism and Theatricality**

The transitional years in Burton's life in the late 1960s coincided with his increasingly visible profile as an art critic. His attitudes about art were catholic in contrast to the border scuffles and dogmatism that characterized art criticism in the 1960s, and he sought to make connections between artists who had been placed in different camps. In the collection of Burton's writings from 1965 to 1975 that I edited, I went into detail about the terms of his art criticism; I will not recount that analysis here except to say that Burton was interested in emotive responses, in the shared temporality experienced by viewers and by art objects, and in the cultivation of viewers' particularities in their engagements.<sup>60</sup> One statement of Burton's is worth repeating here. In a February 1968 article on painter Ralph Humphrey, Burton praised artists such as Agnes Martin, Al Held, and Tony Smith (the latter being one of the major influences on his thinking) as “abstract allusionists,” saying that each, in their own way, was “dealing essentially in affect rather than idea.”<sup>61</sup> Burton argued that such emotional engagements with geometric abstraction were “fundamentally counter to the methodical cerebrations of, for example, Judd or Noland.”<sup>62</sup> Burton believed in work that opened itself to the “subjective,” and he saw such appeal to feelings and affects as making more room for viewers' differences.<sup>63</sup>

Burton developed these ideas through his writings on Tony Smith. He argued for Smith's importance, and he differentiated Smith's work from what was coming to be known as Minimalism. In 1967, for instance, he would argue that Smith's 1962 *Die* (which both presaged Minimalism and was taken up in the literature as one of its primary examples) should be understood as emotional in contradistinction to the “cerebrations” of the other artists with whom he was frequently grouped (fig. 0.4). Burton wrote in 1967, “*Die* has such a presence, is so Expressionist in its aggression—in the way it acts on its surroundings, including people—that *it seems far from the kind of art that declines to speak*. It demands and provokes affective response.”<sup>64</sup> In advocating for Smith's uniqueness, Burton came to have a deep knowledge of Minimalist ideas in addition to developing a critical



**Figure 0.4.** Tony Smith, *Die*, 1962 (fabricated 1968). Steel with oiled finish, 182.9 × 182.9 × 182.9 cm (72 × 72 × 72 in.). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Gift of the Collectors Committee 2003.77.1. © Estate of Tony Smith / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

view of some of the main protagonists. He focused more on writing about artists who complicated, chafed against, and extracted some of the tenets of what would come to be called “Minimalism.”

“Minimalism” here (and throughout this book) is used with precision to refer to the art-historical category that emerged in the 1960s to describe sculpture that relied on a radical suppression of representation. This abstraction was characterized by a compression of artworks’ formal dynamics to geometrically simple, singular units, either alone or nonhierarchically and serially related. It was immediately apparent that the category of Minimalism failed to adequately convey the divergences of its main protagonists such as Judd, Andre, Morris, and Sol LeWitt. Nevertheless, the term gained credence by the late 1960s.<sup>65</sup> A constellation of concepts and practices gathered around the term, giving it a life above and beyond the artworks taken as its illustrations. “Minimalism,” in my usage, should be understood not as a group identity but rather as an uneasy consensus about the effects of these artists’ tactics. It was the idea of Minimalism,

in other words, to which many postminimal artists would soon set themselves in relation.

One of the central concerns of many artists associated with Minimalism was the relationship of the artist to their objects. Systems, mathematical formulas, geometries, and serial repetition came to the fore, supplanting the traditional emphases on evidentiary marks of the artist's creation and on the privileging of the art object's uniqueness. Instead, artists embraced industrial materials, premade or fabricated components, and regularized units. The Minimalist object was seen as shifting emphasis from the artist as sole source of meaning to the situational encounter between the object and its viewer. One could say that Minimalism attempted to bore viewers into paying attention to the shared space of the gallery and to their own process of perceiving.<sup>66</sup> That is, viewers encountering such works in the gallery or museum were to find their own copresence with the object spatially and perceptually activated. As Hal Foster explained, the "fundamental reorientation that Minimalism inaugurates" lies in this emphasis on the viewer's relationship with the sculptural object in the space of the gallery: "With minimalism sculpture no longer stands apart, on a pedestal or as pure art, but is repositioned among objects and redefined in terms of place. In this transformation the viewer, refused the safe, sovereign space of formal art, is cast back on the here and now; and rather than scan the surface of a work for a topographical mapping of the properties of its medium, he or she is prompted to explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site."<sup>67</sup> It was this "prompting" that Burton would seize upon when developing his own artistic practice. This shift of emphasis from the autographic mark of the artist to the relational experience of the viewer was the promise of Minimalism for Burton: here were the seeds of a more open, demotic form of artistic practice. Burton would later explain, "Judd's work is an extension of the pure side of modernism. My work is also an extension of modernism but I want to take it into a less pure condition, a more social or behavioral condition that doesn't exist in a vacuum."<sup>68</sup>

Burton's writing about these topics also developed in direct response to Michael Fried's famous attack on Minimalism (and, in particular, on Smith) in the 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood."<sup>69</sup> Because of his work in theater and dance, Burton came to disagree with the critic's assault on Minimalism, which Fried derided as "theatrical."<sup>70</sup> It became Burton's aim to counter Fried's infamous claim that "the literal espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theater, and theater is now the negation of art."<sup>71</sup> By contrast, Burton valorized this term

of denigration used by Fried, turning theatricality into a positive trait. In the opening paragraph of a 1969 article on temporality and art, Burton included a retort to Fried: “The main inaccuracy of the ‘formalist’ criticism which calls much recent art ‘theatrical’ is in the conservative assumption that the adjective is pejorative.”<sup>72</sup>

Fried’s central claim was that literalism (his term for Minimalism) made sculpture reliant on the viewer’s encounter with it. For him, these sculptures performed “a kind of *stage* presence. It is a function not just of the obtrusiveness and, often, even aggressiveness of literalist work, but of the special complicity that that work extorts from the viewer.”<sup>73</sup> Such observations would later prove important to Burton, even though he ardently rejected Fried’s value judgments. He drew on Fried’s characterization of Minimalism’s combative aloofness even as he sought to argue against the writer’s assaults on theater and on Smith. As he wrote in 1967, “Fried is accurate in his perception but shaky in his judgment.”<sup>74</sup> Burton copied into his notes passages he wanted to combat, and he began to think about ways in which theater could, in fact, be a resource for developing a post-minimalist practice.

For Fried, the theatrical work was both dependent on and desirous of the viewer. He declared, “Someone has merely to enter the room in which a literalist work has been placed to *become* that beholder, that audience of one—almost as though the work in question has been *waiting for* him. And inasmuch as literalist work *depends on* the beholder, is *incomplete* without him, it *has* been [waiting for him]. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone—which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him.”<sup>75</sup> Fried’s characterization of the relationship between active and passive in this text is tortured and telling. For him, the active viewer is made subordinate to (and solicited by) the passive object that waits. The beholder, in Fried’s terms, is cast as an object of desire for the sculpture, the *raison d’être* of which is to produce a relation. In other words, in saying that Minimalist sculptures were theatrical because they were “waiting,” Fried cast them as needful and “incomplete.” Just as the actor requires an audience, Fried implied, the literalist object seeks the beholder’s attention. As he also said in that essay, “In fact, being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest, entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another *person*; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly—for example in somewhat darkened rooms—can be strongly, if momentarily, disquieting in just this way.”<sup>76</sup> This description of the loitering sculpture and the beholder who finds themselves the object of unwanted desire reads as a confrontation between solicitation and its demurral.<sup>77</sup> I find an analogy

for Fried's description of encountering a Minimalist sculpture that "refuses, obstinately, to let him alone" in the dynamics of loitering, cruising, and unwanted attention, and I believe Burton would have also perceived such connections (culminating in his own sculptures that wait to offer themselves to passersby). After all, Fried's account elides the theatrical with perversion, dissemblance, inauthenticity, artificiality, and attention seeking—all traits negatively associated with homosexuals at the time. Such an equation of the theater with homosexuality was common, and this stereotype widely circulated. It was a means to manage cultural phobias of homosexuals appearing "normal" and predatorily hiding in plain sight.<sup>78</sup>

As Christa Noel Robbins has discussed, such associations of theatricality with homosexuality (be it in the form of the cruiser or the actor) were constitutive of Fried's thinking around the issues of "Art and Objecthood."<sup>79</sup> In a letter to his editor, Philip Leider, Fried described an early draft of the essay as being a demonstration of how literalist art's "corrupt sensibility is *par excellence* faggot sensibility."<sup>80</sup> While this phrase never made it into the final text, Burton—like many generations of readers after him—registered the ways in which Fried's snide dismissal of theater and his declarations of the soliciting passivity of literalism echoed suspicions about queer cultures. Robbins has compellingly argued that "Fried understood minimalism's 'perversions' to arise out of its pandering address to individual viewers."<sup>81</sup> Fried's issue was precisely with the "perversion" of *seeing the same things differently*. As he warned in the essay, the danger lay in "the same [modernist] developments *seen differently*, that is, in theatrical terms, by a sensibility *already* theatrical, already (to say the worst) corrupted or perverted by theater."<sup>82</sup> Burton was one who saw differently.

Fried, I believe, came to the unlikely equation of Minimalism and "faggot sensibility" in reaction to the discussion of theatricality in Susan Sontag's watershed essay "Notes on Camp." It was first published in *Partisan Review* in 1964, becoming instantly notorious and one of the most widely read American essays of the decade. The essay was republished in Sontag's 1966 book *Against Interpretation*—which Fried targets in a lengthy negative footnote in "Art and Objecthood."<sup>83</sup> Sontag's essay detailed camp's willful inversions of high and low culture, arguing that "Camp is the consistently aesthetic experience of the world."<sup>84</sup> Literalism, with its refusal of the autonomy of the art object and its contiguity between sculptures and their settings, might also be considered a shift of aesthetic experience from the art object to the banality of everything surrounding it. As Sontag wrote of camp's reversals of attention: "One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious."<sup>85</sup> In his anti-Sontag footnote in "Art and Objecthood," Fried declared, "The truth is that the distinction between



the frivolous and the serious becomes more urgent, even absolute, every day.”<sup>86</sup> When Fried was trying to formulate his critique of this frivolous theatrical sensibility that perverted modernism, I believe he saw ammunition in Sontag’s discussion of camp sensibility as rooted in artificiality and dissemblance—and homosexuality. Her essay became scandalous and widely read in no small part because of her open discussion of homosexuality’s subversion of proper culture and her frank claim that the main proponents (and examples) of camp were homosexuals.<sup>87</sup> Underlying this connection was her emphasis on the queer experience (which she shared) of dissembling as normal—of “Being-as-Playing-a-Role.”<sup>88</sup> Anticipating Fried’s keyword, Sontag concluded that “Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as ideal, theatricality.”<sup>89</sup>

An equation between theatricality and homosexuality was seen by both Sontag and Fried—as well as Burton. He upheld this equation as central to his performance art and its terms. In his anger at Fried’s essay, Burton inverted its critique, seeing complexity and queer potential in theatricality and its opening up of new and variable relations between viewers and objects. As I discuss in the first chapter, Burton’s earliest performance art, his *Self-Works*, explored what it meant to “play a role” through artifice. A new direction was suggested to him by those aspects of Minimalism that were denigrated or ignored—theatricality, temporality, and difference. He was among those who saw Minimalism not as a path to follow but as the opening of a new conversation.

## The Difference Postminimalism Makes

Burton’s critical engagement with Minimalism in the late 1960s made him part of the artistic conversation about what Pincus-Witten would soon dub “postminimalism.”<sup>90</sup> An even more broadly defined term than the historically bound term “Minimalism,” postminimalism comprised a disparate group of artists who built on the potential of Minimalism’s address to the viewer and its reliance on geometric or serial forms. I pointedly use the term in the lowercase to indicate that it is an open-ended and ongoing set of explorations that, beginning in the late 1960s, expanded on key questions of Minimalism while rejecting that movement’s aspirations to rationality, neutrality, regularity, anonymity, and universality. Postminimalism took the form not just of sculpture, but also of a wide variety of practices including video, performance, fiber arts, language, conceptual operations, installation, and land art. Indeed, the blurring of the usefulness of medium as a criterion was characteristic. This move beyond modernist medium-

specificity was something promised by Minimalism's attempt to be "neither painting nor sculpture," but the result was generally de facto sculptural objects. Postminimalism fulfilled the promise of intermediality. Burton was an exemplar who hybridized sculpture, painting, and theater, fusing these elements into postminimalist performance.

Because of the cacophonous range of practices, priorities, and styles that fall under the idea of postminimalism, some historians have avoided this term.<sup>91</sup> By contrast, I see this heterogeneity as its strength. Postminimalism, as a provocation, extends well beyond the first half of the 1970s and is arguably of wider impact than its Minimalist forebear. Artists as distinct as Burton, Lynda Benglis, Mel Bochner, Rosemarie Castoro, Jackie Ferrara, Nancy Graves, Harmony Hammond, David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Hesse, Barry Le Va, Rosemary Mayer, Ana Mendieta, Mary Miss, Kazuko Miyamoto, Morris, Ree Morton, Bruce Nauman, Senga Nengudi, Adrian Piper, Martin Puryear, Dorothea Rockburne, Alan Saret, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Keith Sonnier, Michelle Stuart, Richard Tuttle, Wilke, and Jackie Winsor have all been considered in relation to postminimalism. Despite their divergent practices, artists considered postminimalist share some or all of the following traits: they question the belief that geometric and serial forms can be used neutrally; they are skeptical of the adequacy of such forms or systems as signs of the rational, the empirical, or universal; they are concerned with how viewers' encounters are activated viscerally and mnemonically and not just spatially; they embrace variation or error in the ad hoc systems they propose; they are attuned to the fact that viewers are different from one another. As Pincus-Witten would reflect, these artists sought to differentiate themselves from the "taciturn Calvinism of Minimalism."<sup>92</sup>

Almost as soon as a Minimalist movement began to congeal, artists began to debate its strictures and limitations. They began to use materials for their evocativeness, see geometries as pliable rather than rigid, and call for a bodily empathy with the viewer. Critics such as Lippard laid the groundwork, most notably through the watershed 1966 essay "Eccentric Abstraction" (based on an exhibition of the same name at Fischbach Gallery) and her follow-up essay "Eros Presumptive."<sup>93</sup> Lippard was soon joined by other critics such as Pincus-Witten, Emily Wasserman, Max Kozloff, the mercurial Robert Morris, and Burton. Inspired by Lippard's exhibition, Morris curated *Nine at Leo Castelli* in 1968 at the gallery's storage space on West 108th Street, and he included artists such as Serra, Hesse, Nauman, and Bill Bollinger. As Burton began making his own performances in 1969, he was concurrently writing his introduction to Szeemann's *When Attitudes Become Form*, the exhibition that helped to propel the reputations of Amer-

ican postminimal and conceptual artists.<sup>94</sup> Also in 1969, Burton wrote an assessment of two of the exhibitions in New York that further showcased this work: Marcia Tucker and James Monte's *Anti-illusion: Procedures/Materials* at the Whitney Museum and the Guggenheim's *Nine Young Artists*. Burton's essay "Time on Their Hands" focused on just a small number of the exhibited artists such as Serra, Nauman, Smith, Morris, and Bollinger to discuss how they staged time.<sup>95</sup>

However, it was the New York art world's response to Eva Hesse's death in 1970 that made it incumbent on critics to develop a new vocabulary around such work. This new critical approach was concretized in Linda Shearer's 1972 *Eva Hesse: A Memorial Exhibition* for the Guggenheim (in which Pincus-Witten contributed the essay that would go on to anchor his *Postminimalism* five years later: "Eva Hesse: More Light on the Transition from Post-minimalism into the Sublime") and, in 1976, Lippard's monograph on Hesse.<sup>96</sup> Lippard's 1973 collection *Six Years* also powerfully demonstrated the range of conceptual, performance, and postminimal activity of the period since her 1966 *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition (up to 1972).<sup>97</sup> In addition, artists' magazines such as Bernadette Mayer and Vito Acconci's *o to 9* (1967–69) and Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp's *Avant-lanche* (1970–76) proposed links between sculpture, poetry, performance, and conceptual art, fueling postminimalism's capaciousness. This flurry of exhibitions and writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s tried to capture the varied and divergent artistic responses to Minimalism's provocative aridness.<sup>98</sup>

When in 1977 Pincus-Witten decided to collect his essays from the previous decade under the title *Postminimalism*, he embraced this heterogeneity of practices. Not only did his collection include essays on artists like Hesse, Serra, Tuttle, Nauman, and Le Va; he also brought in stylistically disparate artists such as Burton, Benglis, LeWitt, Lucas Samaras, Acconci, and Ferrara. Performance, video, painting, and sculpture are all addressed in its pages. Pincus-Witten's 1976 essay on Burton is penultimate and the last single-artist treatment in the book. The book is notable for its inclusion of women artists as central (Hesse was, for him, definitional of postminimalism, and the only artist to receive two essays in the first edition was Benglis). Pincus-Witten wrote in the introduction, "The new style's relationship to the women's movement cannot be overly stressed; many of its formal attitudes and properties, not to mention its exemplars, derive from methods and substances that hitherto had been sexistically tagged as female or feminine, whether or not the work had been made by women."<sup>99</sup>

Burton found appealing this more open conversation that made space for questions of the personal, feminism, and sexuality—unlike Minimalism.<sup>100</sup> He and his postminimalist peers—each in their own way—saw the contradiction between, on the one hand, Minimalism's contingent, open address to the viewer coupled with the suppression of the autographic presence of the artist and, on the other, its jealous cultivation of signature styles, dehumanized fabrication, and presumptions of speaking neutrally through geometry, seriality, and industrial materials (fig. 0.5). While not all postminimalists were working from positions of marked or marginalized identities, many were. In a reflection on the term “postminimalism” written in 1990, Pincus-Witten reminded his readers that issues such as anti-form, the embrace of variation, and the emphasis on process and shared experience were all related to a general questioning in American culture of value, truth, stability, and universality. He remarked, “In their own day, these eccentric forms were enhanced by the social agitations and advancements made by hitherto grandly disenfranchised sectors of the community—blacks, gays, women.”<sup>101</sup>



**Figure 0.5.** Scott Burton, *Steel Furniture*, 1978/79, with Eva Hesse, *Aught*, 1968. Photograph in Scott Burton Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

Previously, in the discourse that had promulgated Minimalism's claims to neutrality, issues of difference or of the personal were disavowed but nevertheless operative. As Anna Chave has decisively argued, this was the case in the social circles of Minimalism's central artists and critics, as well.<sup>102</sup> Pincus-Witten, in the introduction to his book, described it as a "high formalist cult of impersonality" and decried the "closed formalist machine of judgment from which personal reference and biography were omitted. This occurred not only because the formalist critics imposed an apersonal, hermetic value system on their writing, but because the artists insisted on it as well."<sup>103</sup> Postminimalism, by contrast, valued what Minimalism tried to expunge—the personal. Burton, like many other artists associated with postminimalism, did not advocate for a return to the myth of the private self or believe in the absolute autonomy of artist but rather grappled with an understanding of the personal as embroiled in power dynamics, hierarchies, exclusions, and norms. As Pincus-Witten said to me in one of our first conversations, one of Burton's driving priorities was "marginalized empowerment."<sup>104</sup>

In drawing on his own experience as a resource, Burton was in line with his contemporaries who turned to performance out of a rejection of 1960s formalisms and abstractions. In a 1973 essay "Performance and Experience," Rosemary Mayer (herself a postminimalist and performance artist) argued, "Performance art has come full circle from the concerns of minimal painting and sculpture and reassessed the very real connection of art to life."<sup>105</sup> Burton's queer experiences (of heteronormativity, of homophobia, of self-monitoring, of cruising, of contact, etc.) provided him with key questions for his performance art that sought to recast relations, power dynamics, and possibilities.

When Burton started making his own performance works in 1969, he found himself among experimental poets, artists, and performers who sought to extend some of the frameworks of 1960s live art.<sup>106</sup> Well aware of the developments in dance and theater of the 1960s, he attended performances of the Judson Dance Theater and was familiar with the dance of Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, and Merce Cunningham. In his early years, he sometimes cited Rainer's work with everyday movement as a precedent for his own.<sup>107</sup> He knew the Happenings of Allan Kaprow, the performances of Gilbert & George, and the actions of Joseph Beuys, all of whom he named as touchstones of current performance art in his lectures.<sup>108</sup> One of his closest friends and collaborators of the late 1960s and early 1970s was Marjorie Strider, who helped educate him about performance. She taught for many years at the School of Visual Arts and had

an expansive knowledge of current developments.<sup>109</sup> Her own expertise was reinforced by her years of marriage to the writer Michael Kirby, who wrote about Happenings and was editor of *The Drama Review* starting in 1969, the year they divorced. (Kirby would include Burton's work in the journal in 1972.)<sup>110</sup> Burton also knew the productions of Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson, and he was attuned to the Theater of the Ridiculous, Charles Ludlam, and John Vaccaro—most directly through his friend McGinnes, who acted in Ridiculous-style plays.<sup>111</sup> He knew Jack Smith, attending the artist's famous late-night performances in 1970 and after.<sup>112</sup> These influences intermixed with Burton's familiarity with more established modes of drama and dance (based both in his experience as a playwright and librettist and in his friendships with Robbins, Kirstein, and Denby). By 1970, Burton had become an enthusiastic advocate for performance art; he even started a short-lived booking agency, the Association for Performances, in 1970 to promote it.<sup>113</sup>

In a 1973 lecture-performance at Oberlin College (that I discuss in detail in chapter 4), Burton presented a statement of principles about performance:

Performance art reevaluates the role of the artist in the culture, submitting him to the transaction with the viewer. No matter how self-referring, apparently remote, or even autistic the preoccupations of the performance artist become, his fundamental, definitive act is his initiation of direct transaction. Performance is structurally, then, an exoteric mode—and social, cultural, and political values are prominent in the historical genesis of the mode. Performance points beyond the competence of a specialized professional artistic class, beyond modernist self-criticism, to an art of situation, in which competence is extended to the viewer, in which the audience becomes the critics.<sup>114</sup>

In his view, performance art transcended medium-specificity and, more importantly, offered a more open and direct relationship to the “transaction with the viewer.” Burton saw performance's activation of the viewer's copresence and shared temporal experience as means to move beyond modernist self-referentiality, and in the same lecture he declared, “Performance art abandons the self-criticism of classic modernist art. The role of the viewer becomes a critical role, in contrast to [Clement] Greenberg's modernism.”<sup>115</sup> The critical role of the viewer as participant would increasingly become a focus in Burton's work. This aim to address viewers beyond



**Figure 0.6.** Scott Burton, detail of *Urban Plaza North*, 1985–88, part of the site-specific installation at the Equitable Center, Avenue of the Americas and Fifty-First / Fifty-Second Streets, New York, 1985–88. Photograph: David J. Getsy.

“a specialized artistic class” would, over the course of the 1970s, be transferred to his ideas about sculpture and public art (see fig. 0.6), as I discuss in chapter 5.

### **“An Art of Situation”: Street Cruising and Queer Performance**

Burton’s definition of performance as an “art of situation” in which “competence is extended to the viewer” had its primary example not in the galleries or lofts of SoHo but in the streets. Burton took street cruising as one of the richest examples of behavior, nonverbal communication, and transactional situations. I refer to “cruising” as the range of nuanced activities involving the scanning for and transmitting of covert signals of outlaw sexual desire (or interest) in public spaces. Often, these broadcasts were intended to be duplicitous enough to be mistaken for “innocent” or coinci-

dental. Cruising is a strategic inhabitation of streets and other public and semipublic spaces, and it comprises coded signs, furtive but intentional looks, proxemic negotiations, gestural prompts, sartorial cues, and a heightened awareness of the city's geographic and social delineations.

The term "cruising" is also applied to similar activities in semipublic places and designated zones (such as tearooms, parks, and rest stops). As with street cruising, the behavior at these sites involves threats of detection, the mimicking of normative behavioral rules, and covert signaling as a means to sexual contact. However, the rules, practices, and (more goal-oriented) outcomes differ owing to the group dynamics of cruisers in these semipublic zones. In distinction, my focus will be on the more paratelic and open-ended performances of cruising that occur in public streets, often under the gaze of unwitting passersby. The theater of behavior—both normative and subversive—involved in cruising such public, trafficked areas (such as the sidewalk) prompted Burton to think more broadly about social space, nonverbal communication, and the queer experiences thereof.

Street cruising's public performances of looking for and finding sex, sexual reciprocation, or mutual recognition of queer desiring were part of the experience of New York's streets, both day and night. As it had been throughout the twentieth century, cruising was an important aspect of queer urban life in Burton's time.<sup>116</sup> In cities like New York in the 1960s and 1970s, cruising became increasingly widespread, defiant, and sophisticated. The clustering of gay and lesbian communities in urban areas following the social upheaval of the Second World War facilitated the development of cruising zones. In New York City, areas like the derelict West Side piers, the parks (as with Riverside Park or the Ramble in Central Park), and then less inhabited downtown neighborhoods (such as the meatpacking district) came newly alive at night with widespread cruising of both the public and the semipublic varieties.<sup>117</sup> In a remarkable guide to the cruising areas of Manhattan published in 1967, Leo Skir extolled the possibilities of New York City: "Summer, spring, fall, and even part of winter is *cruising* time. New York is a polysexual, polytheistic, nature-loving cruising ground."<sup>118</sup> He explained the differences between cruising in Central Park and the Village, for instance telling readers where they could find "young men lacking plans and underpants" (at the three-way intersection of Greenwich Avenue, Sixth Avenue, and Eighth Street).<sup>119</sup>

Those men who cruised (in the 1970s or in its remaining forms) only sometimes identified as gay; plenty enjoy this activity without being defined by it.<sup>120</sup> While cruising was a common form of social activity for gay men in 1970s New York, not all one's tricks would align in that way. Overall,



cruising was far more prevalent among men, though not exclusively so. Lesbians, transwomen, and other queer women also cruised (in a variety of ways), but any street activity was overshadowed and limited by the very real dangers of navigating public spaces in which misogyny, sexism, and objectification of women were rife.<sup>121</sup> The streets were also a place where straight people looked, signaled, and beseeched for erotic connection, but such activities were largely socially sanctioned and permissible, with fewer of queer cruising's dangers of exposure, illegality, and potential violence.

Because of the proscriptions on and surveillance of non-heterosexual desire, queer forms of cruising are tied up with issues of dissemblance and behavioral monitoring (of both oneself and others) as means to avoid detection. It is also for this reason that cruising generally tended to be more active at night, but it was not limited to the dark. It could also be a daytime activity; any busy street had potential. While street cruising could and did lead to sex, sometimes the wink was enough.<sup>122</sup> Both pleasure and danger (and excitement and boredom) are possible outcomes. It was and remains a mode of resistant public performance for those whose desires, loves, gatherings, and communities were oppressed, surveilled, and outlawed.

The nonverbal signaling that constitutes cruising draws on the queer individual's lifetime of experience with the survival tactics of camouflage, masking, and dissemblance. That is, queer self-consciousness about behavior—and its redeployment as cruising—are derived from the daily navigation of homophobia, presumptive heterosexuality, gender normativity, insult, violence, and alienation.<sup>123</sup> In the 1970s, being on guard was a perpetual state for those with unsanctioned desires. The Danish sociologist Henning Bech usefully described this condition as “observedness” in his wide-ranging analysis of the genesis and typology of homosexual behavior in these decades. He defined it as follows: “One cannot be homosexual, therefore, without feeling potentially monitored. Certain other consequences for the homosexual follow on from this. He learns *vigilance*; his brain kits itself out with radar, which simultaneously records his actions and scans the surrounding terrain for hazards. . . . He learns to refine his contact actions, make them discreet, suggestive, silent, etc.”<sup>124</sup> This condition could be mined as a resource, and it provided the tools for the cruiser's subversive navigation of public streets, for survival tactics, and for the seditious creation of communities who shared those rogue desires. In short, observedness could be turned outward as a means of heightened visual attention to behaviors and social spaces.

Dissemblance—that is, the knowing performance of one manner to mask or distract from disparate intention—is the central tactic of cruising. The ability to dissemble is a product of observedness; it is used to facili-

tate (and protect) sexual signaling and queer contact. Cruising is a sophisticated performance in which dissemblance allows for both the navigation of dominant codes and the establishment of mutinous accords. This point was made in a 1978 book that sought to account for the emergence of an elaborate and widespread culture in 1970s New York: Edward William Delph's 1978 *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters*.<sup>125</sup> In his study, Delph provided a useful taxonomy, distinguishing between street cruising, semipublic cruising sites such as tearooms (termed "erotic oases"), and designated sexual marketplaces (such as bathhouses).<sup>126</sup> Delph's book detailed the elaborate nonverbal communications and behavioral signals deployed in these queer performances at different levels of publicness. Street cruising, he argued, took place under the eyes of the passerby and the crowd, giving pedestrian streets the potential to serve as "erotic arenas." In such public and populated zones, the visual attention to one's own and others' behaviors is paramount. He writes that the cruiser (whom he calls the "public eroticist")

becomes an observer, tailoring action in accordance with what he interprets as others' expectations of him in a particular role. Because of the threat of stigmatization, the public eroticist monitors identity and self-presentation to avoid detection. The nonthreatened normal does not share similar anxiety and is not alive to bracketing reality over this concern. . . . In order to maintain the status quo and the social stability in relationships with others, he consciously manipulates behavior, imagery, and self-presentations to conform to taken-for-granted ones.<sup>127</sup>

The pressure to regulate how one appeared and behaved came from multiple fronts—from public warnings of the dangers of homosexuality to bitter debates among homosexual activists about respectability.<sup>128</sup> In his study, Delph discussed both those who pass for straight and those more outwardly visible queer individuals who, through their gender presentation, dress, or mannerisms, overtly and defiantly signal themselves.<sup>129</sup> Whether camouflaged or flouting, cruisers navigate the stigmatization of those who break the rules—especially the opprobrium of looking for (or having) sex in public or semipublic spaces.<sup>130</sup> This holds true both inside and outside cities—from New York's derelict piers that became famous for their cruising activities to the rest stops or nature preserves accessible on interstates that cut through rural areas.<sup>131</sup>

In his book, Delph made clear that cruising in all its varieties was a highly self-conscious performance within and against the enforcing pro-

tocols of “normal” behavior. In this way, cruising both *hypostatizes* and *destabilizes* heteronormativity. By this I mean that it allows one to see the concrete workings of a discourse of compulsory heterosexuality; it does this through cruisers’ adept mimics of everyday public behaviors that are nonetheless the toolbox for seditious broadcasting of covert signals of queer desire, establishing what Delph called “the silent community.”

Identifying someone on the street for a furtive sexual encounter (or even the mutual acknowledgment that both desired one) was a lifesaving activity for those who had to hide themselves, their desires, and their loves. Seeing another who gives a look and then looking back at them could become simultaneously tense, thrilling, agonistic, and affirming. Bech described it as such: “even in the pure eye contacts, a *being-together* is established, an overstepping the border between one and the other, or at least playing with it.”<sup>132</sup> Ambiguity is the terrain of cruising, and the activity is fueled by the public disavowal of the possibility of queer desire.<sup>133</sup> Whether actively on the hunt or merely open to its chance on a stroll, those who cruise grow to be sophisticated in their navigation of possible cues, accidental signals, and purposeful scrutiny that otherwise appears oblivious or uninterested. The shared space of the street became riven with possibilities for private, coded, or colluding behavior through which queer individuals could recognize and engage one other. However, one should not equate all experiences of cruising because of the differential access to privilege and public spaces allowed to the cruiser because of their race, gender, class, ability, age, or even comportment. Nevertheless, for each individual, cruising is an active redeployment of their own particular experiences of observedness and a mining from them of resources for covert communication with others similarly searching.

Historically, cruising (especially street cruising) has had the potential to cut across class lines, and its practice can traverse (albeit only temporarily) some social, economic, and political borders. In his book *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, Samuel R. Delany argued that cruising in its varied forms was exemplary of the capacity for cross-class and interracial “contact”—those many, often ephemeral, sometimes repeated microrelationships (be they in the supermarket line, in the elevator, or at a cruising site) that the pedestrian urban fabric of the city makes possible.<sup>134</sup> “Such occurrences are central to my vision of the city at its healthiest,” he declared.<sup>135</sup> As I argue throughout this book, Burton came to develop an attitude toward public art that was demotic, anti-elitist, and approachable out of his sustained interest in the contact afforded by cruising, nonverbal communication, and other behaviors that worked beneath or against the normative rules of public spaces. In this sense, I see important sympathies between Burton’s

overall project and Delany's observation that "urban contact is often at its most spectacularly beneficial when it occurs between members of *different* communities. That is why I maintain that interclass contact is even more important than intraclass contact."<sup>136</sup> Cruising made that potentiality vivid and exciting, and it provided—for both Delany and Burton—a model for a more ethical inhabitation of public space. As José Esteban Muñoz would write in his analysis of Delany's writings on cruising and contact, "These glimpses and moments of contact have a decidedly utopian function that permits us to imagine and potentially make a queer world."<sup>137</sup>

Of course, cruising's pleasures and opportunities are not free from exclusions, frustrations, and dangers. Cruising can also be a stage for vicious deployment of bias, aggression, and objectification. While cruising sites may offer fleeting opportunities to traverse boundaries, it is also the case that race, gender, gender presentation, class, age, and ability are all inextricable from cruising. We should not simply romanticize cruising as patently subversive, simply pleasurable, or available equally to all. It could also be competitive, injurious, callous, and reinforcing of prejudice and structural inequities. Especially, the more concentrated group activity in erotic oases and in exclusionary sexual marketplaces (such as bathhouses) could be the scenes for discriminatory acts such as racial fetishism, racist dehumanization, brutal ageism, and other forms of abuse—just as much as they might also be the opportunity to contravene such discrimination and bias through forms of contact and intimacy. While the general practice of cruising must be understood for its defiance of the enforcement of heteronormativity and the illegality of queer desire, that resistant stance does not absolve cruisers for the ways that they treat each other. As Delany so thoroughly argued, cruising does afford more opportunities (and incentives) for interclass contact, but he acknowledged that it was by no means free from social hierarchies, biases, and power. It may suspend them or, at best, provide the foundation for challenging them. The defining literary accounts of cruising in this period are by writers of color (namely Delany and the novelist John Rechy), and in them one sees the ways in which cruising could transgress the stratifications of race and class as well as offer a ground against which such stratifications could be viewed more clearly and critically.

Delany observed, "Public sex situations are not Dionysian and uncontrolled but are rather some of the most highly socialized and conventionalized behavior human beings take part in."<sup>138</sup> Burton extrapolated from the practice of street cruising an attention to behavior and its power dynamics—most extensively in his series of *Behavior Tableaux* performances discussed in chapter 3. He thematized both intimacy and

aggression in his works, which do not offer a paean to cruising and only sometimes figure it directly. Rather, I argue that Burton distilled some of its social questions and lessons about behavior. The subtle and electric moments of accord, body language, and nonverbal communication in the midst of a busy street offered him a way to address both the complexities of behavior and the ways in which power and normativity delimited it.

As has been remarked to me over many years of interviewing his friends, Burton participated in cruising both in its elaborate nighttime locales and on daytime streets. He was fluent in its protocols, and he incorporated what he learned into his art. As he wrote to Costa in 1972, "I do not neglect to visit those places which fascinate me—and which would form such a good subject for another pornographic novel."<sup>139</sup> His interest in cruising as a resource for his performance and sculpture deepened throughout the 1970s. For a concise illustration of this, I reproduce here one of Burton's many notes and ideas for performances (see plate 1). In these ideas for an unrealized work on "the sensuous homosexual/male," Burton not only cited cruising, fisting, BDSM, and other practices he would incorporate into his work of the 1970s; he also listed off cruising's locations including subways, trucks, bars, and the baths.<sup>140</sup> These were the scenes for his queer experience and were formative for his interrogation of behavior and body language. I will examine the following statement more extensively later in the book, but it is also worth noting that, by 1980, Burton would boldly claim cruising as the source of his *Individual Behavior Tableaux* performances, saying, "I try to get the poses that I see in the bars, in baths and on the street corners that I frequent. I mean, my own personal experience has to come [into it]. Your work is nothing if its content isn't your personal experience."<sup>141</sup>

Cruising, for Burton, was not only about sexual potential; it was exemplary of the complexity of queer behavior in public. In this book, I argue that cruising serves as a synecdoche for the performances of observ- edness, negotiations of heteronormativity, nonverbal communications, proxemic negotiations, subversive codings, promiscuous accords, and utopian longings that constitute queer experiences and behaviors, in all their particularity. These queer performances, I believe, are the best foundation from which to understand Burton's divergent and sophisticated artistic experimentation of the 1970s as well as his self-effacing, dissembling, often anonymous, and all-embracing public art of the 1980s. Indeed, Burton's radical move of making sculpture that disappeared as public amenities came from a deep understanding of how queer possibility could hide in plain sight.

## Queer Experiences

A note on my terminology is necessary at this point. My titular use of “queer” is targeted and intentional throughout this book, and readers will find it occupying the same pages as “gay.” “Gay,” a term used by Burton and his contemporaries, emerged as a political axis in the 1960s.<sup>142</sup> Initially, its positivity was intended to invert the derision directed at those with non-normative sexualities. While the original aim was for the term to be inclusive, “gay” has, since the 1970s, come primarily to connote men who had been assigned male at birth. It was this drift that propelled lesbians, bisexuals, trans people, and many others to augment or outright reject its narrowness. While Burton, too, came to be suspicious of the homonormativity of gay identity (as I will discuss in a moment), its 1970s usage is nevertheless an adequate way to describe how he identified.<sup>143</sup> Consequently, I will at times refer to Burton as a gay artist to signal him as “out” and to register his affiliation with the social and political movements of the 1970s that also took “gay” as their identifying label. Of course, there were many more forms of outlaw and queer desires, individuals, identities, and communities in the 1970s, and my usage of “gay” in this text does not presume to encompass those equally vital groupings and possibilities (which the term may have aspired to but never successfully included).

I also use the historically available term “queer.”<sup>144</sup> I do so strategically in relationship to its multiple connotations and varied uses in the twentieth century. The content of Burton’s work was invested in the day-to-day queer experiences of failing to inhabit the normal.<sup>145</sup> That is, the themes of his work were not invested in a singular identity category so much as in resistance to compulsory heterosexuality and the enforcement of normative behaviors.<sup>146</sup> His work examined the contours of behavior, agonism, normativity, disenfranchisement, and subversion that had been the condition of queer experience long before (and after) the popularity of “gay” as a positive nomination. In addition to being gay, Burton was, I would argue, also a *queer* artist in his aims and in his tactics.

By “queer,” I mean the dynamic matrix of positions that undermine, oppose, or exceed imposed norms of desire, love, and family as structured exclusively through heterosexual relations and binary genders. While sexual acts and sexual identity are core elements, a queer stance also calls into question relations, kinship, sociality, comportment, history, and the presumptions of “common” sense, “natural” conditions, and the denominator of the “normal.” There are many debates about the usage, current relevance, and genealogy of “queer,” which I will not rehearse here. Suffice

it to say that, in the late 1980s and 1990s in the United States, the insult “queer” was reclaimed, embraced, and debated by activists and theorists. The performative force of this insult was redirected in an act of defiance to the normal. Queer politics, in subsequent decades, have set themselves against mere inclusion, tolerance, new forms of normativity, and assimilationism. This political stance does not aim to erase difference into a new, more inclusive normal, but rather recognizes that there must be an ongoing questioning of how the normal is assumed, imposed, and policed. I deem “queer” positions as taking on (with various degrees of success) not just homophobic oppression and heterosexist exclusion but also forms of homonormativity that, too, seek to disallow difference and that reinforce patterns of presumed normalcy (which are, concomitantly, inextricable from racism, sexism, ableism, and classism).

I understand “queer” as primarily adjectival rather than fixed as a stable noun or verb, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>147</sup> Because it is (always) relational, contingent, and contextual, I see “queer” as a more useful and wide-ranging historical term—one that accounts for acts of resistance to imposed norms in a wide range of historical contexts and inflected by positionality. In the previous section, I discussed how cruising involved not just gay men but others who also signaled unsanctioned desires on public streets, and this is one reason that I see it (as I believe Burton did) more expansively as a *queer* activity.

I draw on the longer historical reach of the adjective “queer” in this study of Burton’s performances and their themes. Throughout, I claim that Burton’s primary resource was his “queer experience”—the accumulated knowledge that arises from misalignment with and disorientation from compulsory heterosexuality. Queer experience comprises such behavioral dramas as being targeted by homophobia (both directly and implicitly), adapting to the condition of observedness, pursuing unsanctioned desires, self-monitoring, and the pleasures of locating sexual and emotional contact (and community) despite these challenges. The particularity of an individual’s queer experience is determined by context (geographic and historical) and the ways in which it intersects with race, gender, ability, class. That is, the conditions that produce queer experiences are common and repeated, but the negotiations and contexts of those conditions are not. Queer experience is not unitary. Rather, it has infinite variety (and striking disparities) in the ways that one meets the obstacles and potentials of misfitting to heteronormativity. Burton’s queer experiences were both individual and enmeshed in larger systems of legitimacy, privilege, and exclusion. His history was enabled by his whiteness and maleness and the access these traits granted (such as his education

and movement through the literary circles of the 1960s), but his particular queer experience also led him to challenge narrow categorizations and hierarchies, as with his opposition to discrimination based on race, gender, or class. In many interviews I conducted, these beliefs were often cited as an explanation for Burton's development of the demotic, anti-elitist, and utopian aims for his work.

Burton's increasing engagement with broader social questions (in particular, feminism) in the 1970s prompted a more critical stance toward gay identity over the course of the decade. He became alert to all that a stabilized understanding of "gay" excluded, especially as it became tied up with consumerism, elitism, and privilege. In a 1980 interview with the gay magazine the *Advocate*, he lamented the ways that—in the decade since Stonewall—many out gay artists seemed to rely solely on idealized homoerotic images marketed to a (homogeneous) gay male audience.<sup>148</sup> For him, this production of a gay iconography was merely a form of marketing to a circumscribed view of an elitist gay community defined only through same-gender desire, consumption, and its idealized sexual objects. He came to be skeptical of the reassertion of mainstream values and assimilationist aims to replicate heterosexual norms—what we would now term "homonormativity."<sup>149</sup> He had seen the radicalism of the early gay liberation movement dissipate into a politics of respectability and, more distasteful to him, a bourgeois sensibility that turned away from such other political issues as feminism.<sup>150</sup> Again, I see Burton as offering an alternative to this consumerism and its reification of a singular gay identity. By contrast, his work of the 1970s had drawn on experiences and images beyond a sole reliance on those that activated sexual desire (and its location in the sexual object). More broadly, his work of the 1970s looked to the queer experiences of behavior, contact, and relations.

In that 1980 *Advocate* interview, he found the need to propose an alternative to "gay" that would be more dynamic, inclusive, and expansive—in other words, how "queer" would be used a decade later. He offered the term "homocentric" as a counterpoint to what he saw as the normativity of "gay." In the interview, he explained, "'Homocentric' is something that is homosexually centered while 'gay' means Bloomingdale's, it means Castro Street, and it means good taste, linen-covered furniture and cork and blonde wood and shirts with alligators. Gay is homosexuality in the middle class. No one from the working class or bohemian culture is gay. We can be homosexual but we're not really gay."<sup>151</sup> Burton returned to "homosexual" as a more open and charged identity than "gay," and his call for a homocentric art was one that rejected such white middle-class values and consumerism. I will return to this term in the conclusion, but here it



is important to note that this statement came in the context of explaining his own work based in bathhouses and street cruising—exactly the kind of places spurned by the desexualizing and assimilationist politics of respectability. By contrast, Burton embraced cruising for its mixing of social classes and its flouting of the proper. In conjunction, he used his experiences of leather, fisting, and BDSM as a basis from which to interrogate the dynamics of active and passive as well as to explore self-abnegation as a means of opening work up to a wider range of audiences. Both in these sexual cultures and in the daily negotiations of being queer (that is, of being outlaw, targeted, insurgent, inassimilable, and intolerable), Burton extracted critical positions about the social and art's role in it. *The Advocate's* editors gave Burton's interview the subtitle "'Homocentric' Art as Moral Proposition."<sup>152</sup>

### **In and Out of the 1970s: Following Burton's Queer Dissemblance**

McGinnes would describe the Burton he met in 1969 as being "out as anybody I could imagine."<sup>153</sup> In 1980, Burton would look back on the 1970s and say, "The art world is very conservative and I know that there are circles of power closed to me because of my overt behavior."<sup>154</sup> Out of his own experience of alienation and from his own increasing impatience with the exclusions of the art world, Burton made works that undermined these views and offered alternatives to them.

But Burton's works only sometimes announce their queerness directly. If asked by an interviewer, he would often deny that his works had gay content or claim that it was unintentional—even in the same interviews when he discussed the sexual sources for his works. The themes of sexuality and queer experience recur throughout his notes, archives, and statements, but Burton rejected a narrow categorization of his work as "gay art." His aim was to speak more broadly, and he did so with lessons learned about behavior from queer experiences such as the negotiation of normativity, the practices of coding and dissemblance, and participation in the sexual cultures of New York City.

Strategically, Burton developed distinct modes of work for different kinds of audiences and institutions. In keeping with the ways in which Burton worked in parallel modes and with sometimes occluded connections and themes, I have divided this book into two sections. The first deals with the early experimental formulations of Burton's practice, and the second examines the parallel tracks of his work in the 1970s through three categories—his *Behavior Tableaux* made to infiltrate museums and

gallery spaces, his overt works that used sexual culture to confront stereotypes, and his development of a sculptural practice that transposed his work in performance to passive objects.

The first of these two sections deals with the years 1969 to 1971, when Burton was still developing the terms of his new artistic practice. Chapter 1 discusses the pivotal year of 1969, when Burton created his first works of performance art. Doing so within the context of the public and collaborative *Street Works* events in Manhattan, Burton chose to make works that either thematized dissemblance or were themselves invisible. I examine this early exploration of disguise and camouflaging within public space as a result of Burton's questioning of the authority of the artist. These works drew on his explorations of body language, of the signifying capacities of gestures and clothing, of cruising behaviors, and of nonverbal communication.

Chapter 2 examines Burton's earliest stage-based works as well as the sources for his theorization of behavior. I discuss the early works in which Burton employed other performers and started experimenting with the *tableau vivant* format. He also looked to feminist art and art history, and his early works evidence a sustained engagement with the ideal of feminism as a model for how gay liberation could remake the institutions of the art world. I also examine Burton's intense interest and extensive reading in the scientific literature on body language and nonverbal communication from the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was this research that provided Burton with the concepts and terminology that were fundamental to his subsequent work.

The second section examines the three parallel trajectories that emerged in Burton's work from the foundations laid during the experimental period discussed in the first section. From 1972 to 1980, Burton's most important and widely seen works of performance art were his *Behavior Tableaux*, the topic of chapter 3. Involving glacially paced movements of actors on sparse stages, these works were intended as demonstrations of nonverbal bodily languages and the power dynamics thereof. From the first work with five male-identified actors for the Whitney Museum in 1972 to the naked single-actor works he created from 1977 to 1980, Burton made it increasingly clear how his investigation into behavior was rooted in queer experience as basis for critique. I examine the evolution of these works and discuss the ways in which Burton developed a unique viewing situation that was intended to transfer queer affects between performers and viewers.

Concurrent with these conceptual performances, Burton developed a practice that was confrontational about queer experience and sexual practices. Chapter 4 examines a series of projects in which Burton attacked



Figure 0.7. Harry Roseman, *Scott Burton*, 4 August 1973. Photograph © Harry Roseman, 2022.

heteronormative masculinity and demanded a visible place for queer artists. This chapter begins with an analysis of Burton's 1973 *Lecture on Self*, in which he made himself an object of self-criticism by dividing his performance into two exaggerated and opposed characters through which he invited praise or scorn. I follow the subsequent history of one of these two, *Modern American Artist* (1973–75), with its caricature of the exaggerated masculinity that many straight Minimalist artists performed. I discuss how Burton engaged in debates about sex, gender, self-promotion, and artistic identity (in direct competition with artists such as Benglis and Morris) through this character. I also explain how Burton advocated for other artists, recounting the story of Burton's work on an unrealized anthology of lesbian and gay art history. These projects were soon followed by a truculent work about fisting that he dedicated to "homosexual liberation." Such activities ran alongside the layered and cerebral performance works he created for museums and galleries, leaving little doubt that the latter were, too, queerer than they first appeared.

Chapter 5 provides a history of Burton's early sculptures of furniture, a practice that was closely allied with the interests that underwrote his performance work—that is, urban camouflage, cruising, and dissemblance. The needfulness of a chair or other piece of furniture was, for him, related to the more open, democratic, and potentially sexualized capacities of shifting emphasis from artist to viewer. While Burton is often remem-

bered solely as a sculptor, an examination of his 1970s work shows a deep connection to histories of performance and design. Indeed, the awkward objects he made in the 1970s help illuminate the stakes of his more widely lauded public works of the 1980s.

This book argues that queer experience and sexuality are at the core of the development, sophistication, and impact of Burton's multifarious work of the 1970s. After almost two decades of thinking, archival research, and oral history interviews, I can see it no other way. I believe it is important to tell this story and to give voice to the rebellious, wry, and smart ways in which Burton built from the frustrations and pleasures of his individual experience. He used them as the raw material to envision a practice that challenged exclusion, embraced audiences, served viewers, resisted sexism, and affected behavior.

Burton, however, made a shift in the 1980s in order to infiltrate the networks of public art. He chose to focus on sculpture, and he deflected attention from his queer performances of the 1970s. His ultimate aim was to make public art that was demotic, approachable, and open to a wide range of viewers (even if they did not know his functional sculptures were art). To pursue this utopian aim, he recognized that his brashness of the 1970s had to be sacrificed in order to get public commissions. As his close friend Betsy Baker said in Burton's memorial service, "For some critics, the anarchic wild man of the early performance pieces sits somewhat uneasily next to the persuasive, even politically-adept public artist. Such contradictions seem to me to resolve themselves in light of a larger consistency that includes the strong component of erudition and the intense aestheticism that pervade even the craziest early works, and the convincing populism that is one of the driving forces behind all his public pieces."<sup>155</sup> Brenda Richardson, curator of his first retrospective in 1986, told me that Burton tried to keep his queer performance work of the 1970s out of the narrative of that exhibition, worrying that it would draw focus from his aim to be seen as a public artist. "He wanted the retrospective to focus on the artworks as sculptures and as civic amenities (so to speak), period," she recalled.<sup>156</sup> His 1980s works no longer celebrated sexual repertoires of cruising and fisting but rather sublimate these themes into an account of semi-anonymous useful sculptures that dissemble as street furniture open to all. This shift was also tied up with the AIDS crisis, and much of Burton's work of the 1980s was shadowed by his experience of living with HIV (from around 1983) until his death in 1989. He feared (rightly) that any knowledge of his HIV status would make receiving public art commissions impossible, but more importantly he devoted himself to making enduring and obdurately resilient public sculptures of furniture that offered care

and contact to passersby (even if they were seen as nothing more than a place to rest momentarily).

While a shift occurs around 1981 regarding Burton's volubility about queer themes, we should see it as neither a chasm nor a disavowal of the earlier work. The work before and after this time does look different, but it is my conviction that there are fundamental and consistent themes across Burton's artistic career. Burton's questions about public space, about the leveling of hierarchies, about sexual enfranchisement are answered differently by his individual works and modalities, but his priorities and principles remained resolute. One of the aims of this book is to demonstrate that—across the chronological range of his work—we understand Burton's multiplicity, code-switching, and dissemblance as components of a queer strategy for dealing with public space, public discourse, and the possibilities of behavior.

Such complexity, however, is unrecognized in the existing literature on Burton, and his work of the 1970s is often ignored, misunderstood, or barely mentioned. Even among friends and collaborators, Burton did not always express the depth and range of his queer commitments. As Nancy Princenthal recalled, "[Burton] was capable of great feats of indirection, of saying one thing—vehemently, eloquently, sometimes quite devastatingly—and meaning (or doing) another."<sup>157</sup> It became clear to me early on in my research that Burton was good at compartmentalizing his friendships and explanations. I have talked with friends, collaborators, ex-lovers, performers, curators, competitors, assistants, and fellow travelers—Burton made his mark on all of them. However, some lifelong friends had never heard of his queer performances involving dildos or were unaware that he worked for years on anthologizing lesbian and gay art in the mid-1970s. With other friends, however, Burton was forthcoming about his sexual life and priorities. For instance, Costa characterized Burton as a "warrior" in relation to sexuality and sexual politics.<sup>158</sup> Kaufman had many stories, remarking that Burton was very much "into all that. He was an extremely sexual being. He experimented a lot with S&M and the leather community."<sup>159</sup> The recollections that have been entrusted to me range from the sexy to the funny to the dramatic. It was a regular event in my interviews to be told, "you can't write this one down," followed by a story about Burton that was fabulous, salacious, uncompromising, or sensational. It was no secret to some (but not all) of his friends how much his participation in the cultures of cruising, leather, BDSM, and other queer socialities were fundamental to his ideas about art. Following on her earlier discussion of Burton's public reticence in the mid-1980s, Richardson made sure to remind me that, with a longer view, it was important to remember that "Scott [was] an assertively sexual being with a bent for hell-raising in art and life alike."<sup>160</sup>

An anecdote about Burton from Rosenblum is exemplary. He recalled an incident in which he invited Burton and his partner of the 1980s, Jon Erlitz (also known as “Chico”), to a posh beach club at Shelter Island: “Suddenly, in this time capsule of American beachside exclusivity and decorum, there appeared an S/M fantasy of nipple rings and tattoos, of which the most startling were the blue spider-webs in the shaved skin of both of Scott’s armpits, now fully exposed to the sun and to everybody else.”<sup>161</sup> Especially as he sought to engage in public art with its civic commissions, community forums, and government contracts, Burton appeared as a refined advocate for design, an ardent aesthete, or an organizer for public amenity. Always underneath, however, was the Burton of the 1970s—tattooed, queer, and infiltrating.

This book does not claim that Burton’s work (in all its variety) is *only* about sexuality. By contrast, my claim is that his work is rooted in—but also about much more than—queer experience, including (but not limited to) his sexual experience. It is only from this basis that we can fully understand how Burton sought to make public, approachable, and critical artworks that would be meaningful for all. I know there are more books to be written on Burton, and I hope they will be. His relationship to histories of design deserves its own full analysis, as does his deep identification with (and learned extensions of) avant-garde modernisms that sought more expansive audiences (especially with Tatlin, Rodchenko, Brancusi, and Rietveld). A more detailed history of Burton’s prodigious output of the 1980s is required, as is a sustained analysis of his contribution to the debates about new forms of public art emerging in the 1980s. The registration of the ongoing AIDS crisis in Burton’s work is also of great importance and, I think, central to any understanding of his public art (as well as his heavy and tenacious independent sculptures). Burton’s story is layered, and it intersects with many of the most important formations in postwar American art. It is my hope that this first history of his artistic practice of the 1970s will ground future discussions of his contributions. Any such accounts of Burton, however, must be made in both cognizance and embrace of the fundamental importance of queer experience for his work and thought. This is the main reason it is the present book, rather than any of the other possible ones, that I believe needs to come first.



**STREET AND**  
**STAGE EARLY**  
**EXPERIMENTS**





# 1

## IMITATE ORDINARY LIFE

### Self-Works, Literalist Theater, and Being Otherwise in Public, 1969–70

For his first forays into making art, Burton turned to himself. Like others who were reformulating performance in these years, he began by using his own body as the medium. However, he came to eschew the body as a site of presence. For his performance works, he went unnoticed in a crowd; he bracketed everyday experiences; and he began to consider the performer as their own primary audience. His earliest works revolved around acts of posing in which Burton sought to heighten self-consciousness of his behavior and his experience of social encounters. He came to call this short-lived mode of practice “Self-Works” since it resulted from Burton operating on himself—and from exploring the ways in which he was visible to others. These works occupied him for only a few months in 1969, his first year as a performance artist. Soon after, he would relinquish this mode and cease using his own body in his performance art (with a very few exceptions), but the core ideas of the *Self-Works* continued to be generative. His tactics of posing, bracketing, critical mimesis, ironic quotation, and camouflaging had their earliest explorations in this series of works in which Burton used himself as medium, object, and audience.

Burton’s works from 1969 are hard to track, since he was developing the ways in which he himself understood and referred to them. This chapter reconstructs Burton’s contributions to the first four events in the *Street Works* series in which artists created performance works on Manhattan streets. I begin with a general discussion of these festival-like events and then proceed to examine each of Burton’s works for them (and related works he conceived beyond their event-based framework). These conceptual performances were

*Schwitters Piece* (for *Street Works I*, 15 March) and, the following day, *For Release: Immediate* (and the fictional work, *Take One*, it discusses); *Disguise* (for *Street Works II*, 18 April); *Ear Piece* (for *Street Works III*, 25 May), which I discuss along with the related examples of *Self-Works* that Burton later recounted in his first artist lecture (at the University of Iowa, June 1970); *Dream* (for the opening of *Street Works IV*, 2 October) and the related *Nude* (done as a response to *Dream* on 26 October).

It was an active year for Burton, and by the end of it he had committed himself to performance. The *Street Works* events proved instrumental, and Burton's contributions to them established the foundations and future terms for his practice. Each tested behaviors and explored how they appeared to others.

### **Block Parties: The *Street Works* Events of 1969**

The year 1969 was a life-changing one for Burton. As discussed in the introduction, he had split with John Button in 1968 after a seven-year relationship, striking out on his own from the community of painters and poets that were his older partner's milieu. Burton moved into a small tenement apartment at 86 Thompson Street and began to make a new circle of friends among poets, conceptual artists, sculptors, and performers. Whether from the perspective of realist painting, conceptual language-based practices and poetry, or emerging feminism, these friends all occupied positions critical of the dominant artistic trends in New York in the late 1960s.

This heterogeneity was reflected in Burton's practice. In addition to his first performance works, in 1969 he pursued pathways that might, at first, seem contradictory. His coedited textbook, *Exploring the Arts*, came out that year, as did his contribution to the introduction to Harald Szeemann's *When Attitudes Become Form* exhibition catalog (in March).<sup>1</sup> The exhibition of realist painting he curated, *Direct Representation: Five Younger Realists*, opened at Fischbach Gallery (in September).<sup>2</sup> He also wrote essays both on temporality in postminimalist sculpture and on Alex Katz in 1969.<sup>3</sup> Not only were these activities evidence of the hustle Burton needed to keep afloat. They are also indicative of the swirl of affinities that he began to mobilize into new practices for himself during this critical year.

It was in this matrix of new influences, friendships, and re-energized

enthusiasms that Burton decided to be an artist. While he had been an aspiring painter in his teens, literature had taken hold. It makes sense, then, that language-based, concrete poetry provided a bridge for Burton. He recalled in 1987,

I was trying to write. It was clear to me that my attempts at writing plays were failures. I was not at all a natural. I had no ear. I could not write dialogue. It wasn't naturalistic. So I was trying to write abstract plays, whatever that means. I can't remember. Plays without psychology and without naturalistic characters. That kind of coincided with the conceptual art and literature as art. Then, in the late 1960s, I was quite close with John Perreault, who was a poet, and Vito Acconci, whom I now loathe. Vito was a poet moving into literature. So, around 1969, 1970, 1971, we did a lot of works together.<sup>4</sup>

With these friends, he began to see performance as a connecting thread between poetry, theater, conceptual art, and Minimalism. With its use of the human body as art material, he saw performance as the logical synthesis of figuration and literality.

Already in 1968, Burton had begun helping out with his new friends' performances, becoming immersed in the loft performance milieu. In May 1968, Burton assisted with the poetry events held at Robert Rauschenberg's loft, which included works by Acconci, Perreault, Michael Benedikt, Clark Coolidge, and Lewis MacAdams.<sup>5</sup> Of all his activities, however, Burton's participation in the first four *Street Works* events organized by Hannah Weiner, Marjorie Strider, Perreault, Bernadette Mayer, and Eduardo Costa in 1969 afforded the opportunity to shift from critic to artist (fig. 1.1).<sup>6</sup>

*Street Works* was a series of loosely organized events that encouraged artists and poets to do public works in designated areas of Manhattan during a specific time frame. There were five events in New York in 1969 (in March, April, May, October, and December), followed by a more distributed sixth iteration called *World Works*.<sup>7</sup> Burton participated in the first four and was closely involved with the organizing group.

*Street Works I*, held on 15 March 1969, originated in an open call for participants to make works for a twenty-block area in midtown over the space of twenty-four hours (fig. 1.2). Perreault estimated twenty artists participated, but Strider remarked, "we really don't know how many are involved. . . . We're not celebrating anything really. I guess the idea of the whole thing is to make people look at their environment."<sup>8</sup>

*Street Works II*, on 18 April, grew to thirty-nine invited artists. Strider recalled, though, that "anybody who was our friend would hear about it

and they would participate.”<sup>9</sup> It was even reported that Stephen Kaltenbach assigned his 120 students at the School of Visual Arts to make performance works on site, but this may itself have been a fabrication intended as a conceptual work.<sup>10</sup> Because some attendees complained that the first event was too diffuse with its large area and twenty-four-hour period, this next installment was much more crowded and concentrated. A mere hour in length, it took place in Greenwich Village and was limited to one block (from Thirteenth to Fourteenth Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues).

A massive seven hundred artists were invited to participate in the next installment, *Street Works III*, though no one was able to count all who did.<sup>11</sup> *Street Works III* occurred in what would soon be commonly referred to as SoHo (between Grand and Prince and Greene and Wooster) on the evening of 25 May 1969 (the Sunday before the Memorial Day holiday). Lippard noted that “this area was chosen because it was then so deserted. Seven hundred people were invited to join and the event was aptly and darkly documented by Perreault with a flashless camera.”<sup>12</sup> The police shut down



**Figure 1.1.** From left to right: Dan Graham, Hannah Weiner, Vito Acconci, John Perreault, Eduardo Costa, Anne Waldman, Bernadette Mayer, John Giorno, Louis Warsh, Scott Burton. Rob Hugh Rosen, *Untitled* (from the series *An Autumn Afternoon with John Perreault and His Friends at the West Village Piers*), 1969. © 2022 Rob Hugh Rosen.

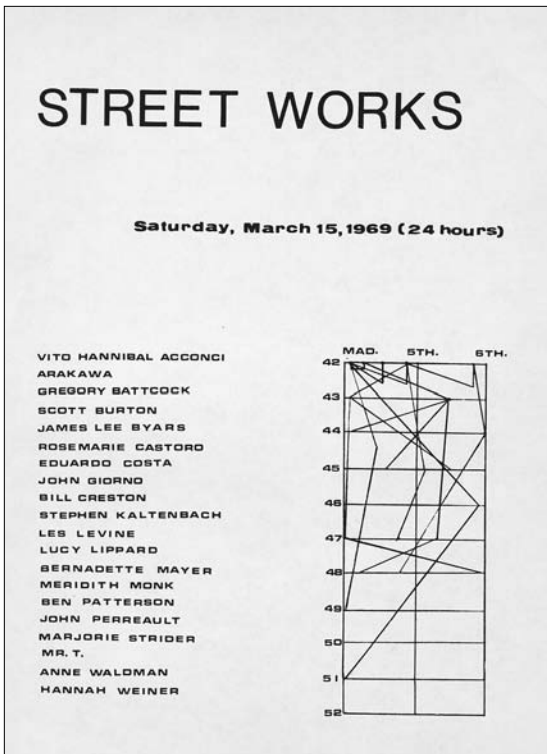


Figure 1.2. Poster for *Street Works I*, 15 March 1969, with map of the telephone calls made by John Perreault for his *Street Music I*, as reproduced in *o to 9*, no. 6 (15 July 1969).

the event early (at 10:30 p.m.) in response to John Giorno's work *Stop the Cars, Stop Vehicle Pollution, Stop Air Pollution*, in which he and five friends threw handfuls of nails onto Canal Street. Cars' tires went slowly flat after being punctured, creating the intended result of a traffic disruption in the Holland Tunnel.<sup>13</sup> As Perreault noted in his column, "this was excuse enough to clamp down the lid on the whole affair."<sup>14</sup>

Because of such police run-ins and other difficulties that attended these unauthorized events, the organizers realized that they required an official sponsor to insulate them from future infringements. Consequently, the Architectural League of New York became the institutional home to a three-week festival (rather than a one-day event), *Street Works IV*, in October of that year. Gregory Battcock wrote in advance of *Street Works IV* that "Jill Johnston told me she thought Street Works were silly. I think so too. However I am convinced that they are legitimate artistic explorations of great value. What these people do isn't of consequence. But what they have done is to bring art out of doors, and beyond the scrutiny of guards, ticket-takers and high society organization. Great!"<sup>15</sup> With an official sponsorship and three-week run, *Street Works IV* chafed against its previous do-it-yourself model.

After this flirtation with institutional support, *Street Works V* returned to the series' ad hoc nature, adopting a policy of total anonymity for participants and relying on a general call for works. This much smaller-scale, furtive *Street Works V* occurred on 21 December.<sup>16</sup> There was a sixth and final installment that exceeded the bounds of Manhattan and went global with the title *World Works*. On 21 March 1970, anyone anywhere was invited to choose a street and make a work. As Hannah Weiner said, "I wanted to create the feeling that people all over the world were doing a related thing at a related time, although they would be doing it individually, without an audience and without knowledge of what others were doing. It is an act of faith. We have unknown collaborators."<sup>17</sup>

As Anna Dezeuze has discussed, the chaotic and inclusive *Street Works* events can be understood as a nexus at which multiple art-theoretical trajectories of the 1960s converged on questions about the boundedness and interconnectedness of artistic practice.<sup>18</sup> The events' loose organizing principles allowed many different kinds of artists to formulate experimental actions that informed (or sometimes departed from) the priorities of their work. Looking back on the *Street Works* genre he helped to name, Perreault said,

A Street Work is anything that takes place in the street or is placed in the street, calls attention to the street, is temporary, and is designated or created by an artist as a Street Work. Although it may be difficult to avoid political over-tones in an art form that by its very nature exists outside the gallery-museum economic structure—there is no way of buying or collecting a Street Work—a Street Work is not directly political and is no attack on any person or thing.<sup>19</sup>

The *Street Works* events had a wide range of contributors, only a portion of whom have been documented, including Adrian Piper, Lil Picard, Rosemarie Castoro, Arakawa, James Lee Byars, Meredith Monk, Geoffrey Hendricks, Anne Waldman, Les Levine, and others.<sup>20</sup> The best-remembered of the interventions is Acconci's work *Activity Situation Using Streets, Traveling, Following, Changing Location* (also known as *Following Piece*) for *Street Works IV*, in which the artist pursued a stranger on the street until they entered a private space.<sup>21</sup> Burton was one of the most frequent contributors, and he was the only one other than the organizers to participate in the first four Manhattan-based *Street Works* events in 1969.<sup>22</sup> These experiences bonded this group of artists, if just for a time, and helped each formulate a different mode of performance practice that, as Battcock once explained, "could not exist within the traditional situation."<sup>23</sup> This formulation of this

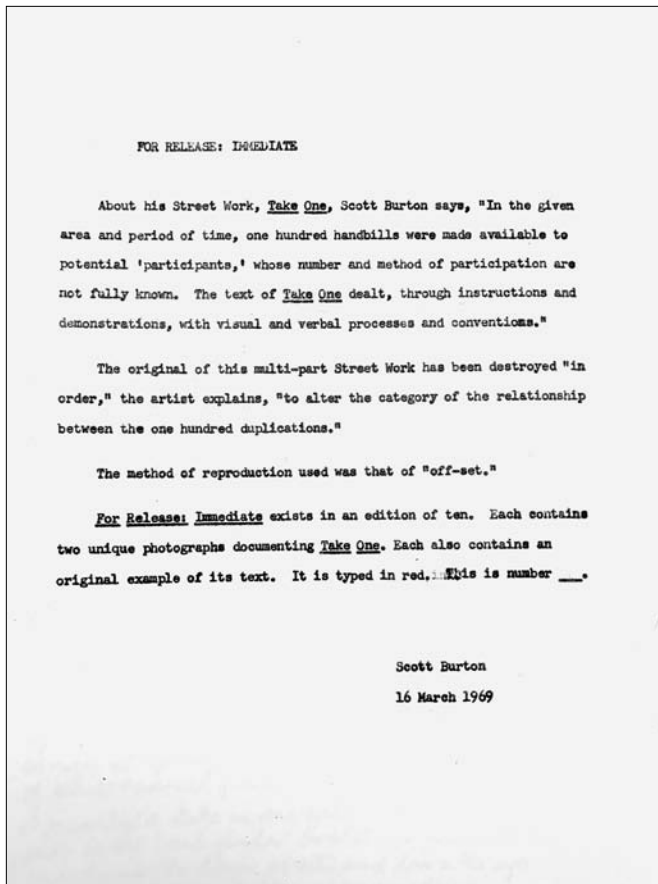
new mode of performance was grounded in the social networks, friendships, and allegiances among poets, artists, and critics that made up the *Street Works* group.

### Found Object: Burton's First Original Unoriginal Artworks

Burton was one of a few art critics who had been asked to participate in the free-form, daylong *Street Works I*. Embracing a range of media and practices, the invitation list included visual artists, poets, street performers, and writers, such as Burton and fellow art critics Lippard and Battcock (as well as the more multifaceted Perreault). Lippard's contribution to *Street Works I* was to draw a circle of chalk around every poet she encountered during the time span of the event. This act of critical taxonomy was somewhat fraught since the boundaries between art, poetry, and criticism were themselves at issue in the event and for the organizers. Indeed, she found only one who would be so identified—Acconci.<sup>24</sup> Burton similarly played with an act of categorization and citation. Perreault—referring to Burton, as he had Lippard, as a “writer”—described the then-critic's initial contribution to *Street Works I*, which set the path for Burton's subsequent repackaging of the everyday and critique of the sanctity of artistic authority. Perreault recounted, “On the corner of Fifth Avenue and 49th Street at 2.25 I met Joe Kosuth and two friends who had come to look for Street Works. He had just met writer Scott Burton who had asked him to select a piece of paper from the street. Burton then placed the paper in a plastic Baggie along with a slip of paper marked ‘Schwitters.’ This was his Schwitters piece.”<sup>25</sup> With *Schwitters Piece*, Burton utilized his extensive art-historical knowledge to make a joke about the use of street detritus through his citation of the German Dadaist and his collages made of rubbish. Burton's attempt to incorporate the non-art everyday into his work, however, was complicated by the interference of art projects being done during *Street Works I*. Perreault explained that Kosuth's chosen piece of rubbish was “an abandoned index card that was one of the ‘101 Instructions’ handed out by poet Bernadette Mayer.”<sup>26</sup> (He also noted that, as they were talking, gallerist Virginia Dwan “leaned out of a cab window and asked us if we were having a political meeting.”) Burton's act of appropriation, recycling, and citation was prescient, and he would go on to expand on the potency of taking an element from the everyday and asking that we view it differently.

This selection by Kosuth of another artist's (Mayer's) work for Burton's act of recontextualization, however, underwent further interrogation. On the sixteenth of March (the day after *Street Works I*), Burton created a new





**Figure 1.3.** Scott Burton, *For Release: Immediate*, 16 March 1969, as reproduced in Judy Collischan and John Perreault, eds., *In Plain Sight: Street Works and Performances, 1968–1971* (Lake-wood, CO: Lab at Belmar, 2008). © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society.

work, *For Release: Immediate*, that reframed the question of appropriation as authorship in *Schwitters Piece* (fig. 1.3). Using the form of the press release, *For Release: Immediate* describes a fictional Street Work, *Take One*, which is the result of his making a “new” artwork from Kosuth’s choice—a choice that, itself, absorbed Burton’s idea for *Schwitters Piece* into a meta-commentary. Referring to himself in the third person (illeism), Burton quoted himself about the work as if it already existed: “About his Street Work, *Take One*, Scott Burton says, ‘In the given area and period of time, one hundred handbills were made available to the potential “participants,” whose number and method of participation are not fully known. The text of *Take One* dealt, through instructions and demonstrations, with visual and verbal processes and conventions.’” This is a description, it seems, of Mayer’s *101 Instructions*, consisting of printed cards with tightly written instructions to the reader (fig. 1.4). The text starts with “make noise. throw garbage cans away. run on one street for a short time. steal cars and re-

place them with photographs” and continues for scores and scores more instructions, all written in small letters packed together.<sup>27</sup> Burton’s *For Release: Immediate* recasts the 101 instructions of Mayer’s work as 100 handbills that were supposedly distributed during *Take One*. Because Mayer’s work was signed (the last words on the cards are “‘69. Bernadette Mayer.”), Burton’s retroactive work destabilized its own authorship, for anyone who thought they had found “evidence” of *Take One* would see that it did not bear Burton’s signature but was, clearly, his friend’s work.

Throughout the short typewritten text that makes up *For Release: Immediate*, Burton undercut the authenticity of the “artist.” This subterfuge went beyond writing about (and quoting) himself in the third person (he would use illeism to great effect a few years later in his *Lecture on Self*, discussed in chapter 4). *For Release: Immediate* described a performance that did not happen but that would—for anyone who found one of Mayer’s handbills—call into question the supposedly authoritative tone adopted by the press release and its citations of Burton as artist. His somewhat jokey work went on to thematize the issue of originality by Burton further quoting himself: “The original of this multi-part Street Work has been destroyed ‘in order,’ the artist explains, ‘to alter the category of the relationship between the



Figure 1.4. Bernadette Mayer, *101 Instructions*, March 1969, as reproduced in *o to 9*, no. 6 (15 July 1969). © Bernadette Mayer.

one hundred duplications.” Strategically shifting from the use of his own name in the first paragraph to the use of “the artist” in this paragraph, the statement of intentionality is, itself, a means of “altering the category of the relationship” between duplications. The remainder of the text performs the protocols of artistic authenticity for multiple works of art, and it claims an edition size (ten) for *For Release: Immediate* (i.e., this typed page) including, each, two unique photographs documenting *Take One* (which I do not believe actually existed), and “an original example of its text” (further complicating the loss of the original stated previously). And, finally, *For Release: Immediate*’s text about itself concludes, “It is typed in red. This is number \_\_\_\_.” The one extant copy of *For Release: Immediate* does not appear to be in red ink, and there is no number on it.<sup>28</sup> Referring to itself, *For Release: Immediate*’s description does not match the reader’s experience, and, in this way, the purported explanatory effect of the press-release format also becomes bracketed and undermined.

Because the date of *For Release: Immediate* is the day following *Street Works I*, I believe that this is a work that Burton created as (humorous?) metacommentary on the event—one that was in reaction to Kosuth’s own authorial appropriation of Burton’s idea through his choice of Mayer’s signed work. I have not found any commentary or further information about *Take One* in the archives.<sup>29</sup> I have treated this work as retroactively creating a fiction that destabilizes its own claims and authorship. It is even possible—though I do not think likely—that this is not even Burton’s work, despite the fact that it is “signed” by him. It is exactly these kinds of skepticisms that Burton’s critique of authorship hoped to spark.<sup>30</sup>

These self-contradictory, linked conceptual artworks were foundational for Burton’s artistic career. *Schwitters Piece*, *For Release: Immediate*, and the fictional *Take One* are all caught up with questions of quotation, authorship, and appropriation. They constitute a suite of original conceptual works about unoriginality. All three block the viewer/reader’s presumptions about artistic authenticity and sincerity and instead conjure a loop of possible other meanings and further authors/artists. Burton posed the question whether the piece of paper chosen for *Schwitters Piece* became the artwork of Mayer, Kosuth, or himself—or all three in collaboration. The same object shifted meanings as it shifted hands, and Burton nested these authored meanings one in the other. For Burton, these works were a performative enactment of the critique of authorship that he saw as Minimalism’s unfulfilled promise. Throughout his subsequent career, he would continue to make works that were invisible as art, that bracketed authorship, and that emphasized dissemblance and critical duplicity (that is, doubleness).

Performance was also crucial to the chain of works *Schwitters Piece—For Release: Immediate—Take One*. Each relies on a performative act of reframing, whether in real time or retroactively. His friends in the *Street Works* group were, all in their own way, thinking about the performative recasting of the encountered and observed world, and Burton's evolving ideas about performance, dissemblance, and recontextualization participated in these conversations.<sup>31</sup> Strider, for instance, distributed thirty empty picture frames on the streets, creating "instant paintings" by focusing attention on the everyday.<sup>32</sup> (Wittily and self-reflexively, her contribution to *Street Works III* was a banner hung outside the event with the imperative "Picture Frames" printed on it.)

Of particular importance was Costa, whom Burton had known since 1968 and who became a close friend, neighbor, and long-term correspondent. Burton assisted Costa with the latter's 2:30 a.m. installation of *Useful Art Works* for *Street Works I*. These works of urban repair consisted of replacing lost metal street signs at various neglected intersections within the *Street Works* zone.<sup>33</sup> Another related repair work of Costa's involved the repainting of the Flushing Line subway station at Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue at 7 a.m., but it was halted and left incomplete (presumably because of the morning commuters and the authorities). He also translated signs into Spanish. Costa's acts of repair and care were a touchstone for the mode of functional sculpture Burton would later make his hallmark. Done in secret, Costa's works—like Burton's—refused the authority of the artist. Indeed, Costa's work had long bracketed authenticity. In the mid-1960s in Argentina, Costa was part of a group of conceptual artists working in dialogue with philosopher Oscar Masotta to create fictional Happenings disseminated through print media and gossip.<sup>34</sup> The supposed immediacy and spontaneity of the Happening became, in their work, an opportunity for a critique of authenticity and an undercutting of the purported objectivity (and authority) of the media. Discussions with Costa about these ideas no doubt taught Burton much about fiction as a conceptual tool. Indeed, as Costa has reiterated to me in many conversations over the years, his and Burton's close friendship and ongoing dialogue about art and life profoundly impacted them both.

Looking back on this pivotal moment when he started making art, Burton recalled, "Performance was where the fringe people found themselves when I was making my way into the art world. I like to scratch around the perimeters of things, and performance is good for that."<sup>35</sup> Throughout 1969, Burton became increasingly engaged and, as I will discuss, did more and more ambitious performances at each successive iteration of *Street Works*. He soon became an advocate for this burgeoning medium within

the art world, and his enthusiasm grew rapidly as a result of these new-found friendships and the energy of these events. Perreault later recalled, “Burton became essential to that group, not only because he was able to arrange gigs at Hunter College in New York and the prestigious Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, but because he was energetic, informed, and full of inspired art ideas.”<sup>36</sup> (I discuss Burton’s production of performance events at Hunter and the Wadsworth in chapter 2.)

By the end of 1969, Burton had launched an Association for Performances out of his apartment at 86 Thompson Street. The association was a short-lived advocacy organization–cum–booking agency for performance art with a focus on Strider’s, Perreault’s, and his own work.<sup>37</sup> Burton’s enthusiasm manifested itself both in these organizational activities and in his ever more ambitious sense of the horizons of his work. The synergy between his new social group and their collective organization of these performance events facilitated Burton’s new understanding of his aims. His subsequent contributions to the *Street Works* events after his first foray reflect his growing adventurousness.

### **Being Otherwise in Public: *Disguise for Street Works II***

The second *Street Works* event (in April) concentrated the action during a single hour on a single block with a larger list of invitees. *Street Works I* had been an all-day event spanning twenty blocks, and a cause of complaint had been that it was difficult to find the art. On this question, Perreault would later recall,

As a viewer of as well as participant in Street Works, I can testify that once one was keyed up to search for artworks within a certain number of city blocks within a certain time, everything was vivified; everything was sculpture. Is the mother holding the hand of her child a dancer dancing? Are the scraps of paper in the gutter Schwitters-like collage? Is that billboard real or only an artwork? Is the panhandler who approaches you an artist? Are the products in the shop window sculptures-for-a-day? Why is that telephone in the booth ringing and ringing?<sup>38</sup>

*Street Works II* tried to address this problem with a more festival-like atmosphere in a smaller zone. The result, Perreault remarked, was that, “the area was totally saturated. It was impossible for me to keep track of everything that was going on.”<sup>39</sup>

Especially given the larger number of artists participating (and being, themselves, viewers), the environment of *Street Works II* was one of heightened attention and artists' competition for it. For this situation of amplified surveillance and earnest scrutiny amid a busy Friday afternoon, Burton chose to produce a work that deflected from his being seen as an artist at all. He aimed at total anonymity and camouflage (much as he would later do with his anonymous public furniture). Burton's performance, titled *Disguise*, involved him moving through the designated *Street Works* zone dressed in "ordinary, unremarkable woman's clothing."<sup>40</sup> Published accounts maintain that Burton seemed to have gone largely unacknowledged by his friends and the art crowds scanning for *Street Works*. That is, until it was reported by Perreault in the *Village Voice* after the event.<sup>41</sup>

Burton offered this explanation of *Disguise*:

I wanted to do something invisible. I wanted to be there and not be there. I did this—and it sounds funny but it's not meant to be funny—by dressing as a woman. It wasn't drag. It was very ordinary. I carried a shopping bag and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible, and I think I succeeded because a lot of my friends looked at me but none of them saw me—saw *me*—you know? My interest was in controlling the way you present yourself and [in] your clothing as a language. And like language you can [choose] not [to] use it. I tried to say something silent.<sup>42</sup>

Burton emphasized his interest in urban camouflage ("doing something invisible"). He aimed at being inconspicuous to others. In his attempt at being unseen, Burton created a performance work that created its effect primarily for the one who performed it. Such a self-directed address would take hold as a central topic of investigation for Burton in his subsequent works. *Disguise* represents a first attempt at creating works that hid in plain sight.

His friend the artist Jane Kaufman recalled in an interview with me about *Disguise*, "He wanted to appear without appearing," echoing Burton's formulation. Kaufman had assisted him in his preparation for the performance, providing him with clothing as well as helping him get ready on the day. They dressed Burton in an elaborate disguise, which Perreault's review described down to the smallest details (which were no doubt provided by Burton himself). Invoking the art-historical reference of Duchamp's alter ego Rose Sélavy to lend some gravity to Burton's "sensational" performance, Perreault wrote,

Perhaps the most invisible and most sensational work was “performed” by Scott Burton. The ghost of Rose Selavy [*sic*] made her appearance. Burton walked the area in disguise and went completely unnoticed. He wore pink octagonal glasses with blue frames, a green floral print jersey slip-over with a large cowl (worn down), uncuffed navy blue elephant bells, a beige coat, low-heeled shoes with matching gloves. He also wore a short-brown wig, pink-orange lipstick, Guerlain perfume, and carried a plastic, flower-printed shopping bag and an umbrella decorated with white daisies. He was completely invisible.<sup>43</sup>

Perreault’s published description exaggerated a few details as a means of arguing for Burton’s success in this work. (Kaufman recalled that Burton failed to put on blush or other makeup, so Perreault’s mention of “pink-orange lipstick” may be an embellishment.)<sup>44</sup>

Regardless of the garishness of the disguise, Burton conceived of the costumed performance as an act of camouflage in relation to the scene of the urban street. As he wrote about this work and its successors, his “self was the figure in a figure/ground relationship with the performance locations—city streets occupied at the same time by other outdoor urban performances—as context with unique characteristics.”<sup>45</sup> Burton’s invocation of figure/ground echoes how Laura Levin later analyzed camouflage, arguing that it is not to be understood as mere hiding but, rather, should be seen more expansively as an integrative relationality between self and setting. She writes, “camouflage is a visual and physical negotiation with one’s environment; it is how individuals transform their appearance—much like animals and insects—as a means of locating themselves within a larger environment or picture. . . . This need not involve the total disappearance of a body into a space or precise mirroring of surroundings. Instead, it implies a process of performative correspondence: embedding oneself, or becoming embedded, in the surrounding environment through the physical and visual stylization of the body.”<sup>46</sup> Camouflage involves a heightened attention to both the person or thing being camouflaged and the situation of that act. It is a “figure/ground relationship” as Burton characterized it. With Levin’s definition in mind, we must ask about the various grounds into which Burton embedded his own figure through this disguise. For the designated hour of *Street Works II*, that one block was both a public space (with normal street traffic of those who were unaware or unconcerned with performance art) and a scene of artistic play, confraternity, and competition (composed of the artists making their own work who, in turn, were among the viewers of each other’s performances). Bur-

ton's camouflage had to be set against these two imbricated grounds. For his act of disappearing into the quotidian and the artistic on Fourteenth Street that afternoon buzzing with the *Street Works* crowd, he chose gender as the primary axis. While invisibility to others was his aim, *Disguise* also allowed Burton to experience the everyday street differently than he might otherwise have been emboldened to do.

After all, Burton's adopted clothing was not just any disguise. He could have worn a hat and a fake beard, for instance. Instead, he chose to adopt the sartorial signs of a gender not ascribed to him. In this regard, *Disguise*'s invisibility was far different from the other kinds of barely visible practices that were a feature of many *Street Works* contributions, since it took the recoding of gender as its main device. As relayed by Kaufman (who also accompanied him during the performance), Burton was highly self-conscious and anxious, for he knew the very real danger he put himself in by moving through the daylight streets in clothes that diverged from his assigned gender. At this time, it was also illegal to appear in public wearing a full outfit of clothes that did not match the gender assigned to one at birth, and this statute would be the excuse for much police harassment of transgender people and of queer establishments—such as happened with the Stonewall uprising just a few months after *Street Works II*. Kaufman remembered, “Scott was a nervous wreck about it. We went together. He was so scared that he hid in a doorway to a store until I made him move. It was raining, and we walked around under an umbrella.”<sup>47</sup> (Near the end of the hour-long event, at 6 p.m., a rainstorm hit.)<sup>48</sup>

Burton's one-hour act pales in comparison to his transwomen contemporaries whose lives involved navigating such dangers daily as they moved through the streets. Indeed, the busy block of *Street Works II* likely provided a safer zone than most city streets because of the increased crowd of art seekers and the range of other distracting performances concentrated in the area. But Burton approached this performance with a seriousness that acknowledged the risk inherent in even such a minor transgression (and one enacted in a facilitating context of an art festival). He also made sure to assert that his work was not intended to be humorous or theatrical, and he distanced the work from “drag.” With this declaration, Burton differentiated his act of walking down the street in women's clothing from stage-based, theatrical drag performances and the hyperbolic caricatures of femininity that were their staple.<sup>49</sup> As he said, he was not trying to be funny but sincere. Burton's act of being in women's clothing on a Friday afternoon was no doubt as eye-opening as it was anxiety producing, but he committed himself to testing the effects of appearing differently. This act of gender transgression was a means of being other than himself in public.



A binary and hierarchical account of gender was assumed by Burton in aiming for *Disguise*'s inversion of his recognizable self. Of this we must be critical, since his work implies an equation of invisibility with femininity, which in turn reifies a set of binaries that cast the artist's role as male in opposition to the everyday female on the street. Burton's feminist sympathies were just beginning at this time through his friendship with artists like Kaufman and Strider. Nevertheless, his choice to dress in women's clothing as an act of artistic self-denial reproduced sexism. Even though the clothes he borrowed were an artist's clothes (i.e., Kaufman's), he mobilized them to be not-male and not-artist in hopes of being overlooked. The invocation of binary gender codes most often ushers in their hierarchical distinction (relentlessly so), and Burton's cross-dressing performance could not help but hypostatize such larger structural inequalities. This is problematic, but we must also acknowledge that Burton's act was an exploratory attempt at identification with a position that he did not share. Burton's intention was to undermine the conventional role of the artist and the expressionist model of artistic authority. While he inadvertently reified that role's presumptive masculinity in his rejection of it, his aim was to identify with an alternate positionality as an act of refusal. He described *Disguise* as achieving "total anonymity—as self (to acquaintances); as male, as performer (to all). Achievement of 'invisibility'; immaterial piece. And 'costumes'; concealment and revelation."<sup>50</sup> Important in this account are, first, how much Burton was trying to produce a denial of his own presence as an artist (in an art festival) and, second, how he was trying to obfuscate his legibility as male as a means of understanding how this affected behavior (both his and others').

The received narratives of Burton's performance maintain that the disguise was successful, allowing him to pass unnoticed in the busy streets. In the literature on *Street Works*, this is often repeated, becoming part of the official recollection of this event. For instance, in 2003 Strider remarked, "Scott Burton dressed as a woman and he actually walked by me several times and I did not recognize him."<sup>51</sup> Both Perreault's official account and Burton's own subsequent retellings of the event insisted that he was indeed "invisible" and went "unrecognized among a group of people to whom he was previously known."<sup>52</sup>

Bolstering this narrative is the single documentary photograph of *Disguise* that Burton used in his lectures to demonstrate how he walked unnoticed on a busy street (fig. 1.5). The photograph is well composed, with a person presumed to be Burton passing perhaps too conveniently behind a bench with four women looking across the street (at another *Street Work*?). When the photo was published in 1972 (and when Burton used the slide in



**Figure 1.5.** Photograph used by Scott Burton to document *Self-Work: Disguise for Street Works II*, 18 April 1969. Photographer unknown. Burton indicated that he was the person walking at center, behind the bench. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

his own lectures), his profile was circled to indicate his presence. Indeed, the photograph offers no actual evidence, and it could just as easily have been a contrivance drawn by Burton from the photographs of the event (or any random day). With its dubious veracity, this ambiguous image was marshaled to testify to Burton's participation and the success of his disguise. It could be, like *For Release: Immediate*, fictional documentation—here produced to “prove” his successful camouflage.

What should we make of the claim that Burton went completely unrecognized? He appears to have had no experience doing drag or cross-dressing, and he had not engaged in the extensive bodywork and discipline required to rework inculcated comportments and gestures. With his ill-fitting clothes, wig, and largely or completely makeup-less face, Burton's lack of skill must have made him stand out. Kaufman recalled, “We had the same size shoe, so he borrowed my heels. He couldn't walk in them. [laughing] He was limping around.”<sup>53</sup> This lack of skill—coupled with the visible fear and anxiety he no doubt conveyed—makes it unlikely that he was as stealth as he (and his advocates) claimed. Kaufman remarked that

it was “so bizarre to see him walking down the street” and that “everybody recognized him anyway.”<sup>54</sup> She walked with him as a sort of protection, and they shared an umbrella while friends passed by and said hello to her. Burton, however, insisted that they might have looked at him but not *seen* him.

There is a difference between recognizing someone and acting on that recognition. On my walk to work every day, I recognize many fellow travelers on the same commute, but I rarely acknowledge them or, indeed, give any indication that they are known to me (and I to them). Burton could maintain that he remained invisible, perhaps, because he registered a lack of acknowledgment by his friends who, in the context of the art festival atmosphere, were looking for Burton and for performance art. The disjunction between Burton’s claims to be unseen and the evidence to the contrary is, I believe, rooted in the act of gender transgression perpetrated by him. That is, his self-othering and transformation could have produced a range of effects and recognitions beyond just “invisibility,” and one has to ask why none of the spectators (whether friends or strangers) broke the spell of Burton’s anxiously worn dress and wig. I cannot help but think that this psychologically charged hour for Burton was not one of total camouflage but rather the result of at least a few uncomfortable refusals to acknowledge him. While some friends may not have noticed him (like Strider, perhaps), those who did speak with Kaufman and her new friend under the umbrella most likely knew something was going on. One could speculate about how friends or strangers might have looked at Burton and—slowly or quickly—began to see the disjunction between the gendered accessories and the person uncomfortably wearing them. His performance, that is, was shadowed by the always-present potential for the shaming and fear that are often projected onto any act of gender nonconformity.

It is important to remember, however, that such affects—*anxiety, fear, shame*—are also sparked in others as they are confronted with the choice to acknowledge or not acknowledge what they begin to recognize as gender transgression. That is, the challenge to gender normativity was likely experienced affectually not just by Burton but also by those who were faced with his performance of it. Those friends or strangers who passed him on the street operated under the same behavioral norms, and anyone who engaged with Burton that day would have likely reacted both to his heightened self-consciousness and to their own struggle to manage the disruption of their expectations of the fixity and immediate recognizability of gender. Regardless of whether Burton really believed that he was unrecognized or not, he would have observed—in either case—the anxious effects on passersby and those talking with Kaufman. Such transmissions and contagions of affect would become a key part of Burton’s understanding

of nonverbal communication, and he would later explore it in more depth in his *Behavior Tableaux*.

Ultimately, Burton was right when he said that his friends might have seen him but not really *seen* him. Their lack of acknowledgment may not have been ignorance or oversight but transphobia. His friends may have chosen not to break the disguise because of their discomfort with the situation of seeing their male friend in women's clothing. Lippard would later critique this response to Burton's acts of gender transgression, saying exasperatedly, "nor was there any hullabaloo when Scott Burton promenaded in drag for a 1969 Street Work."<sup>55</sup> Lippard's point was that women's art was always criticized for its transgressions, but artists like Burton and Acconci were not similarly censured. She is correct in this, but I would argue that part of the reason for the silence about Burton's *Disguise* was the refusal to acknowledge an act that denied the naturalness of masculinity and its equation with the artist's role. As his feminist sympathies grew in the years following, he came to further explore and criticize this equation. He expanded on *Disguise*'s terms in later costume works, such as the 1973 *Modern American Artist* (discussed in chapter 4), in which he adopted hyperbolic caricatures of artistic masculinity in order to mock and undermine them.

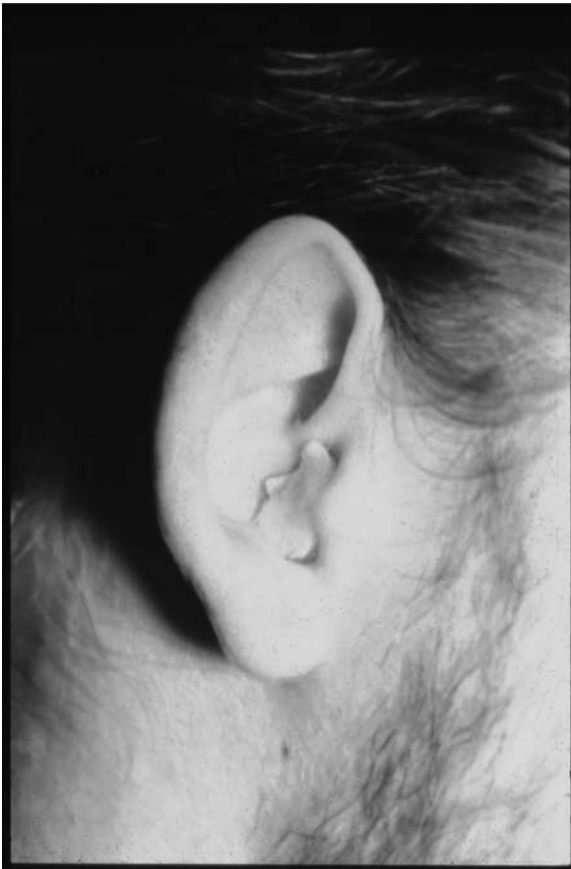
This early experiment taught Burton much about the role of the artist and about the negotiations and expectations of behavior—both his own and others'. It also laid the foundation for his interest in tactics of dissemblance, infiltration, and covert behavior as means to address the power dynamics of sexuality and gender in social spaces. *Disguise* is a conflicted work (and no doubt was for him, as well). Ultimately, it achieved its effect not solely because of *visual camouflage* but because of how its gender transgression hypostatized the normativity of behavior in the social space of the daytime street. Burton's work would further explore the ways in which positions of difference inhabited the everyday, operated in coded ways, and undermined presumptions of the normal. *Disguise* led him to deepen his concern with how the body signified to others, and he also came to understand how such a psychologically charged act for the performer could go unrecognized by others. *Disguise* made him question just who the audience of covert performance was. It was not the passersby or friends but rather himself.

Expanding on these ideas, he would start referring to his contributions to *Street Works* and related ideas as "Self-Works," retroactively including *Disguise*. He used this term because these works explored the performer as their own primary audience. While all artists are also viewers of their own work, in performance there is a simultaneity between the experience of being the performer and the viewers' experience of watching the per-

former. Burton explored this distinction, and he began to formulate works that were primarily directed at the performer's experience. His *Self-Works* operated as largely "invisible" in the social, and these acts' self-address was a means to test behaviors.

### Streetwise Duplicity: *Ear Piece* and the Other *Self-Works*

Within weeks of *Disguise*, Burton put into practice his interest in barely visible and self-directed performances with *Ear Piece*, his contribution to *Street Works III* on 25 May 1969. In it, he deprived himself of hearing by putting wax in his ears (fig. 1.6). He referred to this as a "removal piece, my negative sound piece."<sup>56</sup> This work was developed in the context of plans for the massive spectacle of *Street Works III* with its seven hundred invitees. Anticipating the crowd of artists and art students doing performances during that evening, Burton chose again to go stealth. He expanded on his



**Figure 1.6.** Photograph used by Scott Burton to document *Self-Work: Ear Piece*, 25 May 1969. Photographer unknown. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

idea of the performer as primary audience for the work by disrupting his means of engagement and communication.<sup>57</sup> Unlike other similar bracketings of the everyday (say, for instance, in Fluxus instructions or in John Cage's incorporation of ambient sounds and silences), Burton's focus was on the interplay between the more-or-less visual indiscernibility of the performance and the way it distilled time and experience for the performer who went unnoticed by the passerby. *Ear Piece*, he explained in 1971, was "a sound piece for which I walked in the streets deprived of one means of perception. This was a self-work, one which existed only for the person performing it. To be known by others, its conditions must not be witnessed but duplicated."<sup>58</sup>

I have been unable to locate any reports of Burton's barely noticeable *Ear Piece* performance, and it is not clear how long his experiment lasted. *Street Works III*, as I mentioned earlier, was shut down prematurely in response to Giorno's littering Canal Street with nails. One could imagine, however, that any friends or passersby whom Burton encountered would have had to negotiate Burton's self-imposed deafness. Because the wax was barely visible (and invisible from a distance—especially at night when the event happened), he would have appeared as unchanged or unremarkable until someone attempted interaction. He intended the work's visual recognizability to be primarily in its impact on behavior—both his and that of others who attempted to interact. He described the terms of *Ear Piece* as "Walking on Spring Street with ears plugged. (Sound) removal. Available to no one else, could only be duplicated. 'Autobiographical'—use (interrupted) of own physiology. Visible only in behavior distortions."<sup>59</sup> *Ear Piece* was "autobiographical," because it drew from his queer experience. Burton would later say about the work that "the piece is perhaps more interesting as it prefigures the theme of the isolated individual of the earlier tableaux and narrative performances."<sup>60</sup> That is, Burton's thinking behind these works was informed by the themes of isolation and alienation—themes that, especially in the 1960s, were wrapped up with queer existence. Such themes would become explicit in tableaux performances he would soon develop.

*Ear Piece* produced a degree of isolation and alienation from the social space of the street. Deprived of his hearing and unused to operating without this sense, Burton was likely tied up with his own disorientation and his attempts to negotiate others attending the event. Did he explain the performance and, if so, did he do so verbally? Of the many scenarios that could have been possible, all involve a derailing of the expectations of how his friends might engage him. The performance would have also called into question viewers' presumptions that everyone on the street could

hear them. In this way, *Ear Piece* relates to *Disguise* in that it involved his voluntary adoption of a position of alterity within the scene of the street. Burton appropriated these positions as a means to test his own experience and others' behaviors toward him.<sup>61</sup> The acts of appearing as a woman and of depriving himself of his sense of hearing were primarily self-directed, and he sought to reframe his own experience of social encounters with performances that vexed recognition and viewers' assumptions about naturalness or norms. That is, Burton's experiments compelled him to experience public space differently—with that difference not readily visible or apparent to others.

Burton seems to have been searching for a mode of covertly inhabiting public space otherwise. He tested the distinction between how he appeared to others as normal while nevertheless experiencing self-imposed alterity. He said about *Ear Piece*, "I induced silence . . . and walked around, and it was very strange. It was. It made me feel very peculiar, and I don't know what to say about it."<sup>62</sup> We could think of *Disguise* and *Ear Piece* as research experiments in which he cultivated that peculiarity, compelling himself to imagine a different experience of the street and of the sociality it afforded. He did this through adopting positions marked as other (the female in *Disguise*, the disabled in *Ear Piece*) as a means of understanding some of the complexities of how normative rules of behavior on the street were experienced. This was a search for comparisons and allegiances for his own experience as a gay man, and he investigated gender and disability for the ways in which the experience of them also involved questions of invisibility, the effects of recognition, and the endurance of others' normative expectations and biases. These were circumscribed and temporary experiences, and Burton never made any claims about having understood or being able to speak from these positionalities. Nevertheless, his interest in testing the boundaries of normativity drew from these partial and minor experiences of performing differences within the scene of ongoing visual categorization that is the public space of the street.

Burton explained to his students at the University of Iowa the following year that the *Self-Works* and their self-address had to be performed to be understood. "To read these things is not to experience them. You have to do a lot of them," he said.<sup>63</sup> Before continuing with Burton's other contributions to the 1969 *Street Works* events, it is worth examining this 1970 lecture, for it was in this text that he theorized his *Self-Works* most extensively. Burton was in Iowa City for the summer of 1970 coteaching with Strider in the fledgling Intermedia program at the university. I will discuss this important transitional period for Burton in more detail in the next chapter, but the text of the lecture is useful here because of its explanation

of how Burton understood *Self-Works* and for providing other examples of this mode that he developed outside of the context of *Street Works* events in 1969.

“Literalist Theater,” as I call the Iowa lecture after Burton’s usage of this term in his opening line, was an attempt to synthesize the many avenues of interest that came together in his incipient art practice over the previous year and a half. The text we have is taken from a transcription of Burton’s talk (possibly from a recording). Drawing on the issues of temporality and theatricality that had been so important to his art criticism, Burton dubbed his practice “literalist,” in a double-edged citation of Michael Fried, highlighting how his practice involved actual experience played out in real time. “All of them really have to be performed not only to be fully experienced, [but] to be experienced [at all],” he remarked.<sup>64</sup>

In the talk, Burton offered a list of *Self-Works*, explaining that they were “street theater pieces” in the form of instructions. Like *Ear Piece* and *Disguise* (which he cited as precedents), Burton prescribed acts that were largely imperceptible to the passerby while nevertheless reframing the experience of the public and social space of the street for the performer. He gave ten examples, including

Standing on a corner, waiting for someone, who does not come.

Hurrying or perhaps running to a destination.

Dropping some coins as if accidentally and then picking them up.

Stumbling and tripping or falling and then getting up.

Greeting a stranger, for example by waving or calling a name—in which case this becomes a piece involving mistaken identity.

Laughing to yourself as if at your own thoughts, but in public.<sup>65</sup>

He explained that those who follow these performance instructions are “just pretending—doing ordinary actions, but just pretending to . . . in a sense, doing them gratuitously.”<sup>66</sup> He maintained that such works were “literalist” in that they occurred in real time and were experienced directly and not metaphorically, but his incitement to “pretending” is a clue that he understood these as more than mere matter-of-fact activities. Each action appears as one thing to the external audience and means another to the performer. These covert performances of innocuous disruptions allowed for the performer to test others’ behaviors in response to them. At another point, he called these “invisible street works.”<sup>67</sup> In short, Burton’s literalist theater was a practice of dissemblance in which one’s external



signs, gestures, and actions occupy the space of the commonplace but, in addition, mean differently for the one who enacts them because of an added level of self-consciousness. These duplicitous actions, he said in the lecture, “imitate ordinary life.”<sup>68</sup>

This phrase “imitate ordinary life” jumped out at me when I first read the text of this lecture. Burton’s self-directed performance works all re-framed the experience of the knowing performer, appearing as just another person on the street. He encouraged these actions as a way of establishing a distinction between camouflaged appearance and the performer’s experience, with the complexity of self-consciousness operating underneath the endurances of the normal. Who needs to “imitate ordinary life” except those who do not inhabit it? This phrase, I would argue, encapsulates an important theme of the *Self-Works*: these performances replay and restage the act of being otherwise but passing as normal.

This self-masking is what many who identified as lesbians or gay men—like Burton—were compelled to practice as they navigated public spaces in the 1960s and 1970s. In a 1976 essay, the activist and film historian Vito Russo explained, “Gay people are born into a heterosexual world and spend a lot of time being raised as heterosexual. We therefore know a hell of a lot more about being straight than straights know about being gay. We needed the training to effectively ‘pass.’ Consequently, we see the culture with a dual vision.”<sup>69</sup> Russo’s statement addresses a central theme of marginalized experience—that of living under a system of power and exclusion in which an unmarked, supposedly neutral, and natural center (such as whiteness, maleness, heteronormativity, ability, or the dogma that gender is strictly and statically binary) is defined and upheld through the discrimination against others marked as different. Russo’s “dual vision” is indebted to foundational previous arguments such as W. E. B. Du Bois’s “double consciousness,” but Russo’s statement is useful to consider here because of its emphasis on how this doubling is—for queer subjects—primarily *camouflaged* and *isolated*.<sup>70</sup> Queer youth generally come to awareness of their difference within family units that are defined through and presume heterosexuality. This isolated negotiation of normativity differs from (but also intersects with) most other minoritarian positions because of this divergence from immediate family. As a consequence, visible queer behavior or comportment can become suppressed through a heightened self-monitoring. For example, the theorist José Esteban Muñoz recounted a boyhood incident in which his father, brother, and male cousins mocked him for the queer way he walked. He defensively developed a studied attention to behavior and gesture: “I studied movement from then on, watching the way in which women walked and the way in which men walked. . . . I studied all this and applied it to my own body.”<sup>71</sup>

In a society antagonistic to divergent sexualities and the categorical disruption of heteronormativity that they represent, “imitating ordinary life” is a skill that one quickly teaches oneself. However different each queer person might be, they all have to navigate their communities, neighborhoods, and relations through the “dual vision” of the normative and the non-normative. Self-consciousness and survival tactics of self-monitoring are forced on all marginalized subjects, but those whose identities include queer, lesbian, gay, or other non-normative sexualities are compelled to develop a particularly activated awareness of public spaces and of the scrutiny of behaviors and relations. Even those individuals who refuse to pass do so in knowing defiance of normative rules of behavior and its policing in public spaces. The imperative to negotiate the questions of invisible/visible and covert/overt has been fundamental to queer experience, especially in the decades considered here.<sup>72</sup> In the context of the 1970s, dissemblance (what Russo called “training” to effectively “pass”) was learned as a means of survival in public.

It would be a mistake to simply equate queer dissemblance with fear, denial, or self-loathing. It would also be an error to see it through the prism of the closet metaphor with its narrow characterization of queer experience as one of evolutionary progress into knowledge.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, I do not cast dissemblance in such a negative or negating light. Rather, I see it as an active option that emerges from the queer individual’s navigation of compulsory heterosexuality and pervasive homophobia. It is a survival tactic but also a reservoir of play, subversion, relationality, and community formation. Fluency with dissemblance results from the conjugation of forms of behavior that are alternative to heteronormativity. That is, dissemblance is the queer play with what the Didier Eribon succinctly called the “command . . . to always act ‘as if.’”<sup>74</sup> I have found Eribon’s phrasing to be a useful way to characterize Burton’s interest in behavior, bracketing, posing, and the imitation of the ordinary. Burton’s explorations of camouflage, dissemblance, infiltration, and nonverbal communication all expand on the imbrications and disjunctions between the presumptively normal and the performance of “as if.”

Burton’s performances of *Self-Works* were his first foray into thematizing queer behaviors, and they take the “as if” as their main protocol. They focus on disguises, posing, private performances, and “imitating ordinary life,” and I believe that these themes are drawn from Burton’s interrogation of queer behaviors in public spaces. They echo practices of camouflage and cruising with their tactical invisibility and selectively broadcast visibility.<sup>75</sup> In short, they value dissemblance. In the same year as his *Self-Works*, 1969, Burton wrote in a catalog essay that “sometimes the only difference between [art and life] is sheer consciousness, the awareness that

what seemed to be a stain on the wall is in fact a work of art. Or a trench in the snow, or a pile of scraps, or a hole in the wall, or a hole in the desert.”<sup>76</sup> *Self-Works* promote self-awareness and self-reflexivity under the guise of the commonplace. Burton would expand on these ideas in his works of the 1970s, and they are also the themes of his *Behavior Tableaux* performances about body language and of his functional sculptures of furniture that might be mistaken for a mere chair or table. Those works *behave as* chairs and tables just as the performer of *Self-Works* behaves as if their actions are normal and unselfconscious. To those in the know, more is going on.

The potential that arises from this doubleness is central to cruising, as I have already discussed in the introduction. My examination of Burton’s subsequent works of the 1970s will make it increasingly clear how much the practice of cruising informed Burton’s interest in dissemblance and behavior. Already in 1969, there are also hints of how Burton drew on his own experience of the street. For instance, among the instructions for *Self-Works*, he even included one of the classic street cruising tactics—the seemingly casual look-back: “Looking behind you several times as you walk, as if you’re looking at something of interest—moderate interest—[but] not enough interest to make you turn around.”<sup>77</sup> The look-back (as I can myself attest) was a widespread and effective means of queer signaling within the guise of the everyday activity of walking the sidewalk.<sup>78</sup>

Burton would later remark that his work of the early 1970s “probably had an underlying homosexual sensibility, but it wasn’t in my consciousness. It wasn’t closeted, but it just wasn’t developed.”<sup>79</sup> Taken as a whole, Burton’s *Self-Works* series returns again and again to tactics of dissimulation that were characteristic of the daily experiences of many gay men and lesbians. Just a few years later, in 1972, pioneering sociologist Laud Humphreys would argue that “the art of passing [as straight] is an acting art, and most homosexuals have an edge over others that varies with the number of years they have practiced.”<sup>80</sup> He concluded, “Experience in passing cultivates a sensibility.”<sup>81</sup> Burton held a similar view, and he would later remark that if there was “something gay people understand, it’s performance.”<sup>82</sup>

### **Coda: Vulnerability and Exposure in *Dream and Nude for Street Works IV***

While most of Burton’s earliest works were concerned with camouflage, the covert, and hiding difference in plain sight, there also emerged at this time a parallel strand in his practice that privileged confrontational vis-

ibility. I chart these works in chapter 4, but we can see in Burton's final contributions to *Street Works* a different attitude emerging toward being unseen. He continued with the central questions of *Self-Works*, such as the differentiation of the performer's and the viewers' experiences, but now he made a work that was impossible to overlook: *Dream*, performed at the opening celebration of *Street Works IV*.

There was a summer hiatus in the activity of the organizing group after *Street Works III*, which occurred on Memorial Day Sunday in 1969. Mayer and Acconci worked to record the previous months' activity through a special issue of their magazine *o to 9*. They and the other organizers slowly began to envision a new, more official version of the events, culminating in *Street Works IV* over three weeks in October that year. This more extended iteration of *Street Works* had official sponsorship by the Architectural League of New York and now comprised just eleven artists: Acconci, Arakawa, Costa, Kaltenbach, Levine, Abraham Lubelski, Mayer, Perreault, Strider, Weiner, and Burton.<sup>83</sup> The scrappy *Street Works* had grown up, and the official sponsorship (and *o to 9*'s retrospective view) raised the stakes. In anticipation of *Street Works IV*, Battcock wrote, "As more artists become involved in *Street Works* and the works themselves become more refined, more outrageous, and more thoughtful, we may find ourselves drawn into a new and powerful consciousness of our urban physical and cultural environments, and nothing could be more desirable!"<sup>84</sup>

*Street Works IV* was diffused across a three-week time frame, so the organizers decided to host an opening (as if it were a more conventional exhibition) in the form of a raucous party on 2 October. The contributing artists did special works intended for the party atmosphere of the event, hosted at the Architectural League's building at 41 East Sixty-Fifth Street. For instance, Weiner punningly served free hot dogs ("wieners") out of a food truck in front of the building, and Strider placed a fifteen-foot-high picture frame outside of the entrance to "designate the street in front of the League as a painting titled *Cityscape*."<sup>85</sup> Perreault wrote that the event was covered by the six o'clock news and that there was "a mob of people, plus photographers and tv cameras. Pedestrians were puzzled or joined in."<sup>86</sup> In and among the crowd of partygoers watching the live band on the second floor, Burton performed his contribution: he slept on a cot throughout the party (fig. 1.7). He began by "directing himself to dream about himself at the time and location of part II"—by "part II" he meant the closing of the exhibition.<sup>87</sup> He understood this as another *Self-Work* with the primary audience being the dreaming performer (rather than the observers of his unmoving body). In his performance instructions for *Dream*, he stated that he "instructs self to produce unconscious fantasy about Self at



**Figure 1.7.** Peter Moore, photograph of the opening party for *Street Works IV* showing Scott Burton's *Self-Work: Dream*, 2 October 1969. Photo © 2020 Barbara Moore / licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

a specific (future) time and place.”<sup>88</sup> For the end of *Street Works IV* later that month, Burton would realize *Nude*—the performance conjured in *Dream*. He claimed to have dreamed of himself walking down the street nude.

To achieve the Architectural League party performance, he resorted to taking some pills to ensure that he could sleep through it. “I just took a cot and put it in the hallway and put on pajamas and dropped some—took some pills and went to sleep in public for two hours.”<sup>89</sup> He placed himself at one of the landings outside the busiest place at the event: the “room with rock band”—the Montgomeries.<sup>90</sup> The party was spread across multiple floors with both Burton and the band in the larger second-floor lobby. The Montgomeries “played loud and clear for the celebrants up one flight of stairs. But Burton continued to sleep,” noted Perreault.<sup>91</sup> McGinnes stood watch, and the press release also reassuringly noted that he would be “under the care of a practical nurse.”<sup>92</sup> (Presumably everyone knew that Bur-

ton's sleep was to be facilitated by drugs.) He later remarked, "I really was asleep, and I really was dreaming. I really did dream this dream too. . . . That's the literalism part."<sup>93</sup> (Indeed, the drugs were so strong that Burton was incapacitated until the following day. The next morning, he was due to go upstate with Kaufman, who remembers having to carry him to the car.)<sup>94</sup>

*Dream* was a performed imitation (of sleeping) that became literal, and Burton saw it as another test of social behavior, albeit more confrontationally than his earlier performances of *Self-Works*. He described it as "the 'action' dreaming. Context, strangers in public place; violation of personal space activity."<sup>95</sup> He also said that *Dream* involved "performing a private act in public"—a formulation that could also be extended to describe the covert acts, dissemblance, and cruising that were some of his other behavioral topics of interest.<sup>96</sup> *Dream*, however, created a situation in which Burton was at the mercy of others, and the work was spectacular in a way his earlier performances of *Self-Works* were not. The experience of *Dream* was provoking and anxiety producing for some of the audience. He noted, "In terms of the particular act, sleeping, the reversal apparently produced a sense of my vulnerability in the audience (some people even said I looked dead and were concerned for me)."<sup>97</sup> I see Burton's performance as an example of what Dominic Johnson has discussed as the limit-exceeding "extremity" of some action-performances in the 1970s and, further, as related to Jennifer Doyle's analysis of performance art's production of "difficulty" in the mixed emotions that it spurred in viewers.<sup>98</sup> *Dream* was risky for Burton, and he understood it as such. McGinnes, who stood watch throughout the *Dream* performance, recalled that Burton "was afraid. Quite rightly. To be passed out in a group of people. He said, 'Mac, would you stay here?'"<sup>99</sup> Burton extended his bracketing of authorship by becoming an inert sculpture, with his only authorial act being the instruction to his unconscious mind to dream up a new work. For external viewers, Burton intended that this work ended up "creating a photo-tableau" because of the strong visual image of the knocked-out artist horizontal amid the din of the party.<sup>100</sup>

Burton's *Dream* anticipated the theme of the sleeping performance artist that emerged in the 1970s. His 1969 work predated other well-known sleep works: Geoffrey Hendricks's forty-eight-hour *Dream Event* from 1971, Laurie Anderson's *Institutional Dream Series* (1972), Chris Burden's *Bed Piece* (1972), and Colette's important and confrontational works in this arena (notably, her *Transformation of the Sleeping Gypsy* from 1973 and her *Real Dream* from 1975). Beyond those working in New York, other artists also took up this theme in the 1970s—for instance, Polish artist Natalia LL's *Dreaming* (1978) or, in California, Linda Montano's *Hypnosis, Dream,*

*Sleep* (1975). Decades later, works such as Janine Antoni's *Slumber* (1994) and Tilda Swinton's *The Maybe* (1995) received wide recognition for their activations of the museum space through the incapacitated, slumbering body. Like Burton's *Dream*, each of these sleep performances explored the vulnerability of the sleeping subject and the agency of the dreamer as challenges to institutional and social conventions. Furthermore, one can also see the confrontational passivity of Burton's *Dream* in relation to performances in which the alert and awake artists subjected themselves to their audiences. Here I am thinking of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (orig. 1964), Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974), and Burden's *Back to You* (1974).

With his public *Dream*, Burton enacted a form of critical passivity. The work offered "ways of ambivalently being there and not-there," he said.<sup>101</sup> *Dream* aimed at a sort of objecthood for his immotile body, but it was also a performance in public of a private experience (as with his other *Self-Works*). At the crux of these two aspects was Burton's bracketing of his own artistic autonomy (through both drugged self-suppression and recourse to the unconscious). The result was a performance of vulnerability in which viewers of the work were put into an ethical position as active agents in relation to his performed (and literal) passivity.<sup>102</sup> In his notes, Burton wrote that *Dream* was about "the vulnerability of the isolated individual and his relation to his community."<sup>103</sup> As with the other *Self-Works*, Burton characterized this theme as personal and autobiographical.

*Dream* also spawned *Nude*, performed on 26 October at the end of *Street Works IV*, in which Burton also explored vulnerability and violated the norms of the public street. For this work, he walked naked down Lispenard Street at midnight (fig. 1.8). Initially, he had directed himself to dream a performance to be held outside of the Architectural League at noon on the 25th, but instead he chose to perform after midnight on a more desolate street, just near the terminus of his own Thompson Street.<sup>104</sup> In every recounting of *Nude*, Burton maintained that he actually had this dream. We may be skeptical of this claim, but nevertheless this work was wrapped up with very real anxiety and fear for Burton. He told his students in Iowa,

I didn't have the courage to do it on Fifth Avenue at high noon. I did it only a couple of feet late at night in an obscure neighborhood. Well, I'll tell you why: because the themes of this work, as far as I'm concerned, are madness and criminality, as well as the dream. I was told later that it was a classic anxiety dream. I, in fact, dreamed it. Walking down the street without your clothes on and everybody has theirs on and you feel totally terrified. . . . Well, you have the reason to feel terrified. I can tell you.<sup>105</sup>



**Figure 1.8.** Scott Burton, *Self-Work: Nude*, 26 October 1969. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource. Photograph: John Perreault (?).

Burton put himself in receivership to his own unconscious to enact this act of self-exposure. He said that this work centered on “the self suddenly & inexplicably exposed, nude, out of doors. This was also a dance piece.”<sup>106</sup> This “dance piece” also created a position of literal vulnerability. As he later described the piece, it was the “enactment of *actual* dream produced earlier. ‘Classic’ anxiety dream; fear. Inverted condition: dream directed to be at noon, but midnight was dreamed about instead. (Also inversion of disguise piece?) Violation of legality. Imitation of madness; strong self-directed effect.”<sup>107</sup> *Nude* inverted the terms of *Disguise* (daytime, clothed, camouflaged) with its midnight naked exposure.

Like *Disguise*, *Nude* was also an illegal act in public, though this time not through clothing but through its absence. In his 1970 lecture to his students, he expanded on this “violation of legality” and cited the outlaw figure of Jean Genet and the “theme of the criminal” as informing the ideas behind this work.<sup>108</sup> He continued, “some future idea I have for art works—is that they must be illegal. This is of course illegal, but I think . . . if art can help to undermine the legal system in this country, I think that



would be good.”<sup>109</sup> This statement again indicates how Burton understood these works in relation to normative behavior and its enforcement. Again linking it to the theme of alienation that informed the *Self-Works* series, he said in 1973 that *Nude* “introduced the theme of the extreme, bizarre, or alienated behavior later developed in the narrative pieces and tableaux.”<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the question of social dynamics, power, ostracization, and subordination would loom large in the tableaux works he would begin to formulate in 1970.

Burton’s *Self-Works* emerged in response to the opportunity of the *Street Works* events, but they also helped him to envision the foundational terms for his artistic practice. They tested behavior; they explored infiltration and hiding in plain sight; and they also began to see how that camouflage needed, at times, to be counterbalanced with confrontational visibility. In all of them, Burton looked to questions of the everyday and the social as sites of contestation and resistance to “normal” or proper behavior. He wanted to make art that did not stand apart from the social, but that was part of it. Imitating ordinary life became a central strategy for him in his subsequent work, whether that be a performance of everyday actions or a usable sculpture of a chair that might be invisible to some as art (but usable by all). Many years later, Burton would summarize this aim for his public art and furniture sculpture, saying that his work “wants to integrate itself into the normal fabric of life and stand out subliminally or peripherally or subconsciously or after-the-fact, retrospectively.”<sup>111</sup> A central theme of Burton’s artistic practice focused on how performances and objects could be invisible or overlooked while—to the invested and attentive viewer—performing differently from the field into which they camouflaged themselves. This mimicry was, for Burton, a tactic for producing such dualities and infiltrations, and he examined how it could add layers of meaning and identification that were available only to some. Cruising, body language, gesture, design, sexual signaling in public, and functional realisms are among the many topics Burton investigated in pursuit of this theme in subsequent works.

# 2

## LANGUAGES OF THE BODY

### Theatrical, Feminist, and Scientific Foundations, 1970–71

After his first year of making art in 1969, Burton redoubled his investigation into behavior and its conventions. He began to think about what he could contribute to conversations about performance beyond the framework of the *Street Works* events. In 1970 and 1971, he attempted ambitious multigure works that explored comportment, coding, camouflage, and the use of the human figure in art history and visual culture. He characterized these stage-based performance experiments as an extension of his reconsideration of theatricality, but he also claimed that they grew from obliquely “autobiographical” concerns. In the same years, Burton immersed himself in recent writings by anthropologists and behavioral scientists studying nonverbal communication (notably, Ray Birdwhistell, Edward T. Hall, Robert Sommer, and Albert and Alice Scheflen). This reading established a theoretical basis for his interest in behavior, bodies’ significations, and the dynamics of spatial relations. Also in the early 1970s, Burton began his engagement with the feminist revision of art and art history that gained momentum in these years. Both behavioral psychology and feminism provided Burton with vocabularies to discuss the power dynamics of how bodies related and communicated. These years of experimentation and research laid the conceptual foundations for what would become his major performance works of the 1970s: *Behavior Tableaux*, discussed in the next chapter.

The present chapter begins with a discussion of Burton’s exploration of theater and theatricality, with reference to the transitional works created for *Theater Works* at Hunter College in 1969 (which he organized). As he was pivoting from the street- to stage-based pieces, he adopted the quotational format of the tableau vivant as his genre, and I will discuss the reasons

why it became Burton's favored mode of performance in these and later works. I will then focus on the three ambitious works that Burton created in 1970 and 1971: *Compositions* (1970), *Ten Tableaux* (1970) for the University of Iowa Intermedia Program, and *Eighteen Pieces* for Finch College (1971). The third of these, for a women's college in New York City, evidences the impact that feminism began making on Burton's thinking at this time. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Burton's reading of anthropology and cybernetically informed behavioral psychology of the late 1960s and early 1970s that grounded his interest in behavior, dissemblance, and body language for the rest of his career.

The years 1970 and 1971 were ones of wild and determined experimentation, and during this time Burton clarified his priorities and his artistic practice. Soon after, in 1972 or 1973, he attempted to codify his work and make sense of its multiple threads. This took the form of a remarkable chart of themes and works (plate 2). His keywords were: *narrative, art, furniture, clothing, sexuality, and self*. The earliest versions of the artistic practices I discuss in this and subsequent chapters all make an appearance in this chart. "Self" was the focus of his 1969 works, but he came to prefer other performers and objects as means of unpacking autobiographical themes. Notable among the themes on this chart is "sexuality," and he included in his explanation a critical approach both to gender roles and to "sexual-social behavior"—perhaps the central question for his future work. Cutting across these possible categorizations for his work were Burton's concerns with behavior and how the human body signified. These questions drove his interests in performance, art history, feminism, and, ultimately, in furniture's solicitation of bodily engagement.

### **Art in Time: Burton's Postminimalist Embrace of "Theater"**

A central feature of Burton's work of the 1970s was its exploration of theater and theatricality. As he sought an alternative to his contributions to *Street Works*, he turned back to theater and its histories. After all, he had spent almost a decade as an aspiring playwright as well as being a teacher of literature, and he mined these traditions for further ways to offer a riposte to Michael Fried's denigration of theatricality as "perverse."

Burton thought much about the relations between theater, sculpture, and performance. He discussed these intermedial connections in the text of the lecture-performance titled *Lecture on Self* from 1973, which I introduce here because it offers Burton's most explicit theorization of performance. (I discuss the *Lecture on Self* performance in much more depth in chapter 4.) In the lecture text, Burton asserted,

Performance is, most essentially defined, sculpture as theater. By sculpture is meant no longer the stable object but simply three-dimensional visual art—whatever is offered in an artistic context that is not painting. Recent examples of this category of transformed sculpture have included not only aggregates of mutable or impermanent materials but also works of plastic art that are not constructions at all but made instead of language (conceptual and information art) or of photographs, films or diagrams (documentational art) or of theater (performance art). By theater is meant simply art in time—whatever is offered sequentially that is not music or dance or drama. Recent examples of this medium of appropriated theater—of visual art whose primary dimension is temporal—have included mobile and kinetic art, light art and technological art, materials process art, and now include performance art. Performance is in medium a form of theater but in category a form of sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

This statement encapsulates a number of Burton's driving concerns. His interest was in the lived world of three-dimensional things and bodies, and he saw any departure from pictorial or two-dimensional art as potentially "sculpture." As well, he emphasized the shared temporality of performance with its viewers, seeing this as an extension from Minimalism's activation of the perceptual and durational encounter with objects. Burton argued about live performance, "temporality insures that the very experience of perceiving the work is central."<sup>2</sup> Theater, for him, did not mean dramatic narrative or empathetic characters so much as the self-conscious presentation of acts over time.

In Burton's definition, performance was intermedial. In addition to its relationship to theater and temporality, Burton also argued that his performance works drew on (and hybridized) themes from histories of sculpture and painting. He connected the live performer both to abstract sculpture and to figuration (both pictorial and sculptural). Thus, he considered performance to be equally as literalist, figural, and realist. In his works discussed in both this and the next chapter, Burton cast his performers as repeated units conjugating nonverbal communication and as figures of social and bodily relations. Because of the employment of the human body, Burton also saw these works as speaking to histories of realism (and its address to a broader, potentially non-elite audience).<sup>3</sup> He wrote in 1972 that contemporary realism's "statement of meaning, instead of being metaphoric, is declared, direct, clear to all eyes. The tenor is demotic."<sup>4</sup> Extending this definition, Burton saw the use of the human form as both approachable and open ("demotic").

A central theme of his *Self-Works* had been to bracket his own author-

ship of his works, and Burton extended this by eschewing the idea that performance art necessarily needed to be performed by the artist themselves. Such a position diverged from the predominant understanding of performance art in these years in which there was an emphasis on the artist relying on their own body as a site of facticity and authenticity. After 1969, Burton largely ceased performing himself, with the exception of the major works that spun out from *Self-Works*: the self-mediating *Lecture on Self* performance and the related *Modern American Artist* (in 1973 and 1974), discussed in chapter 4. At this moment in the history of performance art, it was relatively rare to use trained and scripted performers—rather than the artist’s own body or audience interaction. (A few years later, in 1976, John Perreault would claim that Burton was “the only major performance artist to use stand-ins.”)<sup>5</sup> A key factor in his decision to use multiple performers was his investigation of the tableau vivant as a format that could hold his many ideas.

Before discussing Burton’s early tableau vivant works, however, it is useful to examine his first attempt at transforming his street-based performance art into stage-based “theater.” During his first year as an artist, in 1969, Burton organized *Theater Works* at Hunter College. It occurred in the five-week gap between *Street Works II* and *Street Works III* over six evenings in the Art Department’s lecture hall. Because of his background as a playwright, Burton saw the stage as an opportunity. Performance, in these relatively early years, still struggled to find venues, and Burton decided to capitalize on the availability of lecture halls, theaters, and auditoria in art institutions. “Theater Works” was Burton’s invention, and he encouraged his friends Marjorie Strider, Eduardo Costa, and Perreault to develop non-narrative works specifically for theatrical settings, extending some of the practices of performed poetry by Perreault and others in the *Street Works* group and drawing inspiration from Strider and Costa’s very different strategies. Burton convinced Hunter College to host this event, which ultimately included Vito Acconci, Costa, Perreault, Bernadette Mayer, Anne Waldman, Hannah Weiner, and Burton himself. He explained to the art historian E. C. Goossen, the chair of Hunter’s art department, that “your students will find many of the principles of modern visual as well as verbal art in *Theater Works*; they should be interested.”<sup>6</sup>

The seven artists in *Theater Works* performed one another’s works, all of which dispensed with conventional narrative forms. Burton was no exception, and the short performances that made up *Five Theater Works* were largely about silent or near silent movements.<sup>7</sup> *Scale*, for instance, had two parts: first, *Reduction*, in which two performers stood onstage whispering to each other, and, second, *Enlargement*, with the two performers tossing a ball to each other from the far ends of the stage only to be followed by

them tossing a larger ball to each other from the wings. As *Scale* would seem to evidence, these early works were didactic and none too complex. Another of his five works that evening, *Six Crosses*, involved a performer (Weiner) crossing the stage six times with the lights going on or off at certain regular intervals.

Of the five works for this very early experiment, however, one would be prescient. *Four Changes* involved Burton removing layers of clothing only to reveal differently colored but similar garments underneath. Coming just ten days after his first costume work—*Disguise for Street Works II*—this performance focused on how clothing altered the body's signification. He experimented with how the same body could signal different attitudes, classes, and genders. In notes from the early 1970s, he thought about how performers could change apparent gender through clothing, and he was interested both in the ability to pass and in modes of dress that would call attention to the arbitrariness of gender's signification.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with his *Self-Works*, *Four Changes* staged issues of visual dissemblance and camouflage, but here it was done with hidden monochromatic layers of clothes. The same person appeared differently depending on which version of themselves they showed.<sup>9</sup>

While some of its ideas (like those behind *Four Changes*) took root in Burton's thinking, *Theater Works* went largely unnoticed by critics.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, theater continued to be of great interest to Burton, and he maintained a relationship with the theater world for a few years.<sup>11</sup> As he would recall in 1987, "That was a period of experimentation to me. It did enable me to express this love of theatre and being so stage struck in my own peculiar way."<sup>12</sup> He continued to expand the *Theater Works* format in his experiments of 1970 and 1971, and it was in the tableau vivant format that Burton ultimately found his stride.

### **Back to Life: Burton and the Tableau Vivant**

Let's be upfront about this: the tableau vivant format was a campy, outmoded, and somewhat absurd precedent to revive as a conceptually informed performance practice in the 1970s. With its motionless actors posing as famous paintings or sculptures, the tableau vivant called up contradictory associations of Victorian anachronisms and the vulgarities of cheap entertainment.<sup>13</sup> In 1972, one reviewer of Burton's *Behavior Tableaux* couldn't help but refer to the format as "a living statue business of the kind you used to see in the circus."<sup>14</sup> The tableau vivant seemed anything but contemporary, then and now.<sup>15</sup>

Burton's knowledge of literature and theater history prepared him to

understand the odd and conflicted practice that was the silent and static posing of groups of performers as if they were paintings or sculptures. He knew that, some centuries before, the format had been seen as scandalous for its revelation of the live human body and, consequently, that its more current uses relied on those low-class connotations. For instance, he connected his interest in the tableau vivant to the striptease in his origin story: “My mother took me to the Alabama State Fair where I saw Gypsy Rose Lee, and I remember these strip tableaux as making deep impressions which have profoundly influenced my performance format.”<sup>16</sup> Burlesque performance (by no less a figure than the inspiration for the musical *Gypsy*) introduced tableaux vivants as examples of erotic display. Burton’s recollection helps explain how, once he started making his own tableaux some fifteen or so years later, the sexual would be a recurring subtext for his experiments.

Such decidedly non-art and popular culture associations with tableaux vivants were also related to Burton’s search for popular and accessible forms of artistic practice. Because it was lowbrow entertainment yet rife with historical and cultural references, the tableau vivant tradition had been expansive in the different kinds of audiences and knowledges it addressed. In Burton’s contemporary context, the tableau vivant had receded into memory and was seen as old-fashioned, provincial, and vulgar (as with the aforementioned circus comment by a reviewer). These themes connected with Burton’s incipient anti-elitism and desire for a demotic mode of artistic practice, and the tableau vivant’s history was resonant for him. He adopted the format, seeing it as a revaluation of a devalued vernacular mode. (Such a camp maneuver would, as I will discuss in chapter 5, also inform his recasting of a disregarded Queen Anne chair as his sculptural manifesto.) Beyond these questions of the format’s history and address, the tableau vivant also connected directly to his interest in the significations of the human body and behavior. Tableaux vivants present the body as quotational, with the performed pose sparking recognition of images previously seen in paintings, sculptures, and their reproductions in print or photography. Tableaux vivants recalled the history of painting and, at the same time, were “living statues” and “performed sculpture.”<sup>17</sup> Burton embraced this hybridity that combined histories and current practices of painting, sculpture, and theater.<sup>18</sup> In the end, the choice of the tableau vivant format was a bold and deeply considered decision that brought together some of Burton’s most important concerns.

While theater and theatricality functioned as Burton’s primary analogies as he began articulating a literalist, postminimalist form of live art, he also drew from dance. The main aspect of theater that he forswore was

the dominance of an overarching and progressive story line, and he looked to dance for its potential to be more episodic in its organization and, in general, its less tethered relationship to narrative—as well as its use of the whole body as vehicle for form and signification. His tableaux were rarely completely motionless, and he incorporated movement (albeit glacially slow) as a means to update the traditional tableau vivant. This was rooted in his knowledge of dance that began with his relationship with Jerome Robbins in the early 1960s and continued through to his involvement with ballet (most notably, in his libretto for the New York City Ballet in 1965). Burton was also aware of more experimental dance practices, such as Yvonne Rainer's work, which he cited as a precedent for his own.<sup>19</sup> Burton said in 1980, "The dance of Yvonne Rainer is difficult but can be as rewarding as that of Ballanchine."<sup>20</sup> Rainer remembered him attending performances, and, in fact, they were often programmed adjacently, as they were at the Whitney Museum's performance art festival in 1972 and at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston in 1973.<sup>21</sup> Burton understood the historical importance of experimental dance on performance art in the 1970s, saying in 1979, "The examples of people like [Richard] Foreman and [Robert] Wilson, Yvonne Rainer and Merce Cunningham, the great theatre performance artists, had a great influence on this theatrical kind of performance."<sup>22</sup>

Burton's use of the tableau vivant positioned him in conversations about performance art and its terms. With its reference to other images and their stillness, the tableau vivant format complicated the characterization of live art as a medium of bodily presence and authentic immediacy. Highly composed and scripted, the tableau vivant was distinct from Burton's immediate precedents and contemporaries in New York performance art. It exhibited neither the raucous unscriptedness of Happenings nor the emphasis on the artist's self-manipulations in conceptual performance and performance for video. As well, it had little of the playfulness of *Street Works* and performance for non-art, public spaces. Instead, Burton pitched his tableau experiments toward a distinct kind of durational performance that demanded the immersive attention and the kind of spectatorship usually granted to theater or dance. It aligned with Burton's priorities in its activation of temporality, the use of the human form, and the exploration of how that form behaved and communicated.

### **"Autobiographical Literature": *Compositions* (1970)**

Burton's first foray into stage-based performance and the tableau vivant was, he remarked, "related to dance."<sup>23</sup> He created *Compositions* for the



14 April 1970 program *Four Theater Pieces* that he organized for the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. Along with his own work, Burton included Acconci's *Learning Piece*, Costa's *You See a Dress*, and Perreault's *Anthology*.<sup>24</sup> He chose works that took literature as a basis but abstracted it into durational performance. Reiterating his concern for the shared temporality with the audience, Burton explained a common thread among his selection of works: "But these works for the theatre are unlike traditional dramatic art because they exist explicitly in the same, actual time as that of the viewer instead of offering fictive times and places. These are not illusionistic but literalist theatre pieces."<sup>25</sup>

Burton's contribution was *Compositions*, a performance comprising three performers (Ellen LaForge, Valerie Gillett, and Flora Resnick) successively combining themselves into formal combinations on the stage, with fifteen-second blackouts separating twenty-five-second tableaux for a twenty-minute performance in total (fig. 2.1). *Compositions* was largely non-narrative and non-referential. For instance, one tableau took the form of a pyramidal composition, and another involved two seated figures flanking a central performer with arms raised, while another might be three performers standing with arms extended in different directions to produce a visual rhythm.<sup>26</sup> All wore loose white pants and long black tops that were unlike the tight-fitting garments more common to ballet and modern dance, shifting attention from the bodies of the performers to the poses they took. This work was highly formal, with its tableaux being organized into symmetrical and asymmetrical sections. Like Minimalist seriality, the organizational conceit was "one thing after another."<sup>27</sup>

In the program notes, Burton briefly explained the structure of *Compositions* and its sources: "My tableaux vivants imitate painting and dance, two arts I studied before starting to write. They are the nonverbal half of this work of autobiographical literature."<sup>28</sup> Calling *Compositions* a work of "autobiographical literature" was no doubt a challenge to viewers. Given the work's emphasis on formal structure, frustration of narrative, and refusal to use the performing body as personally expressive, it might at first seem contradictory that Burton described *Compositions* in this way. It did not represent anything remotely resembling a straightforward narrative of oneself. Nevertheless, it is in line with how Burton cited personal experience and history as bases for his early performance works. Remember that he said of *Ear Piece* that it both was autobiographical and "prefigures the theme of the isolated individual of the earlier tableaux and narrative performances."<sup>29</sup> In these years, Burton used "autobiographical" as shorthand for declaring that the work derived from his experience, even if it did not simply represent it. In one of the first long assessments of Burton's



**Figure 2.1.** Scott Burton, *Compositions*, 14 April 1970, Wadsworth Atheneum. Performed by Valerie Gillett, Ellen LaForge, and Flora Resnick. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

various practices from 1976, Robert Pincus-Witten echoed Burton's citation of autobiography. Pincus-Witten explained, "Mind you, Burton rightly views the use of autobiography—content without form—as only a bridge, a transition out of conceptualism."<sup>30</sup> Here, Pincus-Witten was conveying the importance of "autobiography" in the idiosyncratic way that Burton had used it, noting that Burton used autobiographical content while abjuring autobiography's conventional forms and genres.

*Compositions* is an important example of this oblique use of personal experience, as the program notes evidence. Burton's high-stakes use of the term "autobiography" was a prompt to viewers to question how the formal configurations of *Compositions* might relate to Burton's life (or any life). He relied on the disparity between, on the one hand, the expectations of an autobiographical work and, on the other, his presentation of a non-narrative performance that seemed structured according to form rather than content. This gap was intentional, and it allowed Burton to present a work that was both personal and open to viewers' own projections and identifications with it—a postminimalist strategy he would pursue

throughout his career. *Compositions* enacted this strategy by adapting the formal reduction characteristic of Minimalism, but it took the body and its positions and proximities as the medium for that reduction. In this way, the distillation of bodily actions and interaction provided scaffolding for the viewer's potential identifications, associations, and memories.

The further text of the program note gave a clue to the meanings Burton attached to the performance's structure: "The 30 poses for 3 figures are the combinations of body positions—standing, bending, kneeling, sitting, lying and 3 spatial relations—very close, moderately close, far apart—in symmetrical and asymmetrical versions."<sup>31</sup> Isn't this, in its most basic elements, a description of what we do in the course of life? These body positions can spark many different memories from our own experiences of kneeling, lying, sitting, or standing (from childhood to adulthood), and they describe our basic bodily orientations over the course of each day. The spatial relations he described, as well, can be understood as the elements from which one could talk about all relations (very close, moderately close, far apart). Burton was, in short, attempting to develop a formalized and coded way of analyzing the body's positions, proximities, and interrelations—somewhat like the ways in which a linguist might break down a sentence into syntaxes or phonemes.

I am basing this interpretation on the ways that Burton would, in later years, understand furniture's orientation as evoking states of the body (for instance, he favored the use of the chaise longue form in many of his *Behavior Tableaux* because it combined the different bodily orientations afforded by the chair and the bed). In addition, he would organize other performances, such as his *Poses* from Finch College (discussed below), around the themes of standing, sitting, and lying.<sup>32</sup> The configurations in which bodies found accord, symmetry, discord, balance, or dynamism would become the central themes of the *Behavior Tableaux* series, and I believe that *Compositions* was both germinal and inceptive. The successive scenes delineate a field of analysis and possibility made available through the Minimalist reduction to component parts, while still keeping emotion and signification near.

As he had argued for Tony Smith and the "abstract allusionists," Burton saw such formal reductions not as blocking content but rather as a means to more openly evoke emotional association. This interest in openness allowed for the differences in subject position and personal history to find themselves, distinctly, in relationship to the capaciousness of abstraction or reduction. A few years later, in 1977, Burton summarized the relational themes of his tableaux in both performance and sculpture, saying that he was investigating "three possibilities of life: to be alone, to be with another,

and to be part of a group.”<sup>33</sup> His attempt to break down and analyze the relationship of the individual to the social can be seen in *Compositions*, his earliest foray into the tableau. He chose performance because of how it kept the social near—the formal relations between his performing bodies alluded to social relations between persons. His desire to break down the semiosis of social relations into constituent parts led him to study body language and, ultimately, to develop the *Behavior Tableaux* series with its negotiation of the power dynamics of the interpersonal.

Reading his rather blank description of *Compositions* in highly metaphoric terms, as I have here, can help illuminate Burton’s turn to body language and his commitment to the tableau vivant. Its “autobiographical” impetus derived from his own negotiations of social power, sexuality, the dynamics of public space, and feelings of isolation and alienation—themes that would become more explicit in the performance works that grew out of this moment. At the same time, however, these elements are neutral enough to allow anyone to use them to think about their own experience and past. I will return again and again to this point: Burton’s move beyond Minimalism expanded on its methods but also injected the capacity for the personal and the mnemonic. Rather than expressing his “self,” he pursued differential possibilities for identification in the encounter with the minimal artwork. This practice, I believe, was built on his queer experiences of alterity to norms. From this experience, he sought to make work that opened itself out to everyone’s particularity.

Such a perspective informs Burton’s other early experiments in this mode. The tableau vivant format allowed Burton to address social relations without simply falling back on theatrical narrative. In his later notes on the history and issues central to tableaux, he would write, “Tableau as a mode of perception—real life use is to achieve an image of latent relationships (‘image’ is what makes overt).”<sup>34</sup> After *Compositions*, he expanded on the format as he sought to develop a mode of performance that could be both about him and widely accessible to others’ identifications and associations.

### **Revolving Perspectives: *Ten Tableaux* at the University of Iowa**

Soon after *Compositions* was shown at the Wadsworth, Burton was given an opportunity and the resources to direct a performance on a more ambitious scale.<sup>35</sup> He spent the summer of 1970 at the University of Iowa, where he cotaught with Strider. In addition to a survey of modern art, they offered a studio seminar titled “Art in the Urban Environment: Theory and

Practice of Post-studio Art” in the history-making Intermedia Program that Hans Breder started building in 1968.<sup>36</sup> Breder’s program encouraged experimentation in the interstices between media. Ana Mendieta and Sandy Skoglund were among the students in the program at the time, either taking the seminar (as did Skoglund) or in the audience (as was Mendieta, who later said she was impacted by Burton’s *Furniture Landscape*, discussed below and in chapter 5).<sup>37</sup> Burton later recalled, “The summer of 1970 was one of the major turning points in my life.”<sup>38</sup> While he had previously taught literature at an art school, this opportunity (for which Strider was instrumental) compelled Burton to theorize his own work more fully. He was, after all, only in the second year as a performance artist. In a letter to Robbins, he explained that their course was “both theory and practice, so I get to teach as ‘creative’ thinker as well as ‘critical.’”<sup>39</sup> Skoglund recalled about the seminar that Burton and Strider “were dealing with the ideas of making art from a radically different point of view” by focusing on making art outside of the studio as well as the “politics of not making objects.”<sup>40</sup>

The culmination of their seminar was a collaborative land reclamation work titled *The Iowa City People’s Hole Project* in an abandoned lot in downtown Iowa City. Strider, Burton, and the students cleaned out the ruined concrete foundation of the McNamara Furniture Company building in order to make a “negative sculpture.”<sup>41</sup> Members of the seminar explained in a letter to the editor of the *Daily Iowan*, “The way one perceives the city from below street level, the difference in sound, the sheer wall of the Larew building [next door], the beautiful space of the hole itself, are all parts of the work of art.”<sup>42</sup> They made sure to distinguish this from the free-form opening festivities, which they described—pace Burton—as “a kind of surreal street theater.”<sup>43</sup>

This moment also gives an early indication of Burton’s inclusion of queer themes. “Gay Power” was among the slogans that Burton, Strider, and their students added to the exterior of a wooden fence blocking off the abandoned concrete foundation that became *The Iowa City People’s Hole*.<sup>44</sup> This public signaling of the still-new slogan was reiterated in the mimeographed flier that announced the project and the opening festivities on 26 June 1970—almost a year to the day after the Stonewall uprising in New York (and on the same weekend as the first Christopher Street Liberation March in New York City). The list of acknowledgments of material contributors to the project included local institutions such as the Iowa State Bank and Trust, Schwab Advertising Systems, and the Iowa City Realtors’ Association, but “Gay Power” is also thanked.<sup>45</sup> At this time, the word “gay” was still considered revolutionary and confrontational.<sup>46</sup> One can see Burton’s influence at play in the seminar’s acts of public defiance, and such

declarations probably had few precedents in Iowa City just one year after the Stonewall uprising.

Strider and Burton taught about the move beyond objects in terms of liberation from the restrictions of tradition. This can be heard in one of the student's letters to the editor of the *Daily Iowan*. Referring to the events programmed over the course of the month, Peter Lytle wrote, "The concert and People's Hole have their relevance. They are free, they are liberated. All they need now are a few more free and uninhibited minds getting involved."<sup>47</sup> When Burton talked to a local newspaper about this work, he asserted it as a challenge to the rarefied and inaccessible institutions of art: "'We're not trying to put people on,' said Burton. The young artist explained that recognizing the Hole as an art form is a move away from the 'elitism' of art museums and galleries."<sup>48</sup> Already in 1970, Burton was trying to formulate (and teach) conceptual forms of art that superseded elitism. In this regard, *People's Hole* was embryonic for Burton's later priorities—as would be the installation and performance works Burton made that summer.

As part of the residency, he and Strider (as well as their host Breder) made performances with the students for a program titled "Two Evenings," held on 31 July and 5 August 1970. While the primary audience for the events were students from the Intermedia Program (such as Mendieta and Skoglund), the aim was to address the wider university and city as well.<sup>49</sup> These were some of the first public performances hosted by the Intermedia Program.<sup>50</sup> A month into his residency in Iowa City, Burton described his works in a letter to Robbins:

I'm planning some theatre pieces here. One I've wanted to do for some time that is possible to do here—a "furniture landscape" piece. I am going to select an outdoor site—a field, but I hope with some trees and bushes—and "decorate" it—that is, part living-room, dining-room, & bed-room furniture in it. A huge field I hope. The "action" of the event will be the behavior of the audience in it—sitting, walking, from "room" to "room," etc. I hope it looks good. Will get photos to show you. Want to do more tableaux vivants in a theater too.<sup>51</sup>

Burton created *Furniture Landscape* for the first evening.<sup>52</sup> He moved ensembles of furniture outdoors to a wooded area, as if a living room or a bedroom was part of the forest's undergrowth.<sup>53</sup> In keeping with the themes of his street-based performances and their complication of interiority, *Furniture Landscape* played with the distinction between inside and outside,



**Figure 2.2.** Scott Burton, *Furniture Landscape*, 31 July 1970, for “Two Evenings,” University of Iowa Macbride Field Campus. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

private and public (fig. 2.2). As he recalled to an interviewer, “For me, it was seminal, one of the biggest turning points of my life. I had really forgotten about furniture, or had been afraid to confront my feelings about it. I was a kid again, dragging chairs out into the backyard and making up this little world with them.”<sup>54</sup> With their displacement of pieces of old furniture to a forest setting, the *Furniture Landscape* ensembles hinged on their recreation of domestic environments or rooms. He explained, “According to his own desire, the visitor moved from room to room or made normal use of the furniture.”<sup>55</sup> Burton intended *Furniture Landscape* to be semipermanent, so that others could unwittingly stumble upon the odd displacement of domestic furniture to the outdoors; after he left Iowa City at the conclusion of his summer seminar, *Furniture Landscape* remained installed for this reason.<sup>56</sup> He cited the paintings of “Le douanier” Henri Rousseau as one inspiration for the imagery, but *Furniture Landscape* can also be seen as related to his burgeoning interest in tableaux. The displacement from the private interior to the woods was also an outgrowth of his interrogation of the public/private divide that he had explored with *Self-Works*.

As I discuss in chapter 5, this work was foundational for some of his furniture performances and, ultimately, his practice of public sculpture.

For the second evening of Iowa events, Burton presented a stage-based performance titled *Ten Tableaux: Theater as Sculpture* with the help of student performers.<sup>57</sup> For this ambitious suite of performances, Burton deepened his commitment to the tableau vivant that he had tried out a few months earlier with *Compositions*. He wrote to James Elliot, director of the Wadsworth, about his new projects, “[I] am very busy working on two new pieces—one in a wooded meadow, the other a successor to the Hartford piece: also *tableaux* but sculptural instead of flat and frontal & 10 people!—and a huge revolving stage to expose the 10 two-minute compositions fully in the round.”<sup>58</sup>

This last element was crucial and catalytic. The theater for which Burton created *Ten Tableaux* featured a revolve—a large turntable embedded into the stage floor that was used to change sets. Burton took advantage of this tool, composing his tableaux vivants with the understanding that the viewers would see them from all sides over the course of the 360-degree rotation of the circular stage floor. In his early works such as *Compositions*, the performers were motionless (as with many traditional tableaux vivants), but Burton added very slow movements in *Ten Tableaux*. Many performers remained still in certain of the tableaux, and any adjustments of pose by others were minimal and slow. Rather, the ensembles of performers were set in motion by the rotating stage. In this way, the barely moving or unmoving “living statues” could be examined by the seated audience over time and in the round.

Burton’s interest was in the ways in which he could short-circuit distinctions between the *viewer of theater* and the *viewer of sculpture*. The outdoor *Furniture Landscape* presented a theatrical “set” that the viewers activated by moving through it; in the performance program for the evening, Burton listed the cast of *Furniture Landscape* as “performed by the viewer.”<sup>59</sup> By contrast, in *Ten Tableaux* the live performers would be turned into static (but nevertheless revolving) sculptural ensembles to be viewed by a seated, largely unmoving audience in a theatrical setting. In his notes on this work, Burton said of *Ten Tableaux* that it was “theatre as sculpture: Figure compositions: volume composed in the round apprehended in actual time, like sculpture; but with living figures and a stationary viewer, like theatre. The narrative sequence entirely formal.”<sup>60</sup> In that same description, Burton said of *Furniture Landscape* that the “action” of the piece was “the behavior of the viewer as he moves through the space, from ‘room’ to ‘room.’”<sup>61</sup>

Burton’s distinction between the stationary viewer and the moving



viewer underwrote *Ten Tableaux* and *Furniture Landscape* (presumably seen by the same audience of his students and others in Iowa City). This initial two-part formulation extended the priorities of his critical work from the previous years with its emphasis on shared temporality and the relationship between sculpture and performance. The formats of these two works presage the directions of his later practice—sculpture as furniture in public and interior performances of living statues. He defined both through their focus on *audience*, and in the ways in which viewers were controlled or enabled became a central feature of his artistic practice in all its forms.

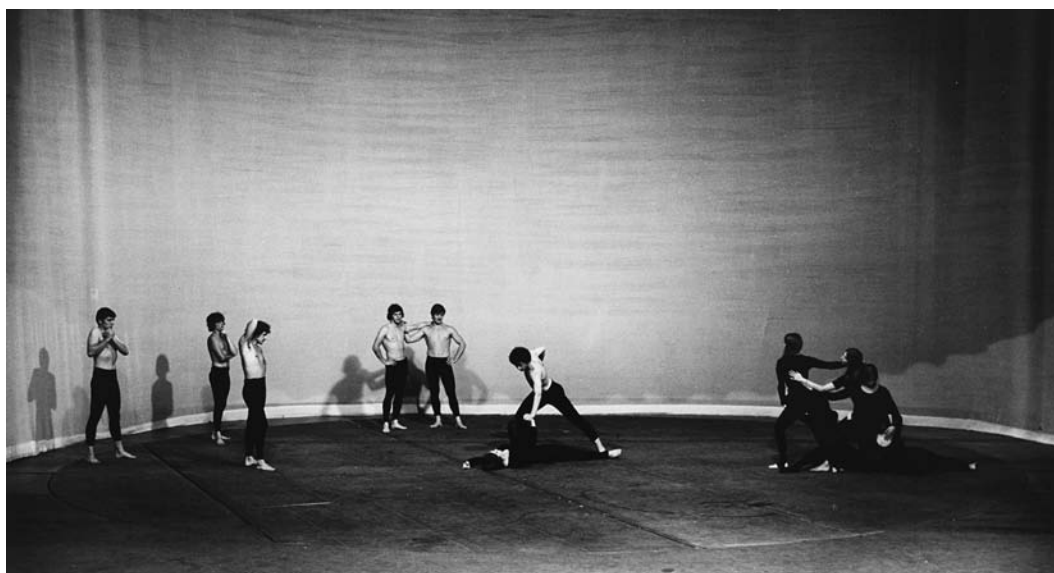
When it came to the content of *Ten Tableaux*, Burton dispensed with the more formal organization of the performers through which he had structured *Compositions*. Instead, he allowed for clearer narrative references to enter. There is little in the way of documentation or description of *Ten Tableaux*, but the titles of the individual tableaux give an indication of their content. Examples include “Walkers,” “Statues,” “Sleepers,” “The Dance,” and “Narrative.” As with *Compositions*, the final formulation belied some of the deeper content that went into Burton’s choices. His preliminary notes indicate that some of the initial descriptions of these scenes had high-stakes content (“A Battle—rape?,” “an orgy”) or art-historical references (“Seurat,” “Giacometti *City Square*”). Throughout, questions of power and its dynamics were central (“tableau of hierarchy of bodies, e.g. mortals, gods / hero, chorus” or “tableau of all bodies equal”).<sup>62</sup> Many of these ideas emerged from Burton’s knowledge of the history of art, and he used iconographies such as the Rape of the Sabines and works such as Ingres’s *Turkish Bath* as sources.<sup>63</sup>

In the text of his *Lecture on Self*, Burton described some of *Ten Tableaux*:

An overtly theatrical subject is introduced. First, the performers imitate statues: in a pediment or in small groups in a statue park, even using actual pedestals. Or, they imitate ordinary life actions like walking, dancing, and sleeping. Explicit narrative content ultimately breaks out in these slowly revolving tableaux in one piece that illustrates a specific moment in time—a moment in which all the performers are interrupted by something unseen to the viewer, something they all turn to regard. In such a theatricalist tableau, the performance reaches a full illusionism—as it does in one depicting a similarly critical and even more tense moment. A tableau of rape, displaying the group of women on one side and men on the opposite side, with one of each meeting in frozen violence in the center.<sup>64</sup>

Leaning on his citations of art history, Burton presented arch moments of drama distilled by the unmoving poses of the performers. Especially given the university context, Burton was didactically playing out questions of theatricality and the ways in which static poses (as in painting or sculpture) could be activated through the stretching of temporality. Here literalized on the revolving stage, the works became visible as moving and time bound. Burton continued, “These tableaux are as narrative as possible in content, but their unfolding in time is still abstract and schematic. They merely revolve.”<sup>65</sup>

For a key tableau (“Narrative,” fig. 2.3), Burton chose a scene of sexual violence and tension. This decision relates to the ways in which sexuality and its power dynamics were an important theme for him: *Ten Tableaux* was among the works listed in the “sexuality” category of his chart of his own works.<sup>66</sup> Both the orgy and the rape looked back to Roman history and mythology, refracted through French neoclassical paintings’ formalization of them. In particular, the rape scene portrayed by Burton meditated on the “Rape of the Sabines”—the mass abduction perpetrated by Roman military as part of their conquest strategy. From this event evolved a well-established iconography in European art. Its examples span the sixteenth



**Figure 2.3.** Scott Burton, “Narrative” from *Ten Tableaux: Theatre as Sculpture*, 5 August 1970, University Theatre, University of Iowa. Performed by Jana Berger, Barbara Berry, Linda Lee, Carole Messerschmidt, Susan Sheridan, Sharon Souder, Robert Ernst, Bruce Hall, Leslie Sha, Michael Sokoloff, Thomas Tindall, and Joe Wells. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

century through to the early twentieth century, but Burton looked in particular to the paintings by Jacques-Louis David and Nicolas Poussin. Such complex multifigure compositions provided Burton a reference for his own tableaux in which the dynamics of power in sexuality were overt. The questions of sexuality in group dynamics and the group's power over the individual would inform the five-person *Group Behavior Tableaux* he would make in 1972, and his introduction of this charged material as narrative content in *Ten Tableaux* was a precedent. Burton's choice of these scenes was related to his burgeoning interest in behavior and his questioning of the ways that sex, gender, and power had been represented. Especially in these early years of making tableaux, Burton was reexamining art's histories and norms, and a primary cause of this revision was the impact that feminism began making on his thinking.

### **Revisions: Burton's Feminist Milieu and *Eighteen Pieces for Finch College* (1971)**

The years of Burton's first performances coincided with his introduction to feminism, and this would prove inspirational for his work. He learned firsthand from those close to him such as Strider, Jane Kaufman, Elke Solomon, Hannah Wilke, and Sylvia Sleigh, and he read extensively the writings of his friends Linda Nochlin and Lucy Lippard. In the year after the Stonewall uprising, Burton became more resolute in his criticism of the art world's elitism and exclusions, and he became increasingly impatient with its code of silence about homosexuality. He looked to feminism as a model for the promise he saw in gay liberation, but he also began to make works that were in dialogue with feminism's critique of the representation of women in popular culture and in art history. He began asking how he might incorporate these ideas in some of the performances he created in 1971 for Finch College, an all-women's college on the Upper East Side.

Burton's engagement with feminism was foundational to his work, and he was consistent in his advocacy for it over the rest of his career. As Solomon remarked, "Scott was adamant about feminism."<sup>67</sup> McGinnes recalled, "Scott was a big supporter of the feminist movement. Jane Kaufman was very active in that. She was a member of the women's group with Pat Stier, Marcia Tucker, Elke Solomon."<sup>68</sup> McGinnes was referring to an important consciousness-raising group that was begun in 1968 and was credited by Tucker, Kaufman, and others as foundational for their commitment to feminism.<sup>69</sup> As Kaufman's political involvement grew, she challenged Burton's preconceptions, and she instructed him on the feminist

critique of art and art history as it was being formulated. The two found personal affinities in feminism's critique of exclusions and hierarchies, and Burton's own political awareness around gay liberation was underwritten by the feminist ideas he was learning from this circle of friends. (This is also the context for Burton's participation in activities of the Art Workers Coalition.)<sup>70</sup>

Kaufman remarked that Burton "saw feminism and gay rights as the same fight."<sup>71</sup> She went on to say, "I can take credit for that. Scott was very smart and very political. He was in favor of feminist ideals."<sup>72</sup> However, she qualified this, saying, "I wouldn't call him a feminist. It's hard for me to think of a man as a feminist. Then it was a women's movement."<sup>73</sup> Burton became an advocate for feminism and developed his work in line with its priorities, but—as Kaufman's comment indicates—there was a limit to men's participation in these early years. Burton did not make feminist work so much as he developed his performances in alliance with its critique of exclusion and bias. He directed his energy to the ways in which a comparable gay movement could contribute to the structural changes for which feminism was fighting, and he would come to make works that attacked masculinity and that explored queer experience, as I discuss in this and the following two chapters. Throughout his career, however, he would repeatedly cite feminism as an inspiration and influence, and he stood with women artists.<sup>74</sup> Kaufman added that Burton "was cheering us on for sure. It was a big influence on him."<sup>75</sup> Burton additionally cited his mother as a source for his sympathy with the feminist cause. He said in a 1987 that "I can see a lot of correctness in feminist political struggles through my mother's own life."<sup>76</sup>

In addition to his exposure to feminist debates through organizers like Kaufman, Strider, and Solomon, Burton was also reading the literature of feminist art history. Nochlin was of particular importance to him, and he had been following her work since at least 1968.<sup>77</sup> Burton first became aware of her work on realism (about which he was curating exhibitions in the late 1960s and early 1970s), but it was her critique of structural sexism in art history that he found most impactful. The two became friends sometime in the early 1970s, and he would include her in his plans for the "Gay Issue" of *Art-Rite* that he worked on in 1974, as I discuss in chapter 4. *ARTnews*, where Burton had worked as an editorial associate (and would, in 1972, become assistant editor), published Nochlin's groundbreaking essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in January 1971.<sup>78</sup> Not only did he read this article; he was also well aware of the debates that preceded and followed its publication. His friends Strider and Betsy Baker contributed to the forum on the article included in the same issue.

This milieu further immersed Burton in discussions about how power and exclusion operated in the art world and in art history. For a reminder of Burton's involvement in these conversations, one could look to 1973 when Sleigh included Burton centerstage in her painting *The Turkish Bath* that replaced women with nude men (including Perreault and her husband Lawrence Alloway) as a means of critiquing the sexist patterns in art history's representation of women (fig. 0.3). As the artist Sabra Moore recalled about her work with Sleigh in feminist organizing in the New York art world, "We could count on one hand the male critics favorable to women artists, and many were included in this painting."<sup>79</sup> In the early years of Burton's development of performance art, feminist ideas were coming to him from multiple sources. They profoundly impacted his outlook.

After returning from his summer in Iowa in 1970, much of Burton's time was occupied by his work as a curator, teacher, and editor. This shifted when, sometime at the end of 1970, he received a commission for a performance work for the spring from Elayne Varian at Finch College. Located on Seventy-Eighth Street on the Upper East Side, Finch was a women's college that, in the 1960s and early 1970s, became known as a platform for experimental art and performance before it closed its doors in 1975.<sup>80</sup> Varian, the director of the Contemporary Wing of the college's museum, was instrumental. Her "Art in Process" series of exhibitions of events ran for eleven years (until 1973), providing an important venue for artists like Burton, Lynda Benglis, and Dan Graham—all of whom were shown in 1971 (as was an exhibition of videos of performance art). It was a high-profile opportunity for Burton, and he created an ambitious program to be shown in the college's auditorium. On 4 March 1971, he showed eighteen short performance works that included tableaux vivants alongside other new experiments (plate 3).

For *Eighteen Pieces*, Burton built on the work he had done with *Compositions* and *Ten Tableaux*, but he expanded it to include his many other interests in clothing, furniture, visual conventions, and art-historical references. The program was made up of performance works that were approximately three minutes each. These included multiperformer and solo tableaux, a sound work, a film, a few costumes, and performances in which only objects (such as chairs) appeared onstage.<sup>81</sup> Many of the works aimed at parody, with Burton poking fun at conventions. The entire event was received as humorous and entertaining. Burton's friend Michael Harwood (who assisted backstage) said, it was "colorful, witty and opulent."<sup>82</sup> Finch College student newspaper reporter Ronny Helene Cohen remarked, "Humor was important in the evening of theatre created by Scott Burton. The presentation best paralleled the old revue technique of

the musical theatre.”<sup>83</sup> The heterogeneity of *Eighteen Pieces* allowed Burton to test out many ideas and directions, and some would turn out to be foundational. He also made these works with the context of a women’s college in mind. This situation prompted Burton to include ideas that he was learning from his exposure to feminism. A recurring theme across *Eighteen Pieces* was the way that women and gender were represented in art history and in popular culture.

*Theater of the Ear: Rape of the Sabine Women*, for instance, expanded on his inquiry into the iconography he had used in *Ten Tableaux* but with a major change: it did not feature performers. Instead, audience members sat in the dark, facing an empty stage while a sound recording of horses, screams, and struggles played. McGinnes, who also stage managed the program, helped him with the recording and editing for this sound work.<sup>84</sup> Whereas his earlier work for Iowa had been a live tableau frozen in mid-struggle, here he refused to offer an image of this scene. Instead, he prompted audience members to imagine it over the piece’s duration—one of the longest pieces that evening, at almost six minutes.<sup>85</sup>

Burton developed this idea in relation to a painting well known to the Finch students: Poussin’s 1633–34 canvas at the nearby Metropolitan Museum of Art, just three blocks away (fig. 2.4). The iconic painting was translated into a durational experience, and the sonic unpacking of its iconography also drew out aspects of its violent content. Audience members sat in total darkness while listening to recorded sounds that represented the approach of the soldiers to the crowds followed by:

Women screaming (3 seconds)

Loud confusion: continuous screams and cries; babies crying; swords hitting each other (150 seconds)

Man dying: gasps, death rattle; noise of struggles and confusion underneath (15 seconds)

Woman screaming, continuous; cloth tearing, single woman screaming; man breathing hard, woman whimpering (45 seconds)

Crowd, lower, subdued (30 seconds)

Single baby crying (10 seconds)

Horses’ hooves, fading into distance (14 seconds)<sup>86</sup>

As Burton intended, the sound work prompted the students to compare their experience to Poussin’s painting, and they had been taught of its importance.<sup>87</sup> We can think of this move in relation to feminism’s criticism of



**Figure 2.4.** Nicolas Poussin, *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*, probably 1633–34. Oil on canvas, 154.6 × 209.9 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1946.

art history for ignoring issues of sexism and violence in works that it took to be exemplary of a male-dominated story of artistic form. Again, Nochlin's article from just two months prior to the performances was catalytic in Burton's thinking about these questions. *Theater of the Ear* refused to offer a voyeuristic or aestheticized image of the scene of sexual violence, instead compelling them to imagine the struggles as lived experiences.

Despite its content, *Theater of the Ear* was received as humorous. Kaufman recalled that this was her favorite work in the program. Reduced to audio only, the melodramatic combination of the sounds of hoofbeats, soldiers' dying gasps, trumpets, and over-the-top screaming were "hysterical," she said.<sup>88</sup> The student newspaper agreed.<sup>89</sup> The artificiality of the sounds included made the work come across as an old-fashioned radio play, and Burton likely used this ironic distance as a balance to the violent content of the iconography. A strategy used by Burton throughout *Eighteen Pieces*, as we will see, was to isolate and exaggerate an aspect of a work of art, an iconography, or a pop culture convention in order to draw attention to its rhetoric and assumptions. Burton's works in *Eighteen Pieces* satirized these conventions and patterns, and many of the works were about challenging the power invested by art history in such images. Whether as parody or critique, however, *Theater of the Ear* countered the aestheticization of domination in Poussin's and other paintings of this canonical scene.

Kaufman's other favorite piece of the evening also re-viewed an iconic



**Figure 2.5.** Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, 1852–59, modified in 1862. Oil on canvas glued to wood, 108 × 110 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

painting with a satirical eye. Burton made “*Bain Turc*,” *J. A. D. Ingres* (his only completed film), which also attempted to complicate art history’s reliance on images of eroticized and objectified women. The film was made up of a slowly panning close-up of Ingres’s *Turkish Bath* (1852–59; fig. 2.5) in which the camera roved across the image. It was likely done from a photograph of the painting rather than the canvas itself (which is in the Louvre).<sup>90</sup> Calling it “a film and a conceptual piece,” Burton described how “the camera moves across [the painting’s] surface, selecting various internal compositions and emphasizing the erotic aspect—the female body.”<sup>91</sup> Burton’s detail-focused film refused a distancing view of whole bodies and their distinctions, and he wrote in the program notes “this piece is also a form of art criticism.”<sup>92</sup> A common interpretation of Ingres’s painting held that it was directed at a male viewer’s erotic objectification of the bodies, whether that be the voyeuristic viewer assumed to be male or the imagined sultan in this Orientalist fantasy.<sup>93</sup> Burton’s close-up focus interrupted that distanced, controlling view. Instead, the claustrophobic closeness to the image showcased the ways in which parts of the painted bodies interact and touch (enabled by Ingres’s slinking and infeasible nudes). In this way, he drew out the lesbian potential that has been seen (and often disavowed) in the painting.<sup>94</sup> “It looked like a piece of porn,” Kaufman recalled laugh-



ingly, again signaling how these works by Burton sought to uncover topics in these paintings that often went unacknowledged in public or art-historical discourses.<sup>95</sup>

These two works were informed by Burton's emerging awareness of feminist critique of art history, but they only timidly engage with those conversations (and are not without their own problems). Nonetheless, they both evidence the impact of his growing knowledge of feminism through their interrogation of the conventions and assumptions of art history's focus on women's bodies. Other works from *Eighteen Pieces* also addressed art history directly. For instance, *Statues* involved Finch student performers striking sequential poses "drawn from Western sculptural traditions" separated by blackouts.<sup>96</sup> In *Bathers* performers arrived one by one onstage to adopt various reclining poses from modernism's many scenes of idyllic bathing. The cumulative effect was again parodic. The combination of these reclining bodies in actual space did not resolve into a controlled composition; rather, their juxtaposition highlighted the artificiality of each of these supposedly natural images of repose. Like the Ingres film, *Bathers* tried to call attention to art history's compositional conventions that used women's bodies. *Sculpture Theater* recreated the effect of the Iowa City rotating stage, but here with a rotating pedestal crowned by plaster cast of a neoclassical nude. Importantly, the nude was Jean-Alexandre-Joseph Falguière's adaptation of Jean-Léon Gérôme's 1861 *Phryne before the Aeropagus*, itself an iconography tied up with women's subjugation to visual inspection under the auspices of art and aesthetics.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to iconographic references to art-historical traditions in which the women's bodies were the site of eroticism and objectification, Burton also called attention to popular culture's use of this imagery. For instance, he described the work *Poses* (performed by Peggy Leary; fig. 2.6) for Finch as "a movement piece and an iconographic piece. A girl in a 'sexy' costume assumes several classic cheesecake poses, referring both to Pop and to cinematic devices of stop-action freezes."<sup>98</sup> Later, in his account of this work in *Lecture on Self*, Burton alluded to the ways in which this piece related to the autobiographical theme of the isolated individual, saying that the poses were all "drawn from a popular sexual iconography. [This piece] presented an oblique portrait of an isolated figure, a pregnant theme of [my] work."<sup>99</sup> By calling these successive poses a "portrait," Burton indicated that he wanted the audience to sympathize with the woman who acted out these clichés. *Poses* would later be revisited in the development of Burton's first one-person *Behavior Tableaux* work.

Clothing's significations featured in a number of the works. Since his *Disguise* for *Street Works II* and *Four Changes* for *Theater Works* at Hunter in



**Figure 2.6.** Scott Burton, *Poses*, 4 March 1971. (Also called *Twelve Poses*.) From *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College, New York. Performed by Peggy Leary. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

1969, Burton had been exploring the semiotics of dress, and he included “clothing” on his works chart as one of his six main themes. *Changes*, for instance, involved a student performer walking in a circle behind a screen, successively removing and adding layers of clothing to reveal new outfits, each signifying different attitudes and times of day. Burton investigated how clothing changed our understanding of the person seen, and this connected with his interests in camouflage, dissemblance, signaling, and sexual coding.

In *Eighteen Pieces*, this concern was most evident in the work *Disguise Piece* (fig. 2.7; not to be confused with its predecessor, the 1969 *Self-Work: Disguise*). Burton described *Disguise Piece* as “a man is dressed as a woman, but removes his wig to reveal the deception. Then a woman dressed as a man does the same thing.”<sup>100</sup> It was performed by Kaufman and Frank Torres. It was one of only two pieces among the eighteen for which Burton brought in men performers, an indication that it was important enough to warrant extra-institutional casting. (Burton only included himself as



**Figure 2.7.** Scott Burton, *Disguise Piece*, 4 March 1971. From *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College, New York. Performed by Frank Torres (shown) and Jane Kaufman. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

a performer in the short *Lecture on Myself*, discussed in more detail in chapter 4.) On this performance about the gendered use of clothing, a student reporter remarked that it “concisely and effectively explored audience astonishment. The rapport established by the tall, slim beautiful sexy ‘girl’ eyeing the spectators, quickly altered once ‘she’ revealed a hairy chest in one swift motion. The reaction re-occurred when the bearded, black-leathered jacket figure, scratching its dungarees, zipped open and revealed a well-filled black brassiere. Many in the audience, though they knew the disguise was present, still remained surprised.”<sup>101</sup> Included with the works that pursued conventionality and power overlaid onto images of women, *Disguise Piece* transgressed boundaries of ascribed genders.<sup>102</sup> As the reporter repeated in her article, the “astonishment” of the audience was expressed even though the falsity of the disguises was readily apparent—evincing how challenging and unfamiliar such gendered performances were for a general audience at the time. It is also likely that part

of the impact of this piece was its address to gay male culture in the form of Kaufman's outfit as a stereotypical gay leatherman with beard and black leather jacket. In an interview with me, Kaufman described it as "leather drag," signaling that the work was a nod to emerging gay visual culture and communities.<sup>103</sup> In a separate interview, McGinnes also used the term "leather drag" to refer to Kaufman's clothing for that performance.<sup>104</sup> This work was a continuation of Burton's interest in the ways that clothing signified and altered others' perceptions of the one wearing it, but here he used clothes that brought with them additional queer connotations.

I have not discussed all the eighteen works (or the ideas that he abandoned, such as the flaming sculpture of the word "theater" that would have been traced by a slow burning fuse).<sup>105</sup> *Eighteen Pieces* was responsive to both its context and its audience at Finch, but it was also somewhat of a free-for-all, with many of Burton's divergent ideas compressed into one evening. Only some of the works evidence the impact of Burton's growing knowledge of the feminist critique of art history, and I have tried to draw out those themes from the extant accounts. The restriction of the three-minute performance meant that some of Burton's works were one-liners, and he incorporated many of the different ideas he was developing for performance. Some would be prescient. *Chair Drama* foreshadowed Burton's psychological use of furniture, and *Slide Novella* looked back to his work on the ballet *Shadow'd Ground* and forward to *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*. (These works are discussed in later chapters.) The first iteration of *Lecture on Self* was also one of the eighteen. As I discuss in chapter 4, Burton would develop this performance to be a bold critique of the masculinist presumptions of the New York art world (in the form of *Modern American Artist*), and it was an outgrowth of Burton's thinking about how he could contribute to feminism. Reinforced by these early works, Burton would begin to ask how he could make works that were more directly about queer experience and its relation to power dynamics. It is this parallel track that led to the development of *Behavior Tableaux*, which would occupy him for the remainder of the decade.

Histories of 1970s art have had a hard time discerning links between gay male artists and feminism. In an important 2007 essay on heterosexual feminist artists creating erotic and sexual works about men's bodies, Richard Meyer noted about his research, "I found, in short, virtually no trace of a dialogue between straight feminist and gay male artists in the 1970s. Perhaps, though, I was looking in the wrong place."<sup>106</sup> Burton's ongoing dialogue with artists (representing different stylistic positions) such as Sleight, Wilke, Strider, Kaufman, and Solomon provides an important exception, and Burton would repeatedly cite the importance of feminism

for his work and thinking for the remainder of his life. *Eighteen Pieces* marked the beginning of his attempt to incorporate feminism's lessons. As I discuss in chapters 3 and 4, this influence would continue to make itself felt in Burton's work, from his *Behavior Tableaux*, which took on gendered conventions of the nude, to his parody of artistic masculinity, *Modern American Artist*.

### **Signals: Body Language and Burton's Study of Nonverbal Communication**

Between what he had accomplished in Iowa and at Finch, Burton began to see a way forward for an art of tableaux that combined the distillation of social relations with a degree of (however dissembled) narrative and autobiographical content. Gone would be the vaudevillian presentation and humor, and instead there was an attempt (as he said in 1973), to "deal with some of the most fundamental aspects of human social behavior" and to find "the exact location where human psychology and visual art meet: in the non-verbal language of the body."<sup>107</sup> Burton began serious study of behavior as a topic of scientific inquiry. He soon found a new vocabulary that bolstered his other investigations: behavioral psychology and the cybernetically informed analysis of nonverbal communication. It was this literature on behavior that allowed Burton a new means of translating the experiential into the analytic, and it focused his concerns with sexual signaling, gendered conventions, public dissemblance, cruising, feminism, and the power dynamics of social spaces. All of Burton's subsequent performance and furniture works are indebted to the language and the concepts that he drew from anthropology, communication studies, and the application of cybernetics to behavioral psychology in these early years.

Burton's reading on these topics focused on authors who studied nonverbal communication and the body's role in it. In particular, Ray Birdwhistell, a colleague and collaborator of Gregory Bateson, Marshall McLuhan, and Erving Goffman, was a key figure among a group of anthropologists and psychologists who began to ask how communication functioned outside of written and spoken words. Birdwhistell and his peers such as Edward T. Hall, Albert Scheflen, and the environmental psychologist Robert Sommer became research interests for Burton, and he quickly absorbed their terminology into his own statements in the early 1970s. Rather than their more widely read collaborators Bateson and McLuhan (or, for that matter, Jack Burnham, who pursued cybernetics in art criticism), Burton was energized by the significant wave of publications these scholars released

in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Hall's *Hidden Dimension* (1966, issued in paperback in 1969), Birdwhistell's *Kinesics and Context* (1970), Sommer's *Personal Space: The Behavioral Basis of Design* (1969), and Albert and Alice Scheflen's *Body Language and Social Order* (1972).<sup>108</sup>

Starting with the popularized notions of personal space and body language, Burton engaged with these more specialist sources on the study of spatial relations and nonverbal communication. In particular, Hall's "proxemics" (the social study of bodily proximity) and Birdwhistell's "kinesics" (the study of body motion as communication) emerged as Burton's main keywords. By the spring of 1972, he was using this specialized terminology to explain his work, writing that his *Group Behavior Tableaux* "uses several performers whose movements and groupings illustrate preverbal kinesic and proxemic systems of human interaction ('body language' and 'personal space' arrangements)."<sup>109</sup> Burton's commitment to this literature continued throughout the decade. In the late 1970s, he was even considering producing a didactic film on nonverbal communication that would feature the arguments of these books.<sup>110</sup> While this literature was foundational to his performance art, he also incorporated its ideas into sculptures that inflected spaces, positioned persons, and modeled behavior.

There was an outburst of publishing activity in the literature on nonverbal communication in the years 1969 to 1972, and Burton read it avidly. McGinnes said that he gave a copy of the 1969 paperback of Hall's *Hidden Dimension* to Burton soon after it was published.<sup>111</sup> Hall's book on the effects of distance on interpersonal relations and communications was transformative for Burton.<sup>112</sup> Hall, an anthropology professor at Northwestern University, coined the term "proxemics" for "the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture."<sup>113</sup> Including discussions of both visual art and literature, *The Hidden Dimension* discusses the experience and perception of space as molded by culture. The book offers a cross-species and cross-cultural analysis of territoriality and the subjectivity of spatial relations between people. Also of interest to Burton was the fact that architectural and urban design were addressed as areas of application.<sup>114</sup> Hall's examination of how spatial perceptions and relations were acculturated was wide ranging, and it emphasized the subjective experience of the space of interiors and public areas as well as the space between people.

In addition to Hall's analysis of the effects of interpersonal space and territory, Burton became enthusiastic about the ways in which these ideas related to his interest in behavior, dissemblance, and public space. He began to think more deeply about the conscious and subconscious language of bodily signals, gesture, and pose.<sup>115</sup> This led him to Birdwhistell's work.

Hall had developed “proxemics” in response to Birdwhistell’s groundbreaking work on the bodily registers of nonverbal communication that he dubbed “kinesics.” (The “kine” was Birdwhistell’s term for the basic unit of body motion communication, and it described any positional displacement of the body or its parts, from an arm to an eyebrow.) Burton acquired *Kinesics and Context* soon after its publication in 1970.<sup>116</sup> He often cited the scholar’s work in later years when he gave interviews.<sup>117</sup>

Birdwhistell argued for the importance and ubiquity of a complex and acculturated vocabulary of bodily and facial acts that were interwoven with (and enabling to) other forms of communication and, most importantly, the power dynamics of social relations. For him, this was a corrective to communication studies and anthropology, which had placed exclusive focus on the verbal and written forms of communication. By contrast, Birdwhistell developed research methodologies and extensive annotation methods to chart and analyze facial and bodily movements and interactions. A main interest was cross-cultural perspectives, and he saw nonverbal communication as being culturally specific but nevertheless benefiting from comparative analysis.<sup>118</sup> By suggesting an alternate to spoken and written communication, Birdwhistell’s work became important as a means of questioning the centrality of the linguistic within anthropology and communication studies. At the time of the 1970 publication of his major book *Kinesics and Context*, Birdwhistell’s influence was well established.

Birdwhistell’s work offered Burton a number of points that related to his own interests in behavior and coded communication. Burton’s application of Minimalist ideas of seriality and of distillation into components found a similar clinical atomization in Birdwhistell’s diagrams of the microdynamics of interpersonal relations, and both Burton and Birdwhistell sought to take the social as an object of this method. Burton used extreme slowness in the *Behavior Tableaux* performances as a means to visualize the impact of the smallest gesture, position, or comportment, and this tactic paralleled Birdwhistell’s (and his peers’) reliance on film, slowed down or analyzed frame by frame, as a method for analyzing body motion communication.<sup>119</sup> Burton also likely became attuned to how Birdwhistell used the domestic and familial contexts as examples to explain kinesics, emphasizing the child’s learning of the cultural codings of bodily relations, gesture, and movements (the first section of *Kinesics and Context* is titled “Learning to Be a Human Body”). And it should not be forgotten that Burton’s attempt to find his own mode of performance art paralleled Birdwhistell’s decentering of the linguistic, and it served Burton as a means to differentiate his work from language-based conceptual art. In the early years of formulating his own brand of performance art, Birdwhistell’s work

on the microanalysis of body motion communication helped clarify Burton's interests and justified his claims that his conceptual performances were neither theater nor dance.

Alongside Hall and Birdwhistell, one of the first books Burton read on these topics was Sommer's *Personal Space*, which offered a bridge between specialized and popular literatures.<sup>120</sup> Its central concerns were behavior's spatial determinations, proximity as a matrix of power struggle, and the role played by architecture and design in those dynamics. In addition to talking about how people communicated and competed through body position and distance, Sommer also examined the effects of buildings, rooms, seating, and other architectural elements on group behavior and interpersonal communication. He characterized interpersonal relations as questions of social power, namely, aggression, domination, and submission—all of which, for him, were expressed through proximity. It was this emphasis on power relations of domination and submission that became main themes of the *Behavior Tableaux*, and Burton incorporated terms from Sommer's *Personal Space* in his earliest ideas for these performances. For instance, in a short treatment for a "body language" piece from 1971, Burton wrote: "Situations expressed only in 'body language' and arrangements of 'personal space.' Postures agree or vary, groupings change—revealing rank, degree of acceptance, tenor of occasions."<sup>121</sup> The brief description of this idea for performance emphasized not just the communicative power of gesture and comportment but also the effects of proximity and the power dynamics of its navigation. Within months, he would expand on this theme in his 1972 application to the Jerome Robbins Fund for production costs for *Group Behavior Tableaux*. Describing each of the scenes of the piece as "confrontations," he explained about these narratively unlinked episodes, "This is a theatre piece closely related to dance because the performers' psychological relationships are stated only through their movements, gestures, and spatial behavior. . . . There *is* content—the emotions of these men, toward themselves and toward each other."<sup>122</sup>

The influence of Sommer's book on Burton was long lasting. For instance, he suggested it as background reading for Linda Shearer, the curator of his 1976 Guggenheim performance *Pair Behavior Tableaux*.<sup>123</sup> Burton would later claim that it was the text that first introduced him to these ideas and allowed him to redirect his tableaux from art-historical citations to contemporary behavioral dynamics.<sup>124</sup> He recalled, "I had this vision. These [tableaux] are not narratives. They're meant to be thematic. Like first you show intimacy, and then you show disengagement."<sup>125</sup> Sommer's book about spatial manipulation and its effects on behavior would also



come to inform the ways in which Burton made furniture and public art in the coming years.

Burton regularly cited the books by Birdwhistell, Hall, and Sommer in his notes and statements, and these remained his main touchstones. However, his particular combination of their concepts and terms seems to show the influence of another book that Burton owned and read: Julius Fast's popularizing text *Body Language* from 1970.<sup>126</sup> Fast's book sought to synthesize these discussions about proxemics, kinesics, and personal space for a general readership. Fast had been a novelist since the 1940s, but he also wrote a number of books that translated medical and social research into more widely accessible prose. For instance, in 1966, he repackaged William Masters and Virginia Johnson's important study *Human Sexual Response* in a book of that same year titled *What You Should Know about Human Sexual Response*.<sup>127</sup> Fast's *Body Language* was of the same order. It transposed the scientific discourse of its sources into a digestible, entertaining overview for a general readership. The book marshals an impressive number of concepts and sources in its combination of kinesics, proxemics, and behavioral psychology, offering a sort of literature review despite its sometimes casual tone. Its aim was to provide a workable knowledge of spatial interactions and body language, and it focused on the daily applicability and evidence of these ideas in urban life. While *Body Language* is far less academic than the books of Hall or Birdwhistell, it does succeed in transmitting their concepts and terminology while integrating (and sometimes taking issue with) the social scientists on whom Fast drew. I believe that the way Fast wove together the distinct literatures on proxemics, kinesics, and related concepts was fundamental to Burton's interest in these ideas. Already in 1972, Burton was conjoining the terms "proxemics" and "kinesics"—something not done by Birdwhistell, Hall, or Sommer. Only *Body Language* brought them together as fluidly and frequently, and Burton seems to have adopted this combination of concepts.

Even though Burton owned and read Fast's book, it appears he came to dislike it, which may be expected when a generalist summary draws on other readings that eventually reveal the limitations of that once-helpful overview text. Because Burton aspired to a tone of seriousness for his work, he would later swipe at the popularizing books on these subjects. In his 1977 notes for the didactic film on body language, for example, he included Fast's book among a short list of sources that he did not want to cite (reserving his greatest disdain, however, for Desmond Morris's *Manwatching*, a "how-to" guide to using body language that Burton also had in his library).<sup>128</sup>

Despite Burton's later distancing, there are too many similarities be-

tween his formulation of these ideas and Fast's synthesis of Hall, Bird-whistell, and others to ignore. My reason for making this claim is not just to sort out the history of Burton's engagement with these ideas but also to draw attention to how Fast's book connects to Burton's other main interest in his performance work—the issues of homosexuality and cruising. I believe that Fast's book helped reinforce Burton's interest in anthropological and behavioral literature as a resource for thinking about queer experience. For all its saucy anecdotes and sweeping generalizations, it made explicit how analyses of behavior and body language had an exemplar in queer sexualities, coded signals, and their disruption of normativity.

In his explanations of everyday body language, Fast often showcased sexual dynamics, and he included some frank but conflicted accounts of same-gender cruising and anonymous sex. At the very least, these would have been noticeable to Burton since they depart from the more sober technical studies. In those studies, homosexuality is briefly mentioned or left implicit, whereas Fast made it a main example. For instance, in a summary of Hall's definition of proxemics and his four zones of interpersonal interaction—the intimate, the personal, the social, and the public—Fast added gendered and sexual dynamics as examples. Whereas Hall talks more generically about subway riders, Fast speculates on the gendered combinations of such crowded spaces. He warns about too-close relations between men: "When you are at *close intimate* distance you are overwhelmingly aware of your partner. For this reason, if such contact takes place between two men, it can lead to awkwardness or uneasiness. It is most natural between a man and a woman on intimate terms."<sup>129</sup> And, a page later, when he talks about American men in a crowded elevator, Fast's level of detail increases:

They will hold themselves as stiff as possible trying not to touch any part of their neighbors. If they do touch them, they either draw away or tense their muscles in the touching area. This action says, "I beg your pardon for intruding on your space, but the situation forces it and I will, of course, respect your privacy and let nothing intimate come of this."

If, on the other hand, they were to relax in such situation and let their bodies move easily against their neighbors' bodies and actually enjoy the contact and the body heat, they would be committing the worst possible social blunder.<sup>130</sup>

In effect, Fast narrated a cruising encounter in which the potential for the recognition of mutual desire erupts through subtle, covert signals. As I

discussed in the introduction, cruising is a strategic inhabitation of public spaces in which queer interest is broadcast through subtle adjustments of comportment, gesture, gaze, or proximity that can be—for one who also is on the lookout—an opportunity for recognition and rapport. These same signals, however, have plausible deniability, and the cruiser can claim that they were innocent, unintentional, or accidental. That is, the cruiser acts “as if,” with their purposeful bodily signs and proxemic negotiations dissembling as normal and mundane. Fast’s narration of “the worst possible social blunder” is full-blooded in its specifics of such a moment. If one of the two men (or both) linger too long in each other’s body heat, they tip the everyday elevator encounter into nonverbal communication of sexual desire and the willingness to break normative social rules.<sup>131</sup> While he ostensibly warns against this moment of disallowed exchange in public, Fast also names it as the potential of urban proximity and crowding. His descriptions remind his readers that these nonverbal power relations all too easily slip into erotic relations.

Before too long, Fast’s book turns its sights to actual cruising by gay men and lesbians. Such passages directly relate to the themes of dissemblance and public vulnerability that were an important part of Burton’s *Self-Works* the year before. In the chapter “The Silent Language of Love,” Fast devoted a subsection to pickups where he both warns and promises, “Homosexuals ‘cruising’ on a street can identify a sympathetic soul without exchanging a word.”<sup>132</sup> References to homosexuality are included throughout his examples, as when he observed, “In our country, two men are not allowed to stare at each other for more than a brief period of time unless they intend to fight or become intimate.”<sup>133</sup> At another point, he salaciously recounted, “I have had male homosexuals tell me that they have had encounters with men, complete from pickup to sexual satisfaction, without even divulging their own names or learning their partners’ names,” adding that this anonymity allowed for greater sexual freedom.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, the 1971 publication of Fast’s book in the United Kingdom had, on its back cover, the enticing proposition that “every move you make tells a secret” with, among its solicitations to the reader: “Does your body betray your thoughts?” and “What are homosexual signals?”<sup>135</sup>

Such content would have jumped out from Fast’s book and caused Burton to scoff at its salaciousness and phobic projection. It is likely that this book—with its cautionary yet nevertheless invested accounts of cruising, anonymous sex, and intimacy—both aggravated and amused Burton. Unlike Birdwhistell and Hall, *Body Language* is a quick read; peppered with anecdotes about cruising, office politics, and sexual intimacies, it synthesizes (adeptly) its source literatures as well as entertains.<sup>136</sup> With its lan-

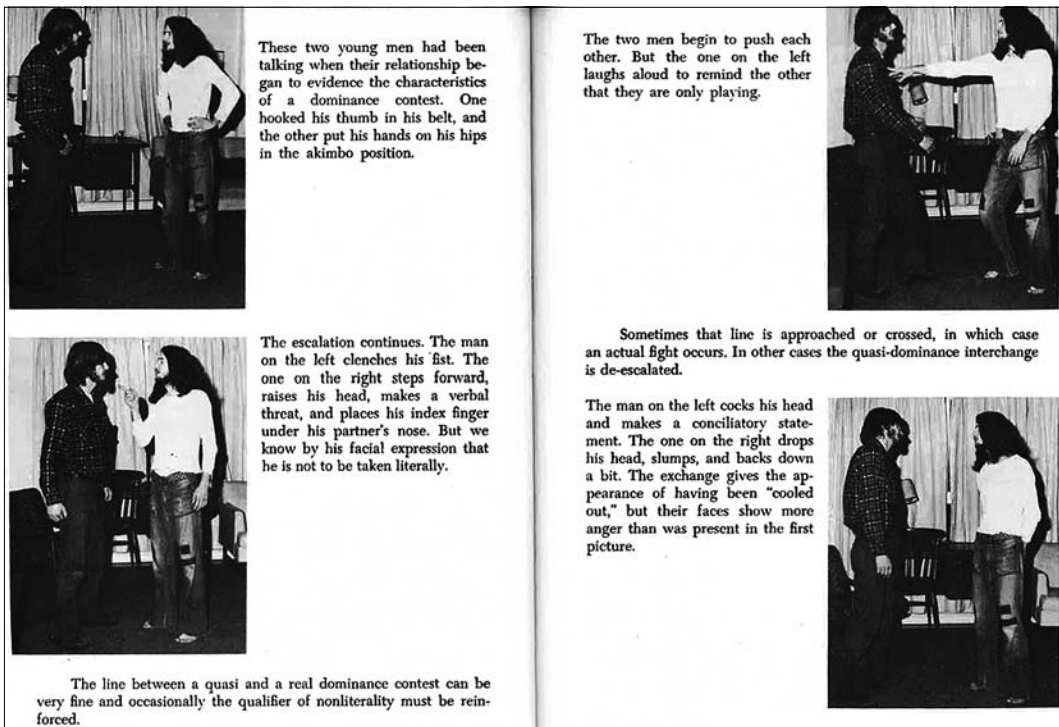
guage regularly careening into the sensational and provocative, I doubt that Burton saw it as a comprehensive account or took it too seriously. Especially as he started to explain his interest in proxemics and kinesics to others, it is doubtful he would have cited such a book. Nevertheless, it does map onto Burton's particular conjunction of these sources and may have provided an initial roadmap to the technical literature. More importantly, it offered an example of how the language of proxemics and kinesics was relevant to discussions of queer experience, cruising, behavior, and public space.

Queer behaviors also feature in another book on body language that was one of Burton's main sources: the slightly later 1972 book *Body Language and Social Order*, by Albert Scheflen in partnership with his wife, Alice Scheflen.<sup>137</sup> The Scheflens' working vocabulary of terms for the study of body language were regularly cited by Burton in his subsequent discussions of what proxemics and kinesics meant to him. "Reciprocals," "monitors," and "transcontextuals" were all put into play in the Scheflens' book, and explanations of these terms were paired with scores of photographs illustrating poses and interactions. I believe these photographs provided an inspiration for some of the content and style of Burton's *Behavior Tableaux*. Burton would go on to read more of Albert Scheflen's work, and he included both the 1972 *Body Language and Social Order* and Albert Scheflen's 1974 *How Behavior Means* on the important source books to be discussed in his didactic film.<sup>138</sup>

The Scheflens' book was published the same year *Group Behavior Tableaux* was debuted, and it is possible that the book got to Burton before the 19 April performance at the Whitney Museum of Art. It is even more likely that Burton read it before the late October iteration of *Group Behavior Tableaux* at American Theater Lab. However, Burton would have first learned of Albert Scheflen from Fast's 1970 book, which summarized his writings in technical journals before the 1972 publication of *Body Language and Social Order*. Fast's summary of Scheflen's articles focused on his analysis of posture and the way people faced each other: "1) inclusive-non-inclusive, 2) vis-à-vis or parallel body orientation and 3) congruence-incongruence."<sup>139</sup> Burton deployed these types of bodily dynamics (rather than those drawn, as earlier, from art history) in *Group Behavior Tableaux*'s expansion of the initial ideas for a "body language" piece.

Scheflen's cybernetically informed work focused on power dynamics, and he also took relations of dominance and submission as central terms (fig. 2.8). Cybernetics involves the study of control, communication, and operation in complex systems, with a central concern being the ways in which feedback alters or inflects those systems in which it occurs. Coming

to body language from the perspective of psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy, Schefflen charted the ways in which social order is maintained and challenged in interpersonal dynamics, and his work liberally extended Birdwhistell's more granular taxonomy of poses and expressions into a generalized account of power and resistance in communication that focused on territorialization and hierarchies. The book focuses on the challenges and reprisals that occur before overt agonism, and its overall thesis is that body language helps stave off such bald aggressions and competitions by diffusing and displacing challenges to social order. The book used instances of gender or sexual transgression as key examples. For example, in a discussion of "transcontextuals," which are gestures that are inappropriate for a given context and are used to disrupt (wittingly or unwittingly) a social exchange, it declares, "A transcontextual enactment can be gross and constant. One can persist in saying the wrong thing, taking the role of the opposite sex, acting sexy or getting drunk at a solemn gathering. This is what deviants do. But we are interested here primarily in

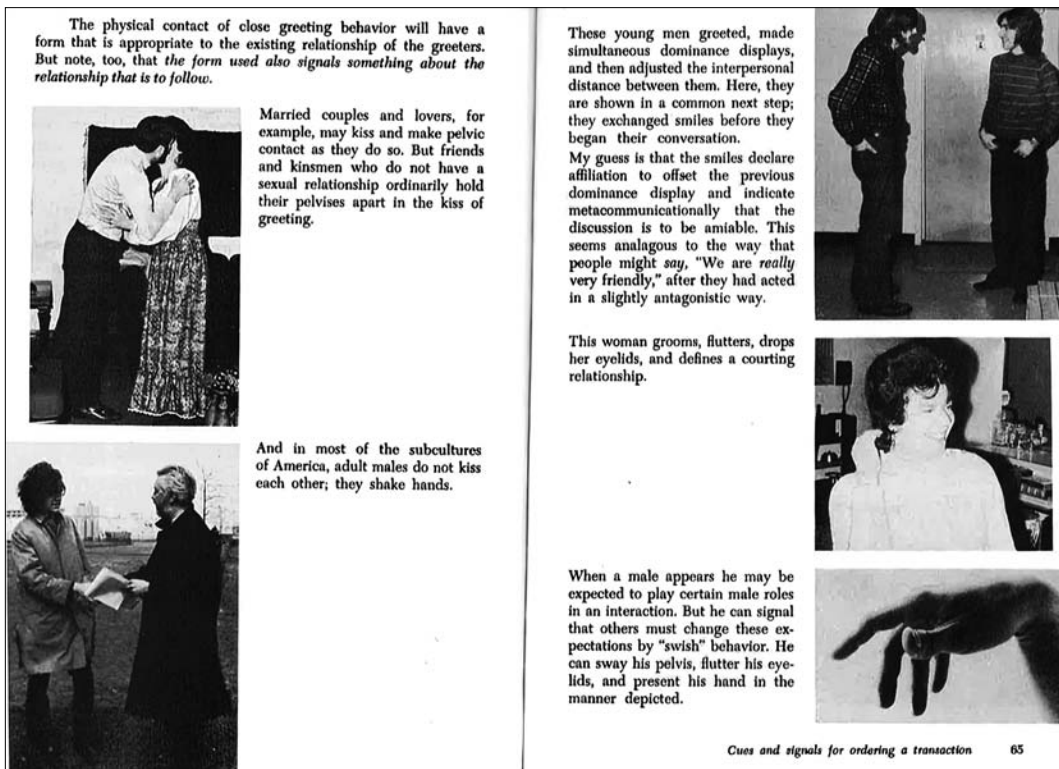


**Figure 2.8.** Pages from the section "Dominance and Submission Reciprocals" in Albert E. Schefflen and Alice Schefflen, *Body Language and Social Order: Communication as Behavioral Control* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

the more usual kinesic transcontextuals, which can be quite subtle. They will not be noticed unless you look for them.”<sup>140</sup> At issue for Scheflen was the maintenance of social order, and he stressed the use of transcontextuals beneath ostensible communication as means to add connotative layers to denotative speech.

Like Fast’s book, *Body Language and Social Order* uses gender nonconformity and queer sexuality as outlying examples of behavior that is manifested kinesically and that should be monitored and forestalled. The book does not fail to remind us that “in most of the subcultures of America, adult males do not kiss each other; they shake hands.”<sup>141</sup> Or, next to an illustration of a limp wrist: “When a male appears he may be expected to play certain male roles in an interaction. But he can signal that others must change these expectations by ‘swish’ behavior. He can sway his pelvis, flutter his eyelids, and present his hand in the manner depicted” (fig. 2.9).<sup>142</sup>

Such attempts to enforce normativity (and evidence of tactics that resist it) appear throughout the literature on nonverbal communication, but



**Figure 2.9.** Pages from the section “Metasignals That Instruct about the Relationship” in Albert E. Scheflen and Alice Scheflen, *Body Language and Social Order: Communication as Behavioral Control* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

the Scheffens and Fast give prominence to the question of queer deviation that often remains implicit. It is this question that Burton would go on to explore in *Behavior Tableaux* with its cataloging of body language in same-gender groups and couples. Burton found in the literature on body language a corollary to his own interest in how difference operated in public space. From his earlier explorations of camouflage in public and more generally of cruising (a theme that would only increase in his development of tableaux works, culminating in his citing of gay bars, bathhouses, and street corners in his *Individual Behavior Tableaux*), Burton was interested in targeted uses of body language and the ways in which it could signal queer potential. He would later explain to the curator Michael Auping that the gestures he used in his *Behavior Tableaux* were “hybrids of art history, psychology, social gestures, street signals. They can be dramatic or very subtle—mostly subtle, sometimes barely visible. . . . It’s how they are sitting or standing in relation to each other or an object or a piece of furniture—spatial/behavioral relationships. . . . Certainly someone who is gay could relate to many of the gestures my performers make. It’s a language you learn.”<sup>143</sup> Burton turned to the literature on body language, proxemics, and behavioral psychology because he was interested in public space and the queer inhabitation of it. Cruising is a complex gestural and proxemic dialect (“a language you learn”), and it provided Burton with a framework for thinking about performance, bodily signals, and power dynamics. His research allowed Burton a greater degree of clarity and a specialized vocabulary for discussing gesture, proximity, and nonverbal communication—themes central both to cruising and to his *Behavior Tableaux*. The scientific literature on body language helped him to see how queer experience could illuminate the terms of larger systems of social power, public space, normativity, and the role of difference. In 1977, he told a reporter, “Human sciences like the anthropology of Birdwhistell and Schefflen can help art be human again.”<sup>144</sup>

# **PERFORMANCE AND ITS USES**





# 3

## THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF THE NUMBER OF INCHES BETWEEN THEM

### *Behavior Tableaux, 1972–80*

“Basically, we are talking about body language, which can be very subtle, very subversive, very secret.”<sup>1</sup> This is how Burton explained the focus of his *Behavior Tableaux* performances—his most widely known works of the 1970s. These austere, hour-long performances showcased body language and questioned the power dynamics of physical and social relations. Burton distinguished these works from his earlier stage-based experimentation, saying “I don’t see [the *Behavior Tableaux*] as theater; I see them as coming out of conceptual art.”<sup>2</sup> Through his work on the *Behavior Tableaux* over the course of the 1970s, Burton cultivated the key themes of his artistic practice: his interest in nonverbal communication, his understanding of the ways in which social spaces are theaters of power, his activation of the viewer’s bodily engagements in space and in time, and his conviction that queer experience provided a major resource for these investigations (fig. 3.1).

Burton’s first work in this format, *Group Behavior Tableaux*, premiered at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1972. He expanded on this performance and developed new variations throughout the decade. He came to think of *Behavior Tableaux* as a trilogy, differentiated by the number of performers in each version.<sup>3</sup> He made shifts and tested new ideas as individual performances were adapted to successive venues. Cumulatively, the *Behavior Tableaux* series comprised

The five-person *Group Behavior Tableaux*, performed in 1972 at the Whitney Museum and at American Theater Lab

An early draft version of a single-person work, *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, at the Institute for Art and Urban Resources' Idea Warehouse in 1975

The two-person *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum in 1976

An evolving one-person *Behavior Tableaux* (featuring a naked performer), which Burton would retrospectively refer to by its final title, *Individual Behavior Tableaux*:

1. *Solitary Behavior Tableaux* for the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 1977
2. Retitled and updated as *Figure Tableaux* for the Philadelphia College of Art in 1977
3. *Figure Tableaux* revised for documenta 6 in Kassel in 1977
4. Revised and retitled *Individual Behavior Tableaux* for Berkeley Art Museum in 1980

In this chapter, I will refer to the shared format of these individual works as "*Behavior Tableaux*." Burton maintained consistencies across the different versions of these works, and there is a set of traits shared by all. When discussing a specific performance and the ways in which it adapts this general format, I will use its fore-title ("*Group*," "*Pair*," "*Individual*").

Burton understood the *Behavior Tableaux* as some of his most important work, seeing it as on par with his sculpture in the decade. He would later remark, "I did a lot of lightweight experimenting. But the *Behavior Tableaux* are very serious. And the design of furniture is very serious."<sup>4</sup> These works were widely seen, and they became a visible example of the new performance art of the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Burton's 1976 performance at the Guggenheim Museum became well known because of its extended run of six weeks (with five performances weekly). In fact, the museum boasted that its presentation of *Pair Behavior Tableaux* "marks the first time that a major American museum has devoted such a degree of time and attention to performance art."<sup>6</sup> Seen by almost nine hundred people, Burton's 1976 Guggenheim piece drew one of the more significant audiences for a non-televised individual performance artwork in 1970s New York.

Across the trilogy of *Behavior Tableaux* performances, Burton established specific parameters that prescribed the audience size, the spatial organization of the performance, the limitation of sound, and the perfor-

mance style. Each *Behavior Tableaux* performance lasted anywhere from fifty to ninety minutes, during which time performers enacted as many as eighty individual scenes of around one to five minutes each, with intervening blackouts separating one scene from the next. In the multifigure works, performers all looked alike, and their movements were glacially slow (if they moved at all). The presentation was soundless, and audience members sat in tightly packed chairs at an extreme distance from the set. Across that dark silent expanse, viewers watched the performers catalog poses and proximities that represented interpersonal relations such as attraction, revulsion, domination, submission, intimacy, discord, solicitation, and alienation.

Because of these limiting conditions imposed by Burton on the experience of *Behavior Tableaux*, the works cannot be quickly grasped through singular photographs. The cumulative experience of the extended endurance of the silent performances becomes lost in the extant photographs that show only the performers. Burton did have these works videotaped, but all but one video (of the final work, *Individual Behavior Tableaux* at Berkeley) has been lost.<sup>7</sup> My reconstruction of the *Behavior Tableaux* trilogy and audiences' experience draws on my interviews with viewers, performers, and the curators who programmed these works. I interweave these recollections with existing documentation, published reviews, performers' scripts, and Burton's notes to offer a richer account of these works. As with all retrospective accounts of performances, my narrative of the *Behavior Tableaux* is incomplete and necessarily involves an imaginative rebuilding of the experience from plans, stills, and decades-old memories. Nevertheless, the fragments of these experiences that survive have been consistent in directing my attention to behavior—both as the ostensible content of the performances but also as the question these performances posed to audience members as they sat close together across a dark room watching the body language of distant performers.

This chapter will first discuss these general traits of the *Behavior Tableaux* format. Burton's attitude toward the audience and the situation of performance were largely unchanged from 1972 to 1980, and I will discuss the ways that these works were orchestrated to affect viewers. I will then examine the *Behavior Tableaux* series in chronological order, charting the shifts in their content. Over the course of the decade, Burton expanded his investigation of behavior, and his work interrogated the power dynamics of the group, the couple, and the single figure in relation to the audience. Across the evolution of *Behavior Tableaux*, Burton drew on his queer experience as a primary resource, and his works increasingly made that clear. As he had begun with his *Self-Works*, Burton looked to queer navigations of



normative expectations as a means to assess how behavioral norms were enforced and subverted. Self-monitoring, dissemblance, secret signaling in hopes of contact, and other queer behaviors were all woven into the content and form of the *Behavior Tableaux*'s successive iterations. Burton's performance works not only staged these ways of behaving; they also entrained audience members into them.

### **"Behavioral Minimalism": The *Behavior Tableaux* Format and Its Queer Effects**

For both performers and audience members, *Behavior Tableaux* took endurance. In these long, soundless performances, movement was slowed, and actions were attenuated. Sitting in silence for about an hour, viewers would watch the performers adopt positions at an almost inhumanly slow pace. At a rate of just a few millimeters per second, it might take a



**Figure 3.1.** Scott Burton, scene from *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 24 February to 4 April 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

minute or more for an arm to change position from above the head to the side of the body. Each scene unfolded as if a ten-second clip of a film had been slowed down to two or three minutes. The performers might start in positions that communicated a certain power dynamic, and they would then slowly shift into a new set of positions that would reinforce or complicate the reading of social power invested in that pose or gesture. The lights went out between each short scene; the performers reset; and the next scene would follow (fig. 3.2). Watching these silent glacial interactions separated by blackouts, viewers oscillated between focusing on the slow-moving details of these well-lit distant relations and adjusting to the short period of total darkness, their eyes constantly adapting to the changes in light.



**Figure 3.2.** Scott Burton, nine scenes from *Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April 1972, Whitney Museum of American Art. Detail of plate 4. Performed by John Braden, James Cobb, Michael Harwood, Glen Jacobs, and Charles Stanley. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

“You could call it behavioral minimalism,” Burton would later say in reference to *Behavior Tableaux*.<sup>8</sup> He adapted Minimalist tactics of seriality, the repeated monochromatic component, and additive composition to multifigure performance.<sup>9</sup> Burton composed the performers as if they were interchangeable units to be put into different proximities and physical relations to each other. They had to have the same body types, were of the same height, and all dressed the same. Burton remarked, “I always use tall, slender men. For one thing, their limbs carry well at the great distance that I use. That linear clarity is the main thing. Also, the uniformity of look is very important.”<sup>10</sup> In the first iterations of *Behavior Tableaux*, all the performers were white and male, and Burton had gauged them to the proportions and look exemplified by Charles Stanley, the dancer and playwright who would feature in the multifigure performances of *Behavior Tableaux* from 1972 to 1976.<sup>11</sup> As with his other artworks of the early 1970s, Burton considered these performances “autobiographical” in origin and related to his experience, and his initial choice of white male performers reflected that centering of his own perspective. However, his desire for visual uniformity among the performers (as a means to forestall other

readings of the relations between them) no doubt also fell back on a specious presumption that these superficially identical bodies were neutral in their whiteness and maleness and, as a result, could be relegated to nondescript units. (In 1975 and 1977, Burton would make some attempts to change this formula with the single-figure works—in which identicality between performers was not an issue.) He did not consider them actors; they were neither individuated from each other nor meant to convey any particularity or personality. They offered no facial expressions or other emotive or expressive actions, and Burton asked them to maintain psychological remoteness. Michael Harwood, who performed in the first *Behavior Tableaux* work in 1972, recalled that Burton instructed them to avoid individuality of any kind and “to be as neutral and unexpressive as possible.”<sup>12</sup> With these strictures, Burton transposed the blankness of Minimalist seriality into performance. In his thinking, if the performers were too visually distinct or individualized, the audience would read them primarily as character types and project narratives or metaphors that would distract from the performance’s focus on gesture, body position, and the meanings of proximity. “I try to make them look similar but not identical. Not so different you get involved with personalities,” he noted.<sup>13</sup> By having the performers be visually exchangeable with each other, Burton’s intention was to keep the audience focused on body language and its shifting power dynamics.

Body language is used by everyone, albeit with different levels of self-consciousness, community-specific idioms, and degrees of purposefulness. Burton’s aim was to implicate the audience with the knowledge that these gestures, signs, and poses were a language that they already employed. Jane Kaufman remembered speaking with Burton when he was amassing his catalog of poses and gestures used in the *Behavior Tableaux* works. She recalled that Burton would choose individual body positions that were common and with which many could identify (or remember using): “That was the whole point. The positions would remind you of something in your life. Like when you took that position at such and such a time—when you put your hand in front of your face it would remind you of when you were sad, when you were angry, when you were happy. That was what he was after. He would talk about that: what the positions meant in the audience’s life.”<sup>14</sup> Burton and Kaufman would experiment with the positions and poses in her loft. He was interested in the ways in which the same gesture or movement could have multiple uses and evoke distinct memories. Kaufman continued, “It was to make you feel—to have you remember feelings. But it made the audience very uncomfortable.”<sup>15</sup> Burton wanted to demonstrate a vocabulary of bodily signs to audience members



as a means of making them self-conscious of how they signaled and non-verbally communicated.

Body language—both intentional and unintentional—expresses or enacts power dynamics, as Burton learned from his study of the scientific literature on nonverbal communication. Accordingly, he divided his *Behavior Tableaux* works into groupings of individual scenes on themes such as aggression, ostracization, accord, or attraction. Each of these section groupings had a slight anchoring narrative through which audience members would see relations between the performers unfold and change, but this did not add up to a singular theatrical plot across the work. One could think of Burton's structure for *Behavior Tableaux* as like a thesaurus, with each theme being conjugated through a range of different gestures, compartments, and spatial distances between performers. None of the performers had a consistent character across the different groupings of actions, and each new series of actions set a different scene. Burton's focus was instead on the polyvalence of nonverbal communication between the performers' bodies and the cataloging of how that body language reinforced normative behaviors.

Burton had inventoried and considered such compartments and their meanings through his reading of behavioral psychology and its discussions of the systems of nonverbal communication, kinesics, and proxemics. Of equal importance, however, were his observations of body language's queer dialect. The dynamics of attention and accord in gay male street cruising offered a complex accounting of how bodies could signal, subvert, and code. Body language could be used tactically and with duplicity—as in the cruising signals such as the nod, the stare, and the look-back that hid in plain sight among the mass of nonverbal communication on any street. A self-awareness of body language was a common element of queer experience, and Burton saw that nonverbal communication was heightened for those who found themselves and their desires monitored in public. He would later make explicit this connection with his gay male viewers when he said, "Something that gay people will understand in my performance work, aside from the male nude, is what it studies specifically in body language."<sup>16</sup> Burton played out these overlapping concerns in the *Behavior Tableaux* scenes of same-gender relations and power dynamics (fig. 3.3).

Thus, *Behavior Tableaux* operated on two levels, as we will see. Burton could frame the works in seemingly neutral didactic terms, as when he explained, "I'm talking about learned behavior, sign behavior, not unconscious. I'm content to work within the body language of my culture. . . .



**Figure 3.3.** Scott Burton, scene from *Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April 1972, Whitney Museum of American Art. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

I'm just trying to get people to see the physical language that goes on all the time, their own behavior."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, such descriptions of his work provided cover for the fact that the *Behavior Tableaux* drew on and came to represent queer themes (culminating in his works about the body language of street cruising and bathhouses at the end of the decade). For instance, one of his earliest notes for the *Behavior Tableaux* format called it "a theatre *entirely* of subtext."<sup>18</sup>

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I will discuss the content, variation, and evolving subtext of the individual works that make up the *Behavior Tableaux* trilogy, but first the situation of viewing that Burton imposed on his audiences must be further examined. Shared across various iterations in the trilogy, the specific spatial conditions of the *Behavior Tableaux* format were what was remarked on first and most often. Burton insisted on a pronounced and artificially wide gap between audience and performers—some fifty to seventy-five feet. Viewers sat together in closely placed chairs organized in two rows at the edge of this distance. Audiences were consequently limited to a maximum of about thirty at a time. Burton would demand these requirements for the space and the audience's bodily arrangement whenever he proposed one of these works. Burton later remarked about the effect of this distance on the audience: "Very far away makes for very strong involvement."<sup>19</sup> This situation was equally uncom-

fortable for the performers, who had backgrounds in theater and dance. Harwood, who performed in the 1972 *Group Behavior Tableaux*, recalled: "In one indelibly memorable moment during the performance, I'm facing the audience, looking out at a bunch of small people far away, covered in shadow, a dark blank space between us. Given my background in theater, this seemed very weird."<sup>20</sup> That chasm between performers and audience clearly indicated to viewers that they were not in a conventional theatrical setting. One reviewer called it the "monstrous gap" between the stage and audience.<sup>21</sup>

At this great distance, the poses of the glacially moving (or completely still) performers could not be read or interpreted quickly. Attentive viewers would be focused on a slowly changing gesture that might not seem distinct or different for a minute or more. Interspersed with their moments of recognition of meanings or their personal associations with gestures would be long periods of silent, awkward boredom waiting for a blackout and change of scene. This strategy was intentional, and it drew on the established Minimalist tactic of using boredom as a means to heighten the viewer's awareness of the conditions of viewing.<sup>22</sup> Burton knew this strategy well. Kaufman recalled, "Scott always said: 'On the other side of boredom is creativity.' He liked to bore people."<sup>23</sup> Perreault also understood this, and he alerted his readers about a later iteration of *Behavior Tableaux*, "Be forewarned. This performance is almost unbearable. . . . [It] is not a work you enjoy, but one you endure. But it stays with you."<sup>24</sup>

The extended distance also muffled any sounds the performers might make. Near total silence was essential for Burton. "The most beautiful and terrifying thing about the work is its silence," Perreault remarked.<sup>25</sup> Since there was little to no sound from performers across the "monstrous gap," the audience primarily heard one another. It was "a dissociated and straining audience that fidgets, coughs, checks watches, and the like," as Robert Pincus-Witten described it.<sup>26</sup> This emphasis on ambient sound was indebted to the precedent of John Cage's experimental compositions that withheld sound and conventional music, but Burton's *Behavior Tableaux* orchestrated this silence (and the viewers' sounds) in tandem with the physical closeness of audience members as means to amplify their awareness of each other. One's attention to the sounds generated by those seated tightly nearby would have been heightened in the frequent blackouts between the short scenes. In a description of her experience, curator Janet Kardon wrote, "The spans of darkness and light, varying from 15 to 120 seconds, were as uneven and unpredictable as an irregular heartbeat. Darkness was as intrinsic element of the piece as punctuation marks are in language."<sup>27</sup> Viewers tended to fidget during the blackouts, meaning that

audience members became more aware of each other's small movements and sounds in those periods of darkness.

The distance, silence, darkness, and pauses were deliberate choices of Burton's, carefully orchestrated to produce a specific range of effects on viewers. "The psychology of the viewer is a major element in the unfolding character of performance," he asserted.<sup>28</sup> With its protracted unfolding of gestures and poses, the "action" on the distanced stage offered no escape from the uncomfortable situation of sitting closely together in darkened silence waiting and watching. I contend that the *Behavior Tableaux* performances are best understood as systems of reciprocity between audience and the distant stage—that is, across the chiasmus between the performers' enactment of body language and viewers' own bodily performances of attenuated attention. Unlike traditional theater, in which focus is directed to the stage, Burton's *Behavior Tableaux* incited a system of relations (both semantic and spatial) within the viewing situation to make audience members more self-conscious of each other. Or, in Burton's own words: "In the behavior tableaux what I want people to become aware of is *the emotional nature of the number of inches between them.*"<sup>29</sup>

Let's imagine the experience of sitting next to someone in silence for this extended amount of time, desperately trying to appear attentive. The slow whisper of bodies in closely placed seats would always be present. Rustles, coughs, and deep breaths would be among the only noises. If our gaze drifted to the left or right, we would see a row of knees. Burton kept the number of rows limited (usually to two), so there was relatively little of the power allowed by sitting in the rear. As anyone who has ever lined up shoulder-to-shoulder knows, our choices for engaging our neighbors become quickly limited to the furtive sideways glance or the obvious confrontation of turning the head. Seen in peripheral vision, such turns often produce a reciprocal action by the one next to you, meeting that gaze with another. Hands rest on knees near other hands and other knees, sometimes touching. Across the hour or more of the performance, an audience member would be attentive not only to what was happening in the distant, silent, slow movements of near-identical performers but also to their neighbors' own endurances of the same silent and slow choreography. Discussing this experience, Kardon said: "Sitting close to the next person one found oneself afraid to move one's head for fear of encountering the glance of a stranger in the suggestive darkness. One's movements, like those on stage, were constricted—a chair might squeak, a purse drop to the floor. This kind of reciprocity between performance and audience was intense, separation led to identification and participation, while apparently precluding both."<sup>30</sup> Because of this viewing situation, *Behavior*

*Tableaux* depicted behavior onstage, while at the same time amplifying viewers' cognizance of their own behavior and that of those sitting next to them.

Burton did not just want to teach the audience about kinesics and proxemics; he wanted to enfold and entrain them into a situation of heightened awareness of their own spatial intimacies and bodily signaling with each other. After all, cybernetic or systems theory approaches would understand the entire complex of a performance as a set of networked relations and feedback. Proxemic and kinesic cues produce reciprocal effects in those receiving them. In addition to conscious communication, those reciprocal relations also activate affect—reactive responses to stimuli that are both bodily and emotive, felt concurrently in these two entangled registers. Not only were audience members watching painfully slow performances of the shifting meanings of bodily poses; they were themselves performing in affective relation to others who sat near them in protracted silence punctuated by one another's sounds of endurance.

The resulting lateral accruals of affect were the result of the heightened kinesic and proxemic situation in which audience members found themselves during Burton's slow, silent performances.<sup>31</sup> Audience members sat together in silence watching the performers' slow declensions of body language while they concurrently negotiated one another's proxemic and kinesic signals. Self-consciousness increased, and—as Kardon's testimony indicates—questions arose about how the smallest of bodily movements might be interpreted or misinterpreted. In the hour or more of silent scenes of slow behavior punctuated by a "suggestive darkness," an audience member might worry that a small fidget in those tight seats could be read as a solicitation or as an aggression. There was no escape from these peripheral negotiations. The "action" in the distance offered no sound, little movement, and boredom interspersed with moments of recognition, identification, and memory as viewers saw their everyday poses and gestures in a new, attenuated light. In the performance system established by Burton's strictures, affectual contagion and transfer circulated laterally among audience members. Responding to this solicited self-consciousness, they might come to experience low-intensity feelings of interest, shame, or distress. Burton hinted at this when, in preparation for the work for documenta 6, he explained to the curator that the seating for the performance must be limited to a small number in two rows because "this small size is also essential for psychological reasons."<sup>32</sup>

Of course, a degree of these interpersonal relations of proximity are present in any theater audience, but Burton sought to distill them. Through

the mirroring of the viewer's proxemic negotiations with the slowed-down presentation of aggression, submission, and attraction by the performers, Burton amplified the customary conditions of being shoulder-to-shoulder in an audience. The deeply unnatural and artificially slow movements at the beginning of the performance would, because of the accumulation of affect, come to seem all too similar to the bodily restraint necessary to sit stiffly in the closely placed folding chairs. The audience members were playing their part too, and all gauged "the emotional nature of the number of inches between them."

While I have used Kardon's account of her experience as my primary example, the affect-laden experience of proximity and bodily negotiation was a common theme among other descriptions of the *Behavior Tableaux*, from the critical accounts of the individual works discussed below to my interviews with those who attended the performances. In effect, Burton's *Behavior Tableaux* produced a self-consciousness in viewers that was above and beyond other viewing situations. Audience members monitored how they behaved, and they were incited to question how their movements might appear normal and unremarkable. Such self-regulation and heightened awareness are the conditions of queer experience. They are daily tasks in the navigation of public space and its normative expectations. I contend that the format of the *Behavior Tableaux* had queer aims in that it sparked feelings of self-regulation and self-consciousness, and a heightened awareness of others' bodily signals. Much like the survival tactics of the queer navigation of the street that underwrote Burton's *Self-Works*, the effects of the *Behavior Tableaux* center on such queer conditions as "observedness" and self-monitoring discussed in earlier chapters of this book.

As I will discuss presently, each version of *Behavior Tableaux* represented issues from queer experience, from the power dynamics of groups (*Group Behavior Tableaux*) to the vicissitudes of a same-gender pair's relations (*Pair Behavior Tableaux*) to the signaling of sexual confrontation and gender ambivalence with a naked solo performer (*Individual Behavior Tableaux*). Beyond the queer *content* of these performances, I argue that the *format* of *Behavior Tableaux* operated to produce queer affects in tandem. I think this is one of the most significant and pivotal aspects of these performances—that they attempt to convey aspects of queer experience that center on the daily acts of survival, dissemblance, and self-monitoring in the face of imposition of "normal" behavior. Burton was not attempting to make work that reduced queer experience to the erotic or its display but, more ambitiously, modeled in the work the larger difficulties of the daily navigation of heteronormativity, homosociality, and homosexual panic

that were an all-too-common part of queer experience. His work with *Behavior Tableaux* taught him that work made from queer experience could also address larger issues of social power, public space, and bodily relations.

### **“To Really Express My Experience, as Real Art Should”: Bullying and Other Power Dynamics in the 1972 *Group Behavior Tableaux***

Burton’s initial formulation, *Group Behavior Tableaux*, premiered at the Whitney Museum on 19 April 1972 (plate 4). Some months before, he had proposed a “Body Language Piece” to the Whitney, and Stephen Weil programmed it into a new festival of performance activities the following spring.<sup>33</sup> Burton was given only one evening to show his work. In these early years of museums’ inclusion of performance, live art was often seen as mere programming because of the perception that it could be more quickly and cheaply staged than an exhibition (and with less of a commitment due to a limited run—usually one night). This was the case with Burton’s Whitney piece, which was grouped along with concerts, dance pieces, and poetry readings as part of a two-week program of activities.<sup>34</sup> (Burton would stage *Group Behavior Tableaux* again in October 1972 for three nights at American Theater Lab.)

Despite the limited run, Burton threw himself into preparing this ambitious work. *Group Behavior Tableaux* relied on a complex, protracted script for five performers with elaborate lighting cues. Consequently, it required extensive rehearsal and preparation, which Burton had to fund on his own.<sup>35</sup> Because the Whitney did not collect ticket sales beyond standard museum admission, it could offer little in the way of financial support.<sup>36</sup> He turned to his friend and former partner Jerome Robbins, with whom he had reestablished a friendship after breaking with John Button.<sup>37</sup> This pitch to Robbins for financial help crystallized on the island of Crete, where Burton spent almost two months in the summer of 1971 and where he hosted Robbins for a long weekend in August.

The summer in Crete was pivotal for many reasons. Burton sailed on the *SS France* to Europe, where he solidified what would be a lifelong friendship with the art historian Robert Rosenblum. In Crete, Burton and his good friends Steve Gianakos, Mac McGinnes, and Donald Droll rented a small villa where Burton spent most of the summer. During the time there, they also met up with others staying on the island such as the gallerist Betty Parsons and Charles Henri Ford, who had a villa there.<sup>38</sup> Friends came to visit, including the actress Stockard Channing (just off her Broadway debut), Christos Gianakos, and Robbins. During Robbins’s visit, he

and Burton concocted a plan to apply for funding from Robbins's foundation and for American Theater Lab (which Robbins had founded in 1966) to reprise the Whitney performance later in 1972.<sup>39</sup>

With the support of Robbins, Burton was able to hire five people to rehearse and perform the work for the Whitney in addition to crew members to handle the eighty timed blackouts at irregular intervals. Gay men made up the entire cast of the Whitney performance, each chosen for their visual similarity to the others: Charles Stanley, John Braden, James Cobb, the actor Michael Harwood, and Glen Jacobs. Harwood's partner, Jean-Claude Vasseux, stage managed.<sup>40</sup>

*Group Behavior Tableaux* presented scenes of alienation, coupling, aggression, domination, and ostracization in a series of silent, barely moving tableaux in which performers' gestures shifted between ambiguity and brutal clarity. It followed through on the "autobiographical" themes that drove some of Burton's earlier performance experiments, namely that of the "theme of the isolated individual."<sup>41</sup> Across its groupings of slow actions, *Group Behavior Tableaux* charted relations such as accord, intimacy, and confraternity—all of which successively broke down into acrimony, antagonism, ostracization, and isolation. A central concern for Burton was power in group dynamics—in particular, how a group can turn against one of its members. The subtext of *Group Behavior Tableaux* was rooted in Burton's queer experiences; he wrote to Robbins about the performance, "As you can see, I don't want to think up clever new ideas, but to really express my experience, as real art should."<sup>42</sup>

Burton divided the work into four thematic sections: (1) concord and mutual acceptance; (2) divisions, disharmonies, and antagonisms; (3) authoritarianism in which one individual dominates a group; and (4) the individual as isolated and subordinate to the group. Of this last section, he remarked, "Isolation, it is implied, depicts the position of low status as an intolerable and crushing one."<sup>43</sup> Across the eighty scenes of slow relations enacted by these five male-presenting performers, there were many moments in which intimacy between the performers was implied as well group dynamics in which one figure comes to be singled out and castigated (fig. 3.4).

All the iterations of Burton's *Behavior Tableaux* involved many components and subthemes, and I will not attempt to reconstruct every scene. However, Burton himself singled out one scenario in the second grouping (on the theme of divisions and antagonisms) when summarizing the overall work in his 1973 lecture-performance *Lecture on Self* (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Explaining the second section of *Group Behavior Tableaux*, Burton recounted this scene as exemplary: "They turn away from





**Figure 3.4.** Scott Burton, scene from *Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April 1972, Whitney Museum of American Art. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

each other, as in a sequence in which one turns his face slowly away from another who has just entered. He continues across the stage-room to be treated identically by the two other previous occupants of the space and finally settles alone in an unaccompanied spot.”<sup>44</sup> This act of spurning is then mirrored when another performer enters. This new performer is similarly rebuffed by the dominant ones in the scene. Upon approaching the other shunned person, this new entrant is, too, refused: “A second intruder into the space causes a second head-aversion by one of the occupants, and ultimately even the performer who was previously shunned by the seated performers averts in turn his face from the performer approaching him.”<sup>45</sup> I believe Burton chose to highlight this scene because it staged issues of homophobia and alienation. The protagonist of this scene (who, in previous scenes, was considered the same as the others) is now shunned and cast out as different. The second entrant onto the scene (rejected in the same way upon arrival) activated the same response in the protagonist, whose own replaying of the act of shaming served to block any possibility for identification with this new person. The protagonist also joins in on the group’s bullying in this act. He deflects attention from the others’ suspicion of him by shaming another and aligning himself with the group’s targeting of that other suspect individual. He is now doubly alone. Such an alignment of peer pressure and the deflecting of suspicion through aggression toward another target are familiar scripts in queer lives.<sup>46</sup>

Power dynamics such as these were Burton’s main interest, and one could understand these scenes of group behavior in his work as a playing

out of the acts of shaming and internalized homophobia that were aspects of “homosexual panic” in postwar America. When Burton was appealing for funding to present the work a second time in 1972 at American Theater Lab, he said to Lincoln Kirstein, “There are five male performers, and the content of the piece is their behavior in this masculine hierarchy.”<sup>47</sup> Across the four main themes, Burton slowly unfolded the experience of being made to feel different and being shunned, bullied, and isolated. This was made apparent in the progression of the work’s thematic groupings.<sup>48</sup> For instance, Burton later singled out another scene: “There’s one tableau where the lights go up and it is simply a guy sitting there with his head back and four others group around him. It only lasted 30 seconds and I thought it was electrifying [laughs], I thought it was incredibly violent.”<sup>49</sup> The interviewer (Edit deAk) caught this nervous laughter as Burton made clear that *Group Behavior Tableaux* addressed brutality as part of the dynamics of social power and ostracization that the work charted. At one point in his notes summarizing his work’s themes, he wrote that it was about “isolation & rejection, sexual confusion and emotional violence.”<sup>50</sup>

Underlying the presentation of themes such as bullying and isolation was the implication that there could be (or had been) affection or desire between the men onstage. There was no overt referencing of sexuality or eroticism in *Group Behavior Tableaux*, and it would have been possible to read it “straight” as a discussion of group power dynamics. Nevertheless, homoeroticism was implied, if never overtly figured, in the displays of rapport, aggression, submission, and intimidation. McGinnes recalled of his impressions of the work, “The underpinning of the *Behavior Tableaux* was heavily sexual. It’s all about men relating to men.”<sup>51</sup> This subtext of queer desire’s potential would cumulatively accrue for viewers, especially since there were certain tableaux that proposed intimacies among the performers. For instance, Burton’s script includes such stage directions as “A standing / E kneeling before him” or “B, C lying on cot.”<sup>52</sup> (The capital letters stand for the five performers.) Such couplings occur across a wide range of other scenarios that involved one to five performers. Any intimacies interspersed among the other group dynamics had the effect of bleeding into other scenes, and the question of erotic and affectionate relations aggregated across the slow, silent scenes. *Group Behavior Tableaux* refused to foreclose the homoerotic to the degree that even the five-person scenes of power dynamics were, by the end, shadowed by the possibility of male-male proximate intimacies and jealousies. As he had written in his application to the Robbins Foundation, “there *is* content—the emotions of these men, toward themselves and toward each other.”<sup>53</sup>

Harwood played the one singled out and ostracized in key scenes of



**Figure 3.5.** Scott Burton, scene from *Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April 1972, Whitney Museum of American Art. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

the work's five-person dynamics. He recalled that while there was nothing overtly erotic about the piece, there were many scenes that implied gay content—especially in relation to the cot that was one of three pieces of furniture that constituted the set (fig. 3.5). Harwood kept a copy of his personal script, which differs from the more mechanical versions Burton typed out (and names the performers). On this one-person list of instructions written to help Harwood remember the poses, more of the intimacy between performers is evident. From various parts of the script, I have selected a handful of such moments:

- Touching circle (Left Bench), face Downstage, Jim (Right), John (Left), relaxed
- Stand close behind Glen (Table Upstage), face Downstage, bend at waist, Left palm on Table, head angled
- Sleepers, Cot Left, curl towards John but turn head Left
- Upstage right, close to Charles, face him (Downstage Right corner), he turns on knees
- Downstage Right Cot, close to Charles (Right), palms on floor, head up
- Stand Downstage Left close to Charles, facing him (Left) [10 seconds], drop head.<sup>54</sup>

Harwood recalled that he thought that *Group Behavior Tableaux* was over-all about “loneliness and anonymity in an urban society”—a loneliness legible to the performers in relation to their own experiences as gay men. He continued, “In several tableaux my ‘character’ was placed apart from the group of men, perhaps suggesting one ostracized for being gay (or an artist?).”<sup>55</sup>

The content of the tableaux—connection, group dynamics, spurning, loneliness—was, we should remember, experienced by audience members in relation to the constrained viewing situation some seventy-five feet from the performers.<sup>56</sup> The closely packed chairs, the silence, the blackouts, the boredom all served to amplify their bodily relations and to make them more self-conscious of their own witting and unwitting bodily signaling. As I discussed in the last section, this can be understood as a means to entrain the audience into a situation of heightened self-monitoring of their own behavior. Their lateral kinesic and proxemic negotiations overlapped with their attention to the faraway stage that showed how social power could be distilled into a gesture, a way of standing, or the act of turning away. In the system of the *Behavior Tableaux*, the implication of queer experience in the performers’ acts was reinforced by the viewers’ performative work to be part of their own group—the audience. As Burton would later remark, “The performance artist initiates a transactional or situational relation with the viewer. The viewer becomes a member of an audience, in a collective rather than private esthetic situation.”<sup>57</sup> Normativity in group behavior, in other words, was also being played out in those two rows of seats.

The reactions to this situation of constraint, boredom, and power varied—as they would to any performance. Some no doubt left annoyed or distracted, but others felt the situation deeply affecting. Perreault titled his review of *Group Behavior Tableaux* “A Dance of Silent Victims.” In it, he described the cumulative effect of the performance: “The situations of accepting, rejecting, of being accepted or rejected, of waiting, or ranking, by their very nature and by the way they were presented—coldly, elegantly, and without comment—elicited personal memories and personal fears. Because the information presented was so minimal, I found myself projecting upon the succession of situations a narrative of dread and cruelty.”<sup>58</sup> *Group Behavior Tableaux* not only presented queer behavior and its consequences; it also made the viewing situation abnormal to the point where viewers were self-conscious about their own behavior—in short, a viewing situation that itself thematized queer behavior. Perreault talked about how his experience became personal and memory laden, and he could see connections to his own history in *Group Behavior Tableaux* despite the lack of traditional narrative or other dramatic conventions. Per-

result was also gay, and he shared with Burton at least some of those queer experiences presented in *Group Behavior Tableaux*. (In his reviews of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, he would make this clearer, as I discuss below.) The issues of social ostracization and compulsory conformation to group dynamics were vivid for Perreault, leading him to “project upon the succession of situations a narrative of dread and cruelty.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite its heavy themes and awkward viewing situation, the response to *Group Behavior Tableaux* was overall positive, and most reviews he received were complimentary. The performances were seen by many notable artist and writer friends, including Edwin Denby, Lawrence Alloway, Roberta Smith, Amy Taubin, Irving Sandler, Alan Sonfist, Athena Tacha, Alex Katz, and Joe Brainard.<sup>60</sup> However, the effort and expense that went into this five-person performance far outweighed the impact of such a small number of shows (four in total, between the two venues that year). The critical success of *Group Behavior Tableaux* nevertheless energized Burton and reinforced his priorities. After the first performance, he wrote to Robbins, “The feelings of breakdown and helpless[ness] I had so strongly three years ago are disappearing as I put myself more and more into my work, and I can gather my energy for a real purpose now.”<sup>61</sup> Emboldened in 1972, he began to develop new works (including *Lecture on Self* discussed in chapter 4 and the furniture sculptures discussed in chapter 5) and to make issues of queer experience and gender more forthright.

### **Alone Together: *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, 1975**

In 1975, Burton returned to the *Behavior Tableaux* format, creating a single-person work for the short-lived experimental space Idea Warehouse. *New Tableaux—Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* was performed by his friend the feminist artist and curator Elke Solomon over ten nights in March 1975. It was his first tableaux work since his Whitney and American Theater Lab presentations of *Group Behavior Tableaux* in 1972 (though he had in the intervening years also shown his *Modern American Artist* as a living statue, as discussed in the next chapter). This new work shifted the five-person group dynamics of the 1972 work to Solomon’s one-person presentation.

Idea Warehouse was part of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, an organization that repurposed unused industrial spaces for artists’ studios and exhibition spaces. Founded in 1971 and directed by Alanna Heiss, the institute established studio facilities at different locations throughout the city and boroughs, with its most ambitious being an abandoned

school in Queens, P.S. 1, which became an important venue for experimental practices in the 1970s. (Burton would participate in its epochal *Rooms* exhibition in 1976, discussed in chapter 4.) In Lower Manhattan, the institute operated the Clocktower space (at 108 Leonard Street) and two floors of a warehouse at 22 Reade Street near city hall. It was these two floors that were used for studios and a performance space called Idea Warehouse. The venue was acquired in 1973, but it was not until 1975 it began hosting public programming, only to be closed down after a fire just a year later. Burton's *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* was part of Idea Warehouse's inaugural performance series, which had kicked off the month before with concerts by Philip Glass.

Burton was given a month at the space, which included two weeks of rehearsal and two for performances, supported again, in part, by the Robbins Foundation.<sup>62</sup> He had been frustrated by the disparity between the amount of work that went into *Group Behavior Tableaux* and the total number of performances, so he pushed for a more extended run. He also chose to reduce the cast to one performer "for practical reasons" of financial support.<sup>63</sup> Burton adapted some of his earlier work featuring women into this piece—*Poses* and *Slide Novella* from the Finch College performances. With its imagery drawn from popular culture's depictions of women, *Poses* also involved a single performer. *Slide Novella* used a sequence of forty photographs of a solitary woman and her surroundings to tell a melancholy story of isolation.<sup>64</sup> These same images were later adapted into an idea for an unrealized installation of light boxes that Burton called *Photovella*.<sup>65</sup> (*Slide Novella* was, itself, an extension of the strategies of his ballet libretto with projected slides for *Shadow'd Ground*.) One of these photographs, of Jane Kaufman looking out a window, was used as the advertising image for the Idea Warehouse performance.<sup>66</sup>

He enlisted Solomon, whom he had known for years. The invitation came at a crucial juncture in her life: she had very recently decided to leave her curatorial position at the Whitney Museum in order to devote herself to being an artist. The rehearsals and other work with Burton provided some structure (and distraction) in this pivotal moment. Burton and Solomon worked closely on the piece, and he ensured that her name was prominently listed on the publicity materials.<sup>67</sup> Burton intended the work as a means to showcase Solomon as well as himself, and his invitation list included many critics and curators who were sympathetic to feminist art (such as Cindy Nemser, Linda Nochlin, Marcia Tucker, Lucy Lippard, Barbara Rose, Annette Michelson, Douglas Crimp, Battcock, and Perreault).<sup>68</sup>

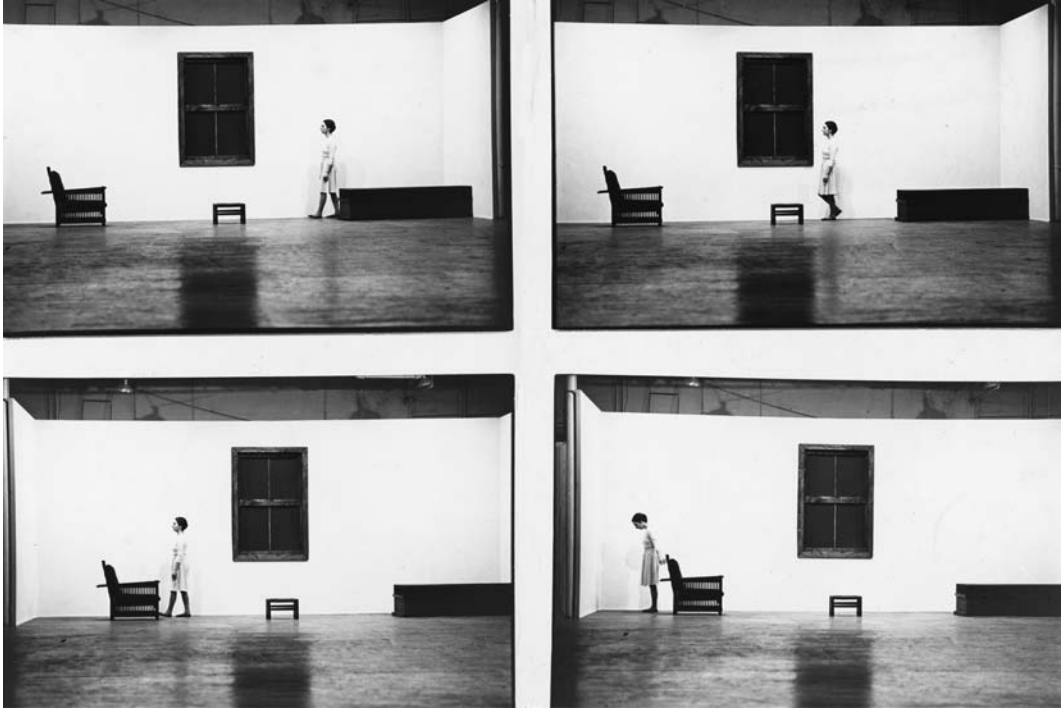
Solomon recalled, "The process was really extraordinary. It changed my life in a particular way. He was brilliant and highly disciplined."<sup>69</sup> In

particular, it was Burton's punctiliousness that she remembered, for the way it was both inspirational and rigorous. "We went over the same part of the piece every night for weeks. He was very precise. I could do one step twelve times to get the turn of the foot right." Together, they worked to get the movements exactly right. "The performance was never monotonous though it was always the same," she said.<sup>70</sup>

As with the Whitney piece, Burton made demands on the audience and the organization of the performance space. In his letter of application to the institute, he asked that there be at a space of least of fifty feet between performers and audience (a compromise from the seventy-five he had at the Whitney). Again, two tightly packed rows of folding chairs were set up. Special arrangements had to be made to ensure silence at the Idea Warehouse. Heiss, for example, wrote to Charlemagne Palestine (the artist and musician who had an adjoining studio space), "Noise will present a particular problem to Scott in that he will be virtually unable to present his work if there is any sound."<sup>71</sup> As with *Group Behavior Tableaux*, Burton's interest was in structuring the audience experience in such a way that they became conscious of their behavior and the limitations imposed on it by the situation.

The new work's reduction in cast to a single performer fundamentally altered the piece. In compressing from five performers to one, Burton had to reconfigure his ideas for the *Behavior Tableaux* format. With *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, the staging of interpersonal relations, subtle signals, nonverbal communication, and power dynamics—those things so important to the first iteration—were now replaced with the single performer whose relations were internal rather than externally oriented to other performers. Solomon's slow solo movements (again divided by regular blackouts) were performed in relation to three pieces of furniture: a small bed (constructed for the performance), a stool, and a Mission-style chair (fig. 3.6). These pieces of furniture were evenly placed in front of a window on the back wall, with the chair facing the bed and the stool between them. She wore a simple, short, pink nightgown that contrasted with her black hair and black shoes.<sup>72</sup>

Solomon recalled that even though there was no conventional narrative, the content of the piece had to do with isolation, indecision, and alienation. "The piece was so stiff. He was thinking about alienation all the time."<sup>73</sup> For her, it was also impactful because of the way the work continued to propose moments of multiplicity or doubt, since Burton organized the poses to show how subtle changes shifted the ways in which the body signified. Solomon's actions were in relation to the pieces of furniture, but they were also meant to convey thoughts (equivocation, loneliness, etc.).



**Figure 3.6.** Scott Burton, scenes from *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, 18–23 and 25–30 March 1975, Idea Warehouse, Institute for Art and Urban Resources. Performed by Elke Solomon. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

“I kept moving back and forth between two chairs. My sense was that it was about indecision. The sides were equal, and it was about where to be. Maybe that’s why he chose me. I had just left the [Whitney] museum and was asking ‘Am I an artist or a curator?’ It had a lot to do with identity—which side one would take.”<sup>74</sup> (Burton, too, quit his job as an editor at *Art in America* to work on this piece.)<sup>75</sup>

In an unpublished review (quoted above in relation to the general effects of the *Behavior Tableaux* format), the curator Janet Kardon detailed the experience of watching Solomon performing:

Each time the lights went on, the performer appeared on the chair, couch, or bench in a different position, as carefully placed in the box-like space as Whistler’s mother or a Cézanne apple. In early scenes, in the tableau tradition, she remained as motionless as a figure in a photograph, but then slow motions, imperceptible as changes in tone in Reich or Glass music, were added. Often, there



was a delay before one realized that an arm was no longer at the side, but was raised over the head. Memory and perception converged in the effort to identify and isolate a gesture, a minimal movement. When the lights were extinguished, bright afterimages of the furniture, but not the performer, remained.<sup>76</sup>

Kardon's remarkable and precise accounting gives a sense of the experience of the work while also showing the attention demanded by Burton on the audience. As Solomon recalled of the piece, "If you weren't paying attention, you wouldn't get it. He made the audiences really seek what was going on."<sup>77</sup>

*Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* reinforced for Burton the efficacy of the format he had developed, but he came to question its departure from the content of interpersonal behavior and power dynamics. He wrote to Costa, "It wasn't the masterpiece to make me famous as I had planned, but I don't know why?"<sup>78</sup> Burton would later reflect on why the work fell flat for him, saying in an interview a few years later that "the piece ended up transformed." In shifting from the five-person format of the earlier *Behavior Tableaux*, Burton experimented by showcasing a woman, rather than men, as the performer. The collaboration with Solomon indicates Burton's increasing recognition of the limits of his initial choices, but he was unsatisfied with the result. Some years later, he recalled, "I used a woman instead of a man and a short person instead of a tall person. The previous [Whitney] piece had been with five very tall thin men, and somehow that look . . . You can't explain why you use bronze or you use wood, or you use a lot of red instead of a lot of blue. This thing of it being men is important to me because women are different. It's not that they are surrogates of myself. I can't really explain it. Using a woman was not quite right though, since I'm not a woman."<sup>79</sup> Burton's circular statements about his identification with the gender of his performers indicates that *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* departed too much from the gay male experience that underwrote his interrogation of behavior (even though the performance was about his privileged themes of alienation and identity). While he claimed that his performers were not self-expressive "surrogates," Solomon recalled that Burton chose her to do the piece, in part, because she was short—like him.<sup>80</sup> As he had with *Group Behavior Tableaux*, Burton drew on "autobiographical" sources for this work, and—despite his attempt to extend the terms of *Behavior Tableaux* and his belief about the commonality of nonverbal communication—this work remained personal in its investments.

Perhaps Burton's uncertain feelings about this piece were also the result

of the different power dynamics that emerged in having a woman rather than men perform. Even from a distance, viewers' lingering visual scrutiny of Solomon's body raised very different questions than Burton's subjection of men to an audience's gaze. Burton could not subjugate a female performer to the same constraints he compelled of his male performers because, as he understood well, that altered the power dynamics of that relation. My justification for this interpretation comes from Burton's later revival of the single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* with the 1977 works that used a naked male-presenting performer. That work, as I will discuss, addressed issues of the erotic gaze, feminist critique, and painting's histories of the nude. In it, Burton shifted attention from an internal relation (e.g., indecision or doubt) to an external relation (i.e., the sexual solicitation of the audience). Questions of visual objectification of the performer and of explicit queer content became central to those later performances. The bridge between them and the more chaste *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* was Burton's most important work in the format: the two-person *Pair Behavior Tableaux*.

### **"One Man Puts His Hand upon the Shoulder of the Other. Why Does This Turn Out to Be So Sexual?": *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 1976**

The Idea Warehouse work kicked off one of Burton's most pivotal years, 1975. This year he would make his first appearance in the Whitney Biennial, be the subject of a one-person article (in *Art-Rite*), receive a grant to make his first bronze sculpture, participate in the *Lives* exhibition, and have his first one-person show (in December at Artists Space). It was also in April 1975 that Burton received his most important commission of the 1970s—for a six-week performance of *Pair Behavior Tableaux* at the Guggenheim Museum in February 1976 (plate 5).

Unlike his earlier performances, Burton now received solid resources to execute his new work, including three weeks of rehearsal time, a dedicated space (the Guggenheim theater), and an extended run (five times a week for six weeks) with a box-office staff to take bookings for each performance's limited seating. The exhibition was organized by Linda Shearer, then a curatorial assistant, who recalled that there was a spirit of experimentalism at the Guggenheim in these years and that she was encouraged to develop this exhibition because it could occupy the underused auditorium in the museum.<sup>81</sup> The result was the elevation of performance from a program to an "exhibition"—which was a largely unprecedented move at this time—and the most extensive commitment to performance art by any

New York museum to that point.<sup>82</sup> Out of a total of nine hundred available seats during the run of the performance (not including dress rehearsals), the Guggenheim filled 832—a significant number for any single-artist, non-broadcast live art event in the 1970s.<sup>83</sup>

Burton conceived of *Pair Behavior Tableaux* as an entirely new piece, though it shared the same format as the *Group* and *Solitary* versions. With this new work, he saw an opportunity to further pursue some of the queer themes that underwrote his interest in body language, proxemics, and kinesics. He turned again to Charles Stanley as a performer and paired him with another of the performers from American Theater Lab performance of *Group Behavior Tableaux*—John Smead.<sup>84</sup> For this new work, he chose to focus on two-person relations, and the sameness of the two performers signaled a reinvestment in the homoerotic underpinnings of *Behavior Tableaux*. The shifting terrain of these two men's relations with each other would be the theme, as Burton explained in his letter of intent to Shearer: "The new material is about pair behavior and uses two performers. It will be another series of tableaux (separated by blackouts) that demonstrate in kinesic and proxemic 'language' the possible kinds of relations between, in this case, two people—friendly, harmonious, aggressive, intimate, competitive, avoidant, hostile, dominant, indifferent, submissive, and so on."<sup>85</sup> The set reflected Burton's idea of the equivalence between the two halves of this dynamic; it comprised two chairs, each on a platform like the performers, at opposite ends of the stage and a bench at the center.<sup>86</sup> For their costumes, Burton dispensed with the clothing that might be taken for office wear. Instead, the two performers wore slacks and tight white t-shirts. They were made to appear even taller by platform shoes (which would, in later iterations, become increasingly important for Burton). Stanley and Smead each wore light facial makeup to suppress their features, making them appear more similar.<sup>87</sup> Again, Burton believed that he could distill the evidence of nonverbal communication only by suppressing visual differences between them.

He explained to Shearer the importance of the physical distance between audience and performers, emphasizing "my absolute necessity to keep maximal distance between the performers and the viewers."<sup>88</sup> In a bold move, the permanent seats in the Guggenheim theater went unused; folding chairs were set up behind them near the entrance so that Burton could guarantee the fifty-foot gap between performers and audience.<sup>89</sup> Shearer recalled, "It was perplexing to everyone."<sup>90</sup> This move set up a further control dynamic for the audience, who became aware not just of the gap between them and the performers but also of being excluded from the regular, more comfortable seats, which had been roped off. Perreault

warned in his review, “The folding chairs are hard; the time-warp and pace is almost unbearable. And yet.”<sup>91</sup>

The structural elements that I discussed in *Group Behavior Tableaux*—the near-identical cast members, the arch ambiguity of the spatial relations and movements, and the control of and affectual transfer to the audience—were all consistent in *Pair Behavior Tableaux*. However, the reduction of the cast concentrated the behavioral themes into a two-person relationship that, across the work’s scenes, went from chance encounter to accord to discord (fig. 3.7). One reviewer summarized this sequence: “Unlike Burton’s earlier work for five men, ‘Group Behavior Tableaux,’ which dealt more in the possibilities of visual arrangement, the present piece has a sequence. The two men strike up relations. One is powerful and stand-offish, and other his victim. As the relationship progresses, the victim becomes the dominating force. The men begin to drift apart. In the last tableau, as in the first, they just pass without acknowledging each other.”<sup>92</sup> The overall theme of alienation from the earlier iterations gave way to an unpacking of the dynamics of one-to-one relationships, allowing the themes of desire, affection, discord, and loss to resonate in a different way because of the intimate focus on two performers (plate 6). The relations established by the pair cycled through the shifting power dynamics of a relationship. Burton later summarized the narrative arc of *Pair Behavior Tableaux* as “strangerliness, acquaintanceship, intimacy, estrangement, alienation, aggression, and avoidance.”<sup>93</sup> The early scenes of the two performers walking past each other represented a cruising encounter in which mutual recognition leads them to subtly signal their interest. From that point of connection, the pair’s silent interactions evolved into accord, conflict, and eventually isolation over the remainder of the slow, silent performance.

Of course, some of these dynamics might emerge in any interpersonal relationship. Consistently throughout the *Behavior Tableaux* works, Burton nested these general and queer themes in one another, creating works that drew from queer experiences of sociality and normativity but that could be extrapolated more universally into identifiable positions for all audience members. His list of themes for individual tableaux included such potentially double topics as “intimate space,” “personal-space discord,” “appeasement,” “unilateral withdrawal,” “invitation to approach,” and “dom-sub reinforcement.”<sup>94</sup> This last theme, already nascent in *Group Behavior Tableaux*, would become increasingly important for later iterations of *Behavior Tableaux*, his conception of sculptural functionality, and his heterogeneous artistic production in the late 1970s.

While acknowledging the generalist themes of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*,



reviewers seized upon the same-gender pair and heralded the work's queer content. Perreault even titled his review "Burton's Robot Lovers" and foregrounded the homoeroticism in this "duet of tall and sensitive zombies." Likening the work to a "pre-Sirk Fassbinder," Perreault signaled the ways in which the work was about outlaw desire and the navigation of normativity.<sup>95</sup> He explained, "The pop phenomena of body-language may be an inspiration, but the result is the communication of extreme anxiety and the fruits of repression."<sup>96</sup> He then made clear the nature of that anxiety and repression was the *desire* that underwrote the pair's interactions: "Burton's robot lovers touch but once. One man puts his hand upon the shoulder of the other. Why does this turn out to be so sexual? Another sexual scene happens when one man imitates the reclining, open-legged pose of the other. Arms are folded. The robot lovers ignore each other. A palms-out gesture becomes fantastically emotional."<sup>97</sup> Other critics followed suit



**Figure 3.7.** Scott Burton, scene from *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 24 February to 4 April 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead. Photograph courtesy Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society.

and also saw the pair as lovers. For instance, Peter Frank observed, “One, in fact, constructs in one’s mind a whole history of these two men, as friends or lovers or whatever (the intimacy of certain gestures indicating that business partnership is not a likely relation).”<sup>98</sup> Michael Feingold signaled a gay relationship while keeping the reading open, saying “It could be love, or psychoanalysis.”<sup>99</sup> Steve Simmons in *Artforum* wrote, “The interaction of the two men on stage has, of course, all sorts of social and psychological and sexual resonances (how could it not?).”<sup>100</sup> Others signaled the work’s queer valence obliquely, as when RoseLee Goldberg called the work “Hockneyesque.”<sup>101</sup>

In an unpublished review, Stefan Brecht dispensed with such coded language and went for the jugular, describing the performers as “handsome well-mannered quietly manly faggots (low voiced) with more than decent hair cuts, fine regular features & beautiful bodies (pectorals, thighs).”<sup>102</sup> (The performers did not speak; that was Brecht’s embellishment.) The son of Bertolt Brecht, Stefan lived in New York and documented the experimental theater and performance scene with the aim of writing a book cycle entitled “The Original Theatre of New York”; from this cycle, he saw to publication only the book *Queer Theatre* and monographs on Robert Wilson and Peter Schumann.<sup>103</sup> Despite his interest in the carnivalesque genders and sexualities performed by troupes such as John Vaccaro’s Play-House of the Ridiculous (that he grouped under his idiosyncratic nomination “queer theater”), Brecht maintained distaste for some works about homosexual lives and relationships (which were for him merely “faggot theater”).<sup>104</sup>

Brecht easily recognized the signs that Burton employed to indicate the homoerotic potential between the performers, noting biliously, “I didn’t like the two being so pretty. It seemed to beg a question.” On multiple occasions in his review, he criticized the looks of the performers, writing, “There was an air of high tragedy (it would have been stronger had the two not been pretty) in the silent progression of gestures.” At another point, he simply decried: “The tight t-shirts.”<sup>105</sup> With this, Brecht called attention to Burton’s use of clothing that intimated the “gay clone” style that made gay men more publicly and defiantly visible as a community in the mid-1970s.<sup>106</sup> Burton was attuned to the semiotics of clothing as a long-term interest; he would later say that in *Behavior Tableaux* “the costumes are carefully edited street clothes.”<sup>107</sup> Brecht’s recognition of this subtle reference to gay style was on the mark—summarized in the insult “manly faggots.”

Brecht took issue with the emphasis on the two-person couple and with the themes of alienation and disappointment that Burton had made central. He recognized the work’s abstraction and structuralist elements (comparing them to Michael Snow’s 1967 *Wavelength*), but unlike other critics he found limitations in the work’s focus on the unfolding relations of the two-person pair. He declared that “cutting relative conduct down to the dyadic is a misrepresentation,” and he criticized the work because it told the story of the pressures on and ultimate failure of relations between these two gay men, leaving them in isolation. Brecht disliked this focus on alienation: “The theme clearly seemed inhibition, or perhaps: fear of exposure, commitment, involvement. Not the tactics of erotic conquest: each seemed to have to overcome pride & self-love, a liking for his own purity.”<sup>108</sup> The coded content of Burton’s tableaux depicted the mundane and fre-

quent experience of the disconnects of desire, feelings of loneliness, and constant and compulsory self-monitoring (fig. 3.8). Brecht lamented, “The view taken by Burton seemed pessimistic. Mainly that unions are ephemeral. That involvement cannot be maintained. Perhaps not achieved.”<sup>109</sup> While Brecht would have preferred a more boisterous attack on propriety (and less of an emphasis on the tragedy of relationships), he was nevertheless perceptive in discerning Burton’s underlying themes. Burton’s *Behavior Tableaux* were tied up with the pressure of heteronormativity and its effects on behavior and relations—from *Group Behavior Tableaux*’s focus on bullying and ostracization to the indecision and self-doubt of *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* to the agonistic relationship dynamics of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*.

Across the critical reception of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, reviewers consistently called out its potential homoeroticism or gay content. Brecht’s criticisms aside, the published reviews coupled these observations with praise for the work’s possible universal applications and lessons. That is, it was seen as both a queer work (in its foregrounding of same-gender intimacies and discord) and a poignant and general piece with which many could identify. One review remarked, “The artist’s consciousness represented purely on stage awakens something in the audience’s consciousness.”<sup>110</sup> Another concluded, “The mystery of the work is not a hollow or merely esthetic mystery, but a human one.”<sup>111</sup> *Pair Behavior Tableaux* received more reviews than the earlier two iterations of *Behavior Tableaux* (no doubt because of its more extended run), and they praised how personally affecting it was. “I love it,” Perreault declared as he explained how it evoked memories: “And yet the time-warp and the pace have become part of my brain. Certain relationships, certain movements caught in mid-air, as it were, by the blackouts that punctuate the somnambulism are as much a part of me as an inexplicable relationship in a Cézanne still-life, an inch of Pollock, or a puppet-play I may have produced as a child.”<sup>112</sup> He even went so far as to deny the importance of gender by the end of the performance of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, writing “after a while the fact that both are men becomes irrelevant. They can be a man and a woman, two women, or two men or even two nations or two ways of looking at the world.”<sup>113</sup> Long Island’s *Newsday* embraced this possibility more succinctly when it started its brief announcement of *Pair Behavior Tableaux* with the sentence: “The relationships possible between two people are endless.”<sup>114</sup>

No doubt a wider range of viewers could identify with the dynamics of a coupling and its dissolution than they could the five-person scenes of bullying, and the amplified praise for *Pair Behavior Tableaux* may have been a result. The audience’s experience of constraint, silence, and





self-monitoring could be understood, in the case of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, as reinforcing the content of two-person power dynamics being played out on the distant stage. The work of spatial and bodily self-consciousness that the viewing situation demanded of the audience, that is, amplified the ways in which viewers labored to interpret a relationship through bodily gestures. Interspersed with these attempts to read meaning would be their own memories of desire, love, hurt, loss, and other episodes in a relationship. It's worth recalling the explanation Kaufman gave of Burton's intentions: "That was the whole point. The positions would remind you of something in your life. "It was to make you feel—to have you remember feelings."<sup>115</sup> By concentrating his interest in behavior to the couple, Burton expanded the possibility for empathies and identifications (even if, as Brecht decried, it was a gloomy account of relationships). Throughout its reviews, *Pair Behavior Tableaux* was consistently discussed both in terms of its implication of a same-gender relationship and as powerful and relevant to a range of viewers. After all, Burton's ambition (however utopian) was



**Figure 3.8.** Scott Burton, scene from *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 24 February to 4 April 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead. Photograph courtesy Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society.

for the performances to speak from his own queer experience but not limit their audience to those with that experience.

### **“A Single Actor Moves through Space, His Gestures Made to Imaginary Partners”: Naked Address in the 1977 *Individual Behavior Tableaux* Performances**

*Pair Behavior Tableaux* was, arguably, Burton’s most impactful work of the 1970s. It established Burton as distinct from his peers, and institutions outside of New York began to commission works. In the year following the Guggenheim performances, Burton would show *Behavior Tableaux* works

in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Germany. Emboldened by the critical success he had achieved with *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, he returned to his idea for a single-figure performance (plate 7). He also began to think of *Behavior Tableaux* as a trilogy at this time.

As part of this push, Burton started making plans for an hour-long didactic video that would detail the research into nonverbal communication for his tableaux. In his prospectus for the video, he gave an updated working definition of body language that foregrounded sexuality and its power dynamics. It is also one of the clearest summaries of how he understood “behavior” in his overall *Behavior Tableaux* project:

The elements of body language: Spacing behavior, posing behavior and gesturing behavior are the actions or verbs. The nouns, or states of feeling being “discussed” [in the video] are the sexual emotions, hierarchical relations (expressions of dominance and subordination), the behavior of aggression and feelings of sociality. Each sentence in body language is spoken in the context of being in a pair, being part of a group, and being an individual in relation to a group. There are modifiers: public situations, and private. In a systematic order, I will attempt to illustrate all these moments of social experience in which we communicate far beyond words.<sup>116</sup>

The sexual deployment of body language had always been Burton’s interest, but he now made it a primary and stated theme—for instance, with “sexual emotions” being the first of the “nouns” of body language he listed.

In this passage, it is also evident how much Burton saw issues of sexuality—and indeed all behavior—as tied up with power dynamics. His *Behavior Tableaux* performances addressed such topics as heteronormativity, bullying in group dynamics, and the bold look that sparks a cruising encounter. The works consistently presented those operations of power alongside (and interdigitated with) the understanding of how quickly such power can be displaced, hijacked, or revealed to be needful. In particular, dominance and submission were represented as reciprocal positions, both of which affected and entrained the other. In the earlier iterations of *Behavior Tableaux*, Burton had investigated coded behaviors, public spaces, social relations, and nonverbal messages. With the final works in the trilogy, starting in 1977, he centered his attention on sexual communication and display as exemplary of body language and its playing out of the complex behavioral dynamics of active and receptive.

Burton’s work on a single-figure performance focused on “an individual in relation to a group,” as he said in the prospectus. This group, I will

argue, was the audience. In the works of 1977 and after, Burton amplified and increasingly exposed the communicative relations between the performer and the viewers through the display of sexual solicitation and display. Burton had learned a great deal about how the solo performer could convey behavior from the earlier single-figure *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, but the 1977 works departed significantly from the form and content of that early draft from 1975. Burton replaced the focus on indecision and introspection with a catalog of poses (drawn from art history, popular culture, and his own experience) that communicated “sexual signals,” submission, and domination.<sup>117</sup> These poses were directed outward (unlike the more inwardly focused poses of the 1975 version) toward the audience (fig. 3.9). This address became both confrontational and sexualized owing to the fact that the performer of these solo tableaux was a naked man (in heels).

Burton changed the name of this new performance a few times as it evolved. It was first seen in Chicago in January 1977 under the title *Solitary Behavior Tableaux*, then in Philadelphia and Kassel that same year as *Figure*



**Figure 3.9.** Scott Burton, scene from *Solitary Behavior Tableaux* (later known as *Individual Behavior Tableaux Chicago*), 5 to 8 January 1977, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Performed by Alfred Guido. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph © MCA Chicago.

*Tableaux*—presumably because Burton began to understand that the performer was not “solitary” but in a group with the audience. In 1980, Burton returned to this work, expanded it with the new title *Individual Behavior Tableaux* (discussed in the next section). I will use their specific names as needed, but I consider these four single-figure works from 1977 to 1980 as iterations (however evolving) of a single work.

Burton looked again to “autobiographical” sources and his queer experiences as the basis for the 1977 single-figure *Behavior Tableaux*. Explaining the change from his early single-figure work to the new tableaux, he remarked, “When I changed the figure from a woman to a man, it all came out. I used to use women [as performers] before I began to work with behavior content, but there’s something personal and projective about that kind of material [i.e., behavior].”<sup>118</sup> He had made homoeroticism and gay coupling more of an explicit focus in the previous year’s *Pair Behavior Tableaux*. In the new single-figure works of 1977, he chose to register and represent his own queer experience more clearly by confronting the audience with a naked man as the performer of bodily messages (in part, as we will see, in relation to his dialogue with the feminist critique of art history). He explained this shift: “Up until now my subject has mostly been that of the unconscious non-verbal communicational behavior we call body language. In this new piece the subject is pose—attitudes self-consciously assumed by a single performer for an audience—which is another kind of language, one of overt signs.”<sup>119</sup> Later, he would explain the 1977 works and their new relation to the audience as “about what is called aggressive displays, threat, appeasement, and sexual displays, what one would call art poses, not for plastic but for behavior reasons.”<sup>120</sup>

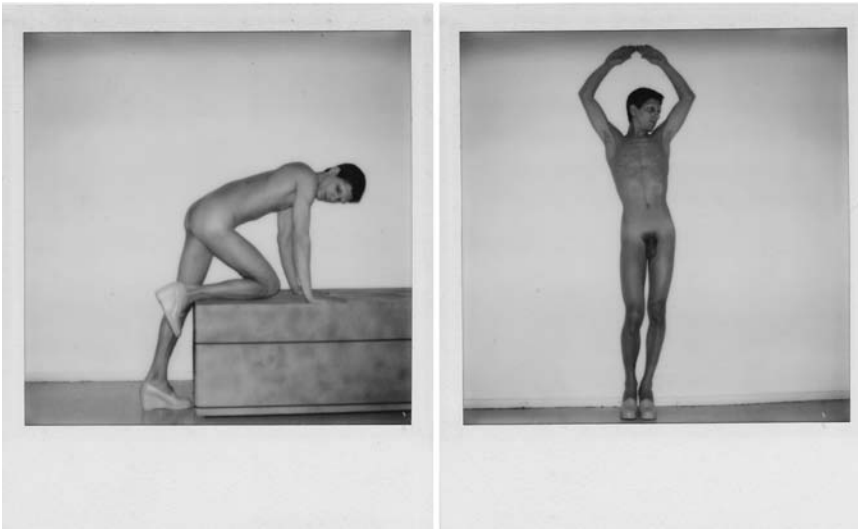
In early January 1977, Burton presented the first of the single-figure performances at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, with the title *Solitary Behavior Tableaux*. As Charles Stanley was not available, he worked with the alternate performer (and stage manager) from *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, Alfred Guido. Because of this experience, Guido understood Burton’s concept and practice well by the time he performed in Chicago. (He would also do the Philadelphia performance in April.) For the Chicago performance, there were two pieces of furniture: a Mission-style hardback chair and a long, geometric bench that Burton had fabricated. In Burton’s notes for the Chicago performance, he consistently referred to it as a “bed” even though it was without cushioning.<sup>121</sup> Kaufman, who was then teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, assisted by making a felt cover for the bench/bed.<sup>122</sup>

In the Chicago performance, Guido moved in between the bed and chair and the bodily options they offered (sitting and lying) as he pro-

ceeded through a series of tableaux separated by blackouts. In Burton's archives, there are a series of Polaroids taken in Chicago of Guido enacting different poses, and it is evident in them how much Burton was shifting attention to the overtly sexual—in terms of both the performer's nakedness and the specific actions represented (fig. 3.10).<sup>123</sup>

Guido's poses were directed at the audience. In the program notes to the Chicago version, Burton explained, "In the present work, recalling both its predecessors, a single actor moves through space, his gestures made to imaginary partners."<sup>124</sup> The audience became the "imaginary partners"—distant voyeurs to the naked performer posing (as, for instance, one might do in a mirror). An earlier draft of the program notes said it more completely and clearly: "Body language is interpersonal (because it is communicative). For a person alone, it exists only when he or she engages in fantasies of exchange with another (exchange with fantasized groups?). These new Behavior Tableaux are about enactment, this acting-out of *presentations* (sexual and aggressive) with fantasized partners."<sup>125</sup> The naked posing was for someone offstage and imagined—as well as to the audience seated together in the distance. One reviewer of the Philadelphia performance noted, "In the absence of a real antagonist or mate, the performer's actions seemed rhetorically directed towards the audience."<sup>126</sup>

In an interview from the late 1970s, Burton expanded on the difference of his single-figure works: "The single figure became a study of postures.



**Figure 3.10.** Scott Burton, rehearsal Polaroids of Alfred Guido demonstrating poses from *Solitary Behavior Tableaux*, 1977. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

The social analysts call them presentations, and they call them displays. Translated into art language: it's poses. But they're not just poses of the figure like in a life class, to show anatomy. They're significant, they signify sexual signals, there are some aggressive ones and there are some submissive ones."<sup>127</sup> Now deploying a naked performer self-consciously exposing himself to the audience's gaze (again, in slow movements over the course of an hour, in silence), the single-figure version of *Behavior Tableaux* transformed the system of affectual transfer, foregrounding erotic solicitation and response. Even across the wide, dark distance separating the performer from audience, the effect was akin to viewing a stripper or go-go boy behind a glass wall who performs for patrons seen or unseen—or just for themselves and their imaginary partners during the dance. (Remember that one of Burton's origin stories for his interest in tableaux vivants was the iconic performer Gypsy Rose Lee.)

Viewers were compelled to stare at the naked body as they sat, closely together, in darkened silence for an hour, and this created a sense of voyeurism that had been implicit—but not as inescapable—in the clothed versions of this performance. Burton explained, "There's not an attempt to arouse but certainly the beautiful object, the male body, is put before the audience (including the penis) for it to contemplate."<sup>128</sup> One effect of this compelled visual scrutiny and contemplation was the shift in the ways in which queer affect circulated from performance to audience. The issues of self-monitoring and lateral physical relations among audience members became both heightened and differentiated in relation to the performer's erotic display.<sup>129</sup> Placing the naked body at the center of this endurance performance had amplified the ways in which audience members might identify with or objectify that body over the course of the hour-long performance. The use of nudity would have made issues of desire, shame, and self-consciousness about bodily signaling more acute and varied among audience members sitting closely together in silence and intermittent darkness

Beyond its effects on the audience, the shift from behavioral dynamics to "poses" and the focus on the solo naked figure also reflected Burton's desire to address art history as a context for his work. (This, too, harkened back to some of the themes and motivations for his work in 1970 and 1971.) As he explained in a 1980 interview, "I wish to connect the work to the tradition of painting and sculpture which has an unbroken tradition of presenting the male nude, unlike the theater. The male stripper is a very recent variation on theatrical nudity."<sup>130</sup> Burton understood well the tableau vivant format's relationship to the history of painting, as discussed in the last chapter. With the multifigure works, he had emphasized the

contemporary uses of gesture and behavior, but his single-figure versions drew more heavily on the art history of figuration and its debates. He said in the statement for the 1977 documenta catalog that his use of body language in the single-figure version of *Behavior Tableaux* can be seen in relation to “the arsenal of the medium of figurative art.”<sup>131</sup> Or, as when he equated his works with life-drawing class in the above-cited interview, the “poses” were seen as both contemporary and historical. After all, some of his earliest tableaux works relied on art-historical references, and he likened his “living statues” to both eighteenth-century paintings and neo-classical sculpture.<sup>132</sup> As he explained, “Putting a nude man in changes it very, very much, and, in fact, it may take away too much from the didactic idea of studying body language but you get into the traditions of art that go back to the 19th century and to the Renaissance.”<sup>133</sup> He was aware of the shift made with the 1977 single-figure version of *Behavior Tableaux*, and he used the naked body not (just) for its visual immediacy but also as a means of citing the art-historical conventions of the nude (fig. 3.11).



**Figure 3.11.** Scott Burton, scene from *Solitary Behavior Tableaux* (later known as *Individual Behavior Tableaux Chicago*), 5 to 8 January 1977, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Performed by Alfred Guido. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph © MCA Chicago.



The genre of the nude in art history was, we should remember, a very contemporary debate in the 1970s. Feminist artists and feminist art historians had assaulted the conventions of the received history of art, pointing to its erotic exploitation of female-signifying bodies and its concomitant exclusion of women artists.<sup>134</sup> While there were many different views about what a feminist art or art history might look like in these years, one of the most visible tactics (and one that generated significant debate) was the introduction of the imagery of the nude man into the erotic conventions of the history of art.<sup>135</sup> This tactic was famously used by Burton's friend Linda Nochlin in her 1972 photograph *Buy Some Bananas*, which restaged a popular nineteenth-century French photographic postcard of a naked woman in stockings offering her breasts on a tray with apples (captioned "Buy some apples").<sup>136</sup> Nochlin's photograph replaced the woman with a naked man in knee-length socks holding a tray with bananas at penis-height. Burton was well informed and sympathetic to these debates. After all, he had a starring role in one of this strategy's most iconic works— Sylvia Sleigh's *Turkish Bath* of 1973 (fig. 0.3).

Burton drew on the feminist tactic of substituting naked men into the female nude's conventions of erotic availability with his 1977 single-figure *Behavior Tableaux*. More than a few of the poses Burton put his performer through (bending over the bench, exposing and tilting the pelvis, leaning back spread eagle) communicated the body language of sexual receptivity and erotic display. (It is worth remembering that in the 1971 *Eighteen Pieces*, Burton had interrogated the gendered conventions of the figurative tradition and its impact on such popular culture forms as the pinup.) Burton's substitution of a naked man allowed Burton *both* to cite the feminist critique that he saw as a model for gay art *and* to reclaim (and amplify) the homoeroticism that underwrote the earlier multigure *Behavior Tableaux* works. This move was both in line with some of his feminist peers and in keeping with the terms of his work: destabilizing the heteronormativity that governed images and viewing conventions; locating the male-presenting body as the site of erotic display; exploring the shifts in attitude and meaning of which bodies are capable; and unsettling the gender assumed of that body.

In these new single-figure iterations of *Behavior Tableaux*, the performer was not nude but naked; Burton's performer wears platform shoes without clothes.<sup>137</sup> Burton thought a lot about these shoes (fig. 3.12), and he had first explored them in his *Modern American Artist* character from 1973 to 1975 (discussed in the next chapter). In 1974, Burton called them "cothurni," referring to the special elevating boot (cothurnus) worn by actors in ancient Greek drama (see ahead to fig. 4.5). By 1976, his performers were wearing



**Figure 3.12.** Scott Burton with heels used in *Figure Tableaux* at documenta 6, Kassel, June 1977. Photograph © documenta Archiv / Ingrid Fingerling.

clunky shoes with an elevating platform that extended from toe to heel in *Pair Behavior Tableaux*. (Solomon, in 1975, wore ballet slippers.) He extended this idea for the 1977 performances, in which the naked performer now wore wedge shoes with an exaggerated elevating heel. Burton told a reporter in 1977, “There’s a very serious campiness in the platform shoes. It’s a strong signal.”<sup>138</sup> This camp play of these shoes was evident especially to his circle of friends, and he sent photos of the performances to Costa and Hélio Oiticica, then both living in Rio de Janeiro. (Oiticica, writing a short-lived newspaper column, reacted by calling Burton “the excellent American artist who is doing a series of performances that are great fun.”)<sup>139</sup>

In keeping with his interest in imbricating the contemporary with the art historical, Burton’s platform heels combine a reference from antiquity (as cothurni) with a very current one—the fashion of glam rock and, in particular, David Bowie. Burton was a fan of Bowie and his gender-confounding dress and character changes, and his datebook indicates that he saw a number of Bowie concerts in the 1970s.<sup>140</sup> He wrote to Costa as early as 1973 about the phenomenon: “Since you have left America, we have the new rock & roll, ‘glamour rock,’ that is transvestite and beyond Mick Jagger, its methods are to outrage and to use sequins and makeup and very

very high heels (6 inches and more). I like it all very much. David Bowie is the best.”<sup>141</sup> Burton was drawn to Bowie’s gender play, seeing it as related to a queer critique. Burton would come to signal Bowie even more clearly in the extreme platforms used in the 1980 *Individual Behavior Tableaux* (see fig. 3.18), which are a direct reference the singer’s signature boots.

The heels complicated the naked body as self-evident sign for gender, and they worked in tandem with the poses to demonstrate how the naked body could convey shifting codes of gender and of sexuality. Burton’s aim was twofold: first, to challenge the conventions of the nude through the substitution of a male-signifying body and, second, to complicate that signification by demonstrating the malleability and multiplicity of the connotations of gender and sexuality conveyed by that body over the course of the performance. In conjunction with the ambiguity-producing camp platform heels, the performer’s catalog of poses cycled through such attitudes as dominant, submissive, solicitous, flirtatious, active, and receptive. In contrast to the conventions of the nude in which the unclothed body is seen as a self-evident and static sign for gender (and, often, heteronormative desire), Burton wanted to show how the body’s meanings and messages could be altered through pose, gesture, and bodily signaling. So, a sequence of poses might proceed from “frame ass (standing upstage)—‘Betty Grable’” (referring to the famous actress and pinup model) followed by “hands cover crotch (‘modest’)” then proceeding slowly to “hands to pectorals (‘Botticelli’)” (signaling the pose from the painter’s *Birth of Venus*).<sup>142</sup> At other times in the performance, that same performer would also be on his knees or adopt what Burton’s shorthand referred to as a “muscle man pose.” Over the course of the hour-long experience of watching in silence, the audience would see the performer successively conveying butch, femme, active, receptive, bold, demur, and so on. Burton’s main interest was the complexity (and subversiveness) of the body’s capacity to nonverbally communicate power, resistance, sexuality, gender, and sociality. With the solo naked body posing for the audience, this focus was more explicitly about how non-normative sexualities and shifting gender positions could be signaled.

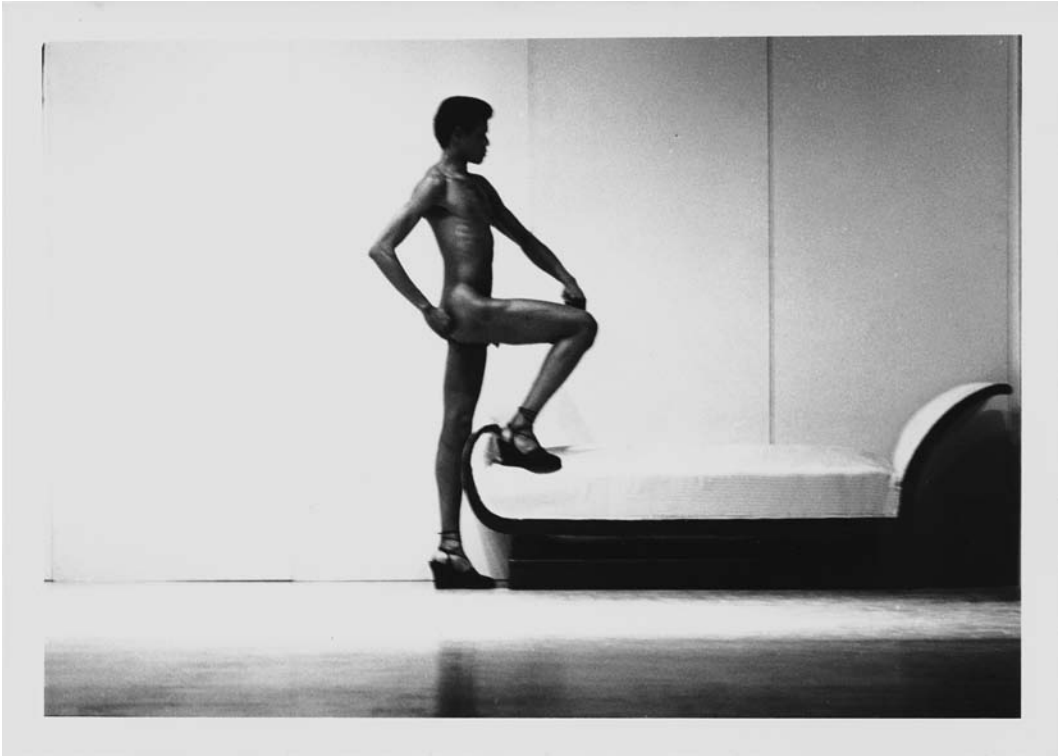
This interest in gendered signs and an emphasis on both sexual signaling and gendered instability were expanded with the presentation of *Figure Tableaux* (newly renamed) in April 1977 as one of two performances included in the exhibition *Time* at the Philadelphia College of Art (plate 7).<sup>143</sup> Kardon, the curator for this performance, secured use of an unused building in downtown Philadelphia, and the performance took place in a long, raw narrow space that allowed for a great distance between performer and audience.<sup>144</sup> Using similar shoes and the same performer

as in Chicago (Guido), Burton made an important shift in the furniture. The Chicago presentation had a Mission-style hardback sitting chair and a long bench (almost the length of a body), but the Philadelphia and Kassel presentations reduced this two-part ensemble to a single piece: an early nineteenth-century Regency chaise longue. The curves and scrolls of its ornamentation were decidedly unlike the hard right angles of the Chicago furniture. Burton insisted on this piece of furniture, and Kardon scoured Philadelphia antique stores before she eventually found one.<sup>145</sup>

The chaise longue was an important format for Burton because it offered a hybrid of chair and bed, of sitting and lying. For instance, in some fragmentary notes Burton once voiced such an awareness of the metaphorical and bodily distinction between chairs and horizontal furniture (a bed or a couch): “The seat and the couch [are] the two figural types of furn[iture]. (They are the principal locus of interactions of animate life & constructed/built world.)”<sup>146</sup> The chaise, as a combination of these two modes, offered a little of both sitting and lying as well as an easy transition from one to the other. Because of this positional hybridity, Burton reduced the previous version’s onstage triad to a focused dyad of performer and solitary chaise. Consequently, the dynamic relationship between the two became more intense, intimate, and reciprocal. Burton later explained that the combination of naked performer and furniture “exaggerates the dynamic. I’ve always thought of sculpture as the ultimate condition of nakedness. The body and the furniture are presented on equal terms, both stripped down and exposed. Placed together, they create a kind of subliminal narrative—a kind of psychology of poses.”<sup>147</sup> Whereas the furniture used in earlier versions of *Behavior Tableaux* functioned more like a traditional theatrical set, Burton embraced the idea of an individual piece of furniture as, itself, performing multiple positions simultaneously or successively.

The third performance of the single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* in 1977 was at documenta in Kassel, Germany, in June (fig. 3.13). That performance also used a historic chaise longue placed stage left.<sup>148</sup> As with all the other *Behavior Tableaux* performances, Burton was precise and upfront about the need for a specific kind of space that would allow for the distance, the lighting blackouts, and the silence required by the piece. He wrote adamantly, “These requirements are, I promise you, absolutely necessary. Without this very formal (but very simple) presentation, this work would fail. And my requirements are too exact for me to be able to expect to exhibit this performance in many places.”<sup>149</sup>

For the Kassel performance, Burton made one significant change. Because Guido was unavailable, Burton had to find a new performer who could devote the time to rehearsals and then make the trip to Germany



**Figure 3.13.** Scott Burton, scene from *Figure Tableaux* (later known as *Individual Behavior Tableaux* Kassel), 28 to 30 June 1977. Performed by Julius Webster at the Bürgersaal, Kassel Rathaus for documenta 6, Kassel. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph © documenta Archiv / Dieter Schwerdtle.

in June.<sup>150</sup> Burton worked with a Black dancer and actor, Julius Webster, who matched the tall, slender body type that was Burton's requirement for his performers. In his interviews and other discussions of the single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* in these years, Burton did not discuss the change of the performer's race nor the impact it might have had on the performance. Whatever Burton's intention, this employment of Webster throws into relief Burton's assumption of the neutrality of the whiteness of the performers he had previously used. Perhaps the casting of Webster was an extension of Burton's belief in the commonality of body language and the extensibility of the work to a new performer. "Scott said the real essence of the piece is transferring it to another person," Michael Auping recalled from their conversations about the 1980 version.<sup>151</sup> As discussed in the introduction, Burton voiced an opposition to racism; his choice of Webster may have seemed, to him, an uncomplicated confirmation of that opposition. I have found no indication that Burton made any other major

changes to the performance from the Philadelphia version performed by Guido, and Burton would later assert that the three versions of the 1977 single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* shared the same score and were equivalent. The substitution of a Black performer, however, was a conflicted move because it lacked any changes to the performance that would confront the versions' different activations of racial bias. The audience for the Kassel performance was predominantly white, and the dynamics of viewing a naked Black performer no doubt set in motion racist hierarchies and amplified the unevenness of power in the work's series of sexual signals and voyeuristic poses. In my view, the insensitivity to the pervasiveness of racism and the hope that the performance would be unaffected by it were serious miscalculations on Burton's part.

I have not been able to find any reviews of this performance nor speak to any audience members, so any account I can offer of the documenta work must remain incomplete and speculative. Documentation of this version is very slight. It is also the case that this performance was not seen by many in its short run. It was included among a week of performances in Kassel in late June of 1977, and it was performed six times (twice daily on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday). The performances were in the evenings at 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. and competed with film screenings and other performances. These difficulties were compounded by the fact that, once Burton arrived in Kassel, he found that the space he had been assigned for the performance (the Apollosaal of the Orangerie) did not allow enough distance between audience and performer. A last-minute scramble ensued, and the curators applied to the mayor for use of the Bürgersaal in the Kassel Rathaus.<sup>152</sup> All the printed programs for documenta listed the performance in its originally intended location at the Orangerie (now a standard documenta site) rather than this unprecedented one. For all these reasons, published accounts of the performance seem to be nonexistent, and consequently I have many unanswered questions about how it looked, how it was attended, and how it was received.

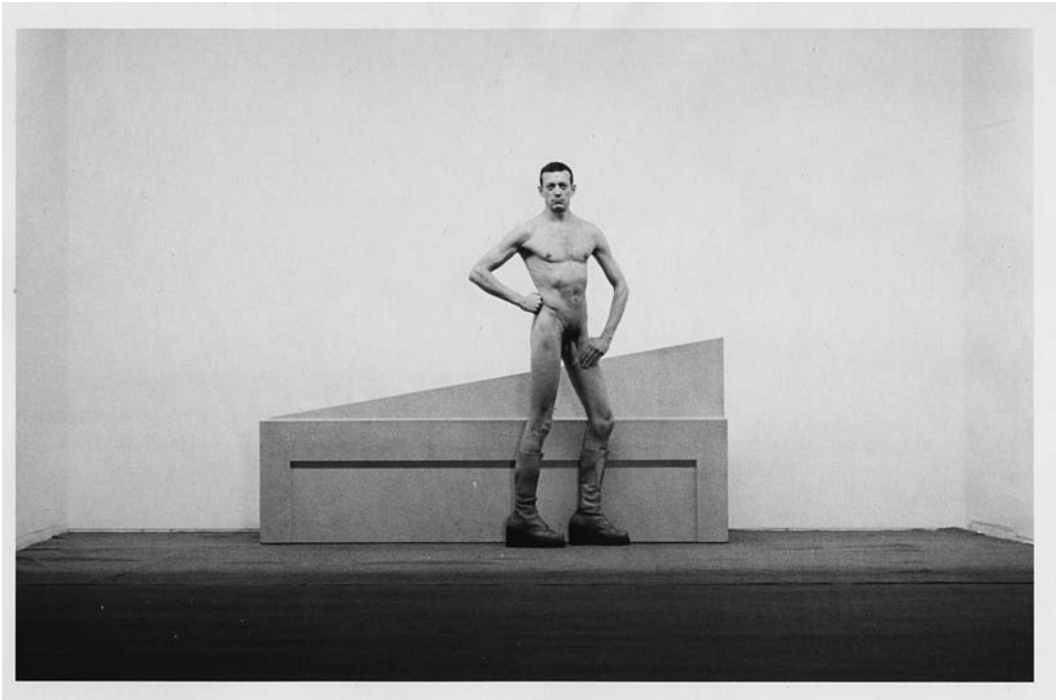
The three naked single-figure works of 1977 extended Burton's exploration of his own queer experience as a basis for interrogating behavior and body language. Like the earlier versions, he couched the queer and personal themes of these works in the language of scientific inquiry, general applicability, or (in the single-figure works) the traditions of art history (plate 7). This dissemblance allowed for these works to infiltrate official venues such as museums and other institutions that—even by this point in the 1970s—would not agree to showcase work that had overt gay content. As with much of his work, Burton offered multiple characterizations that allowed the work's queer themes to hide in plain sight. In these same

years, his sculptural practice would become energized (and increasingly well received), and he saw the *Behavior Tableaux* trilogy as completed. He would, however, return to performance once more in 1980, when he revived and revised the format a final time. He would use this return to retrospectively lay bare (and openly explain) the queer themes and “sexual signals” that had underwritten not just the naked address of the single-figure works but all his *Behavior Tableaux* works.

**“I Try to Get the Poses That I See in the Bars, in Baths and on the Street Corners That I Frequent”: The 1980 Iteration of *Individual Behavior Tableaux* in Berkeley**

In response to a commission for the Berkeley Art Museum’s *MATRIX* series, Burton revised his single-figure tableaux performance in 1980 (plate 8). To more clearly identify the *Behavior Tableaux* works as a trilogy, he titled this new performance *Individual Behavior Tableaux* and retroactively incorporated the 1977 versions under this new title. It was the first time his performance work was seen on the West Coast, and he took advantage of the opportunity (and a related exhibition at Daniel Weinberg Gallery) to spend time in San Francisco. Even though the performance was across the bay in Berkeley, Burton thought of this work in relation to a San Francisco audience. (Like many from other parts of the country, he subsumed the two cities into one.) San Francisco had, over the previous decades, become known for its vibrant gay culture, and Burton was excited to engage in both personal and professional ways with its sexual communities. He wrote to Costa in November 1979, “I was in San Francisco one month and will be there two months the first part of next year—a sexual paradise for me.”<sup>153</sup> With this context in mind, Burton chose to be more explicit with his work and expand on the sexual and queer content that was already evident in 1977 versions.

In the earlier iterations, Burton had included sexual signaling as an integral part of the catalog of poses that made up the single-figure performances of *Behavior Tableaux*. The works also relied on the gender confusion produced by the platform heels (now boots) to further complicate how the body signified to an audience, and he exploited the camp resonances of the heels to allude to queer content (fig. 3.14). While there were some poses in the 1977 versions that verged on the frankly sexual (bent over the chaise or with legs splayed), Burton’s 1980 version was more explicit and confrontational in its display of poses for “fantasized partners.” He amplified the ways that certain poses seemed to modify the gender



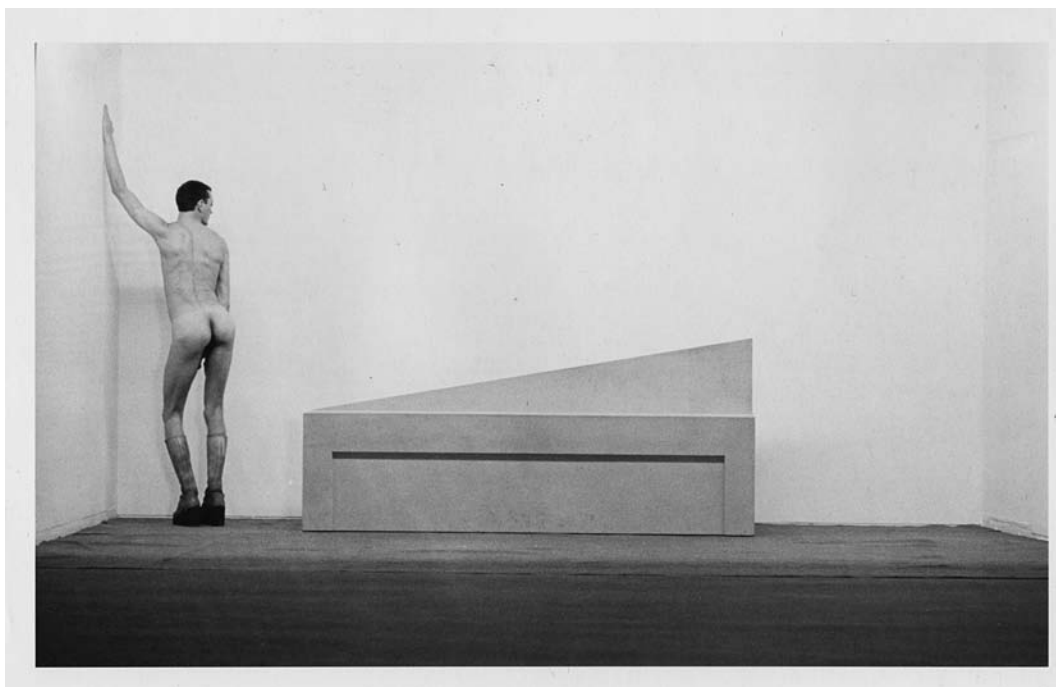
**Figure 3.14.** Scott Burton, scene from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX* 32). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

presentation and sexual availability of the performer, and he explored the reciprocal positions of receptivity/dominance, butch/femme, and top/bottom as central themes of the Berkeley performance. Most importantly, he added to the piece a series of new poses that were drawn from his experiences in the sexual communities of late 1970s New York.

Burton also made a change to the set, removing the historical *chaise longue* that had been so important to him in the 1977 versions in Philadelphia and Kassel. In contrast to the nostalgic, dreamlike mood created by the performer posing on an antique, Burton returned to a contemporary and geometric form of furniture. He had a minimal, angular chaise constructed especially for the performance (fig. 3.15).<sup>154</sup>

Now two and a half years after the earlier single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* performances, Burton had to find a new performer, and he cast Kent Hines, a white actor and artist who also shared the tall, athletically thin profile Burton required of the earlier iterations. (I have not found any information as to why Guido or Webster did not reprise their roles or even if they were still in New York at the time, but I should note that Hines had,





**Figure 3.15.** Scott Burton, scene from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX* 32). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

in 1976, been a member of the Mighty Oaks Theater company with Elke Solomon, who likely discussed her work on *Behavior Tableaux* with him.)<sup>155</sup> When Burton arrived with Hines to start rehearsals at the Berkeley Art Museum in 1980, it became clear to the museum that the work was much more sexual than they had expected. Michael Auping, the museum's curator, had seen the Guggenheim *Pair Behavior Tableaux* some years before and invited Burton in early 1979 to mount the performance over two weeks in late February 1980. With characteristic evasiveness, Burton said that the work was about body language and behavior, and Auping assumed it would be like the elegant and coded Guggenheim work. After the first rehearsal, Auping realized that the work could be controversial, and a main topic of the ensuing discussions was the now-overt sexual content of some naked poses. Burton did what he always did when asked—he refused to reduce the work to its source. Auping recounted: “In San Francisco at the time, the gay revolution was on fire, and it was all about sexual freedom. I asked Scott if this is what the performance was about. He said no at first. He vacillated, but eventually started saying something like ‘In the gay world, body

language is everything. You just don't come out and say what you think."<sup>156</sup> Burton's standard line in defending and promoting the *Behavior Tableaux* series was that body language was of universal concern, and he was always careful not to make the work simply about the queer experiences on which he drew in developing the works' content. In one of his interviews with Auping, Burton stated, "Certainly someone who is gay could relate to many of the gestures my performers make. It's a language you learn. But this is not gay art, if that's what you are getting at. These actions are a language that everyone uses. I am gay, so there are some subtexts in the same way that there are in other artists' works."<sup>157</sup> Burton consistently rejected any narrow classification of his work as "gay art" or *only* about gay identity. This refusal of labeling, however, is different from hiding or denying the queer content of the works. Burton could point to other themes such as his engagement with art history's traditions of the nude or the science of nonverbal communication as plausible explanations for the work's aims. However, he also made sure that—at key moments in the performances—viewers were confronted with poses that implied receptivity to anal sex, directed attention to the performer's genitals, or complicated the performer's presentation of gender (plate 8 and fig 3.16).

Burton explained to Auping that the poses were "hybrids of art history, psychology, social gestures, street signals"—with this last term being a coded citation of the theme of street cruising that had occupied Burton's thinking for the past decade.<sup>158</sup> Just after the run of *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, Burton decided to be more direct about his sources, and he openly explained the queer and sexual bases for his work in an interview with Edward DeCelle for the gay magazine the *Advocate*: "I try to get the poses that I see in the bars, in baths and on the street corners that I frequent. I mean, my own personal experience has to come [into it.] Your work is nothing if its content isn't your personal experience."<sup>159</sup> In this interview, Burton was forthright in a way he rarely was with straight interviewers. He acknowledged his deep investment in the sexual communities of the 1970s and the



**Figure 3.16.** Scott Burton, detail of contact sheet documenting scenes from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX* 32). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

ways in which his interest in behavior was rooted in the practice of cruising and other forms of queer sexual signaling. He explained to DeCelle that the 1980 *Individual Behavior Tableaux*

is closer to a kind of “coming out” that I’ve been doing as an artist. I’ve been working in performance which studies body language for ten years. I had a show at the Whitney Museum in New York in ’72 and at the Guggenheim Museum, also in New York, in ’76. In both cases the men were fully clothed and there were no sexual references. There was probably an underlying homosexual sensibility, everyone said there was, but it wasn’t in my consciousness. It wasn’t up front. It wasn’t closeted but it just wasn’t developed. In this more recent study of body language at Berkeley, which focuses on individual poses . . . I decided to work with the male nude. I don’t know why. There has been a coming out process in the work. Body language is universal, gay or straight.<sup>160</sup>

Burton was being selective in his recollection of “coming out” with the 1980 performance and in his disingenuous statement that he was not conscious of the homosexual sensibility of his work earlier in the decade.<sup>161</sup> From his first performances in 1969 onward, the issues of sexual culture had been present in his mind and thematized in his works. Burton’s notes, archives, and previous statements evidence these concerns. In addition, he began exhibiting works about queer sexual practices and communities starting in the mid-1970s. As I discuss in the next chapter, his 1975 *Dream Sex* (in which he fantasized about fisting Robert Morris) or his 1976 *Closet Installation* (that utilized a fisting dildo) are far more likely candidates for a “coming out” work than the later *Individual Behavior Tableaux*.

The 1980 performance is nevertheless significant for the ways in which it makes overt the dissembled themes of the *Behavior Tableaux* format, and one way to understand this shift (and Burton’s emphasis on it in his 1980 interview) is to see it in relation to Burton’s increased participation in the gay sexual cultures of New York City in the late 1970s. These years saw a flourishing of new zones for cruising activity as well as the explosion of gay establishments (such as bars and clubs) for communal sex.<sup>162</sup> Burton was a knowledgeable participant in these sexual geographies. For instance, in 1979, he wrote a long letter to Costa, discussing his reworking of the “male nude tableaux” for a new performance in a few months. In the same letter, he also explained that he was just about to move into a new loft on Twenty-Eighth Street: “This is the middle of the ‘Flower District,’ very busy, late night and early morning, with *all* the flowers coming

to New York in masses. (And it's all day long an industrial neighborhood, the most erotic kind, of course.) The second good element of the location is the proximity to the Everard Turkish Baths. This was the archetypal gay baths. It burned two years ago (a terrible story) but is being rebuilt, just in time for my relocation."<sup>163</sup> Beyond the public areas for cruising, Burton also studied how body language was operating in the bars and clubs built for these sexual communities. In a 1978 letter, he reported, "I have had a little, most interesting work as a bartender at 'The Mineshaft'—Do you remember this notorious all-male after-hours sex club near 14th Street and the Hudson River?"<sup>164</sup> The Mineshaft had opened in 1976 and soon thereafter became "the most famous S/M club that ever existed," as one chronicler put it.<sup>165</sup> This members-only, dress-coded leather club was the epicenter of New York's leathersex scene, and it was infamous for its complex internal architecture with multiple rooms and floors to which one would descend. Mineshaft founder Wally Wallace said of this space that it was "a perfect setting for underground graphic viewing."<sup>166</sup>

Burton's work at the Mineshaft allowed him the opportunity to study at greater length the codes, rituals, and body languages at play in a space of abundant sexual performance. Indeed, the community of the Mineshaft was invested in the cultivation of practices and behaviors, as with their nearly weekly "School for Lower Education," which Wallace described as offering "limited size classes in subjects relating to improving one's sexual techniques."<sup>167</sup> Patrick Moore has written at length about the importance of the Mineshaft, arguing that "in the carefully constructed unreality of the club, men were given rigid roles that satisfied their creative need to respond to the oppression of being a gay in an unaccepting world."<sup>168</sup> The sociologist Joel Brodsky explained that "the Mineshaft performed a variety of integrative social and cultural functions for gay men at the communal level."<sup>169</sup> The Mineshaft was culturally transformative, and it established a vision of queer possibility that has often been elegized.<sup>170</sup> Bartenders at the Mineshaft, as Brodsky noted, were participant-members of the community.<sup>171</sup>

So, when Burton stated in 1980 that *Individual Behavior Tableaux* used "the poses that I see in the bars, in baths and on the street corners that I frequent," he was speaking after a period of heightened engagement with these sexual communities.<sup>172</sup> Adding to his citations of art history and popular culture, Burton included things he had observed (or employed) in places like the Mineshaft and the (reopened) Everard Baths. The sexual signaling in these communal spaces was more overt and forward than the body language used on the street, and the bolder signs used in the bathhouse and the sex club made their way into the Berkeley *Individual Behavior Tableaux* (fig. 3.17).<sup>173</sup> In the same 1980 interview for the *Advocate*, Burton

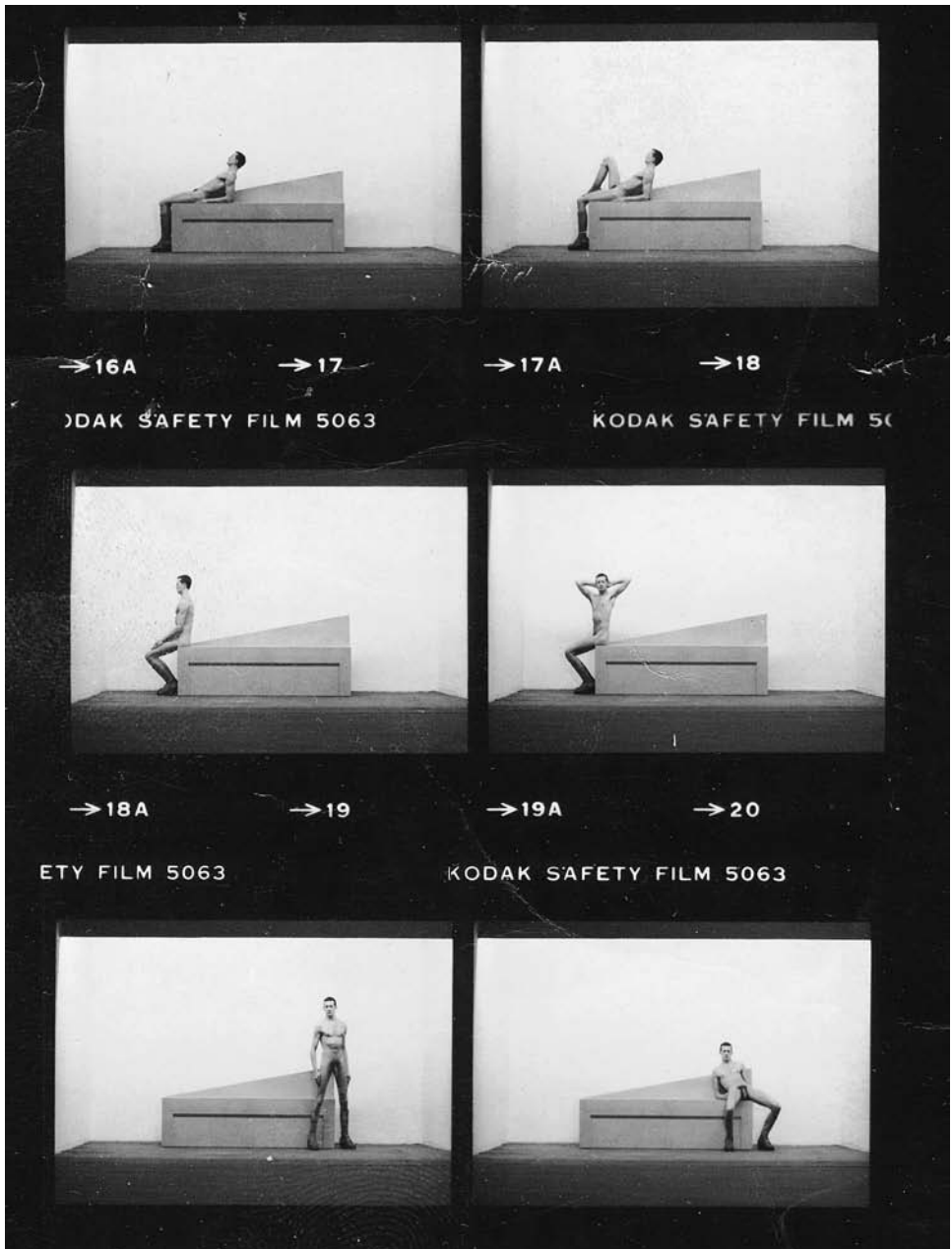
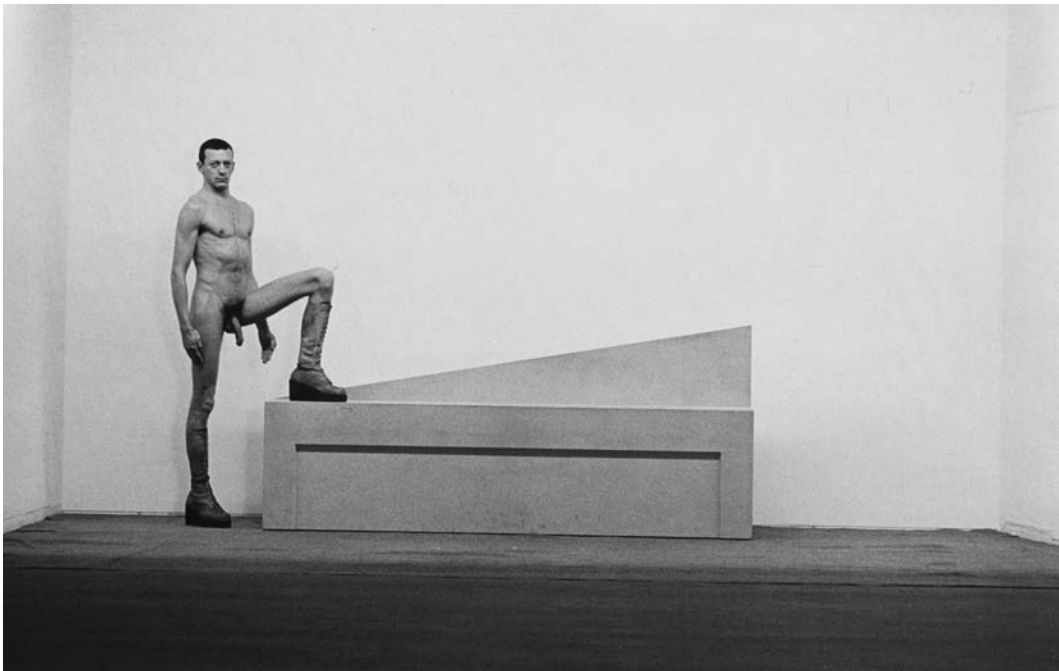


Figure 3.17. Scott Burton, detail of contact sheet documenting *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX 32*). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

continued his explanation of the choice of poses and themes: “So I was essentially dealing with the poses that the top takes and the poses that the bottom takes. And those two categories both in social relations—and in sexual relations. The body messages of the top and the body messages of the bottom.”<sup>174</sup> He concluded that there was “deep content” in the work, which was a “distillation into topness and bottomness.”<sup>175</sup> It is also worth remembering that the lateral negotiations between audience members over the extended duration of the performance would also be an arena, however subtle, for the playing out of dominance and submission as viewers self-consciously adjusted to each other in the closely packed seats. The confrontational nakedness of Hines in his glam rock boots (and nothing else) had the potential to incite arousal, identification, evaluation, or denial (fig. 3.18). Viewers would, according to their own identities, be aware of how they communicated or hid those reactions through their own body language.

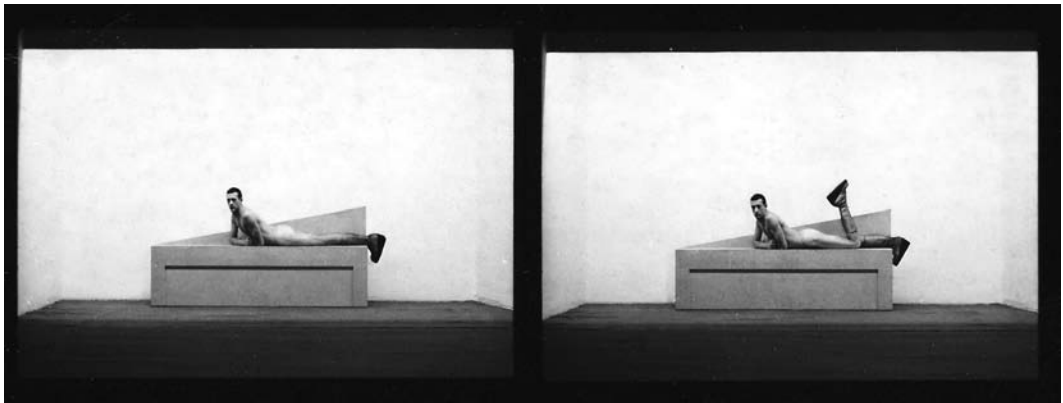
Despite the increasing explicitness of some tableaux included in this performance, we must remember that Burton’s aim was to use this material



**Figure 3.18.** Scott Burton, scene from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX* 32). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

to address larger issues. For him, the interdependence of “topness” and “bottomness” was of broader concern as a means to reconsider social (and not just sexual) power dynamics. In his interview with Auping, Burton emphasized how his investigations into the meaning and variability of body language allowed for a different way of considering relations. He was interested in how a person had the capacity to convey a range of attitudes and behaviors. He declared, “You could say that people are like furniture. They take different poses and suggest different genders.”<sup>176</sup> Burton often maintained a distinction between his performance and his sculpture, but in this important statement one can see how closely they were related in his thinking. Burton hoped to show how the single body could convey different attitudes and even different gender presentations. His *Individual Behavior Tableaux* cataloged stances of the top, bottom, dom, sub, femme, and macho. For instance, a bend at the knee in a recumbent pose transformed the waiting, face-down cruiser into a coquettish pose (fig. 3.19). In another, Hines raised his arms at right angles in a biceps-flexing stance only to put his hands behind his head in a pose recognizable as a classic female pinup.

Burton told *Advocate* interviewer Edward DeCelle, “These gestures are associated with masculinity and femininity—falsely so. I’m not condoning or condemning, I’m illustrating didactically. There’s a deep content in these poses which can be seen in the photographs of aggressive statements made through poses and passive statements made through poses—tops and bottoms—not only for sexual reasons but for various other social reasons as well.”<sup>177</sup> In Burton’s understanding of the learned corpus of body



**Figure 3.19.** Scott Burton, detail of contact sheet documenting two-scene sequence from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX* 32). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

language, gender was not intrinsic but adopted and inculcated, and his works often played with how the same body could communicate different genders, be the source of different sexual desires, or produce gender confusion.<sup>178</sup> Through the oscillating gendered connotations of the series of poses, the single body could shift what it communicated, how it behaved, and what relations it established.

The 1980 revision of *Individual Behavior Tableaux* was Burton's last performance work. As I detail in chapter 5, by the late 1970s sculpture and public art had become his primary concern. The *Behavior Tableaux* trilogy underwrites the concerns of Burton's sculptures, which also perform reciprocal relations between bottom/top, use/support, and overt/covert. Pincus-Witten once remarked to me that a connecting thread between the restraint of the *Behavior Tableaux* works and the usability of the subsequent sculptures was Burton's participation in sexual cultures of cruising, leather, and BDSM: "masochism was the real clue to Burton's art. . . . The condition of the forms and the presentation were deeply marked by his masochism."<sup>179</sup> Burton's investigations into sexual signaling and the power dynamics of behavior that he developed in his performance art are crucial to an understanding of how his later sculptures perform their service. Kinesics, proxemics, and the play with the normative rules of social spaces all fed into Burton's sculptural practice, and he refined his knowledge of these issues through these queerly postminimal performances about body language.

Founded in Burton's sustained engagement with cruising and his committed study of nonverbal communication, the *Behavior Tableaux* series extrapolated from his queer experiences a more general consideration of the operations of social power and the expectations we bring to one another. As Burton's ideas developed over the decade, the successive iterations of *Behavior Tableaux* came to address different aspects of queer life, from the questions of bullying and social ostracization to the gain and loss of coupling to the proud performance of sexual availability and receptivity. His examination of behavior took these experiences as foundational, and he explored how heteronormativity was navigated, evaded, and defied. Perreault, in a 2004 recollection of Burton, made sure to draw out these aspects in his summary of the *Behavior Tableaux* performances, saying "Burton's theater works could be read as highly minimalized and stylized presentations of bedroom body language or dreamlike documentations of forbidden flirtations and public sex."<sup>180</sup>

As a means to incite a deeper and more felt reaction by viewers, Burton did more than illustrate these themes and practices. The highly controlled viewing situation of the *Behavior Tableaux* enveloped the audience



in their own immediate drama of bodily negotiation, establishing a system during the performance in which feedback circulated and affect transferred among viewers in an artificially silent and distant space where no action was self-evidently meaningful but every micromovement could be. For the duration of the performances, Burton sought to make the audience experience the anxious negotiation of normativity and difference in social relations—regardless of their own identity positions. He wanted viewers to see the potential of the ways their bodies communicated and to feel the emotional nature of the number of inches between them.

# 4

## ACTING OUT

### Queer Reactions and Reveals, 1973–76

“Just the exhibition of gay male art would be a political gesture,” John Perreault told *Artworkers News* in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the decade after the Stonewall uprising, overt gay or lesbian content remained rare in the New York art world.<sup>2</sup> Harmony Hammond recalled about enlisting artists for her 1978 exhibition *A Lesbian Show*, that it “was a radical and risky gesture not to be underestimated. . . . As one’s personal life was made public, artists risked everything from family and community disapproval to job discrimination to artistic stereotyping.”<sup>3</sup> John Preston, writing in 1980, agreed: “The ‘art world’ is a tightly-controlled, homophobic system that banks heavily on the closetness of the gay artist.”<sup>4</sup> Only in the final years of the 1970s had this reticence begun, somewhat, to thaw. Burton, however, was at the forefront in the years before. In the mid-1970s, he not only made confrontationally overt work; he also endeavored to build a conversation about the history and current state of gay and lesbian art.

Burton extended the critique of the artist’s authority that he had begun with his *Self-Works* in 1969. He expanded on the “artist” as an object of analysis and began to develop works that challenged the heteronormative assumptions about who an artist was supposed to be. Rather than merely attempting to *be* an artist, Burton confronted “the Artist” as a set of clichéd conventions to be disputed. These activities centered on Burton’s exasperation at the art world’s exclusions, homophobia, and presumptions.

In what follows, I will discuss Burton’s works—often overtly queer—that ran concurrent with his development of *Behavior Tableaux* and his furniture works in the mid-1970s. This chapter is less singular in its focus than the other two chapters that flank it, and its topics range from

performance to installation to an editorial project. The first half of the chapter traces a series of performances caricaturing artistic authority that led up to one of Burton's most confrontationally queer works—*Dream Sex*. This is followed by a discussion of Burton's editorial project that advocated for lesbian and gay artists and a subsequent work that confronted a stereotype about gay male sexual culture. The linked works this chapter tracks are:

The major performance *Lecture on Self* from 1973, one of Burton's most complex works that questioned artistic authorship and authority;

The eponymous character of the performance *Modern American Artist*, which was initially nested within the 1973 *Lecture on Self* and then performed once more as a living statue in 1974;

*Dream Sex*, a 1975 triptych that features a third, photographic version of *Modern American Artist* to intervene in mid-1970s debates about gender, sexuality, and artists' personae;

Burton's ambitious plans during the years 1974 to 1976 for a "Gay Issue" of the magazine *Art-Rite*, which would have been—had it been completed—the first anthology of lesbian and gay art history produced in the American context;

The 1976 *Closet Installation*, which parodied current debates about leathersex and gay visibility. Burton boldly dedicated this work to "homosexual liberation."

Many of the projects discussed in this chapter are incomplete or were responsive to other events in the New York art world, and their bombast and brashness contrast to the cerebral and restrained style that characterized the *Behavior Tableaux* performances and the sculptures of furniture. Nevertheless, they offer forthright critiques of the chauvinism of heteronormative masculinity and of the stereotyping of gay identity, and they complement his other main activities of the 1970s. Burton's work reflected his anger at straight artists who would appropriate and mock queer cultures, and he countered them with celebrations of queer sexuality (and an editorial project that aimed to chronicle gay and lesbian artists). While all of Burton's work of the 1970s drew on and thematized his queer experience, this chapter discusses those works in which he made that stance increasingly visible.

### **The Artist Is Not Present: Illeism, Self-Exposure, and *Lecture on Self*, 1973**

I have seen a lot of artist talks, from the famous art star to the emerging artist to the grad student doing a dry run for their peers. For many years, I taught at an art school with a robust visiting artist program; the artist talk was a staple. In these performances, artists are compelled to represent verbally their work, and the artist talk has emerged as an often-inescapable professional exercise for connecting with art students, curators, historians, collectors, and other publics. Some artist talks are smooth, some are awkward. Some are informative, some obtuse. Some are playful, even subversive. Many try to be funny, and many fail at being funny. They can inspire students or leave them nonplussed. Most artists emphasize a level of discomfort with this professional performance, understanding that—however useful as outreach—it involves a level of self-caricature. All artist talks are partial.

The artist talk is ultimately a compromised genre since it asks artists to simplify their practice into a digestible narrative offered up for evaluation and, often, emulation. In this form, individual artworks or projects end up being instrumentalized in the service of a progressive narrative that centers on the artist's authority in articulating their intentions. No matter how distant historically their earlier works might be from the present moment, the artist's current word is taken as definitive of their (past) intentions, contexts, and meanings. Some artists (wittingly or unwittingly) alter facts, shift emphasis, or omit details to suit their authorial narrative. In this performative scene, each slide is reauthored by the ex cathedra situation, and audiences experience a collapsing of the artist and their work into that autobiographical performance. (Of course, not all artist talks are so chronologically and teleologically structured, but most are.)

Given the conventions and confines of this genre, what does the artist talk mean to one who seeks to bracket authorship? As I discussed in chapter 1, a key element of Burton's postminimalism was his aim to complicate the authority of the artist in favor of the viewer, which he did by making self-directed performances, using tactics of quotation, employing performers as stand-ins, and calling into question his own behavior as artist. As with his other work, he turned the form against itself, and he came to refashion his artist talk as a self-critical artwork. This method resulted in one of his most important performances of the 1970s—his 1973 *Lecture on Self*. This work is a complex contribution to the genre of the lecture-performance that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

The origins of *Lecture on Self* can be found in the second year of Burton's artistic practice. While teaching with Marjorie Strider at the University of Iowa in the summer of 1970, Burton gave his first artist talk. The surviving transcript is a fraught, short text in which he tried to explain his *Self-Works*, discussed at length in chapter 1.<sup>6</sup> It ended abruptly as Burton's self-consciousness about the lecture's narrative (and disclosure of his intentions) reached a breaking point. After a discussion of the works *Dream* and *Nude*, he spiraled into self-reflection: "You know, there are fictional elements in all of this critical analysis, obviously. But not fictional in the sense of made up—just fictional in that this is like a performance for me because I'm dissociating myself from myself. I'm talking in a critical way about works I've done, and it's very. . . . This is a schizophrenic work. I think that's all, thank you."<sup>7</sup> "This is like a performance for me" was Burton's live realization that he was performing authority by attempting to describe the intentions behind his own works—which were themselves aimed at questioning and complicating authorship. In this first artist talk, he found himself adopting the same kind of direct and expressive statement of intentionality against which he had set himself. Further, "dissociating myself from myself" is a valid way of talking about the structure of the artist talk, where one narrates and simplifies one's work to make it legible to others. Burton's critical attitude toward authorship (especially in these early years) made him realize how this "fictional" performance was compromised.

After the abrupt ending of the Iowa lecture, Burton continued to think about the artist talk and its stakes.<sup>8</sup> For his Finch College performances in 1971, he included—among the chair dramas, surrealist tableaux, sound pieces, and gender-crossing clothing works of his *Eighteen Pieces*—a lecture-performance titled *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself* (fig. 4.1). (At one point, Burton also called this short performance *Lecture on Self*, but I will use the earlier title to differentiate it from the longer 1973 version discussed later in this chapter.) It was unlike the other works in format and



**Figure 4.1.** Scott Burton, *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself*, 4 March 1971, presented as part of *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

tone. In this initial iteration in 1971, the performance was a five-minute presentation in which Burton, wearing a sport coat to indicate gravitas, gave an illustrated art-historical lecture on his own short career.<sup>9</sup> *Some Recent Works* was an expansion of *Self-Works* with its self-bracketing and dissemblance. He employed illeism—referring to oneself in the third person—to complicate its address and distinguish it from a straightforward statement of intention. Burton described it as “a lecture on the artist’s own works, in the third person—deliberately ‘schizophrenic.’ Slides accompany the lecture, including slides of the very pieces forming this program (one of which will not yet have been seen by the audience, a ‘flash-forward.’) A critical piece.”<sup>10</sup> Again using the self-divisive term “schizophrenic” to describe its conceptual structure, Burton provided metacommentary on the entire program through this performative lecture embedded midway through it. This self-reflexive and autoquotational stance was intended to prompt self-consciousness in the audience about their expectations. While informational, *Some Recent Works* was also an exercise in seeing otherwise—that is, in showing how easily something can be experienced as twofold, duplicitous, or other than its first appearance. This duplicity (in the sense of a strategic doubleness) was the core idea behind his *Self-Works*, and he now extended this doubleness to his public appearance *as artist*. It was not simply a lecture but, as he urged, “a critical piece.”

This five-minute performance stuck with Burton, and he continued to develop it as an idea. An opportunity to revisit the performance occurred with an invitation to contribute to an art festival at Oberlin College in 1973. The invitation came from artist and curator Athena Tacha, who planned an ambitious Festival of Contemporary Arts at the college’s Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM) in May 1973. The AMAM had a strong tradition of supporting contemporary art, most notably through the long-running series of “Young Americans” exhibitions curated by Ellen H. Johnson, the influential modern art professor and curator at the college.<sup>11</sup> Johnson had made a name in contemporary art for the Ohio college by offering some of the first museum exhibitions to artists such as Eva Hesse and Frank Stella. Tacha assumed the role of curator of modern art in the mid-1960s, and the 1973 events were an extension of Johnson’s tradition as well as the museum’s first organized program of performance art. Tacha was ambitious: over the course of one week, the Festival of Contemporary Arts included performances by Burton, Joan Jonas, and Chris Burden; a night of artists’ films and videos; an exhibition focusing on postminimal sculpture by women artists (including Mary Miss, Ree Morton, Jackie Winsor, and Ann McCoy); and a major symposium, “The Role of the Artist in Today’s Society,” featuring the artists in the exhibition and Hans Haacke, Cindy

Nemser, John Perreault, and Carl Andre. (Jon Hendricks of the Guerrilla Art Action Group was planning to attend but ultimately did not.)

Burton's invitation resulted from Tacha and Johnson's experience of the 1972 *Group Behavior Tableaux* at the American Theater Lab.<sup>12</sup> Tacha had hoped that Burton would propose a performance that could use student performers—as he had at Finch College—but Burton was wary. Instead, Burton proposed a single-performer work that adopted the format he had initially explored in *Some Recent Works*: a performance-lecture about his own works, titled *Lecture on Self*. He said, "It is a performance in the form of an art critical lecture but will really be a public act of genuine self-assessment."<sup>13</sup> He explained to Tacha that, because of its use of costumes and spatial elements, it was a "mixed mediums piece." Tacha resisted this idea, writing, "What you propose for a performance here would be fine, were it not for the fact that it sounds too much like a slide lecture," and she suggested deferring Burton's invitation until the visiting speaker series the next year.<sup>14</sup>

Burton responded immediately in a detailed letter that provided further insight into his thinking about this work.<sup>15</sup> He described the set needed for the performance, alluding to the use of lighting (and blackouts) and costume. He also informed Tacha that he would be talking about other artists' work as well. He explained the self-bracketing and self-othering that was at the core of his idea for the work—and that had been formulated in his earlier *Self-Works*. He wrote, "The text will be cast in the *third person*. It will also make kinds of statements that people do not usually make about themselves—I'm dividing myself into two fictional parts."<sup>16</sup> This is a crucial point. Rather than simply being a self-evident or self-confessional artist talk, this work involved Burton fictionalizing and splitting himself for this performance.

Burton marshaled his art-historical knowledge to position himself, saying that the combined use of words and images could be seen in relation to the work of Robert Smithson, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Cornell, and Joan Miró. He offered up Futurism and Dada as foundations for performance; cited the Britain-based artists Gilbert & George as a main inspiration; and also claimed a precedent for the use of the lecture form as art in Yvonne Rainer's dances and in Andy Warhol's collaboration with Alan Midgett (who had impersonated Warhol on a 1967 lecture tour). He likened his idea to the work of Marcel Duchamp, writing "this 'found form' is altered. (You could think of the piece as an 'assisted readymade' in form.)"<sup>17</sup>

Burton signed his letter with a quote from Arthur Rimbaud, "Je est un autre" (I is an other). This famous line by the French poet has often been seen as exemplifying modern self-alienation and the multiplicity of the

self, and with this citation to a queer forebear Burton signaled his allegiances. This multiplicity was reiterated in the one-line statement Burton ultimately provided for the program to the festival. It is, itself, a conceptual component of the work: "In a solo performance of about an hour, Scott Burton will give an illustrated critical lecture on the performances of Scott Burton, who will then appear for questions."<sup>18</sup> Such a bracketing was another manifestation of the doubling and dissemblance that he drew from queer experience. With it, Burton made it clear that he was concurrently the speaking subject and more than what he appeared. He was also the object of analysis.

As he was planning for this performance on 5 May 1973, Burton no doubt took into consideration the rest of the program of Tacha's Festival of Contemporary Arts, including a performance by Chris Burden four days before his own.<sup>19</sup> Coming from the different West Coast conversations about live art, Burden represented a new performance modality, "body art," of which Burton was suspicious because of its assertion of the importance of the bodily facticity and presence of the artist (which were contrary to Burton's interest in self-bracketing and complication of authorship through performance). Later in the decade, Burton would remark, "a lot of conceptual performance turned into body art and nothing is more boring. It was important when Acconci first did it, but it degenerated into what I call the I-do-this-you-do-that school."<sup>20</sup> Burton was reacting to what he saw as a conservative assertion of artistic presence in this other form of performance that, like his, could be understood to have emerged out of the debates around Minimalism.<sup>21</sup> As Amelia Jones has argued, male body art of the 1970s (such as Burden's) reinscribed male privilege through "attempts at transcendence" in performances of self-sacrifice and endurance.<sup>22</sup> Burton, by contrast, stepped back from using his own body or—when he did—presented it as a bathetic caricature of masculinity (as I will discuss in the next section). Jones further argued that the rhetoric of body art or live performance as presenting unmediated presence is flawed because "the 'unique' body of the artist in the body artwork only has meaning by virtue of its contextualization within the codes of identity that accrue to the artist's body and name."<sup>23</sup> Burton's attitude toward live performance emphasized these codes over the facticity of the body, and he showcased body language, nonverbal communication, dissemblance, and the bracketing of artistic authority and masculinity. By contrast, body art—in Burton's view—was invested in a return to authority, albeit one located in the martyr-like sacrifice of the artist to the work.<sup>24</sup>

Burton saw Burden as representative of this attitude. He had been aware of the younger artist's work early on, in part, because of the homo-



phonic relationship between (and frequent conflation of) their names. Burton had, of course, created works in 1969 that seemed to be echoed by Burden's later practice—most importantly, the way the Burden's *Bed Piece* from 1972 invited comparison to Burton's *Dream* from three years earlier. At stake was something deeper than personal rivalry. Burton had, in the three years since his *Self-Works*, clarified his critique of the performer's presence and the artist's authority, seeing his own work as anathema to body art. He had been using other performers in his works, but for his return to performing himself, he staged at Oberlin an elaborate bracketing in which the categories of "self," "presence," and "artist" were thrown into scare quotes and mediated. Burden seemed to offer something contrary to this careful metacommentary. On 1 May 1973, Burden performed *Movie on the Way Down*, in which he was suspended from one leg six feet above the Oberlin gymnasium floor while holding a super-8 film camera. The rope was cut loose and he dropped to the floor. While Burton probably would not have known the details of this performance beforehand, he would have heard about it when he arrived in Oberlin just two days later. The fact that Burden was (somewhat unnecessarily) naked in the performance would have confirmed Burton's suspicions. By contrast, Burton's performance had been orchestrated to distance himself from such attempts at immediacy and authenticity, and he preferred instead to perform as a character (and caricature) of authority in *Lecture on Self*.

For the 8:30 p.m. Saturday lecture, Burton took to the stage wearing a sober costume that included a suit coat and a short wig that obscured his own shoulder-length hair. As Robert Pincus-Witten later summarized: "The artist dissembled as a clean-cut American, wearing a short-haired wig and suit and tie . . . as if he were a young instructor talking about someone else's work."<sup>25</sup> The lecture was presented by this character of authority, reinforced by the conservative hair and suit. Much like the doublings of his *Self-Works*, Burton was impersonating a different version of himself—he had been after all an art critic for many years.<sup>26</sup>

Burton visually signaled that the lecture itself was a work of art by starting the lecture with a slide featuring the title of the work and his name. As he wrote to Tacha, "there will also be title, information and signature slides which imitate visual arts conventions for identification of art works."<sup>27</sup> He would also conclude the performance with a slide featuring a photograph of his face that had been bisected in two, with the left half colored red and the right colored blue (fig. 4.2). This was followed by a slide featuring his signature, a performative declaration that ended the preceding performance and reaffirmed that the entire lecture had been an artwork. In between these opening and closing slides, he first discussed his theories

# HOT BROTHERS

the surprising homosexual (male)

## I SEX.

incl arising

sex - main subject -

~~cock sucking~~

fucking -

SM sex. bisexual sex fist fucking.

incl  
Foreplay  
French  
bars  
kisses

incl. slang.

non sexual subjects

## II STYLES.

types - anonymous interviews

styles Golden Boy off - rich + famous people - chic - middle class  
gay ideal  
dancers, actors,

of h. artists, Jimmy John B. Jimmy Andy W

new h. Jim Furratt. open - question of publicness  
from anonymity -  
drag queen.

straight world, old h. alive

athletic, bitchy gay

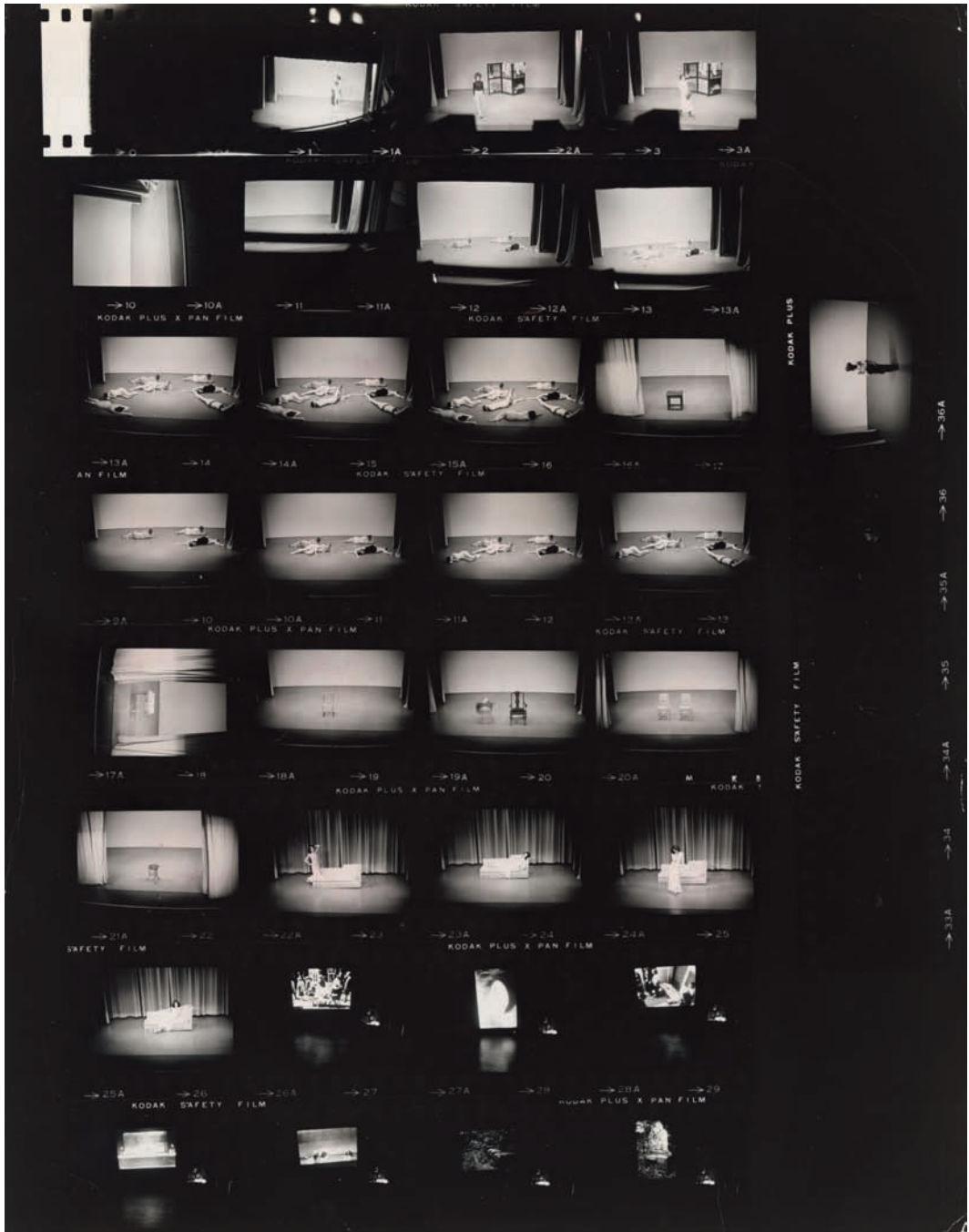
dirty old man

- SELF.

Plate 1. Scott Burton, notes for an unrealized performance (*Hot Brothers*), early 1970s. SBP II.16. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

Themes and subjects ↓	Materials and mediums →	OBJECTS	OTHERS	SELF
NARRATIVE, telling stories depicting situations, representations, anthropocentric		MARINESQUINS AND THUNDER 3-MINUTE SCULPTURE FURNITURE PIECES RAPE OF SABINE WOMEN CHAIR DRAMA SLIDE NOVELLA	TEN TABLEAUX (WALKERS) 10 TABL. (MONTHS) 10 TABL. (NARRATIVE, RAPE) 10 TABL. (DANCE) 10 TABL. (SLEEPERS) 10 TABL. (PRICE) SLIDE NOVELLA STATUES (FINCH) ALLEGORICAL MOVING BEHAVIOR TABLEAUX ANIMAL PIECE	ST WK I (Schmittens) ST WK V (under contract)
as conscious theme				
ART, styles, forms architecture, sculpture, painting, theater, variations, parody, references		MOVIES FILM - SCULPTURE THEATER CHAIR DRAMA	SIX CROSSES 30 COMPOSITIONS 10 TABL. (STATUES) 10 TABL. (DANCES) 10 TABL. (THEATRE) 10 TABL. (MONUMENT) 10 TABL. (PRICE) STATUES (FINCH) BATHERS POSES ALLEGORICAL T.V. (A?) BODIES	ST WK I (Schmittens) ST WK III (dreamfant)
as conscious theme				
FURNITURE, Rooms, HOUSES		FURNITURE LANDSCAPE. FURN. PIECES. CHAIR DRAMA	BEHAVIOR TABLEAUX	
CLOTHING			CHANGES BATHERS POSES DISGUISE PIECE	ST WK II (disguise) ST WK IV (under) FOUR CHANGES
SEXUALITY masculine, feminine roles - home of women - theory of the relation between figures, under, bodies, sexual-social behavior		MOVIES FILM SCULPTURE THEATER MANS + THUNDER	30 COMP'S 10 TABL. (NARRATIVE, RAPE) STATUES (FINCH) BODIES CHANGES ALLEGORICAL T.V. BATHERS RAPE OF SABINES POSES DISGUISE PIECE BEHAVIOR TABLEAUX	ST WK II (disguise) ST WK V (under)
SELF forms of self-portraiture, portraiture of self, personal symbolism		SLIDE NOVELLA	ALLEGORICAL T.V. BEHAVIOR TABLEAUX	ST WK I (Schmittens) ST WK II (disguise) ST WK III (dreamfant) ST WK IV (dream) ST WK V (under)

Plate 2. Scott Burton, chart listing artworks and themes, 1972 or early 1973. SBP II.52. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.



**Plate 3.** Documentation of Scott Burton's *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College, 4 March 1971.  
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 licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

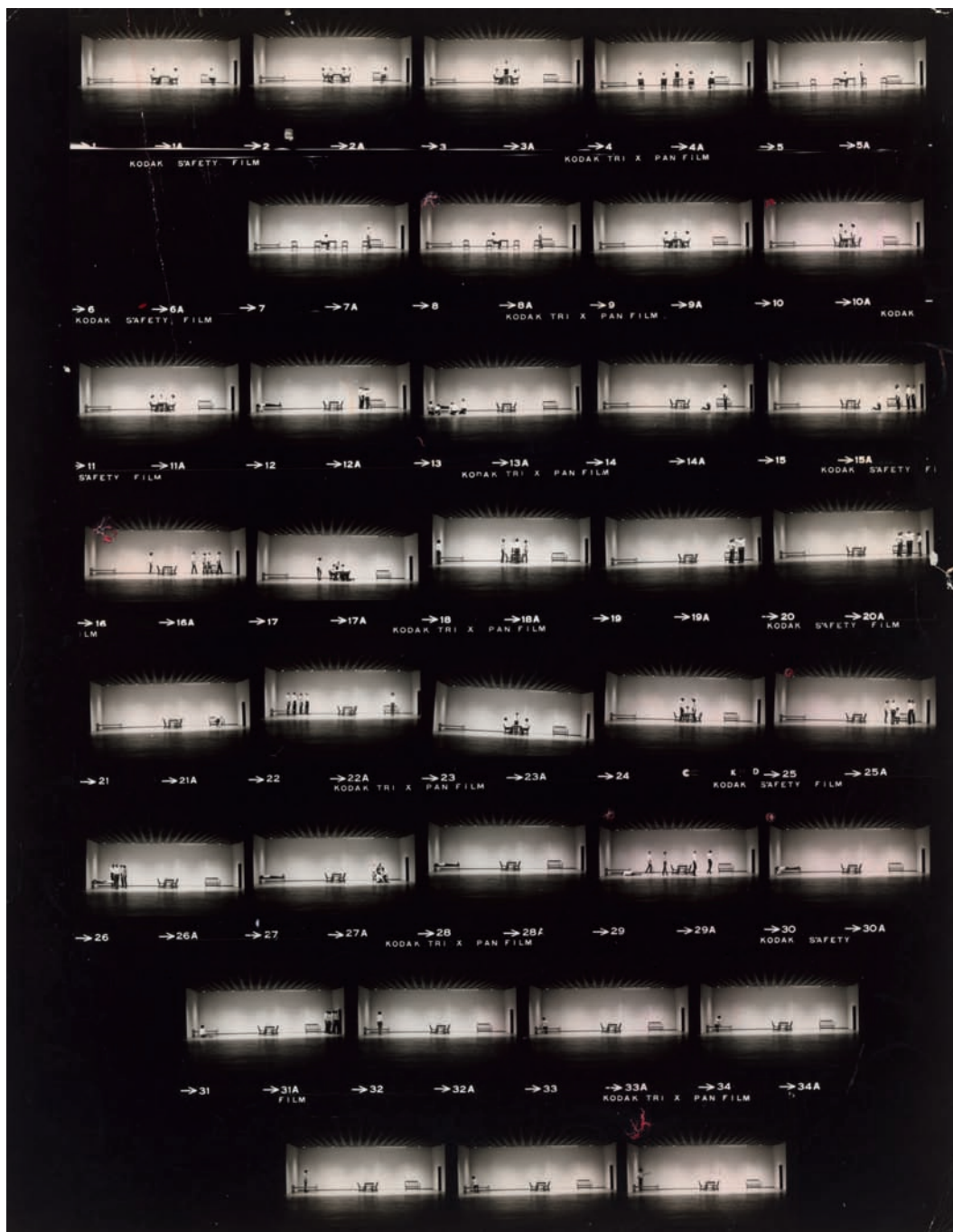
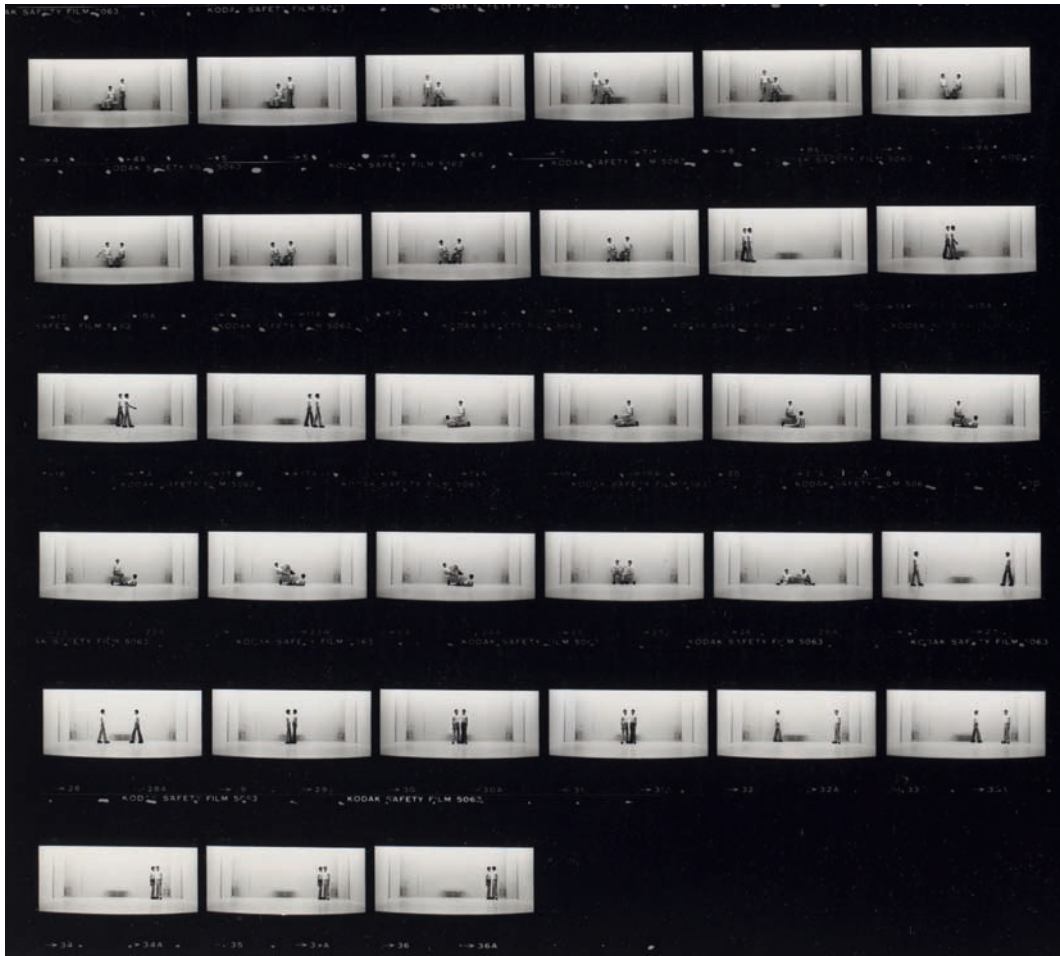


Plate 4. Scott Burton, contact sheet documenting scenes from *Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April 1972, Whitney Museum of American Art. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.



**Plate 5.** Scott Burton, contact sheet documenting scenes of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 1975, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.





**Plate 6.** Scott Burton, scene from *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 24 February to 4 April 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.





**Plate 7.** Scott Burton, sixteen slides documenting scenes from *Figure Tableaux* (later known as *Individual Behavior Tableaux Philadelphia*), 22 to 24 April 1977, Philadelphia. Performed by Alfred Guido and sponsored by Philadelphia College of Art. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.



**Plate 8.** Scott Burton, contact sheet documenting scenes from *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March 1980, Berkeley Art Museum (*MATRIX 32*). Performed by Kent Hines. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.



## DREAM SEX FOR LIVES

TODAY, SEXPLUATION ART HAS BECOME  
THIS WAS NOT SO IN MAY 1973 WHEN MY  
WAS EXECUTED AT THE GÖRBLIN ART MU  
SELF-PORTRAIT IS MODERN AMERICAN ARTIST  
IN A 1974 PHOTOGRAPHIC VERSION A BLA

LATER, AFTER ROBERT MORRIS DID HIS  
LYNDA BENGIS, BANKING ON HER BUM  
DILDO SELF-PORTRAIT, I STARTED TO H  
IN ONE RECURRENT DREAM, THE WOULD +  
WATCH THEM SUCKING EACH OTHER OFF.  
WOULD BITE HIS NIPPLES AND PECORALS.

RECENTLY, THE NIGHT AFTER I SAW HER  
WITH HIM IN THEM, I HAD A WET DREAM  
MY DILDO ON HIS ASS, WORKING IT IN AN  
I STARTED TO FIST-FUCK HIM. AT THE  
BY A YOUNG TEENAGE BOY WHO WAS PART  
BUT ALSO HAD A THICK DROOPING BROWN MO  
I PULLED OUT OF THIS BOY'S MOUTH AND  
MY ARM WAS STILL IN MORRIS'S ASS,

SCOTT (S)

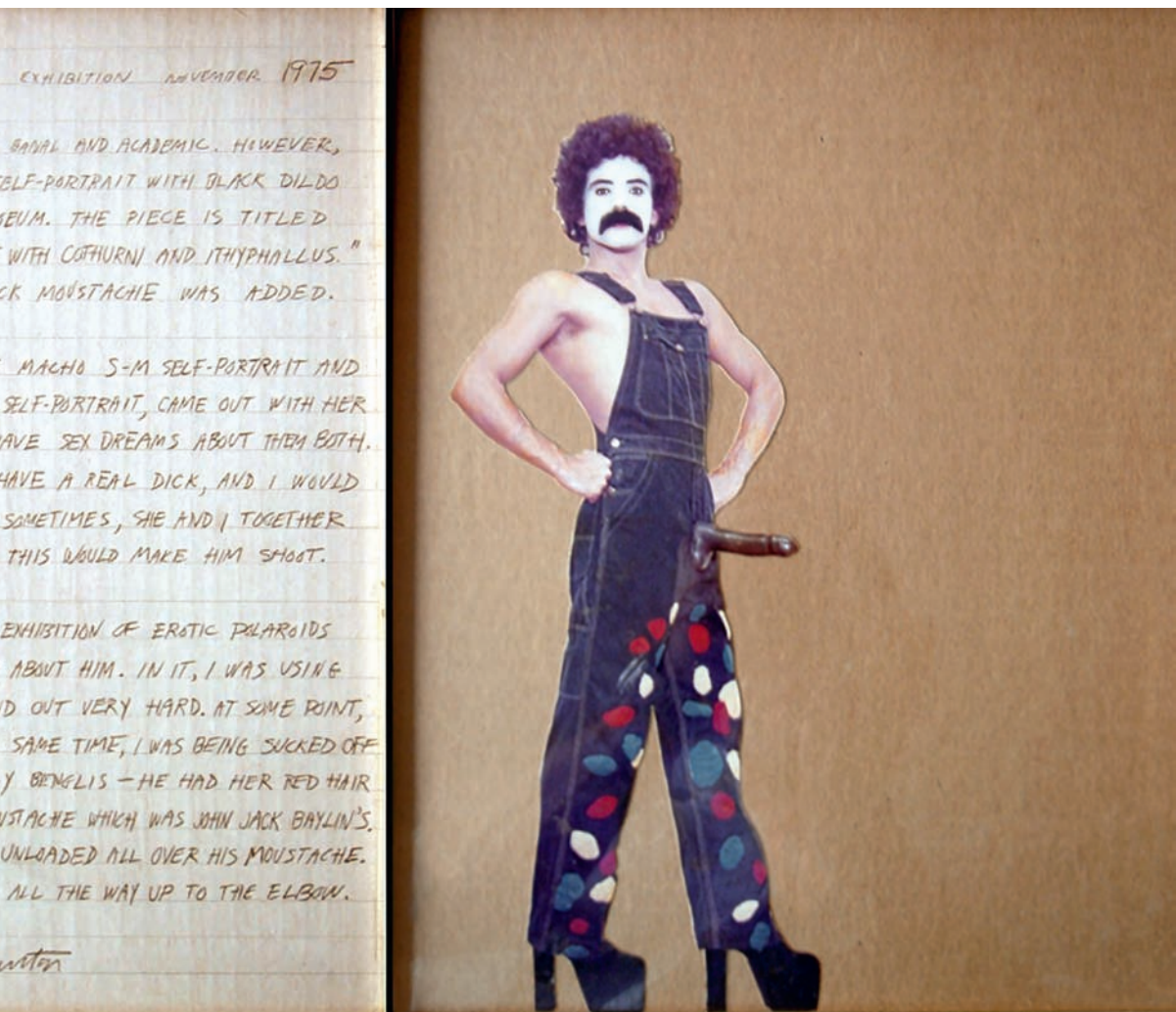


Plate 9. Scott Burton, *Dream Sex*, 1975. Ink on paper and collaged photographs, triptych approx. 11 × 26 in. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: David J. Getsy.



**Plate 10.** Scott Burton, *Pastoral Chair Tableaux*, 1975. Modified found furniture, blue curtain, and imitation grass rug, 10 × 22 × 7 ft. total. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

**Plate 11.** Scott Burton, *Bronze Chair*, 1972/1975. Bronze, 121.9 × 45.7 × 50.8 cm (48 × 18 × 20 in.). Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Lannan Foundation, 1997.36. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: David J. Getsy.



**Figure 4.2.** Scott Burton, opening and closing slides from *Lecture on Self*, 1973. Performed at Oberlin College. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

of performance before narrating his own works with a large number of slides.<sup>28</sup> Burton's self-presentation mirrored the themes of realistic representation, mimesis, and narrative that he was speaking about in his lecture. As his character said about Burton in the lecture itself, "His major achievement in performance has been an introduction of representational style."<sup>29</sup> Burton himself performed as his sculptures of furniture would later come to: as a representational one-to-one image that functioned as what it depicted. The lecture was, as his sculptures would later be, a work of art effectively performing as the useful thing it represented.

The content of the lecture was smart and tuned in. Burton had refined his definitions of performance art, and in the first half of his presentation he sketched out a contemporary framework for the medium. The text is significant for being both a clear statement of principles and a learned synthesis of the medium of performance art at a relatively early moment. "Performance," he began, "is, most essentially defined, sculpture as theater."<sup>30</sup> Using the metaphor of theater pointedly, he emphasized the reciprocity between performer and audience, and he contrasted it to the contained self-reflexivity of modernist art as described by Clement Greenberg. Burton emphasized how performance art required and activated the participation of the audience, and he embraced the concept of theatricality: "Performance art, by flouting self-definition and favoring elements shared with other arts, rejects purity and, by implication, rejects the ideology of the autonomy of the artwork and the self-sufficiency of the artist."<sup>31</sup> He then charted a brief history of performance, focusing on the Happenings of Allan Kaprow, the shamanic persona of Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci's self-manipulations, and the living sculpture of Gilbert & George.

For the second half of the lecture, Burton stood unwavering at the podium and began to give a third-person discussion of a performance artist (himself) who left behind “the individualism of the self-centered performance” and who represented “the drive of performance to go beyond modernist self-criticism toward re-emphasized relations with the viewer.”<sup>32</sup> Never declaring the name of this remarkable artist, he offered a thorough and well-illustrated account of this artist’s work. “The representational performances of this young American artist approach conceptions of art broader than those of either the self-defining formalist object or the self-referring performance,” he said, comparing this artist to Warhol’s innovations in film.<sup>33</sup> Multiple slides supported his claims, offering a trajectory of all his artworks within a framework of representational performance. As he concluded, he declared, “The name of the artist is Scott Burton,” and then proceeded to summarize the themes and new direction for this important American artist.

At the conclusion of this illeistic performance of self-objectifying and “genuine self-evaluation,” the lights went out momentarily. During the blackout, Burton removed the coat, tie, and wig. When the lights came back on, he stepped to the side of the podium to reveal his new character’s costume, the lower half of which had been hidden behind the podium. Burton wore a pair of overalls, from which a dildo protruded. The overalls were covered with represented paint splotches, and Burton’s long hair was released to his shoulders. Pincus-Witten remarked that this final reveal was “a conscious parody of the modern American male artist with the phallus sharing importance with the overalls.”<sup>34</sup>

As Burton had initially described the piece to Tacha, “the lecture will be delivered in one visual aspect and the post-intermission question-and-answer performance in another.”<sup>35</sup> The overall-wearing character was the second of these two aspects. He had not specified the details to Tacha, only writing in a subsequent letter: “I’m dividing myself into two fictional parts.”<sup>36</sup> Two months before the talk, he wrote to Tacha, “I will give the ‘lecture’ in disguise, then there is a brief blackout and a quick transformation of self, then intercourse with the audience.”<sup>37</sup> When I asked Tacha about this, she could barely recall the first of the two costumes, since the second was so striking. She said, “It is just that his image, with his long hair, blue-jean pants with shoulder straps on his bare chest, and large fake penis sticking out is quite indelible in my memory.”<sup>38</sup>

This costumed character concluded Burton’s illeistic narration of his career, since it was his most recent work. It made clear that Burton’s performance was to be seen as a critique of the authority (including his own) that the artist talk is meant to distill. Burton cast that authority as an over-

compensating masculinity, replete with clichés of the artist, such as the paint-splattered overalls. (More on these in a moment.) This new character overtook the seriousness of the previous lecture, becoming a shocking image that no doubt incited laughter, confusion, derision, and even embarrassment among viewers. The reveal compelled the audience to revise their experience of watching Burton's somber preceding performance of self-representation. In *Lecture on Self*, the artist was never present. Burton never spoke as himself; he only performed as various characters and concluded by intentionally making himself the object, alternately, of analysis or mockery. In so doing, he further bracketed and undercut his own authority. More importantly, Burton caricatured the chauvinistic assumptions underwriting the modern definition of "the Artist," and he made ludicrously visible some of its invisible preconceptions, its biases, and its presumptions of phallic mastery. With this absurd image of the artist as priapic clown, Burton mocked the hypocrisies of artists who claimed to level differences but who nevertheless benefited from exclusions of difference. This was the Modern American Artist (fig. 4.3).

### The "Tragic Priapic Artist"

*Modern American Artist* was a direct challenge to prevailing assumptions about the identity of the artist. Burton once described his character as the "tragic Priapic artist."<sup>39</sup> Growing from his burgeoning feminist sympathies, this character exaggerated and lampooned the cliché of the straight macho artist. Just as *Lecture on Self* had sought to complicate the performance of artistic authority, *Modern American Artist*, too, tackled the question of how that authority was demarcated. Burton's aim with this character was to address the exclusions, hierarchies, and assumptions that produced the myth of "the Artist." It was, as he conveyed in 1975, "a generalized, mythified image of the 'free-thinking,' creative individual (the so-called Artist)."<sup>40</sup> After its debut in *Lecture on Self* at Oberlin in 1973, this character was performed as live art only one further time (the second revision shown at Artists Space in 1974, discussed below; see fig. 4.6). Its subsequent revision, the third begun in late 1974, was solely a photographic project (discussed below; see fig. 4.11).<sup>41</sup> It seems that the work on *Modern American Artist* was incomplete or abandoned sometime in 1975 (when Burton hastily incorporated photographs of the second and third versions into a new work, *Dream Sex*, discussed in the next section, plate 9). While there are photographs that he retained in the archive, I have found almost no explanation for the work by Burton in the form of notes or commentary (unlike





**Figure 4.3.** Scott Burton, *Modern American Artist*, first version, 1973. Photographic portrait of performance character unveiled at the end of *Lecture on Self* at Oberlin College. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

most of his other works). Consequently, I have many questions about the work, and my interpretation of it is based primarily on the remaining photographs (and a handful of scattered references).

During the same period when he first began to develop the idea for *Modern American Artist*, Burton started reading Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*.<sup>42</sup> Burton's tragic, hubristic, and priapic casting of "the Artist" as carnivalesque caricature can be understood as in relation with Barthes's unpacking of the uses of myth in contemporary culture and politics. As Barthes said in his preface, "I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there."<sup>43</sup> Burton turned such a critical perspective onto the mythology of "the Artist" that he saw as operative in the art world. He created a grotesque—a comically outlandish and exaggerated figure—that made confrontationally visible the presumptions and exclusions Burton saw in the art world. Consistent across the three revisions of this grotesque were its identifying traits: splattered overalls, a protruding dildo, gender-ambiguous hair, and platform shoes. This work took specific aim at one Minimalist artist—Carl Andre—but its resulting mockery became a vehicle for Burton to intervene in other artistic debates about gender, sexuality, and fame over the course of 1973 to 1975.

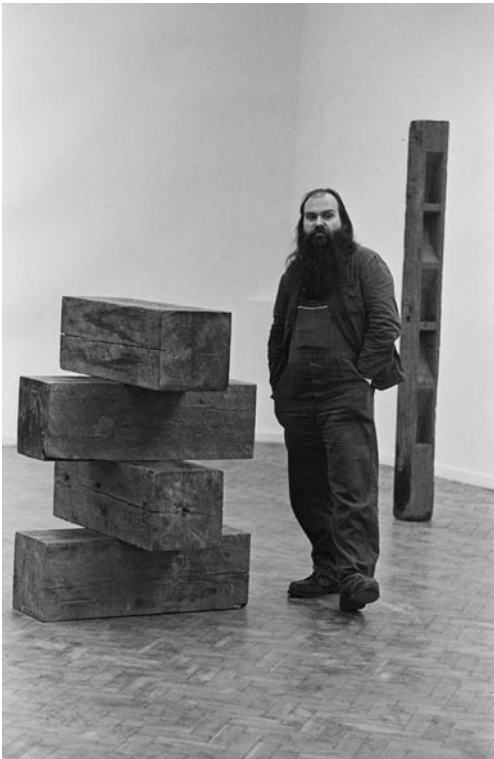
The overalls were a direct reference to Andre's daily uniform (fig. 4.4). He costumed himself in the same German-made bib overalls for decades and kept his hair long and stringy. Jackie Sherman, a waitress at Max's Kansas City, recalled, "Who else but Mickey [Ruskin, the owner] would let Carl Andre in wearing his paint-splattered overalls, looking like a bum?"<sup>44</sup> These overalls allowed Andre to affect a working-class origin (which he never neglected to remind interviewers of in the 1960s and 1970s).<sup>45</sup> By many, his outfit was taken as a sign of his artistic posturing, a view on which Burton capitalized. The *Modern American Artist* donned Andre's signature overalls, and Burton even added cartoonish colored patches on them to indicate (inauthentic) paint splatters. (These splatters start at genital height, making it clear the equation of virility and artistic creativity that Burton caricatured.)<sup>46</sup> In the 1970s, Andre had long hair, and Burton also capitalized on his own long hair to signal further the connection.

Andre exemplified the hypocrisy that Burton saw in Minimalism.<sup>47</sup> Burton was disdainful of the pomposity and the dismissiveness that ran parallel to Andre's statements about his working-class roots and the political nature of his work.<sup>48</sup> He was also aware of Andre's dismissive attitude toward gay men. For instance, the artist and critic Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe recalled,

I was at a party once and Carl and Angela [Westwater] came, and there were a lot of funny people there, gay people, and he suddenly noticed there were a lot of them there, and I suppose it was some gay person's loft because there was a picture of the queen on the wall, Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, and Carl looked at it and then said, "You know, it's good to have a queen. And one is all you need." He was trying to be fucking annoying. He was saying something that other people would overhear and it's just the kind of thing that Carl used to do.<sup>49</sup>

Voicing an offensive sentiment in order to elicit a reaction was precisely the kind of heteronormative chauvinism that Burton wanted to call out and critique with *Modern American Artist*.

Andre had often used metaphors of sex and masculinity to account for his ideas and his work.<sup>50</sup> About his sculpture *Lever*, Andre famously pontificated (in a widely quoted line from a 1966 conversation with Burton's friend David Bourdon): "Most sculpture is priapic with the male organ in the air. In my work, Priapus is down on the floor. The engaged position is to run along the earth."<sup>51</sup> Here, Andre was invoking *Endless Column* of



**Figure 4.4.** Carl Andre at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, 15 March 1978. Photo: United News / Popperfoto via Getty Images.

Constantin Brancusi, a sculptor with whom Burton identified. (Burton would curate an exhibition about Brancusi at MoMA in the 1980s.)<sup>52</sup> Andre's counter to Brancusi's verticality was a horizontality that was nonetheless "engaged" in its priapism.<sup>53</sup> As Bourdon noted (overriding Andre's demurrals), "But as originally planned, *Lever* was not without sexual connotations, coursing through the doorway like a 34 1/2-foot erection."<sup>54</sup>

When Burton made his parodic "tragic Priapic artist" character, he took Andre as a model. This choice was only partly informed by Andre's comments about the engaged priapism of *Lever*. It was sparked by a more immediate witnessing of Andre's sexual pontification. McGinnes recounted the story:

During the time when Scott was thinking about the lecture and performance at Oberlin, we were invited to a party at Marjorie Strider's loft. The place was crowded, the furniture was limited and so most of us were sitting on the floor. The party was going full swing when in walks Carl Andre (not a favorite of either of us). He was wearing his uniform of the time: worn overalls. He stood in the middle of the room looking down on all of us and pontificated. The subject of cock size came up and I swear to you that Carl said, with no hint of humor much less irony, "Actually, no man is satisfied with the size of his dick. It is because he looks down on it and it is foreshortened: like Mantegna's *Christ*." "Let's get out of here," I said to Scott, and we beat it.<sup>55</sup>

This event catalyzed Burton's development of his grotesque. Emboldened by his engagement with his feminist peers, he took aim at the sexist and heteronormative hubris of such a public display and its uncritical acceptance (and promulgation) by many in the art world.

The protruding dildo of *Modern American Artist* referred to this story of Andre's disingenuous claims of men's phallic underestimation and dissatisfaction. With it, Burton lampooned not just Andre but also the stereotype of the masculine and virile "free-thinking" artist-as-creator so central to the dominant rhetoric of postwar American art. The presence of the dildo served as a visible sign of the swaggering machismo and unapologetic sexism of the art world at the time. (A year later, in 1974, Lynda Benglis would similarly use the hyperbolic dildo as a sign for this context: she flaunted one in her infamous *Artforum* advertisement that showed her naked save for sunglasses, as I will discuss below.) However, in his hyperbolic attempt to caricature Andre (and this anecdote), Burton made a problematic move: he chose a dildo that was colored to look like black skin. This

choice visually differentiated the represented phallus from Burton's white body, making clear that it was fake and inauthentic, but this move could not help but call up racist stereotypes.

The production of dildos has historically been tied up with ideologies of sex, race, and gender. Any dildo (just as with any bodily avatar) is inextricable from histories of racism, sexism, and heteronormativity. There is no neutral choice of a representational dildo; they are synecdoches for idealized, racialized, and fetishized constructions rather than real bodies.<sup>56</sup> In having to choose between a black and white representational dildo, Burton was already enmeshed in the racism of these fetishized surrogates; no selection could have been innocent of or free from racial hierarchies and stereotypes. By featuring a black dildo to mark its difference from Andre and "the Artist," Burton's character relayed a racist stereotype—rather than fall back on the assumption of whiteness as neutral (as the choice of a white dildo would have done for the costume). On the one hand, this choice has the effect of calling out the ways in which that whiteness went unmarked and assumed in the definitions and mythology of "the Artist" at the time. Burton's aim in creating his caricature was to embody the dominating cliché of the sexist, macho artist; he may have thought that this choice further implicated Andre and what he represented. But, on the other hand, any critique of that mythology was gained through the trafficking in stereotypes. The artificiality of the dildo in the costume was underwritten by an ideology of racial difference and fetishization in order to imply that it was Andre's unattainable fantasy endowment. This move was heir to a long and entrenched history of racist myths of Black men's virility as a threat to white masculinity and dominance. In constructing his caricature in this way, Burton ended up reproducing another form of exclusion.<sup>57</sup>

To what degree Burton considered the ramifications of this problematic move I do not know. As I mentioned earlier, there are almost no explanations in the archive for this project and his thinking about it. Nevertheless, he could not have been innocent to the larger questions of race that confronted him when choosing the color of dildo (whether that choice was deeply calculated, irresponsibly casual, or arbitrary—however unlikely that third option seems to me). In the end, I have come to consider this troubling choice as something that Burton likely did as a thoughtless and callous attempt to shock, failing to see that his attempt to criticize an exclusionary mythology was, itself, relying on a racist one. *Modern American Artist* was a concentrated image of what Burton stood against, but in constructing his caricature in this way he ended up contradicting his own opposition to discrimination. It seems clear to me that Burton had not

challenged himself to see how his own assumptions operated within (and as an extension of) racism. While it fails in fundamental ways, *Modern American Artist* nevertheless brings to the surface the often unmarked and implied positions of privilege that were and are operative—even if Burton could not fully see in this instance how he, himself, was part of the problem he wanted to address.

I will now turn to the other key attribute, the shoes, as these give an indication of how Burton thought to cast this caricature of Andre's performed masculinity as the mythological and tragic figure of "the Artist." The Modern American Artist wore exaggerated platform heels. Burton called these "cothurni" in reference to Latin word for the elevated high-laced boot (cothurnus) worn by actors in ancient Greek drama. (As I discussed in the last chapter, in the years following he would further expand on the sign of the platform heel in the single-figure *Behavior Tableaux* works.) By identifying the iconography of the cothurnus, Burton emphasized the mock seriousness of the role he played, making the character all the more absurd. (While associated with tragedy, the cothurnus was also worn by comic actors, for example in fig. 4.5.) The cliché embodied by the Modern American Artist was not just tragic; it was bathetic. In each of the costume's elements, the signs of authenticity, authority, and masculine power were overplayed, undercut, and compensatory. The result was a clownish vision of the fragility of stereotypical, swaggering artistic masculinity Burton saw as the dominating cliché of the art world.

Burton would later pointedly call the photographs of the character "self-portraits," indicating that Burton was also criticizing himself. The Modern American Artist can be understood as a mythified incarnation of all that Burton hated about the category of the artist (exemplified by Andre) and its elitism. Made just a few years after Burton decided to be an artist, this work—in all its contradictions and problems—should also be seen as another facet of his skepticism and bracketing of that role. The critique of the authority of the artist would eventually lead him to embrace public art, anonymity, and a belief in making sculptures that might be invisible as art but that served the passersby. His interrogation of artistic authorship began with his earliest performance works (both his *Self-Works* and his use of other performers in the tableaux works). I see the *Modern American Artist* project as a carnivalesque embodiment of the mythologized self-important and imperious artist—one that was meant both to call attention to the myth and to exorcise it through its exaggerated presentation. In so doing, Burton challenged viewers of *Modern American Artist* to take him seriously as an artist, sacrificing his own authority as a means of visualizing the problems of that role. In this sense, this



**Figure 4.5.** First-century Roman polychrome ivory depicting a comic actor wearing cothurni. Collection Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-arts de la Ville de Paris.

conflicted work must have been infused with emotions for him, as it seems far from his other more calculated and cerebral works. Its caricature came from his frustration and anger, but he chose to expose himself to mockery, criticism, and denigration by adopting this grotesque.<sup>58</sup> He risked being seen as celebrating that which he was criticizing (and I see the unstable boundary between those two readings as informing, but not absolving, Burton's deployment of a racist stereotype as a joke). The work's initial context as the concluding work of *Lecture on Self* seems important in this regard. It was the other half of his self-division into two. The preceding conceptual performance of metacommentary (in the guise of the cliché of the authoritative art critic) was undermined by the exposure of the Modern American Artist as its evil twin—that is, the invitation to view the artist as characterized by pomposity, fragility, and the desire to shock. As Burton wrote to Tacha, the Oberlin performance was “a public act of genuine self-assessment.”<sup>59</sup>

*Modern American Artist* would not reappear until the spring of 1974, a year after the Oberlin performance. Edit deAk, who was assistant direc-

tor of Artists Space at the time, included Burton in a performance series she curated there, for which Burton developed a second iteration of his caricature. Titled *PersonA*, deAk's series focused on autobiography and included Eleanor Antin, Adrian Piper, Jack Smith, Dennis Oppenheim, Kathy Acker, and others over the four days of events.<sup>60</sup> (Acker would write that Burton was one of the artists "bonding together [to] make conscious the socio-economic-sexual-etc nature of this environment.")<sup>61</sup> On 25 April 1974—in between works by his friends Laurie Anderson, who did a performance with an electric violin titled *As:If*, and Roger Welch, who showed his film *Welch*—Burton presented an updated *Modern American Artist*.<sup>62</sup> He called it *Performance Portrait of the Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus*, which he dated on the announcement as 1973 in reference to the Oberlin performance (fig. 4.6). (He later also referred to the photographs of it as *Self-Portrait as Modern American Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus*.) For this performance, Burton installed himself on a high pedestal and posed like a statue in the guise of the "tragic Priapic artist." The lights were off when Burton ascended the pedestal and were



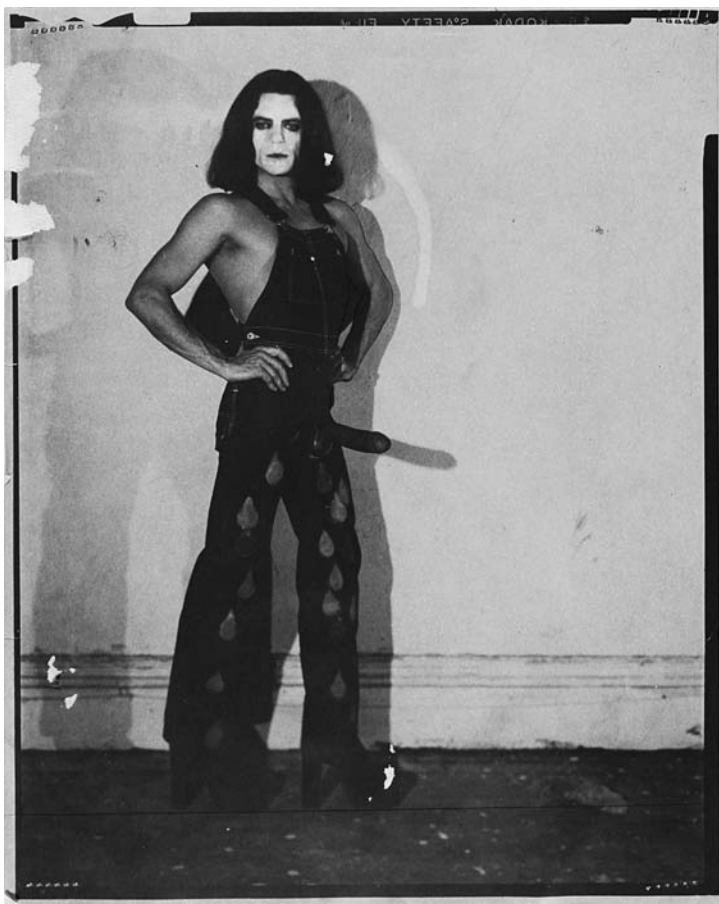
**Figure 4.6.** Scott Burton, *Performance Portrait of the Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus*, 25 April 1974. Documentation of performance at Artists Space. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph courtesy Artists Space Archives, Fales Library, and Special Collections, New York University.



then turned on to reveal him standing motionless atop it. There was to have been a soundtrack, but Walter Robinson—who also worked at Artists Space—encountered difficulty with the audio recording.<sup>63</sup> The Modern American Artist stood motionless, or as Lucy Lippard wrote, “static.”<sup>64</sup> For this second version of the character unveiled in this performance, Burton made some alterations to the costume. The overalls now sprouted bulbous paint splatters instead of painted drips. His long hair still fell to his shoulders, and he wore the exaggerated cothurnus boots. The most significant new addition to the second version of the costume was the white greasepaint makeup Burton applied to his face for this performance (fig. 4.7).

With the makeup, Burton exaggerated the idea of the Modern American Artist as a buffoon. The makeup invoked Pierrot, the sad clown stock character from commedia dell’arte and pantomime comedies, and with it Burton drew again on histories of theater as well as on the iconographies of the mime and the clown that trace their origins to the Pierrot iconography. In a move analogous to his revival of the tableaux vivant format with its wordless and static performances, Burton’s character stood silent, like a mime playing at being a statue. Unlike the first version of *Modern American Artist* which required a quick switch in *Lecture on Self* to this character, this new version further established a clear distinction between Burton himself and the carnivalesque role he was playing. The clownish white makeup cast as comic the “tragic Priapic artist.” (The new title, with its classical reference to “ithyphallus,” directly connected Burton’s statue performance to the iconography of Priapus, sometimes understood to be an allegory for frustrated male sexuality thanks to the comic combination of voraciousness and vulnerability.) The thick greasepaint clown makeup reinforced the artificiality (and absurdity) of the archetype of the overblown and pompous artist. At the same time, the use of white makeup must have stood out to viewers (who may or may not have gotten Burton’s classical references or those to clowns or mimes) since it clearly called attention to the racial designation of the *Modern American Artist*’s caricature as white. This had the effect of further marking the unmarked whiteness assumed of “the Artist,” making it a target of critique and mockery. Indeed, while the primary citations of the white makeup were to traditions of theater and pantomime, it is possible that Burton’s addition of it in the second (and third) versions may also be an indication of his further thinking about (but not adequate self-criticism of) the ways in which race operated as part of his caricature of “the Artist.”

This short performance also invoked classical traditions and mythologies by adopting the form of a freestanding statue, and this performance



**Figure 4.7.** Scott Burton, *Modern American Artist*, second version, early 1974. Photographic portrait of performance character shown at *PersonA* at Artists Space. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

is another instance of Burton's fusing of performance and sculpture.<sup>65</sup> Standing atop a pedestal, the "tragic Priapic artist" occupied the position of exemplarity that is defining of the genre of the monument. Viewers of the Artists Space performance saw this statue in a flash as the lights were turned on to reveal Burton aloft—wordless and without explanation. He stood there motionless, inviting evaluation of the excessively artificial traits of the character—from the applied paint splatters to the exaggerated boots, greasepaint makeup, and dildo. By mockingly putting this embodied caricature on a pedestal, Burton was inviting critical assessment of its terms, its limitations, its fragility, and its failure to be universal—as well as of himself.

### Triple Play: *Dream Sex* and the Further Adventures of the Modern American Artist

After *Modern American Artist* premiered at Oberlin in May 1973 and was later revised for the April 1974 Artists Space performance, Burton stopped performing it live. Later in 1974, however, something happened that gave new energy to Burton's work on *Modern American Artist*: the high-profile exchange of exaggerated self-portrait photographs that Lynda Benglis and Robert Morris released as magazine advertisements, posters, and postcards. Throughout 1974, they circulated these images of themselves acting out aggrandized gender and sexual performances. The first, published as an advertisement in the April 1974 *Artforum*, displayed Benglis as "Machorina."<sup>66</sup> In her mockery of macho, she wore clothing that could be read as masculine and cockily leaned against a Porsche. Morris responded with a poster showing himself dressed up in "helmet and sadomasochistic drag," as Maurice Berger would come to precisely call it (see ahead to fig. 4.10).<sup>67</sup> Morris's "de Sadean" exercise, as another writer framed it, was answered by Benglis with a May 1974 gallery advertisement of her with her short hair dyed red and naked, shown from behind in a "cheesecake" pinup pose taken by Annie Leibovitz and then, following that, a two-page spread in the November 1974 *Artforum*.<sup>68</sup> This last advertisement is undoubtedly the most famous of these works (fig. 4.8). In it, Benglis is naked with sunglasses, slicked-back hair, and a swaggering, double-headed dildo. The publication of this image in the pages of *Artforum* sent shockwaves through the New York art world, and it was one of the defining moments of 1970s art in the United States.<sup>69</sup>

In response to Morris's poster in April and Benglis's pinup advertisement of May 1974, Burton began to revise *Modern American Artist* a third time, as I will discuss in more detail later in this section. Whereas the first and second versions of Burton's character had caricatured the chauvinistic "modern artist" (and Andre as its exemplar), the third version intervened in the high-profile self-mockery and posturing of Benglis and Morris. This new version, with its mustache and short hair, would come to look like a fusion of the two other artists' playful self-portraits. Burton explained these connections and chronology in a work exhibited the following year, in December 1975, titled *Dream Sex* (plate 9). This collage triptych incorporated some of the photographs Burton had taken of the second and third versions, bringing them into comparison. These images flanked a handwritten account of a wet dream Burton claimed to have had, occasioned by his having seen a group of Polaroid works in Benglis's exhibition at the Kitchen in November 1975 (fig. 4.9).<sup>70</sup> In the Polaroids, Benglis,



**Figure 4.8.** Lynda Benglis, advertisement in *Artforum*, November 1974. © Lynda Benglis / Artists Rights Society; photograph: Arthur Gordon.

Morris, and (solo) Ray Johnson adopted histrionic poses with the dildo from the notorious *Artforum* advertisement. More of these Polaroids were also to be shown in an exhibition (opening later the same month) to which Burton was also contributing. He had already been developing the third revision of *Modern American Artist* as a riposte to Benglis and Morris, and now he hastily adapted it into this new work, *Dream Sex*, that he made to share the walls of the exhibition with the Polaroid works. (It would be the only time the incomplete third revision of *Modern American Artist* was shown publicly.)

In *Dream Sex's* narration, Burton positioned himself in between Benglis and Morris, joining their mock competition to create the most virile version of the modern artist. But he topped them both by casting their macho displays as his erotic objects. In essence, he took both Morris's and Benglis's characters as sincere and literal, and he sexualized them as the genders and sexualities they performed, with Benglis as the glabrous young man and Morris as a collared fisting bottom. The text describing the dream is preceded by a critique and reminder of Burton's own priority in these performative exchanges about the role of the artist, and its chronology cites his May 1973 performance as precedent. The text reads:

Today, sexploitation art has become banal and academic. However, this was not so in May 1973 when my self-portrait with black dildo was executed at the Oberlin art museum. The piece is titled "Self-Portrait as Modern American Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus." In a 1974 photographic version a black moustache was added.



Later, after Robert Morris did his Macho S-M self-portrait and Lynda Benglis, banking on her bum self-portrait, came out with her dildo self-portrait, I started to have sex dreams about them both. In one recurrent dream, she would have a real dick, and I would watch them sucking each other off. Sometimes, she and I together would bite his nipples and pectorals. This would make him shoot.

Recently, the night after I saw her exhibition of erotic Polaroids with him in them, I had a wet dream about him. In it, I was using my dildo on his ass, working it in and out very hard. At some point, I started to fist-fuck him. At the same time, I was being sucked off by a young teenage boy who was partly Benglis—he had her red hair but also had a thick drooping brown moustache which was John Jack Baylin's. I pulled out of this boy's mouth and unloaded all over his moustache. My arm was still in Morris's ass, all the way up to the elbow.

In a work intended to be seen in dialogue with the Benglis and Morris Polaroids (and their previous photographic play), Burton turned the tables on them to reveal their irony to be, itself, just one more kind of macho display to be critiqued and parodied.

Burton created *Dream Sex* for an exhibition verbosely titled *Lives: Artists Who Deal with Peoples' Lives (Including Their Own) as the Subject and/or the Medium of Their Work*.<sup>71</sup> Curated by Jeffrey Deitch, the sprawling exhibition



**Figure 4.9.** Lynda Benglis, *Secret #3*, 1974–75. 20 Polaroids, 10 × 36.5 in. (25.4 × 92.71 cm). Photo: Chris Burnside. © Lynda Benglis / Artists Rights Society, courtesy Pace Gallery.

took over the Fine Arts Building at 105 Hudson Street from 29 November to 20 December 1975. It was the third such exhibition held that month in the Fine Arts Building, which became a hub for art, galleries, and music performance (and the initial office of Marcia Tucker’s New Museum of Contemporary Art).<sup>72</sup> Deitch’s *Lives* (his first curatorial endeavor in New York) built on the momentum of the previous month’s exhibitions: deAk’s exhibition *Not Photography* (to which Burton contributed his *Photochair*, a one-to-one scale foreshortened photograph of a chair that he cut out and glued to an otherwise blank wall) and Susan Penzner’s *Self-Portraits*.<sup>73</sup> Deitch, then just a twenty-three-year-old gallery assistant, ambitiously included some forty artists.<sup>74</sup> In addition to Burton and Benglis, there were others such as Vito Acconci, Antin, John Jack Baylin, Beuys, Burden, Colette, Agnes Denes, Piper, and Warhol. The exhibition focused on artists who mined their own daily lives and intimacies in making their work. As Marc Miller remembered, “Most talked about at the *Lives* opening was Hannah Wilke’s vengeful sound piece *Intercourse With . . .* featuring embarrassing, personal messages left on her telephone answering machine by her ex-lover Claes Oldenburg.”<sup>75</sup> As his friend Wilke (and many others in the show) had done, Burton’s *Dream Sex* took the interpersonal entanglements of the downtown scene as its content.

Since it had begun the previous year, the high-profile Benglis/Morris ex-

change increasingly treaded on the same ground (and used similar props) as Burton had earlier with *Modern American Artist*.<sup>76</sup> Benglis and Morris's self-portraits (figs. 4.8 and 4.10) directly addressed the issues that were at the heart of Burton's interrogation of the role of the artist—sexist hierarchies, narratives of virility, and presumptions of heterosexuality. Benglis's *Artforum* advertisement appeared some eighteen months after Burton first presented his priapic caricature (and seven months after he performed it at Artists Space), and he no doubt felt that he should be part of this conversation. Jane Kaufman told me that he "felt a little upstaged [by Benglis's *Artforum* ad]."<sup>77</sup> Pincus-Witten wrote that Burton felt "overlooked."<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, he was a supporter of Benglis's work and thought the 1974 advertisement to be an important and bold riposte to the prudery and hypocrisy of the New York art world. "I think she's great," he wrote to a friend in 1975.<sup>79</sup>

However, it was Morris's costume that seems to have spurred Burton to develop the third version of *Modern American Artist* (and ultimately was the primary target of *Dream Sex*). Burton respected Benglis and the risks she took with her work, and he even thought of her boldness as contributing to gay visibility (as I discuss in the next section). Morris was a somewhat different story. The mercurial artist had been associated both with Minimalism and with some aspects of postminimalism (most notably "anti-form"). Burton had mixed feelings about him: he appreciated Morris's shifting critical positions as a form of self-irony, but he was skeptical of the authority that he exercised and the permissiveness with which many critics treated this former Minimalist. (In this regard, Burton's ambivalence was akin to his anger at Judd's "posturing" even as he occasionally voiced respect for some aspects of the artist's work.) Indeed, Morris enjoyed the position of the "*beau ideal* of all that you could hope to be as an intellectual, and influential artist," as Pincus-Witten would later describe him.<sup>80</sup> Or, more pointedly, Anna Chave inveighed, "A certain overweighting of Morris's role as progenitor or 'intellectual superman' has served to occlude or subsume the initiatives of other generative and engaging figures of this era with differing reference points, emphases, and values."<sup>81</sup>

Burton's skepticism became more focused after Morris began experimenting with themes of BDSM, gender, and sexuality in his works in the early 1970s, culminating in Morris's April 1974 poster "showing the artist bare-chested, biceps oiled and bulging, in World War I German infantryman's helmet, aviator glasses, bulldog collar and metal cuffs, swathed in thick-linked chains," as *ARTnews* described it (fig. 4.10).<sup>82</sup> Whether Morris intended it to be or not, this image was widely seen as blatantly homoerotic and as a reference to contemporary stereotypes of gay men.<sup>83</sup> (Morris



**Figure 4.10.** Robert Morris, poster for “Labyrinths,” 1974. © 2020 The Estate of Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society.

would, a quarter century later, disavow this poster as a “ludicrous image of a kind of fugitive from a motorcycle gang” saying, “I thought I was making an image of the war god Mars.”)<sup>84</sup>

To Burton, Morris’s posing appeared as a parody of the leather community of which he was a part. Morris, with his military helmet and ludicrously oversized chain, approximated the popular caricature of leather and BDSM rather than the practice.<sup>85</sup> Even Susan Sontag singled out Morris’s poster, criticizing it as “sophisticated playing with cultural horror.”<sup>86</sup> Its mockery of leather culture (and its embrace of scandalizing stereotypes) would have been immediately apparent to an adept like Burton, who must have bristled at the uncritical adoration of Morris’s image and its supposed salaciousness. After the poster, Burton became “assertively counter-Morris,” Pincus-Witten told me. He added that, for Burton, “Morris’s heterosexuality was an issue,” and this prompted Burton to adapt *Modern*



*American Artist* and eventually create *Dream Sex*.<sup>87</sup> McGinnes also conveyed this to me, saying that Burton “was critical of Morris for that costume. It’s the same thing he said about Carl [Andre]: ‘these awful macho guys.’”<sup>88</sup>

A full-page reproduction of Morris’s poster appeared in the September 1974 *Artforum* as part of a tortured and overly laudatory article by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe that refused to name the gay connotations of Morris’s outfit. The author did, however, make an arduously oblique allusion to fisting that cast the act (“that seems repulsive on several levels”) in solely heterosexual terms.<sup>89</sup> I believe not only that Burton read this article, but also that it amplified Burton’s ire at Morris’s appropriation—ire that would culminate in *Dream Sex* the following year. In addition, an article by Pincus-Witten on Benglis (featuring her May 1974 pinup that I believe also to be an inspiration for the third version’s attributes) appeared in November 1974 (in the same issue of *Artforum* as her notorious advertisement) in which he discussed at length the comparison of Benglis and Morris’s self-presentations.<sup>90</sup> Both Gilbert-Rolfe’s and Pincus-Witten’s articles reprinted the self-portraits of the previous spring, showing Morris in his chains and Benglis as a pinup—bringing these images back into circulation.

Around the time of the Gilbert-Rolfe and Pincus-Witten articles, Burton began to have photographs of his new, third version of *Modern American Artist* taken (fig. 4.11).<sup>91</sup> Morris and Benglis were folded into *Modern American Artist*’s critique of “the Artist.” As with their advertisements and posters, Burton conceived of this third version as a photographic project rather than a live performance. It is unclear what his original plans were for the character, and he left this work incomplete.<sup>92</sup> It would be almost a year later when he would bring the third version to light (and make clear his critique of Morris and Benglis) in *Dream Sex* (plate 9).

As he stated in the work itself, Burton wrote the text of *Dream Sex* in November 1975 after seeing Benglis’s exhibition of Polaroids earlier that month. It is significant that he chose to contrast two different versions of the *Modern American Artist* character, and I think this was to establish a dialogue between their attributes. He made sure to adopt the same pose in the photographs to establish this parallel. The central attributes (the overalls, the dildo, and the clown makeup) remain the same, but for the new version he countered the long hair that had characterized the earlier iterations with tight curly wig in an auburn color. Like the long hair, the curly wig was also somewhat gender-ambiguous. But it also seems to echo the color and shortness of Benglis’s hair in her images (while the November 1974 *Artforum* ad pictured her hair slicked back, it appeared curly in the pinup advertisement; this was exaggerated in the *Secret* Polaroids with what almost seems to be a wig). In the various mock-ups for the character,



**Figure 4.11.** Scott Burton, *Modern American Artist*, photographic portrait of third version, mid-to-late 1974. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

Burton played with the size of the wig (exaggerating it in some mock-ups and erasing it down to a tightly cropped buzz cut in others), and these choices went through many permutations as he considered how it altered the appearance of gender in the *Modern American Artist*. As with the long-haired version, Burton seems to have been aiming at a degree of gender ambiguity that could contrast with the priapic display.

Burton also added a prominent fake mustache to the character's face—likely inspired by Morris's facial hair (which he normally did not have). I suspect that the third version of *Modern American Artist* was meant to be a hybrid Morris-Benglis character. Indeed, the overlaying of these new attributes onto what he now called “Self-Portrait as Modern American Artist” may have been an attempt to visualize the three-way fusion of their characters (with the long-haired second version as the “before” and the composite third version as “after”). There may be additional references that Burton had in mind, but I have found no explanation for the third version in the archives beyond the text of *Dream Sex* itself. For instance, I have been asked if the mustache and curly wig could be a reference to Piper's *Mythic Being*, in which she adopted a male persona whose key attributes were an Afro wig, a mustache, sunglasses, and a cigar.<sup>93</sup> Burton had known of Piper since the *Street Works* events, and he had even planned to write an article in 1971 about her *Catalysis* series.<sup>94</sup> However, when Burton was developing the third revision of *Modern American Artist* in 1974, Piper had released only very little about the extent of the *Mythic Being* project, and images of it were limited.<sup>95</sup> There is no mention of *Mythic Being* anywhere in Burton's archive, and I do not think Piper's project was the reason for the addition of the wig and mustache. Other resemblances have also been suggested: to Burden (who had a mustache in 1974), to Sylvia Sleigh's favored model Paul Rosano (for the hair), and to Eleanor Antin's use of wigs and alter egos in 1974. The mustache might also be connected to the gay clone style that was popularized during these years and that Burton referenced in other works. Sometime in early 1975 when Burton was working on small-scale bronze furniture for a brief period, he had also created a one-to-one-scale sculpture of a mustache to be cast in metal.<sup>96</sup> This lost or unrealized work further reflected his interest in the use of the mustache as a mobile sign for masculinity and homosexuality.<sup>97</sup>

In the 1975 text of *Dream Sex*, Burton did offer a direct reference for the mustache. Besides Benglis and Morris, the third artist conjured in *Dream Sex*'s pileup was John Jack Baylin, a Vancouver-based mail artist who also went by the names John Jack, John Jacks, Count Fanzini, and Bum Bank. Beginning in 1974, Burton had been working on a “Gay Issue” of *Art-Rite* (discussed in the next section). This research had engaged Burton in the mail art network, and he became a correspondent and recipient of works by Ray Johnson, Baylin, Jerry Dreva, and others. Queer content—both overt and playfully coded—circulated more freely and widely in mail art, and Burton became an enthusiastic participant in it for a time.<sup>98</sup> “I've been getting lots of cum in the mail from the neo-correspondence school artists,” he explained to Bourdon in letter thanking the critic for his “hornygraphic

review” of the *Lives* exhibition.<sup>99</sup> It was the exaggerated and gossipy tone of much mail art that seems to have been a template for Burton’s narration of his (probably fictional) wet dream.

Baylin was an artist whose work focused on queer desire; his collage works and writings appropriated and recontextualized popular culture to draw out its homoerotic potentials and counternarratives. Deitch included Baylin’s “Treatise on Gorgeousness” in *Lives*, writing in the catalog that Baylin “looks at the connection between art and sexual image building.”<sup>100</sup> He most likely learned about Baylin’s work from Burton. Baylin had founded the tongue-in-cheek John Dowd Fan Club in honor of (and in flirtation with) Dowd, a key figure in New York mail art and—like Burton would be—a bartender at a New York leather bar (the Eagle Bar).<sup>101</sup> Baylin put out the periodical *FANZINI* (featuring many collages and other contributions by Dowd), which tackled advertising, mass media, and queer cultures. Burton received *FANZINI* and was on Baylin’s mailing list, and he planned on including both Dowd and Baylin in the “Gay Issue,” that I discuss in the next section.<sup>102</sup> Burton must have appreciated the queer fandom of Baylin’s long-distance club dedicated to another artist (as did Ray Johnson, who started his own “John Dowd *Fanny* Club” in homage to Baylin’s).<sup>103</sup> The practice of making such fan clubs was a form of queer appropriation as well as appreciation, and Burton may have seen these strategies for tackling artistic personae and myth making in dialogue with Benglis’s, Morris’s, and his own. In *Dream Sex*, I believe that Burton invoked Baylin (and the mail art network more broadly) as a means of reinforcing *Dream Sex*’s queer co-option of Benglis’s and Morris’s role-playing. Like Baylin’s work, Burton’s triptych played at fictionalizing, eroticizing, and chiding other artists’ personae in a mixture of desire and critique. He signaled that context through the citation of Baylin/Dowd as a source for the mustache (and with the wink at Baylin’s moniker “Bum Bank” when he said that Benglis was “banking on her bum”). With these references, *Dream Sex* carried forward the critique of the authority and persona of the artist that had been his target from the start of his artistic practice. By calling out Benglis and Morris, Burton not only folded himself into their play but also went further to make it explicitly queer and sexual.

For the catalog to the *Lives* exhibition in December 1975, Burton also prepared a text work titled *Odd Years*. The catalog did not document the show so much as offer a parallel exhibition in the form of a compendium of mail art Xerox collages, artists statements, and the like. *Odd Years* drew on the precedent of ironic and divided self-representation he established with *Lecture on Self*. It presented a curriculum vitae of the works in which Burton used himself as the medium—but listing only the odd-numbered

years since he started making art in 1969. (The works on this list from 1971 to 1975 are the main topics of this chapter.) *Odd Years* reads:

- 1969 Appears in public as a woman.  
Drugs self to sleep at public art opening.  
Runs naked in streets.
- 1971 Appears as art critic lecturing on own art.
- 1973 Expands critical lecture on self.  
Appears as tragic Priapic artist.
- 1975 Narrates wet dream.

This résumé does not include his furniture work or the performance art for which he was known at the time (remember that in this same year Burton was *also* exhibiting *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, had shown sculpture at the Whitney Biennial, and had had the first solo exhibition the same month as *Lives*). Instead, *Odd Years* traced a narrative of his queer self-bracketing, starting with *Disguise* and carrying through with the two versions of *Lecture on Self to Modern American Artist* and *Dream Sex*. For Burton, these critiques of artistic masculinity and authority constituted an important thread through his work. However rude and specific *Dream Sex* might have been to some, Burton made sure to link it to the longer story of using himself as object and to his long-running interrogation of exclusions and assumptions that defined the mythology of “the Artist.”

### Burton’s “Gay Issue” and the Chronicling of Queer Art in the 1970s

In tandem with his work on *Modern American Artist* and *Behavior Tableaux* in the mid-1970s, Burton also began a major editorial project in 1974. His friends from Artists Space deAk and Robinson (with Joshua Cohn initially) were the editors of an experimental art magazine, *Art-Rite*, and Burton convinced them to let him organize a “Gay Issue” that would bring together a group of writers and artists around the topic of gay liberation and its presence in contemporary art and art history. He worked on the volume for more than two years, but it was never realized. While its ultimate failure was due to the vastness of the topic, his research encouraged the deepening of his commitment to and celebration of queer themes in his work.

Irreverent in tone and experimental in content, the twenty-four-page newsprint *Art-Rite* was intended as a cheap alternative to—and rejection of—glossy art magazines.<sup>104</sup> DeAk recalled that one of the title’s allusions

was to “the immediate Americana expression you see in shops like Shop-Rite, Quick-rite . . . this meaning of something cheap. It was perfect, as even the letter type would be similar to a cheap newspaper or flyer.”<sup>105</sup> DeAk and Robinson gave it away to friends, and it was freely distributed at some galleries. Absorbing some of the style of correspondence art, *Art-Rite* combined artists’ projects, a mocking attitude toward the commercialization of the art world, and short essays on art and culture. Lucy Lippard commented that “all the risks larger institutions don’t and can’t take, *Art-Rite* can and does.”<sup>106</sup>

*Art-Rite* had already been supportive of Burton, and it would publish the first major article on his work—a meandering text in the form of a “resumé” in 1975.<sup>107</sup> His first appearance in the magazine, however, was in 1974, when he was part of a forum in which artists were asked to “make a political statement.”<sup>108</sup> Along with others such as Piper, Howardena Pindell, and Ray Johnson, Burton provided a short statement on art and politics. Whereas some other contributions were intended to be funny, his was rather earnest. His statement voiced the central themes of his practice: a critique of the elitism of the art world and a hope for a more accessible form of art. He concluded by lauding feminism for creating alternative institutions and critiquing the canon, and he called on the gay movement to follow suit. He noted that “in what it has done to institutions and habits of taste, [the Women’s Movement] is far advanced in comparison to the Gay Movement.”<sup>109</sup> As I have discussed throughout, Burton drew parallels to the feminist critique of art and art history in his work, and he sought ways to model a comparable formation for gay liberation. Joyce Kozloff recalled about her conversations with Burton that the connection he made between feminism and gay rights “made perfect sense.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Jane Kaufman remembered those years, saying Burton “did a lot of work for gay rights.”<sup>111</sup> In 1980, Burton would recount to an interviewer how his idea for the “Gay Issue” was directly inspired by feminism: “I was going to do a ‘Gay Issue.’ In the early 1970s, feminism as applied to art got me interested in the parallel application of the idea of gayness through art.”<sup>112</sup>

Five years after the Stonewall uprising ignited a political and social movement, Burton’s “Gay Issue” would have been the first attempt in the New York art world to assess gay liberation and its impact on current art.<sup>113</sup> In the wake of the 1969 uprising and the subsequent 1970 Times Square riot, organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance led efforts to establish new political visibility and change.<sup>114</sup> In addition to political action groups, new social spaces (such as the Gay Activists Alliance’s headquarters at a decommissioned SoHo firehouse) emerged in the early to mid-1970s. In the art world, however, newer insti-

tutions were slower to develop, even though the movement developed a vibrant visual culture immediately after Stonewall, as Richard Meyer has discussed.<sup>115</sup> The small Gallery of Erotic Art in a Park Avenue townhouse hosted the exhibition *The Homosexual* in 1970, but such open address to lesbian and gay themes in art exhibitions would remain very rare until later in the decade. By 1975, the Gay Academic Union at Columbia University would stage a two-day open-call exhibition of lesbian and gay work (mostly photography) and, that same year, the first gay-focused commercial gallery opened when Charles Leslie and Frederick Lohman decided to make public the private exhibitions of gay erotica they had been staging in their SoHo loft.<sup>116</sup> But it would not be until 1978 that New York art world would see a full-fledged exhibition of lesbian or gay art: the groundbreaking *A Lesbian Show* curated by Harmony Hammond for the independent 112 Greene Street Workshop in the heart of SoHo.<sup>117</sup>

In 1974 when Burton started working on the “Gay Issue” of *Art-Rite*, he was still formulating how the multiple modes of his artistic practice could address queer experience. After *Group Behavior Tableaux*, *Lecture on Self*, and *Modern American Artist*, Burton became increasingly insistent in his demands for the visibility of gay and lesbian issues in contemporary art. He saw the increased activity and energy around him and wanted to promote these efforts. By this time, he also had extensive experience as an editor and writer for art magazines, which made him a good candidate for such an endeavor. He had also been an anthologist, having coedited a textbook for art students during his time teaching English literature at the School of Visual Arts in the late 1960s. His footprint was evident in that volume, most clearly in his inclusion of a remarkable interview with Allen Ginsberg in which the poet made an analogy between fellatio and Paul Cezanne’s painterly attempt to capture the fullness of sensation.<sup>118</sup> Even in his pedagogical work, Burton was committed to the inclusion of queer experience as pertinent to art. This attitude later prompted him to propose the “Gay Issue” to *Art-Rite*.

In coming up with a plan, Burton called on his friend the feminist art historian Linda Nochlin. As I discussed in earlier chapters, Nochlin’s ideas (and humor) had been a major influence on Burton’s thinking. She was “brilliant on contemporary body art and persona and that kind of stuff,” as he would say in a later interview.<sup>119</sup> They talked a lot about these issues in 1974 and 1975, and Burton attended Nochlin’s public lectures on feminist topics.<sup>120</sup> Her work on the history of art—as well as her friendship—reinforced the conversations he had been having with feminist artists such as Kaufman, Strider, Solomon, and Wilke. When Burton began planning on what to include in the “Gay Issue,” Nochlin was one of the first writ-

ers he asked to contribute an overview essay. She agreed to write an essay titled “Anti-formalist Art and Gay Styles,” but it appears not to have been completed.

Burton sought other connections to feminism, evidenced by his commitment to discussing Benglis’s work in the volume, as I will discuss below. He also enlisted Sleigh’s husband, Lawrence Alloway, for an essay on role-playing. Burton explained in a letter to another contributor, “the whole sexuality-and-art theme is covered in the issue (by Linda Nochlin and Lawrence Alloway, incidentally, in two very different ways)—that is, the issue of how Gay art is one part of a whole new relation to sexuality-in-general—to new kinds of work.”<sup>121</sup> Encouraged by these early commitments to write for the issue, Burton ended up soliciting a range of other general and historical essays. He quickly involved Gregory Battcock, who was himself developing his own gay publications in these years.<sup>122</sup> He asked Sarah Whitworth (who had been the art editor and columnist for the *Ladder*, the first national lesbian magazine) to write on lesbian artists.<sup>123</sup> Burton also talked to Perreault about an essay on Pop art. He hoped he could convince his friend Taylor Mead to write, and he approached Bourdon.<sup>124</sup> Burton talked about his project to many of his friends, including Robert Rosenblum, who had been actively engaged with homosexual culture and history in the 1960s.<sup>125</sup> Rosenblum connected Burton to scholars working in this area such as Wayne Dynes, a professor at Hunter College who in 1973 started a history-making bibliography of gay and lesbian studies (which would become the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*). Dynes further assisted Burton by connecting him with an emerging national network of gay bibliographers.<sup>126</sup>

Burton’s excitement about the volume inspired him to reach out not just to critics and scholars, but also to other editors such as Boyd McDonald, the infamous publisher of *Straight to Hell*, a zine that blended stories of cruising with cultural critique. Burton described the special issue to McDonald as being “on gayness and art, which includes everything from art history scandals to new pornographic art forms.”<sup>127</sup> McDonald eventually published Burton’s letter in *Straight to Hell* with his own commentary. He promised to write an article on Thomas Hart Benton titled “The Fine Art of Fag-Baiting.” McDonald kept re-editing and changing this essay, and he ultimately withdrew his contribution to the “Gay Issue” because he had left the topic of Benton (and art) far behind.<sup>128</sup>

The scope of the “Gay Issue” continued to expand, and Burton became increasingly ambitious (and unrealistic) about the project. He asked the art historian Frederick Hartt for an essay on the sixteenth-century artist Il Sodoma. He was looking for writers to address queer themes in Thomas



Eakins, Bradley Walker Tomlin, F. Holland Day, and Charles Demuth.<sup>129</sup> The artist Charles Henri Ford, whom Burton had met a few years earlier, agreed to write on gay surrealism, and he solicited (unsuccessfully) Sontag to write. Alexandra Comini, Sam Wagstaff, Joseph Masheck, and Henry Geldzahler were also on his list of potential contributors.

From just this quick summary of some of Burton's plans for the issue, we can see that the volume far exceeded what could be done in a single twenty-four-page issue. The strain was even more pronounced because the contributors mentioned so far were *only* in the historical and critical section. Burton also had a long list of artists he hoped to involve in the issue, and he planned another section addressing contemporary work. As with the historical essays, he was ambitious in scope, and the contemporary section was to have been divided between established and emerging artists. The established ones included Jack Smith, Andy Warhol, Francis Bacon, Gilbert & George, David Hockney, Paul Cadmus, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg. He wanted to include a discussion of Yvonne Rainer's recent film work *Film about a Woman Who* (1974).<sup>130</sup> Both Rauschenberg and Johns appear throughout Burton's notes, and Burton (vainly) hoped for a contribution by John Cage on the two. Agnes Martin and Lenore Tawney are another same-gender couple included in another of Burton's planning notes. These inclusions may not seem so remarkable to us now, but we must recall the hard-won historical work that has been done over the last three decades to demand recognition that the non-heterosexuality of such artists as Rauschenberg and Martin mattered to their work and to their receptions.<sup>131</sup> There was far less public discussion of artists of this generation in relation to non-normative desires, loves, and networks. Burton's anthology would have been one of the first to put them into this shared context.

Far more unexpected, however, is the list of "younger" artists in Burton's table of contents. Burton looked to artists who were flamboyant, fey, pornographic, bombastic, critical, and out. He made central Ray Johnson and the mail art network, as mentioned; the queer correspondence art of Canadada, John Dowd, and Bum Bank (Baylin) recurred throughout Burton's lists. He also wanted to showcase the gender nonconformity that had become visible as part of Warhol's circle and in his films, and the gallerist Jay Gorney submitted an article titled "Figments of Hollywood's Imagination: Warhol's Drag Stars."<sup>132</sup> At the same time, Burton was cautious about overreaching in this regard. In one note for possible topics for the issue, he included Diane Arbus's images of transwomen and gender performers, whom he referred to as "transvestites" following the common usage at the time. His idea was to have two opinions, one written by a "straight person" and the other written by an invested participant in order to debate the question "is it exploitative voyeurism?"<sup>133</sup>

Burton also looked to street performance artist Stephen Varble, who had burst onto the scene in 1974 with his gender-confounding costumes made out of trash.<sup>134</sup> Varble's performances on his *Costume Tours of New York* were guerrilla interventions that critiqued the commercialism of galleries and museums, and this critical stance reinforced Burton's interest in them. Burton loved Varble's unauthorized performances and saw him as an example of a kind of art based in queer culture that did not resort to the merely erotic. Indeed, Varble's work was more about gender, and his performances posited genderqueer potential beyond binary genders, though many (like Burton) mistook such an emphasis on nonbinary gender as being about gay sexuality. Burton would later say that Varble's work was some of the most important of the 1970s, calling him "part of a contrary culture and avant-garde which still has some healthy meaning of being antagonistic to the established society."<sup>135</sup>

Burton also included artists who engaged with queer street cultures, such as Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, whom he had known since the 1969 *Street Works* performances in which they both participated. Lanigan-Schmidt recalled talking with Burton about the art world and the troubles he faced navigating it: "It is important to know how homophobic the art world was," Lanigan-Schmidt urged.<sup>136</sup> The critic Bruce Kurtz—another of Burton's friends—introduced him to Jimmy Wright, who had been doing a series of drawings of sex clubs, cruising spots, and discos. Wright recalled that, in the 1970s, "the only person in that serious art world that saw my work and responded to it was Scott, who loved it immediately."<sup>137</sup> Burton wrote to Kurtz saying that Wright's "subway-sex drawings are wonderful," and he was also particularly interested in the drawings of Club 82, a basement club in the East Village that had been a popular drag bar in the 1960s and one of the birthplaces of glam rock in the 1970s.<sup>138</sup> Also included on Burton's list was Robert Mapplethorpe, who had yet to achieve the notoriety he would later in the 1970s. Both Burton and Mapplethorpe participated in the rapidly growing leathersex and BDSM culture of New York, and he had likely been introduced to Mapplethorpe earlier in the 1970s by Wagstaff.

Burton's archives also contain some of the only substantive accounts of other, less well remembered artists such as Ed Shostak, Seth Kahn, and Gregory J. M. Portley. For example, Burton received a fourteen-page manuscript on an artist, designer, and aesthete who named himself Gary Grant, about whom there is hardly any other trace.<sup>139</sup> Among the most telling pieces is an interview with the sculptor Shostak, who was one of the first artists to have a one-person show at Holly Solomon's gallery (and who introduced Lanigan-Schmidt to Solomon).<sup>140</sup> Burton was planning to print Shostak's remarkable account of being a gay artist. In the interview, he was

asked by Arlene Ladden, “As a homosexual artist, do you at times feel alienated from the art world?” to which Shostak replied: “Well, being an artist in itself is a type of alienation. Being a homosexual artist may give one a double dose of alienation.” He concluded the interview: “The art gallery does not seem like a good arena for the homosexual liberation struggle because of the small, esoteric audience. But an issue such as this can only contribute to the general climate that will eventually result in greater civil rights, which to me is the ultimate goal.”<sup>141</sup> Burton shared these sentiments, and his efforts on the “Gay Issue” (and his own work) combated the homophobia that made it difficult for out gay artists to exhibit their work.

One of the ways that Burton addressed the suppression of lesbian and gay artists was to draw connections with straight writers (such as Nochlin and Alloway) and straight artists. At one point in his notes, he thought to include a section of “critique of gay art by non-gay artists, and of non-gay art by gay artists.”<sup>142</sup> Central to his thinking about the overlap of gay issues with straight artists was Benglis. Even though he competed with (and chided) Benglis in his own work, he believed strongly in her importance. He was committed to representing her well in the issue and planned on including two articles on her work. Only one remains in the archive: in an essay on the *Artforum* advertisement Kurtz made the case for Benglis as “the best gay artist around, and she’s not even queer.”<sup>143</sup> Kurtz’s piece—which is too complex to go into here—argued that Benglis had transcended gender and sexuality through her role-playing. Burton ultimately sent the piece back because he decided he could not have two articles on the *Artforum* advertisement. Instead, he pushed Kurtz to write on the more recent video *Female Sensibility*, saying that “a good critic could at this timely point write a marvelous piece on this outrageous videotape and help rescue Lynda from her own publicity-notoriety.”<sup>144</sup> Burton was sympathetic to Benglis’s situation in which the prudish controversy over the advertisement had overshadowed the complexity and range of her work, and he sought to redress it. More ambitiously, he was also thinking beyond a narrow identity politics by demanding a multifaceted discussion of Benglis in the issue, and he was attuned to the ways that her work complicated sexual difference and was in dialogue with queer themes and critiques. As he wrote to Kurtz, Benglis was “important to the gay issue, because not strictly or not just gay.”<sup>145</sup>

In his ongoing work on the project, Burton had attempted to capture the proliferation of queer topics and artists in the years since Stonewall, but ultimately the “Gay Issue” failed to be realized because it became too ambitious. When it became clear in 1976—two years after he started—that this project would not come together, Burton turned to his own work

to make an angry statement against homophobia and silence. As I will discuss presently, his *Closet Installation* for P.S. 1 performed an overt and anti-assimilationist, a celebration of sexual subculture as a route to freedom, and a declaration of devotion to gay liberation.

All the work Burton did on the “Gay Issue” had an impact, albeit some years later. In the early 1980s, Burton shared his archives with the curator Dan Cameron, who was putting together the history-making exhibition *Extended Sensibilities: Homosexual Presence in Contemporary Art*, which opened at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1982.<sup>146</sup> While the contribution of Burton’s extensive work would not become clear until then, it was nevertheless an important part of his thinking and enthusiasms from 1974 to 1976, when he was making some of his most overt work. The “Gay Issue” provided the framework and justification for the more forthrightly queer work that he was developing in the second half of the decade.

### **On Fisting and Liberation: *Closet Installation* for Rooms at P.S. 1**

After the *Lives* exhibition in December 1975 (and his one-person exhibition at Artists Space the same month), Burton continued to make queer experience central to his work. In 1976, he would present the more intimate two-person *Pair Behavior Tableaux* for the Guggenheim, and he continued his efforts on the “Gay Issue.” Burton also created another work that was uncompromisingly sexual at this time: his *Closet Installation* for the groundbreaking *Rooms* exhibition in June 1976 at the abandoned Queens school P.S. 1.

*Rooms* has been understood as a major turning point in the development of postminimalism and installation art. It remains a touchstone for narratives of American art of the 1970s.<sup>147</sup> The exhibition involved artists making site-specific works in the repurposed (but still raw and derelict) public school turned exhibition space. “My own site was a closet,” Burton recalled in the catalog published to commemorate the exhibition.<sup>148</sup> He was precise in his choice: the closet functions as a central metaphor for homophobic oppression.<sup>149</sup> As *New York Times* critic John Russell dryly noted, “the nature of the art on view [at P.S. 1] is such that it may actually thrive better in a windowless closet (see Scott Burton’s piece) or in a gutted men’s room than on the white walls of uptown Manhattan.”<sup>150</sup> Burton’s closet, however, was no space of regret or code. High on its opposite wall, he installed a rubber dildo in the shape of a forearm with clenched hand (the kind used for fisting) that pierced the center of an aluminum Mars symbol (the graphic sign indicating “male”). Below, a printed text attached

to the wall with spikes read “Fist-Right of Freedom.” The open closet was cordoned off with a chain, keeping viewers from entering this now protected space (think of a velvet rope at a club). Viewers could only stand at the edge and gaze in and up at the fisting dildo (fig. 4.12).

Those in the know would have recognized the characteristic organization of the fingers on this sculptural hand, which tapered from the wrist forward to the index finger’s closed knuckle to make a more effective penetrative shape (fig. 4.13). The specialized dildo at the center of Burton’s installation was, like Benglis’s double-headed version, commercially available in New York at the time.<sup>151</sup> The fact that this rubber hand was designed for fisting was highlighted by Burton’s placement of it inside (and extending through) the circular body of the Mars symbol. In his review of the exhibition, Perreault made sure his readers understood: “Scott Burton’s *Closet Installation* was anything but [proper], since a metal symbol for the male—a circle with an arrow moving away from it—was violated by a dildo fist.”<sup>152</sup>

The text beneath, “Fist-Right of Freedom,” referred to the original German title (*Faustrecht der Freiheit*) of Rainer Fassbinder’s film *Fox and His Friends*, released in the United States in 1975. Burton made this clear in the catalog published to document the exhibition: “The devotions were to homosexual liberation and R. W. Fassbinder.”<sup>153</sup> The 1975 film was epochal for many viewers in both West Germany and the United States because of its open depiction of homosexual characters whose sexuality, in contrast to most cinematic depictions, was not the primary focus of the narrative. Many hailed the film not just for its strategic mundanity with regard to queer lives but, more importantly, for its indictments of class hierarchies and the wealthy.<sup>154</sup> In 1976, Burton remarked, “I identify very strongly with [Fassbinder’s] mixture of an extremely austere and stylized narrative style and a wildly melodramatic emotional atmosphere. If I could do something even faintly comparable in the time, I wouldn’t be too displeased.”<sup>155</sup>

For the *Closet Installation* banner, Burton played on the literal translation of the original German title for the film, “Faustrecht der Freiheit” (the connotations of which are “rule of the fist” or “survival of the fittest”). He chose as his font Fraktur, in which the hyphen is rendered with double lines—lines that would read to many viewers as an equal sign: “Fist=Right of Freedom.” Deitch said that this phrase became a sort of motto of Burton’s.<sup>156</sup> Perreault called it a “Gay Liberation pun.”<sup>157</sup> This “pun” was part of *Closet Installation*’s double-edged parody. On the one hand, the font choice, the (somewhat obscure) translated German phrase, and the placement of the rubber fist above eye level (in a manner that evoked but did not replicate an open-handed salute) called to mind fascism. As I will discuss



**Figure 4.12.** Scott Burton, *Closet Installation*, 1976. Chain, printed sign, rubber fisting dildo, aluminum Mars/male symbol, spikes. Installed in the *Rooms* exhibition at P.S. 1. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.



**Figure 4.13.** Scott Burton, *Closet Installation*, 1976 (detail). Chain, printed sign, rubber fisting dildo, aluminum Mars/male symbol, spikes. Installed in the *Rooms* exhibition at P.S. 1. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

below, this was Burton's response to caricatures of the leather community circulating at the time. On the other, the use of a sex toy, the pierced Mars symbol, and the graphic duplicity of the hyphen/equals sign created an unabashed celebration of queer sexual culture. *Closet Installation*, like *Dream Sex* before it, employed hyperbole and parody to confront mainstream appropriations and caricatures of the queer sexual communities of which Burton was a part.

In the months before Burton created *Closet Installation*, fisting, leathersex, and other queer practices became topics of public discussion and scrutiny. In the summer and fall of 1975, the *Village Voice* published a series of sensationalist articles that drew attention to the increasingly visible gay and lesbian communities of New York. Ironically, this new wave of reporting was in response to protests (by the Gay Activists Alliance and Lesbian Feminist Liberation) over the inadequate and crassly stereotypical representations of gays (and the lack of representation of lesbians) in the pages of the *Voice*.<sup>158</sup> It seems that the editors of the *Voice* responded by attempting to promote normalizing images of gays and lesbians while (in a move to entice straight readers) contrasting those images to communities and practices they deemed deviant or disreputable. At issue was a divide between queer sexual and community practices and the emergence of what we would now call "homonormativity"—or "straight homosexuals," as Vito Russo sneered in a vituperative letter to the editors of the *Voice* about one of these articles. He continued, "[They] find a symbol with which the public can identify and call it clean gay. Disney's version of life. Nobody goes to the bathroom and nobody has sex."<sup>159</sup> The *Voice* fueled this division by giving lip service to mainstream acceptance while concurrently inviting voyeuristic curiosity into queer sex lives through descriptions of them in lurid detail.

Of these articles, the most hotly debated was senior editor Richard Goldstein's "S&M: The Dark Side of Gay Liberation." Salaciously, he declared the "rise of fist-fucking as a distinct scene" and treated his readers to accounts—equal parts moralizing and indulgent—of the gay male leather community in New York City.<sup>160</sup> Dramatic descriptions of the practice and mindset of fisting made up a good part of Goldstein's nominal exposé. Burton is even mentioned obliquely in the article.<sup>161</sup> Goldstein (who was gay himself) took aim at cultures of promiscuity and leather, and he pitched his supposedly insider tales to eagerly curious straight readers.<sup>162</sup> His anti-sex rhetoric, feigned shock, and presumption of traditional family values can be understood as symptoms of the homonormative politics of respectability that were emerging in the 1970s (and that Burton would himself criticize). Jack Fritscher, publisher of *Drummer* magazine, recalled that



Goldstein was an “anti-leather queen” and “a lickety-lickety crusader of the correct. He had a special hatred for the Mineshaft and for [the graphic artist] Rex. He got his buzz poking his stick into the gay beehive. He specialized in anti-S&M, anti-fisting articles.”<sup>163</sup>

Burton’s friend Elke Solomon recalled that, in 1975, an entire dinner party (attended by Kaufman, Donald Droll, and Solomon’s husband, Michael Kwartler) was consumed with a frank and animated conversation about Goldstein’s article and his willful misrepresentation of the leather community and the fisting scene. They also talked about how the art world echoed Goldstein’s prudery in its toleration of gay artists as long as they remained discreet about sex.<sup>164</sup> To Burton, Goldstein’s article was another example of a mainstream caricature of his sexual community much like Morris’s “Nazi helmet,” spiked collar, and heavy chain.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, both Morris and Goldstein propagated a misleading elision of the leather and BDSM community with fascism.<sup>166</sup> Goldstein concluded his article melodramatically by implying that BDSM practitioners were “Naziphile.”<sup>167</sup> Much as he had with *Modern American Artist* and *Dream Sex*, Burton responded to this negative stereotype with a hyperbolic burlesque of it. *Closet Installation*’s allusion to fascism (with its Fraktur phrase and high hand) parodied mainstream misconceptions, but it also declared that “freedom” (and “survival of the fittest”) came through embracing a queer sexual culture that “straight homosexuals” wanted to suppress and disavow. As he made clear in his statement for the catalog, the work made this connection through the “devotions” to Fassbinder and “homosexual liberation,” with fisting at the center.

In the 1970s, a burgeoning community formed in New York around the practice of fisting, for which gay clubs and bars such as the Mineshaft and the Anvil provided venues.<sup>168</sup> In contrast to Goldstein’s account, some saw it as an alternative to genital sexual activity and conventional roles. Others praised its liberatory, spiritual, or transcendental potential.<sup>169</sup> Burton’s involvement with these sexual cultures partook of this heady, experimental moment. As I discussed in chapter 3, in the years after *Closet Installation*, Burton would work as a bartender at the Mineshaft, a New York epicenter for this community. In addition, he also cofounded a sexual/community group for men shorter than 5-foot-6-inches tall (Burton was about 5’4”).<sup>170</sup> It was called the “Short Ass Club,” and it was one of the many specialized groups that the Mineshaft hosted.<sup>171</sup> As with his work about the body language of cruising, fisting’s potential, or the power dynamics of bottoming, this initiative became a site for a larger examination of power and taxonomy for Burton. He wrote to Costa, “I have become especially interested in short men, other men my size all have a compensatory enlargement of

force, so the exchange is active, the back and forth, the top and bottom roles change unpredictably and dramatically.”<sup>172</sup> Throughout the decade, Burton had continually returned in his notes to the ways in which sexual relations and signals offered a way to think about power dynamics, and indeed one can understand Burton’s semi-anonymous sculptures made to be used as related to BDSM’s valuation of receptivity and submissiveness. At one point, Burton planned to include a section on the “semiotics of S/M” in the “Gay Issue.”<sup>173</sup> By 1980, Burton would write to Costa, “I have made fantastic sexual advances, further and further into the sado-masochism so deep in me.”<sup>174</sup> With the 1976 *Closet Installation*, Burton provided an initial declaration of the importance of these experiences and communities for him, and Burton’s work was one of the initial incursions of the representation of fisting, leather, BDSM, and their communities into the New York art world in the 1970s.<sup>175</sup>

A few years after *Closet Installation*, in 1980, Burton spoke about the continued importance of BDSM and leather as part of his interview with Edward DeCelle. This was spurred by a question by DeCelle about the gay community’s protests against William Friedkin’s movie *Cruising* that were unfolding that year. This film about a serial killer targeting men having public sex became a flashpoint for the gay community.<sup>176</sup> Like many, Burton was highly critical of the movie because he saw it as glorifying violence against gay men (and, in particular, those who cruise). However, he was also suspicious of gay activists who went further and criticized the communities of cruisers, leather, and BDSM that the film caricatured. Referencing the “hanky code” and its designated color for fisting, Burton rejected the homonormativity of the mainstream gay activists: “What the gay community was upset about was the exposition of what passes for an S/M lifestyle—a leather style and red bandana style. I believe in flaunting that stuff. I don’t believe in hiding any of it. I mean, who cares? We should have a sexually democratic society. The gay world is much too bourgeois. Many people were upset by showing the ruder side of things [rather] than by the potentiality of homo-phobic violence.”<sup>177</sup> Burton’s criticism was rooted in the fact that the film made his sexual communities the object of voyeurism. He rejected the gay activists’ disavowal of these sexual cultures and their politics of respectability. Like many who frequented the leather bars in New York, Burton had been approached to be an extra in the film. (He refused.)<sup>178</sup> “The real allure of the leather world is too difficult for a movie like *Cruising*,” he told DeCelle.<sup>179</sup> He also remarked that “I’d like to include things like S&M and leather life style and sexual styles in my performance work in the future.”<sup>180</sup> With *Dream Sex* and *Closet Installation*, he also made these allegiances clear.

Underwriting such statements in 1980 were the works about queer sexual culture that Burton had been making for almost a decade, the most overt and truculent of which were *Dream Sex* and *Closet Installation*. It should be remembered that such open discussions of queer sex, fisting, and gay liberation remained rare in the New York art world in the mid-1970s. At the start of this chapter, I quoted Perreault in 1980 talking about how the mere exhibition of gay male sexuality was still considered a political act. That interview, for the *Artworkers News*, led to a second interview with Perreault, for *Artforum* that same year. This two-page text may be the first feature article on the topic of gay or lesbian art in a major, mainstream national art magazine in the United States.<sup>181</sup> By 1980, New York's downtown art world had seen an increasingly visible and vibrant group of artists exhibiting queer content; in the years after Burton's efforts there had emerged other high-profile events such as Mapplethorpe's exhibition *Erotic Pictures* at the Kitchen in 1977 and Hammond's *A Lesbian Show* for 112 Greene Street in 1978. Preceding these events, not only had Burton shown *Modern American Artist*, *Dream Sex*, and *Closet Installation*, but he would, in 1977 to 1980, tour *Individual Behavior Tableaux* with its catalog of sexual poses from bars, baths, and street corners.

Perreault knew these artists and exhibitions well, but he also understood how the majority of the art world often chose not to discuss them. He wrote accusingly to the *Artforum* readers, "It is amazing that the art world has been so little affected by gay liberation. . . . And silent. At least when it comes to gay topics. The art world is an example of repressive tolerance. Everyone is 'accepting' as long as you keep quiet and don't ask embarrassing questions."<sup>182</sup> Astonishingly, Perreault's interview couldn't even have the word "gay" in the title; instead, the oblique "I'm Asking—Does It Exist? What Is It? Whom Is It For?" heads the two-page spread. The cover of this issue, however, featured an illustration of Burton's 1980 *Individual Behavior Tableaux*.<sup>183</sup> It was not discussed in the issue, but it stood, in tacit reference to Perreault's article, as a contemporary image of gay art. I mention this slightly later registration of Burton's standing as a gay artist because it (and Perreault's exasperation at the art world's repressive culture) throws into relief the difficulty entailed in making overt and confrontational works like *Closet Installation*, *Dream Sex*, and *Modern American Artist* in the mid-1970s.

# 5

## PRAGMATIC STRUCTURES

### Sculpture and the Performance of Furniture, 1972–79

Burton interrogated what it meant to *behave as*. From his committed study of the scientific literature on body language to his bracketing of authorship to his caricature-like provocations, Burton pursued forms of performance involving dissemblance, duplicity, and doubleness. His works tested the contours of the “normal” through infiltration of it, and his aim was to make strange those everyday actions and inculcated behaviors by reflecting them back to the viewer. I consider this “behaving-as” (which we might also think of as the performance of the “as if” or “performing-as”) to be the core strategy of Burton’s artistic practice—in all its variety. Alongside his experiments in performance over the course of the decade, Burton also made sculptures that performed “as if.” His sculptures dissemble as furniture while, all the same, behaving as functional chairs, tables, and benches. For him, furniture’s familiarity served as a means to spark self-reflection in viewers about their expectations and assumptions. That familiarity was akin to the “normal” behavior that Burton exposed in his performances, and Burton wanted to demonstrate how expectations could be subverted and categories questioned. As with the performances that Burton developed in the 1970s, his sculptures drew on his queer experiences as the foundation from which to interrogate expectations of the normal and its presumptive behaviors. Like his works about body language, street cruising, and other behaviors, the sculptures also hide in plain sight, are more complex than they first appear, and self-consciously adopt the look of the normal, the familiar, or the everyday.

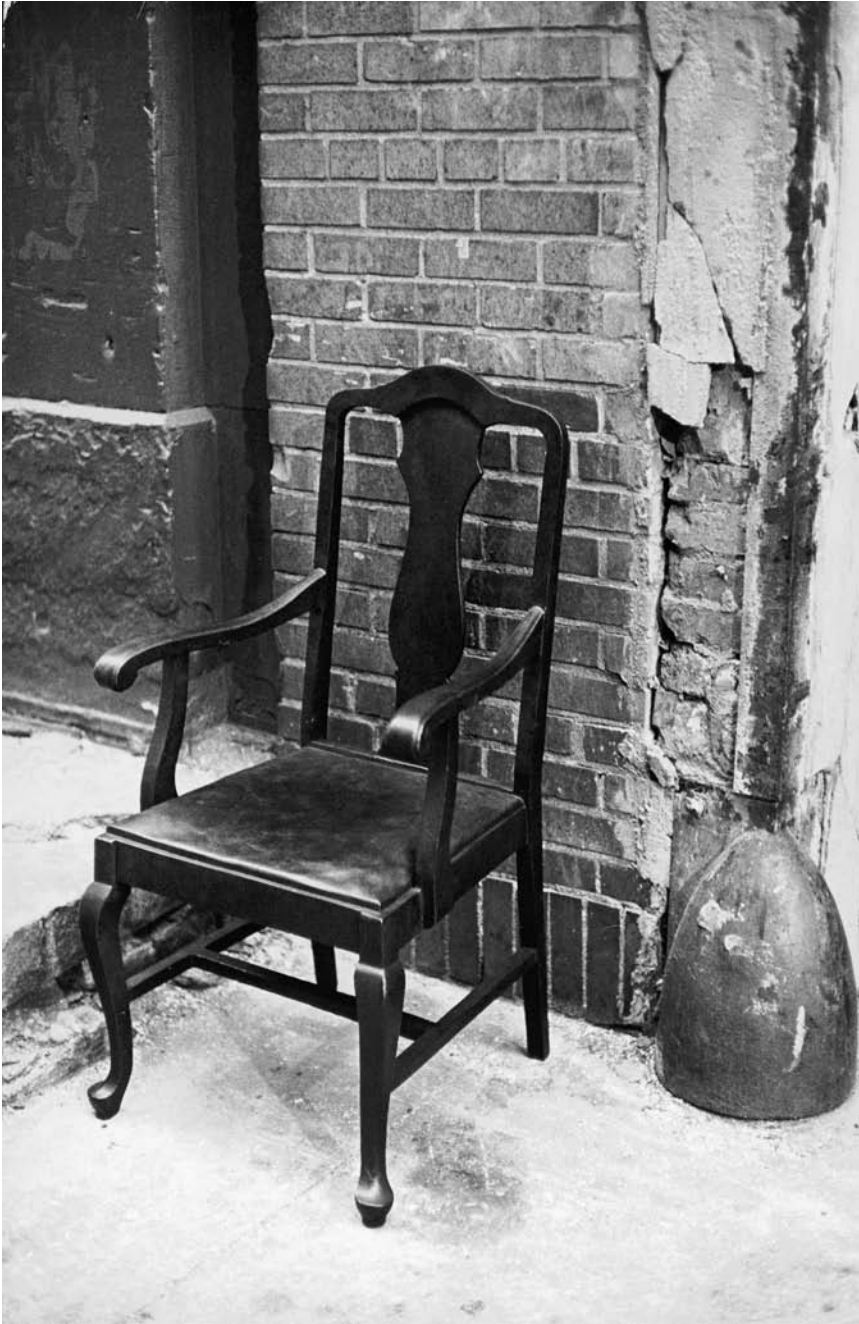
Burton’s sculptures are realist representations of furniture at the same time they are literal functional objects, and this chapter will detail the evolution of Burton’s thinking about this twofold performing. I will trace central

examples of his sculptural work of the 1970s that ran concurrently with the performances and other works detailed in the previous chapters. Indeed, this book's structure, with its chapters' parallel chronologies, performs the kind of pivoting between practices that Burton himself enjoyed in the 1970s. Throughout this chapter, I will often note how these sculptural works cannot be extricated from Burton's other modes of performance. These reminders are intended to resist the decontextualization that Burton's sculptures often experience, in which larger questions and driving themes are often muted or excised. Without a doubt Burton's investment in camouflage and ostensible simplicity lends itself to such decontextualization, but that strategic dissemblance should be seen, I argue, not as a problem but as a complex theoretical proposition on its own. As Burton said in 1973, his "living tableaux and object pieces form two recent series of works in different materials but with overlapping preoccupations—with the human figure, with dream states, with social relationships, with sexuality, and with art."<sup>1</sup>

### Street Finds: *Table I* and Burton's Furniture at Home

In 1969, just as he started making art by using quotational tactics in his *Self-Works*, Burton was in a state of major change and exigency. As discussed earlier in the book, the break with John Button compelled Burton to establish new social networks. One pragmatic effect of this new situation was that he found himself struggling financially; he would largely remain so throughout the 1970s. As a result, when Burton secured his own tenement apartment in the Italian neighborhood of South Village, he had little.<sup>2</sup> Upon arrival, however, he was comforted by a solitary chair, in a derivative Queen Anne style, that had been left behind in his new home.

This chair would become increasingly important to Burton during the time it lived with him as he transitioned from critic to artist. He would put it into performances and, in 1972, decided to make it into a monument, declaring it his first sculpture. He liked the chair, he said, "for, partly, being 'best-of-type' (type is cheap, mass-produced, '10s, '20s, '30s Queen-Anne, this being an exceptionally well proportioned example) and for, mainly, being there in one of my rooms when I first entered."<sup>3</sup> After choosing to make it a sculpture, he initially painted the found wooden chair in a bronze color. This cosmetic layer allowed the chair to impersonate a bronze statue until 1975, when Burton could afford to have the work cast into metal—with the help of a grant. Burton considered *Bronze Chair* his first sculpture, and his retrospective exhibition positioned it as the inaugural catalog entry (fig. 5.1).<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 5.1.** Scott Burton, *Bronze Chair* installed on the sidewalk across from Artists Space on Wooster Street, New York, December 1975. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

Burton's attention to furniture grew during the years he lived with this chair, and he took to scanning the sidewalks and visiting thrift stores to find other pieces to bring back to his home. "This was the first time I'd ever had my own space that I didn't share with anybody. So I started populating it with a few very cheap, but to me intensely important, pieces of thrift shop furniture. That's how the obsession started."<sup>5</sup> Both a necessity and a passion, this recurring hunt wove itself into his evolving artistic practice and the other contexts (such as street cruising or behavioral psychology) to which he devoted his energy. On the streets, he encountered objects that had been discarded because of their age, their disrepair, or their outmoded style. Burton identified with these objects, and he would come to use furniture as stand-ins for people, autobiographic scenes, and prospective situations of encounter.

Especially at the beginning of 1970s, these objects moved, like Burton himself, between home and stage. He recalled, "For a time, there was no real separation between the furniture I lived with in the studio, the furniture I was using in the performances, and the furniture I was making. I did my earliest furniture pieces from things around me in the studio. The first pieces were actually a form of assemblage—a base from one table, a top from another. I was asking questions: 'What is sculpture? What is installation art? What is furniture?'"<sup>6</sup> When we look at another of Burton's earliest sculptures, *Table I*, it initially and immediately appears as an everyday table (fig. 5.2). The wood is oak and has been heavily stained (covered even) to a dark tone. Many would have no problem casually placing a newspaper or a coffee cup on it. Only if we persist in looking does the object stand apart. As we linger on its form, it starts to defy the stylistic categories that we might bring to bear on it. Why, we wonder, would it need a second rectangle at its base? Where are the feet? Whereas we might have earlier focused just on the top of the table (as the place that supported our cup or paper), now our gaze might pass down along its length to the bottom in order to puzzle—if even momentarily—at this element that makes this table more than a normal table. It's not a lower shelf below, just an empty rectangle. More questions arise. Does the top of the table belong there at all? With a different thickness than the stout legs and their framing squares, the lacquered top starts to seem affected and mildly alien. Burton's table plays with the presumptions of structure, style, and function that we bring to reading and categorizing furniture, and there are subtle visual clues that this is no run-of-the-mill table. His sculpture, in other words, disassembles as a table—a functional one at that.

We have little information from Burton about his earliest sculptures except that they were all made with found objects that have been modified



**Figure 5.2.** Scott Burton, *Table I*, 1973. Oak, stained found object altered by artist, 21.5 × 21 × 18 in. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

or repaired in some way. For *Table I*, Burton added a new top to a table that had been “cut down” in some way.<sup>7</sup> It is likely that the spans that make up the lower rectangle were added by him; they are narrower than the upper spans and have no visible braces or hardware that would commonly hold such pieces in place (and be invisible under the table’s top, where they would normally go). He had made these modifications to the found object by 1971, since the table (unstained) makes an appearance in *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College (discussed in the next section). Burton consistently dated the sculpture *Table I* to 1973, and I believe that—much as he had with the coat of bronze paint applied to the Queen Anne chair in 1972—Burton came to regard this modified oak table as sculpture by unifying it through staining it in this deeper color.

The final effect of Burton’s modifications is that *Table I*’s dominant formal trait is an open rectangular volume, bounded at each edge and topped with a plane that overhangs slightly on all sides. *Table I* evokes associations from vernacular furniture’s history (like the sturdy and geometric Mission style and its right angles) while at the same time speaks to the

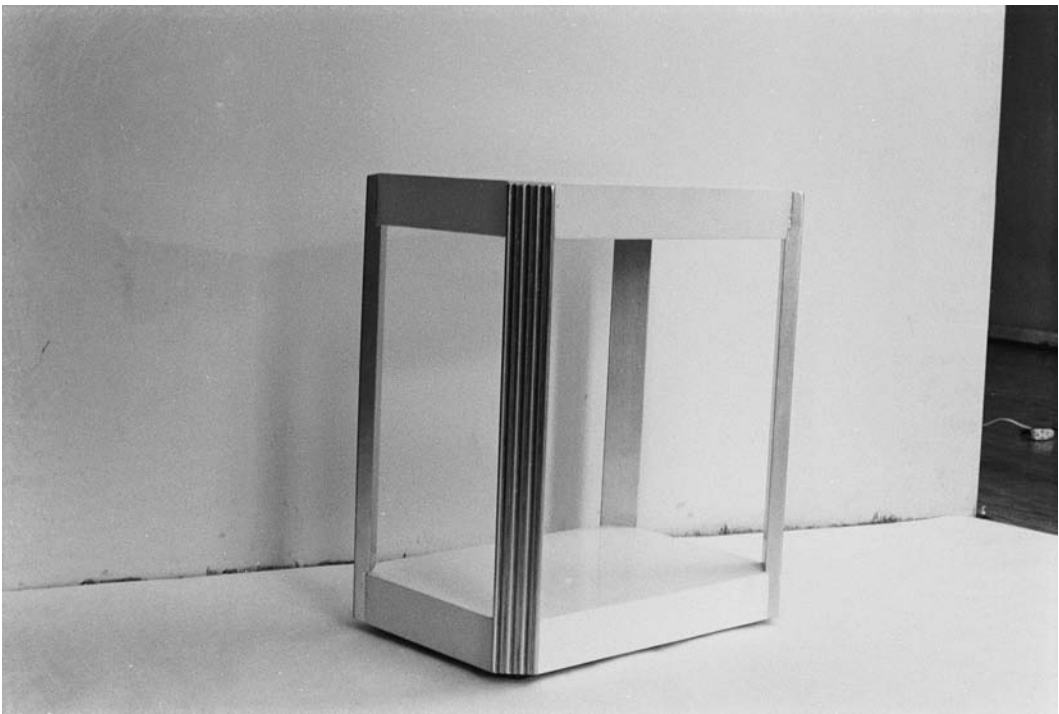


midcentury modern style that was Burton's other major design reference. The framed open cube (usually in metal) had been used for its simplicity and efficiency by designers such as Marcel Breuer and Milo Baughman, and one can see Burton's odd little *Table I* echoing such floor-bound open cubes while also looking like the kind of homey and vernacular furniture that midcentury modern furniture used as its foil. *Table I* is not quite a cube. Rather, it is slightly rectangular in its footprint—21.5 inches tall, 21 inches wide, and 18 inches deep (54.6 × 53.3 × 45.7 cm). If it were not for the lower rectangle that hugs the ground, it might look like an average end table. *Table I* is like modern furniture in its geometric clarity and framed, open form, but with its rectangular volume and wooden table top's overhanging lip, it speaks to that earlier Mission style and its homey familiarity. (The lack of an overhanging lip is often associated with modernist furniture.) *Table I* is neither and both of the often-imitated design styles it evokes. It remained a particular, unique, and ad hoc table.

At the same time that it plays with design history, *Table I* also economically alludes to Minimalist sculpture—one of Burton's primary concerns in these early years. Burton's emergent postminimalism in the late 1960s derived from his interest in personalizing the cold geometric forms of Minimalism, and *Table I* offers a vernacular version of the empty-framed cuboid volume that was a signature of Sol LeWitt's sculpture, to which Burton was very sympathetic. Burton was aware that LeWitt had made a table for their mutual friend Eva Hesse, and he would later acquire a LeWitt table of his own.<sup>8</sup> Burton saw Breuer (and in particular, Breuer's Parsons table) as an influence on LeWitt's sculpture with its open volumes.<sup>9</sup> Burton often considered contemporary Minimalist sculpture in light of the history of design and furniture, tracing such sculpture back to the early twentieth century and the art-historical precedents he often cited for his own work: Constructivism, De Stijl, and the Bauhaus. (He would later write his major article on Gerrit Rietveld, of whose furniture LeWitt was a significant collector.)<sup>10</sup> *Table I* is evidence that he was already working in this lineage: its floor-bound open volume pointed to LeWitt's sculptures, and, through its dark stain perhaps, it also approximated the signature black finish characteristic of Burton's other favored forebear Tony Smith.<sup>11</sup>

Burton's made three related table sculptures in 1973 and 1974 and numbered them as a series. *Table II* (1973) resulted from adding a top from one table to the base of another with the base's feet rounded off rather than square, creating subtle abnormalities in a manner similar to *Table I*. *Table II* also had the proportions of a dining or work table but was reduced in scale (at only 22 in. / 56 cm high); such scale shifts would also be used in later table sculptures.

*Table III* (1973–74, fig. 5.3) approximated the size and proportions of *Table I*, and Burton exhibited it as its companion. It had the same mirroring of table top and bottom as *Table I* and is also footless as a means of achieving an enclosed cuboid volume, but this time with narrower proportions and a continuous lower shelf that hugs the ground. In this work, the supporting legs are conspicuous owing to their stylistic incongruity with the otherwise simple (but subtly if irregularly octagonal) planes. Burton used a white lacquer (in contrast to *Table I*'s dark stain) to unify it. The addition of gold and silver leaf along the long, striated legs are like cosmetics that become apparent only when one looks with intent. In 1975, Edit deAk and Walter Robinson wrote that it “appeared influenced by an odd combination of Bauhaus and art deco.”<sup>12</sup> Like its predecessor, *Table III* also manages to draw in disparate styles with a form that still sits in a gallery space like a Minimalist geometric form. Together, the two tables play out a conversation between their similar forms and their differing stylistic connotations; the curator Suzanne Delehanty noted of the pair in 1977, “Scott Burton’s two tables . . . question different



**Figure 5.3.** Scott Burton, *Table III*, 1973. Wood, lacquered white, with gold and silver leaf found object altered by artist, 20.5 × 35 × 17 in. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

qualities of form and style: hard and soft, classical and romantic, male and female.”<sup>13</sup>

These works are stubbornly easy to misread as common, practical, and unpretentious tables—that is, as normal. As was the case with his *Self-Works*, Burton’s early furniture is intended to pass unnoticed by those who look quickly. At first glance, the Queen Anne chair or the little tables all appear familiar, recognizable, even homely. They are the kinds of objects—we might at first believe—that frequent everyday spaces, and we go on our way without attending to them as particular or even interesting. This is the same concern Burton was concurrently exploring in *Self-Works*, his studies of body language and behavior, and his *Behavior Tableaux* (which slowed down normally overlooked gestures to examine their effects). His furniture sculptures, too, only repay attention over time. As he would say a few years into his sculptural practice, his works are “functional objects invisible first as ‘art.’”<sup>14</sup>

In many settings, Burton’s sculptures successfully camouflage themselves as “normal.” The tables indeed functioned as tables (Burton’s tables), operating as both sculpture and furniture simultaneously. When placed into a museum or gallery context, however, their homeliness and mundanity stand out. In a white cube gallery, they appear dramatically out of place. Burton traded on the precedent of the Duchampian readymade, and his incursion into museum and gallery spaces with these works is meant to stage a collision between the (at first) unremarkable functional object and the space of art.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Duchamp made his readymades deliberately nonfunctional, Burton emphasized his works’ actual or potential usability.<sup>16</sup>

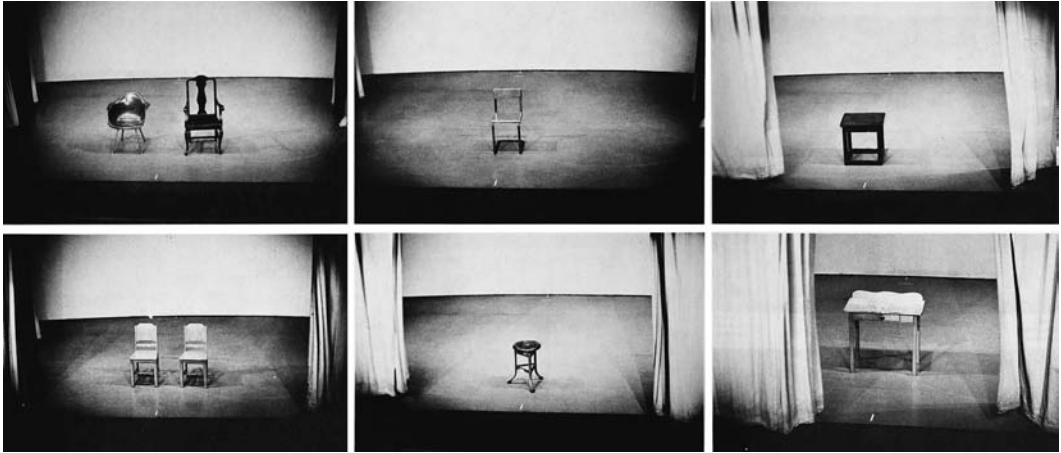
*Table I* and *Table III* effectively perform as both readymades and tables while being neither of these fully. Ironically, in a museum context they probably looked *more like* found tables because they were so radically different from their contemporaries (especially Minimalist or postminimalist sculpture). A sculpture like *Table I* dissembles: we look at this humble object and see it solely for the ways in which it is impersonating—that is performing as—something other than it is. Against the backdrop of the “as if” of his *Self-Works*, the complication of authorship in *Lecture on Self*, and the exploration of coded language in *Behavior Tableaux*, the multidirectional impersonations of *Table I* come into view as a complex manifestation of Burton’s strategic interest in camouflage and infiltration—of being more than what might be assumed from a quick glance or from external appearance. Burton’s subsequent sculptural practice hinged on the potential he saw in sculpture that realistically imitated a functional object to the point where it could function as that object. This valuing of critical duplicity

and tactical dissemblance were, for Burton, drawn from queer experience, as I have argued throughout this book, and his earliest sculptures have the ability to hide in plain sight while nevertheless making themselves available to the viewers who are looking for something more. When asked about his sources for his furniture works a few years later, he replied in the same mysterious but pointed way that he had described his earlier performances: “First, there are autobiographical, personal sources.”<sup>17</sup>

These autobiographical sources and their resulting works, however, were only sometimes camouflaged and infiltrating. For all the plausible deniability of queer content in the earliest iterations of *Behavior Tableaux*, critics regularly drew out the queer capacities of Burton’s work. Burton’s work of the mid-1970s was overt and tied up with championing gay liberation in concurrent contexts, and critics did not fail to connect the different practices regardless of their level of infiltration. Such was the case in 1975, the year of Burton’s first-ever exhibition of static sculptural objects, at the Whitney Biennial, where he showed *Table I* and *Table III*. Even these humble works raised queer suspicions. In a pompous and donnish review of the exhibition (written, no less, as a fictional ancient Greek symposium), Thomas Hess critiqued the overall exhibition as “boring” and mocked the curators’ choice to include more women, people of color, and artists from the Midwest.<sup>18</sup> Though he disregarded the exhibition as a whole, he nevertheless singled out three artists, one of whom was Burton (whom, of course, he had known since giving him his first assignment at *ARTnews* in the mid-1960s). The mention was hardly a compliment; Hess referred to Burton’s sculptures as “two mysterious little tables by Scott Burton, sure for some corybantic perversities.”<sup>19</sup> Using this pedantic word to call these otherwise unassuming tables “wild” and “excessive,” Hess made a move that would become common in the criticism of Burton’s furniture sculptures: trying to call them out for their dissemblance and link them to Burton’s queerness, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Burton’s sculptures were not “normal” but rather engaged in active and tactical dissemblance, and Hess evaluated these quiet sculptures in relation to his knowledge of Burton’s out sexuality and the performance works he had been making.

### **“Chairs Represent Human Life”: Anthropomorphism and the Furniture Performances of 1971**

Burton’s sculptures were, after all, performers themselves. In 1971, the altered oak table (that eventually became *Table I* in 1973) featured, as did the Queen Anne chair, in Burton’s performance *Furniture Pieces*, midway



**Figure 5.4.** Scott Burton, six scenes (of nine) from *Furniture Pieces*, 4 March 1971. From *Eighteen Pieces* at Finch College, New York. Shown in the order reproduced in *TriQuarterly* 32 (Winter 1975), n.p. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society.

through his *Eighteen Pieces* program at Finch College (fig. 5.4). This was the first of two furniture-based performance works that evening. I will first discuss the other, *Chair Drama*, which involved a series of static scenes punctuated by blackouts (during which time the furniture was changed). In his initial description of *Chair Drama*, Burton described the work as “a mini-melodrama. With a “cast” of 10 identical chairs, a “play” in motionless scenes (changed out of view of audience) is presented: included are battle scenes, love scenes, monologues, trial, and others conveyed solely through the placement of the chairs in relation to each other.”<sup>20</sup> Burton’s plan for *Chair Drama* contains many of the elements he was pursuing on other fronts. The battle scenes related to analogous content in other works in *Eighteen Pieces*, and the relational placement of the chairs can be understood as another early manifestation of Burton’s interest in proxemics and tableaux. Here, the combinations of one, two, three, or ten chairs were a counterpart to Burton’s use of uninflected performers making extremely slow movements.

Whereas *Chair Drama* illustrated proxemics by using identical chairs as surrogates for people’s placements and spatial dynamics, the performance *Furniture Pieces* asked the audience to interpret different furniture actors based on their design styles and their connotations. Across nine scenes of fifteen seconds each (separated by curtain closures), individual or paired pieces of furniture took the stage. Unlike the dynamic and narrative placements of the chairs in *Chair Drama*, these objects were placed facing forward, without spatial inflection. *Table I* appeared alone, and

Burton's Queen Anne chair was paired with a plastic-molded Eames-style chair. Two kitchen chairs, with similar handmade backs with irregularities, sat together. A vanity appeared on stage, its backsplash an out-of-place and undersized piece of wood with a wavy top. A key scene featured a single kitchen chair based on Marcel Breuer's "Cesca" design (shown in the top central of the series illustrated here).<sup>21</sup> Instead of the characteristic caning of the seat common to this type, this derivative version was narrower and had wooden elements. Burton would later describe the chair (and his alterations) as "a little chromed-steel tubular number, of a type originally Bauhaus then Diner. Mine was neither of these. The original has plywood seat and back, the American cafeteria-copy is padded, of course, but mine had a seat and back of board lumber with very simple and beautiful curves cut into it. It also had a delicately narrow-diameter tubing, and a perfect, small-scale proportioning, which are rare. I have no idea of its origin but it irresistibly became the star of the piece for me."<sup>22</sup> Through his process of collecting these found objects, Burton became enamored with the derivations of styles and the adaptations and repairs made by previous owners. These alterations became animated for him when he made the pieces of furniture into performers onstage. He said of the successive scenes of *Furniture Pieces* that "Each begins to seem anthropomorphic. The variation and contrast within sequence creates drama of objects irresistibly humanized and personalized."<sup>23</sup>

From the metallic paint on the Queen Anne chair to the truncated legs of *Table I* to the rare curves of the wooden-backed "Bauhaus then Diner" style tubular chair, each of the furniture actors in Burton's *Furniture Pieces* has elements that made them odd or off, whether they be subtle alterations, multiply-derivative stylistic lineages, or ad hoc repairs (made by Burton and/or previous owners). The ragtag objects of *Furniture Pieces* tell a story of use and vernacular adaptation of design styles, from the European imported (Queen Anne) to the American (Mission) to the modern (Breuer) to the commonplace ("Diner").

Burton's furniture performances capitalized on the inherent anthropomorphism of chairs. One of furniture's central appeals for him was its role as an analog for the human bodies for which it was designed. In one of his first ideas for a furniture performance, he said it would be "a new kind of puppet theatre [in which] the process of anthropomorphism is drawn upon."<sup>24</sup> From the beginning, Burton's concern was to imply and to evoke persons through such objects. He once explained, "The human body is central to my work. A piece of furniture, even without the presence of a body, refers to human presence."<sup>25</sup> In notes for an unrealized performance for one male performer, Burton perhaps said it most clearly. He sketched

out the idea for a long piece in which the performer would act out fantasies and attitudes toward others, including parents and lovers. When performing these scenes, the performer was to use the “piece of furniture as [the] person imagined.”<sup>26</sup>

Furniture—especially the chair—lends itself easily to being anthropomorphized. The chair is designed in relation to the human body and echoes its forms. “When you see a piece of furniture presented as a sculpture, it creates a dynamic of us versus it,” Burton once observed. He continued, “Is it designed for us, or are we designed for it?”<sup>27</sup> Furniture relates to and holds our bodies, and when we see an empty chair we think about who might fill it or who once filled it. “To be a chair is to offer oneself as something to be sat on,” the philosopher Arthur Danto once remarked.<sup>28</sup> He continued, “The chair, then, is eloquent enough—less eloquent than the nude human body but eloquent enough—to carry into art a set of powerful human meanings.”<sup>29</sup> When we talk about chairs and other furniture, we deploy the mode of catachresis, referring to their “legs,” “backs,” “arms,” and “feet.” Burton understood well the potential of furniture to evoke the human, and his sculptural practice hinges on furniture’s ability to stage bodily interactions fueled by anthropomorphism without, however, foreclosing the kinds of bodies being called for or engaged. Both *Furniture Pieces* and *Chair Drama* were performances without human actors onstage, and Burton deployed his favored format of the tableau vivant to justify the stillness and posedness of his arranged chairs, tables, and desks. As he would write a few years later about his furniture performances, “A ‘chair-tableau’ is like performance art because it is TIME-limited and relates to the theater (audience and actors)” and “Chairs represent human life.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Inside Outsider: The *Pastoral Chair Tableau* Installation for Artists Space in 1975**

Beyond their capacity for anthropomorphism, Burton also saw tables and chairs as imbued with personality—from both the evidence of the object’s use and the histories of design expressed through its form. One of Burton’s driving interests was how the design of a piece of furniture communicated, and this was analogous to his investigations into human nonverbal communication. His early furniture experiments were concerned with how furniture signified people, their class, gender, and relationships. His furniture performances played with the ways that functional objects carried with them connotations of their intended users. He saw a parallel between the inculcated societal rules of nonverbal communication and the language of

furniture that told consumers and users what objects were working class, middle class, feminine, masculine, modern, traditional, and so on. As with his other work of the 1970s, Burton's questions centered on coded meanings, layered connotations, and unspoken languages. He once succinctly remarked, "The style of objects is a behavioral condition."<sup>31</sup>

It was the class, behavioral, and gendered connotations of furniture that became the central question for Burton's first solo exhibition of sculpture at Artists Space on Wooster Street in December 1975. He adapted the ideas from *Furniture Pieces* and *Chair Drama* into a static sculptural installation, *Pastoral Chair Tableau* (plate 10). (He also exhibited *Bronze Chair*, plate 11, discussed in the next section.) Burton's installation of refurbished chairs demanded the same amount of viewing distance as his *Behavior Tableaux* performances, and he clearly attempted to establish a parallel between these tableau modes.<sup>32</sup>

Artists Space featured a program that gave artists without gallery representation a one-person show, with a well-established artist solicited to nominate a younger artist.<sup>33</sup> Burton was Claes Oldenburg's pick. It is likely that Oldenburg was in sympathy with Burton's use of humble, found objects (and his embrace of performance).<sup>34</sup> Burton's solo show ran concurrently with that of the painter Pamela Jenrette, who had been nominated by Larry Poons. She had been added at the last minute, making for an odd pairing.<sup>35</sup> She recalled: "I didn't know that much about [Burton]. He was in a gay world and his work was conceptual and environmental. It wasn't really my brand of art. . . . So, if you can imagine this hysterical opening, it was like ghosts gliding in and out of each other. His people acted as if they didn't even see my people and my people acted as if they didn't even see his people."<sup>36</sup> In contrast to Jenrette's self-described formalist paintings, Burton's showing was decidedly more arid; two furniture works that, following the prototype of *Behavior Tableaux*, demanded a great deal of space. Both pieces were tied up with his staging of obliquely "autobiographical" material that mediated the self. *Pastoral Chair Tableau* and *Bronze Chair* each deployed found and repaired furniture as surrogates for people. Burton leaned on the connotations of these found objects' design histories to produce obliquely psychological or personifying narratives.

Starkly lit and distanced, *Pastoral Chair Tableau* consisted of an ensemble of refurbished thrift store chairs placed against a backdrop of a blue curtain and sitting on a fake grass carpet made of green paper (the kind used in grocers' displays of fruits and vegetables at the time).<sup>37</sup> Burton explained that the ensemble "grew out of a collection I just couldn't stop adding to of odd pieces of used furniture. After some time together, some of my chairs started to have relationships and other chairs appeared



to fill the picture.”<sup>38</sup> As with the renewal of the abandoned Queen Anne chair, these orphaned outcast chairs were given new life and new meaning through their kinship in Burton’s apartment/studio. He had these works restored, he said, “to a state of perfection they probably weren’t even in when new. They were resurrected.”<sup>39</sup> In all these found objects, Burton was attentive to the ongoing life of design and to the ways in which once-fresh styles shifted class connotations as these objects passed through generations and were subjected to imitations and derivations. For example, he called the two chairs on the left side of *Pastoral Chair Tableau* “Bronx-survival examples of the Neo-Classical revival of the *klismos*.”<sup>40</sup>

While the central solo Cesca chair (the “star of the piece”) had been one of the pieces that Burton had adopted and modified for use in *Furniture Pieces* five years earlier, the other chairs in the ensemble were more recently repaired.<sup>41</sup> At this time, he enlisted the help of sculptor Thomas Abate Marco, who became Burton’s longtime studio assistant and model fabricator. With the exception of his modifications to the earliest sculptures—*Table I*, *Table II*, *Table III*, and the painted Queen Anne chair—Burton rarely if ever constructed his own sculptures. He aligned himself with the approach to the making of conceptual art and Minimalism, particularly to his much-admired Tony Smith, who infamously ordered the sculpture *Die* by telephone.<sup>42</sup> This conceptually justified outsourcing started with the works for the Artists Space show. Abate Marco took Burton’s hodgepodge furniture and remade its elements so that the works impersonated the “new”—or “resurrected,” as he said.<sup>43</sup> The frames of the two “Bronx-survival” *klismos* chairs used to have upholstered seats and backs, but Abate Marco remade them in sanded Styrofoam covered in silver lamé, making them precious and pristine. Their faux silver skins echoed the metallic colors Burton had used for earlier works such as the bronze-painted Queen Anne chair and the gold and silver leaf on *Table III*.<sup>44</sup> For the trio of wooden chairs on the right of *Pastoral Chair Tableau*, Abate Marco created their distinct backs, giving each of them a slightly different personality. Burton described them as “alike in type but individual in detail.”<sup>45</sup>

*Pastoral Chair Tableau* created an unmoving yet evocative scene of relationality comparable to his tableaux performances based on slowed movement. Floodlit at the far end of the fifty-foot-long Artists Space gallery, the tableaux was to be looked at “across a dark, empty zone” in a manner akin to the viewing of his performance works.<sup>46</sup> Burton said of this patently theatrical ensemble, “The finished ‘picture’ is a group composition about pairing (‘love’); the community of peers; and aloneness or uniqueness. I try to communicate these relations proxemically. By the way, the piece is meant to be a comic piece. Actually, ‘comical-pastoral.’ The three groups

represent to me the three aspects of life or “ages of man” though only up to the season represented in the tableau.”<sup>47</sup> In another note, Burton clarified these three aspects of life; he said that *Pastoral Chair Tableau* “deals with chair typology (3 vernacular styles), with human proxemics (territorial zones), and with 3 possibilities of life: to be alone, to be with another, to be part of a group.”<sup>48</sup> Much as he talked about the theme of isolation in *Group Behavior Tableaux* or had similarly produced a grammar of life’s positions through bodily orientation in *Compositions*, here he identified such emotional states and relations as a core message of this sculptural ensemble.

He pointedly called this staging of isolation and alienation a “pastoral”—an idealized narrative of simple life. This “group composition about pairing (‘love’); the community of peers; and aloneness or uniqueness” was “comic-pastoral” because it rendered a queer version of that idyll. Like *Group Behavior Tableaux*, it charted out the queer individual’s isolation from a group and, like *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, the precarity of relationships. He said that the wooden chairs to the right were “slightly face-lifted art deco kitchen chairs (having a chat),” and one could think about this trio of rigid chairs as gossiping.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the pair of lamé klismos chairs face each other, each shiny and new—but also unyielding because their silver-clad Styrofoam seats merely resembled cushions. They were mere images of comfort rather than actually being comfortable. The lone Cesca chair, with its modernist curves and ad hoc wooden seat, looks away from the group to the couple, but it is alienated from both. Burton said that the central chair was “rejected by both groups” to its left and right.<sup>50</sup> This was the third stage in the “ages of man” allegory staged by this ensemble. The first was the isolation from the group. The second rejection involved the loneliness of being replaced in a relationship (as Burton had a few years prior) in which the new couple sees each other only as shiny, new, and comfortable—even though this is a mirage. Burton’s works are only loosely “autobiographical,” as I have discussed in earlier chapters. His aim was to extrapolate from his own experiences the general patterns of behavior and the social forces they represent (as he had with *Behavior Tableaux*). *Pastoral Chair Tableau* can be understood as a further exploration of the narrative of power dynamics, group ostracization, and isolation that he often cited as the underlying theme of his performances of these years. Indeed, when I have interviewed his friends and collaborators, they have often conveyed to me examples of how Burton would privately describe his works through personal analogies. Kaufman told me that, when Burton was installing *Pastoral Chair Tableau* at Artists Space, he asked for advice on the placement: “Well, do you think the outsider should be looking at the family or not?”<sup>51</sup>

### Sidewalk Statuesque: *Bronze Chair*

In the found objects he encountered on the street and in thrift stores, Burton saw how discarded furniture and derivative design styles were able to narrate a transformation from the elite to the proletarian. Whether the “Bronx-survival” klismos or the elegant “Bauhaus then Diner” Cesca, Burton’s family of chairs all told stories that crossed class lines. He loved their styles for their resilience, adaptations, and inventiveness. Individual objects, too, told of their memories of use, and this was particularly the case with the abandoned Queen Anne Revival chair that was Burton’s first found furniture sculpture.

When Burton decided to make this chair a sculpture in 1972, he chose the traditional artistic material of bronze (merely painted on until he could gather funds to have it cast in 1975, plate 11). Burton knew that, in the durable metal, the sculpture of the chair could be used and sat in, inviting actual physical contact in a way *Pastoral Chair Tableau* did not. When he made this decision to transform the chair into a sculpture in 1972, he had already lived with it for a few years, thinking deeply about not just its style but also its personal history. He told friends that he wanted to make it a “monument” to Ernest Cardinale, the working-class man who was its previous owner and the former inhabitant of Burton’s apartment.<sup>52</sup> Burton knew who he was because Cardinale had “signed” the apartment by scratching his name into the windowsill before vacating it. This story was told to deAk and Robinson, who extolled Burton’s desire to memorialize Cardinale as an “anonymous proletarian.”<sup>53</sup> Both Burton’s humble apartment and his abandoned chair inescapably evoked their past lives. Perhaps Burton identified with the bravado gesture of this man he never met, characterizing this act as intuitively Duchampian in effect (“signing” the apartment, making it a sort of readymade).

For Burton a piece of furniture was never merely a found object or a previous person’s possession. It was also a testament to the lived histories of design and to the transformations of meaning experienced by functional things. In addition to being attentive to the way individual objects passed from owner to owner, Burton also looked at objects for the ways in which they bore the histories of imitation and derivation from the original design to their reproductions by other manufacturers. When he walked in on Cardinale’s Queen Anne chair, he recognized it as just such an object with layered design histories. In a 1978 interview, he explained that the chair was the “cheapest kind of fake Queen Anne–Grand Rapids mass-produced chair. So, I have a definite attachment to the Pop vernacular, to ordinary, even unworthy things.”<sup>54</sup> He often spoke of the chair as “Grand Rapids

Queen Anne,” in reference to the midwestern city that was famous for supplying mass-produced versions of traditional furniture for a rapidly growing American population at the turn of the century. Remember, he had called it the “‘best-of-type’ (type is cheap, mass-produced ’10s, ’20s, ’30s Queen-Anne, this being an exceptionally well proportioned example).”<sup>55</sup> It was, for him, both “totally valueless” and “evocative.”<sup>56</sup>

Earlier in the century, Grand Rapids furniture had been associated with burgeoning middle-class gentility and aspirations to domestic luxury previously reserved for the wealthy.<sup>57</sup> The American Queen Anne Revival style—key to the establishment of the reputation of this Michigan city as “Furniture City” in the late nineteenth century—was itself an adaptation of a slightly precedent English architecture and design revival that liberally appropriated elements from the eighteenth-century architectural style from which it took its name.<sup>58</sup> The Grand Rapids Queen Anne Revival traded on a series of citations of tradition to convey its message of solid good taste and respectability. During the twentieth century, however, such revival styles became increasingly mass-produced with lessening quality. The Great Depression of the 1930s led to this drastic decline. The cheapened execution of the Queen Anne style such as that of the chair Burton inherited from Cardinale (and who, probably, inherited it from someone else) could not help but evoke a kind of hollow nostalgia and loss of those aspirations to luxury.<sup>59</sup> In an exhibition review, the poet John Ashbery called out Burton’s sculpture as a “borax Queen Anne dining-room chair.”<sup>60</sup> (Ashbery was referring to the now-dated colloquialism “borax furniture,” which was “usually applied in a derogatory sense to cheap furniture,” as David Shulman has discussed.)<sup>61</sup> Such generically genteel replicas as Cardinale’s chair kicked around for decades, and by the 1960s the style had almost become kitsch. It was exactly these connotations of disparaged propriety and working-class thrift that fueled Burton’s enthusiasm for the otherwise unremarkable (“ordinary, even unworthy”) object.

By choosing to cast this chair in the high-art material of bronze, Burton aimed to elevate the disregarded object and its neglected style. In a review, Perreault remarked that *Bronze Chair* was “brilliant” in its aspirations to permanence because of the material.<sup>62</sup> When Burton received the grant to support casting the chair in 1975, it was executed by Marsha Pels at the Excalibur Bronze Foundry on Bleeker Street.<sup>63</sup> She recalled in a conversation with me just how strange this work was in relation to their other jobs at the time.<sup>64</sup> Burton’s material choice was a rejoinder to the Minimalist disparagement of “traditional” art materials. As Judd had said in the previous decade, bronze was “obviously art.”<sup>65</sup> Burton chose bronze for this reason: to connect his sculpture to the traditions of figurative statuary and the

monument. Bronze was the material of sculptural representation and memorialization. (Think not just of monuments but of the practice of having baby shoes “bronzed.”<sup>66</sup> This long-running practice was still current in the mid-1970s; I have my pair of bronzed baby shoes from just around the time Burton was getting ready to cast *Bronze Chair*.) Burton also capitalized on the material’s representational ability to capture verisimilitude and replicate a functional object in one-to-one scale.

Even though *Bronze Chair* does not depict a human form, it operates as a statue—it is life-size bronze with “arms,” “legs,” and so on. This anthropomorphism allows *Bronze Chair* to evoke the human body without imaging it. Furthermore, it addressed viewers directly by offering them an empty seat—both as an actual physical incitement to sit and as an emotionally charged image of the absence (or anticipation) of a sitter.<sup>67</sup> Exceeding its dedication to Cardinale, this usable vacant chair thus lent itself to viewers’ projections and bodily engagements. A good example of this comes from a few years later, in 1977, when *Bronze Chair* was shown at Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York. Robert Longo had invited Burton to exhibit. After the exhibition was completed, Longo wrote scattered late-night notes to Burton about the experience of living with *Bronze Chair*. For him, it was “mute. . . to be filled, drama. . . in the form of controlled, refined. . . a historical clarity with ’20th century tension.”<sup>68</sup> Longo’s comments demonstrate how evocative *Bronze Chair* could be when experienced daily. He treated it as a statue resonant with his memories and open to those of others:

we had to experience the loneliness of the empty chair who is the survivor and only witness of the life already nonexistent, this piece is a monument of a sort of chair, not chair, as if its reflection of the ideal chair, neo-platonism. . . ? demanding action

WATCHFUL

*a mono log* of being alone

maximum expression of inner feelings<sup>69</sup>

Burton’s aim with all his work (however conceptually grounded and art historically indebted) was to activate the personal—the core of his understanding of postminimalism’s promise. As Longo recognized in his time with *Bronze Chair*, the obdurate presence of this art object activated just such a capacity for evocation and memory. We are meant to sit in and with this sculpture.

In the context of Burton’s postminimalism, these effects of *Bronze Chair*’s fusion of sculptural image and functional object are best understood as

*theatrical*. In Michael Fried's infamous attack on Minimalism and its theatricality, he had warned that it is "almost as though the work in question has been *waiting for him*."<sup>70</sup> For the artists whom Fried critiqued as "literalist," this theatrical address was produced through the banishment of all representation and illusionism. Dan Flavin would later summarize the literalist position more succinctly, saying of his work, "It is what it is and it ain't nothin' else."<sup>71</sup> Burton's *Bronze Chair* produces theatricality in a way analogous to a literalist object, but it does so through its one-to-one-scale realism. That is, Burton's *Bronze Chair* achieves an amplified bodily relation in space with the viewer through the deadpan use of bronze casting to represent a chair. Casting, as a mode of sculptural representation and life-size reproduction, is key to the transformation of the original Queen Anne chair to the bronze sculpture that, nevertheless, is also a chair. (Think how different this work would be if it were carved out of the more common chair material of wood or, by contrast, made from the impractical chair material of papier-mâché.) The literalism of *Bronze Chair* is performative: the sculptural image performs as if it is—rather than merely depicts—a chair. No less than Minimalism's gray polyhedrons, lines of bricks, fluorescent tubes, or stacks of aluminum and Plexiglass, Burton's functional chair "is what it is." *Bronze Chair* is a bronze chair (but a bronze statue is never a bronze person). The actual functionality of *Bronze Chair* short-circuits the conventional opposition of literalism and representation. Perreault would later say that Burton's work might be called "minimalist/realist sculpture."<sup>72</sup>

Other sculptors had created not-to-scale sculptural images of furniture (Richard Artschwager's slightly reduced Pop tables, Robert Morris's oversized *Hearing*, and Joel Shapiro's Lilliputian chairs), created chairs for symbolic or dramatic uses (Yayoi Kusama, Lucas Samaras, Robert Wilson, or Barbara Zucker), or used found chairs (Joseph Kosuth, Edward Kienholz, George Segal, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Geoffrey Hendricks, et al.).<sup>73</sup> While Burton would skew the expected scale of his works (as with *Table II* or *Splattered Table*, discussed below), he maintained the capacity for everyday usability for his functional sculptures that dissembled as furniture.<sup>74</sup> He emphatically pursued the overlap between sculptural image and object through the realistic representation of the functional object that, in turn, functions as that object.

Burton was not, however, the only one to be concerned with the philosophically rich problem of the usable sculpture of a chair. In 1960, Ernst Gombrich asked, "Must it always be true that the sculptor's couch is a representation?"<sup>75</sup> A few years later, the French philosopher Étienne Gilson postulated, "The statue of a marble chair is a marble chair, but the

statue of a seated man is not a seated man.”<sup>76</sup> In 1976, just a year after *Bronze Chair* was exhibited, Rosalind Krauss would ask in an unrelated essay, “What would a sculpture look like if it were not illusionistic, and did not thereby propose a transcendence of reality? Well, it might look like a readymade, that is, an ordinary object like a hatrack or a chair, which was literally indistinguishable from the world of everyday use.”<sup>77</sup> Here, Krauss postulated “indistinguishability” and usability as the outcome of a commitment to anti-illusionism. Burton arrived at the same position, by contrast, from a commitment to realism, recognizing that the mimetic representation of a functional object can effectively *perform as* that object. All his subsequent sculptures, both independent and site-specific, should be considered realist sculptural representations of furniture that function as what they represent. In this first sculpture, Burton grappled with this idea through its reference back to the statuary tradition and its materials. *Bronze Chair* enjoys its status as part of the world of “everyday use” but is, simultaneously, apart from it (because it is a bronze cast). Burton’s other furniture sculptures (from *Table I* to his later signature functional works) are “literally indistinguishable from the world of everyday use” in their camouflaging as mere furniture and their infiltration of public spaces. Even *Bronze Chair* gets mistaken all the time for a piece of serviceable furniture for the public. At the Art Institute of Chicago, the home of *Bronze Chair*, museum guards have told me that it is a regular occurrence to see someone attempt to sit in it without knowing that it is, also, a sculpture.<sup>78</sup> The people who just sit in the chair unselfconsciously are not wrong. As Burton intended, *Bronze Chair* is something everyone can understand, and it waits for beholders to become sitters by putting their bodies into the chair’s embrace.

*Bronze Chair* is manifold: it performs as a realist statue, a working-class monument, a vernacular exemplar, a functional piece of furniture, a readymade, and a literalist thing with theatrical objecthood. In its collapsing of realism with literalism through functionality, this sculpture sets the terms for Burton’s subsequent independent sculptures and public commissions, all of which are realist sculptures of furniture that offer themselves for use as furniture.

*Bronze Chair*, however, differs in two significant ways from Burton’s later works. First, he would soon abandon bronze. (The 1977–78 *Rustic Table*, a cast of a unique table with tree-branch legs, was the only other major work in bronze.) He came to understand that this expensive material was, in the end, not the stuff of furniture, and the question of urban camouflage or institutional infiltration was hampered by its associations as an “art material.” Second, he also came to recognize that his choice of

bronze read to some viewers as a hoax or a trick, running contrary to his belief in making approachable works for non-art audiences. He learned this lesson the first time he exhibited *Bronze Chair*.

When *Bronze Chair* was first shown with *Pastoral Chair Tableau* at Artists Space in 1975, the work was displayed outside, on the sidewalk across Wooster Street (figs. 5.1 and 5.5). Street signals, cruising, and dissemblance had been central themes of Burton's artistic practice from his *Self-Works* to *Behavior Tableaux*, and now he further declared the importance of the shared space of the street to his work. Strategic in relation to his first one-person show, this move deployed sculpture as an agent of performance,



**Figure 5.5.** Scott Burton, *Bronze Chair*, 1972/75. Documentation of furniture performance outside Artists Space, 1975. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.



introducing it to a wider range of viewers than those who might come inside the gallery.

On the sidewalk, Burton's sculpture dissembled as a chair. To many, this metal chair appeared at first as an abandoned piece of domestic furniture, hanging out on the street waiting to be taken to someone's home. Again, for Burton, this chair's performance drew on his long-running line of investigation of street cruising and other tactics of survival and conviviality that made up the queer experience of the urban street. Burton was interested in the duplicity of appearing as "normal," and he built on the easy familiarity and solicitations that this homey-looking furniture offered. A lone Queen Anne chair on the sidewalk is not that remarkable in New York City (where trash is piled on the sidewalks), and Burton staged his chair so that it would act as an abandoned chair for the passerby while also being a sculpture for those who took the time to look (or who were already on the lookout).

This sculptural performance happened on Saturdays, the busiest day for sidewalk and gallery traffic. (Since the exhibition occurred in December, it was not feasible to leave the chair outdoors for a month of wintry weather.) Sitting out on the sidewalk, *Bronze Chair*—like any other chair loitering on the street—was asking to be picked up. As Burton knew well from his own accumulation of street furniture for his home, anything usable left on the street in New York was likely to be taken. So, on Saturdays when the chair was outside, Burton and his friends set up "chair-watching parties," keeping an eye on the chair from a facing window, Kaufman recalled.<sup>79</sup> Burton would have liked to have the chair more permanently installed, so that it could also be on the street at night, but instead he created this collective experience of street watching.<sup>80</sup>

This proved wise, since watching *Bronze Chair*'s street performance revealed a great deal. Most people walked by it like "urban waste," as Burton described, or like "the furniture that people use, parking attendants, it's not even valuable enough to take. Nobody wanted to take it. I love that notion."<sup>81</sup> As deAk and Robinson conveyed, *Bronze Chair* "is designed to be indistinguishable from any chair left outside, hence it is both utilitarian and garbage (according to New York slum habits)."<sup>82</sup> Thanks to the effectiveness of the sculpture's urban camouflage, however, more than a few people were enticed to carry away this apparently abandoned treasure on those Saturday afternoons. Burton likely recalled a similar response to art left in public from the first *Street Work* event in March 1969. In response to Marjorie Strider's work, one Bernie Roberts took home an example of the empty frames that she had strategically placed on Forty-Fifth Street, saying as he went, "You'd be amazed what you'll find in the streets nowadays."<sup>83</sup>

The few passersby who did attempt to pick up *Bronze Chair* were befuddled by its approximately 250 pounds of solid metal. The duplicity of this chair became evident as soon as one attempted to move it. As the *New York Times* noted, “it is barely more portable than the Statue of Liberty.”<sup>84</sup> Thinking the object was merely such a piece of potentially utilitarian garbage and then realizing, perhaps to some embarrassment, that it was not a “normal” chair because of its material and its weight, people on the street found themselves faced with a number of dilemmas: they were forced to reconsider their expectations of public space; they faced the frustration of their desire to possess the object; they were compelled to ask just what type of thing they had encountered on the sidewalk; they likely resented being duped by it; and they questioned what the function of this object might be.

Though heavy, the chair was not impossible to move. Burton’s Artists Space co-exhibitor Jenrette recalled:

So, on the day of the opening, I am there trying to hang my show and I see some awful Bowery-bum-like chair of garbage and I thought, “Oh, what is that doing here? How hideous! How gross!” Galleries are not supposed to have furniture! You’re supposed to stand around with your plastic glass of bad wine and that’s it. But I shoved it over to the wall and I stood on it in order to get my paintings up. It weighed a lot more than I thought it would, the thing was really hard to move, but I shoved it around some more, wherever I needed. Then a gallery woman starts screaming at me, “How dare you? That’s a \$40,000 [*sic*] Scott Burton bronze sculpture of a Bowery bum chair!” Scott was there and he said, “Let me introduce myself. I’m Scott Burton. I just loved what you did, that’s why I do this.”<sup>85</sup>

Burton wanted physical interactions with the work, and he made it in bronze in part to be resilient enough to have them. The fact that his sculpture could serve an artist hammering a nail was exactly the kind of usefulness and passivity that Burton aimed for. He wanted this sculpture to perform as furniture would, and using a chair when you cannot find a ladder was a commonplace auxiliary function. *Bronze Chair* had been useful. “He loved it and that is how I found out what a with-it guy he was,” Jenrette said.<sup>86</sup>

While Burton wanted the work to be used, he did not want it to disappear. For some would-be street scavengers, the obdurate resistance of the weighty chair became a challenge. It became “like a ‘happening’ thing,” as Burton recalled. The chair was too heavy for one person to carry off alone,

but two or more people could accomplish it. “People would come and try to steal it, because they would notice other people, and tug it and tell their friends.”<sup>87</sup> Burton quickly realized that this work’s duplicity could read almost as a dare to some viewers.<sup>88</sup> His aim was to create work that operated equally well in public space with art and non-art audiences. *Bronze Chair*, however, came into focus for Burton as doing something that was not in accord with his democratizing agenda. It fooled people. He would try to deal with this effect in a proposal for public sculpture at Smithtown, which I discuss presently, but he would soon abandon bronze casts of furniture. (Later works in granite would continue to be unmovably heavy, but those works appeared as such, unlike *Bronze Chair*’s impersonation of a wooden chair.) Instead, he came to realize that his public works must comfortably be both street furniture and art, without such a division (however minuscule) between the represented chair and the functional sculptural object.

Nevertheless, *Bronze Chair*’s performed dissemblance on the sidewalk allowed Burton to see a means to bring together his interests in performance, street works, hiding in plain sight, proxemics, and furniture. Responding to an interviewer, he once said, “You’ve asked me how the endeavor of my individual objects broadened into what is now called ‘public art.’ My stock answer is that first I did the chair, and then I placed it.”<sup>89</sup> The central role of *Bronze Chair* in Burton’s conception of himself as a public artist is indicated by his proposal the following year for a public art competition in Smithtown, Long Island. In 1976, within months of his Artists Space exhibition, Burton submitted a proposal to the New York State Council on the Arts for the town’s small park, remarking that the public installation would be “an extrapolation of the *Bronze Chair*.”<sup>90</sup> He suggested creating an outdoor “room” of bronze casts of furniture from different periods in American furniture history, titling it *American Town Parlor*. Burton said that the ensembles were to have been made up of furniture “from plain to fancy—plain, fancy, and middle [class]” and that the proposal “mixed up thrift shop things with fine things, the way American life seems to do.”<sup>91</sup> Burton’s Smithtown proposal utilized the outdoor resiliency of bronze while circumventing the possibility that the bronze cast of furniture could be seen as a trick or hoax. By moving the bronze casts of sculpture to a pastoral context (instead of a downtown New York street), Burton could ensure that they would never be mistaken for abandoned furniture or refuse. Rather, the contrast between a park-like environment and the domestic furniture would activate the kind of juxtapositions of indoor and outdoor that Burton had explored earlier—in particular, the 1970 *Furniture Landscape* in which old furniture was installed as rooms in the woods on the University of Iowa campus (discussed in chapter 2; see

fig. 2.2). Even though his proposal was not successful (the townspeople instead voted for Athena Tacha's *Tide Park*), it nevertheless spurred Burton to become increasingly ambitious in his plans for public art.<sup>92</sup> He recalled, "I didn't win the competition, but this changed my life; since 1976, I have been making proposals for environmental works."<sup>93</sup>

Burton always maintained the foundational role of *Bronze Chair*.<sup>94</sup> However, he soon began to see the limitations of the idea of bronze replicas publicly installed. As he recalled in a 1987 interview, "It's a ridiculous idea, but it was—In fact, I outgrew it, because a few years later, when I actually got the chance to do it, I had already started doing the real things."<sup>95</sup> After he realized that some viewers thought *Bronze Chair* was an antagonistic hoax or challenge, Burton sought to fuse more tightly the realist representation of furniture (and, consequently, the anthropomorphic object) with literal functionality. He started making "the real things."

### **Burton's New Designs on Furniture: The 1977 *Pragmatic Structures* Exhibition and *Lawn Chairs***

After the watershed episodes of *Bronze Chair* and *Smithtown*, Burton started to design and fabricate new pieces of furniture rather than rely on found objects. This new mode of practice was unveiled at Burton's first public one-person commercial gallery exhibition in 1977 at Droll/Kolbert Gallery in New York. In his review of the show, Perreault asked, "Burton makes 'furniture' that looks exactly like real furniture. How are you supposed to tell they are art?"<sup>96</sup> Starting in 1977, Burton fully embraced this conundrum.

His title for this exhibition was *Pragmatic Structures: Tables and Chairs*—a wry allusion to the history-making 1966 exhibition *Primary Structures*, which heralded Minimalism. With this title, Burton again signaled his allegiance to the idea of postminimalism that he helped to establish with both his work and his art criticism.<sup>97</sup> Burton's exhibition occurred in the same year that Robert Pincus-Witten published *Postminimalism*, an anthology of his essays on such artists as Burton, Hesse, Benglis, and Serra.<sup>98</sup> It reprinted Pincus-Witten's important 1976 article about Burton—the first major assessment of his work.<sup>99</sup> Up to this point, Burton had made only a handful of sculptures, and his contributions to postminimalism had been primarily in the realm of performance. But with the title *Pragmatic Structures*, Burton reminded viewers that his sculptures, despite appearing to be "just" furniture, should be understood in relation to Minimalism's emphasis on literalism, viewers' relations (both perceptual and physical),

and, most importantly, the shift of emphasis from artist to viewer that Burton understood as Minimalism's unfulfilled promise. With his invented furniture designs, he expanded on his ideas of strategic self-abnegation, camouflage, and bracketing his authorial role. He hid evidence of his presence as an artist by appropriating design styles and making sculptures that dissembled as everyday furnishings. Combined with their actual functionality, Burton intended these works to be more approachable to non-art viewers, who needed no explanation for a chair or a table. He took pleasure in the idea that his sculptures could anonymously serve such users.

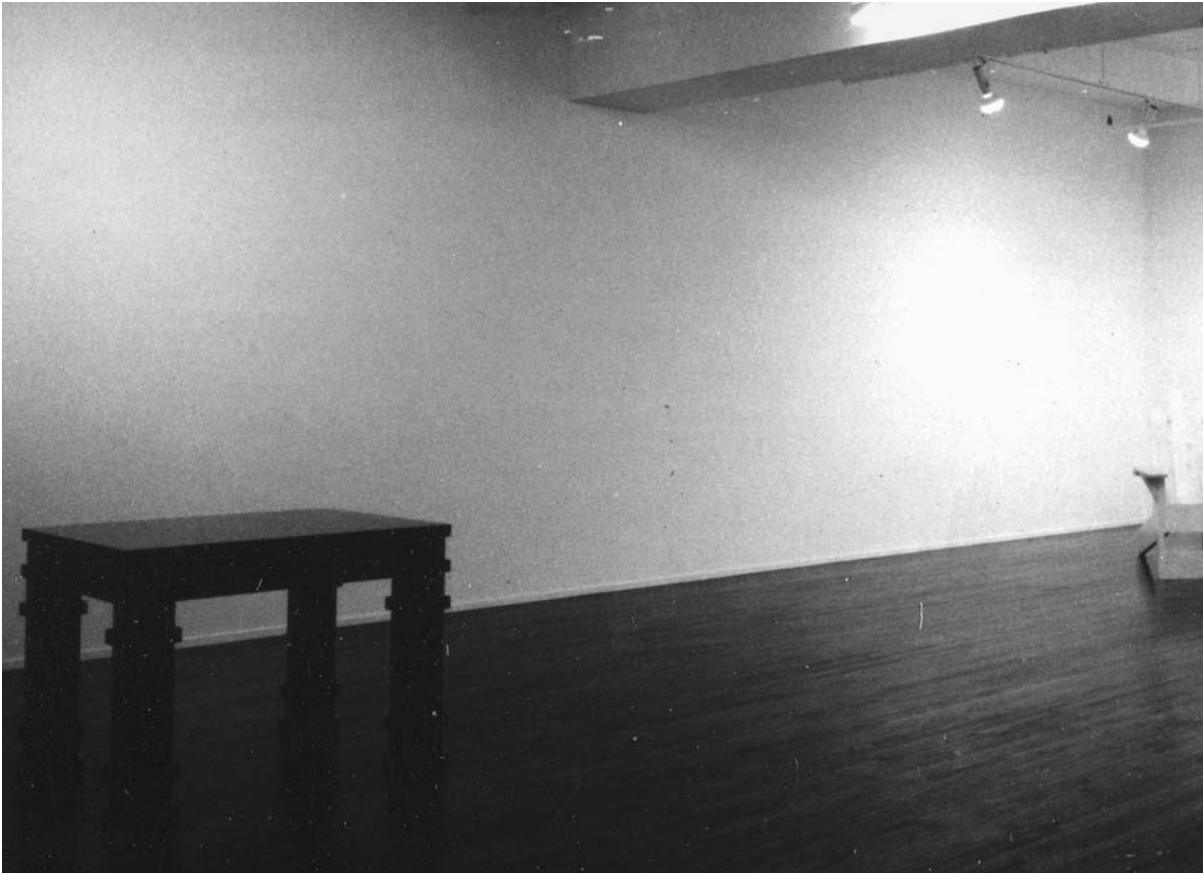
For these first designed sculptures, Burton self-consciously adapted and changed existing prototypes from furniture history. One of the *Pragmatic Structures* works, *Splattered Table* (later titled *Table IV [Splattered Table]* and dated 1974–77), had begun as a found object, but Burton ended up destroying the original and remaking the work from scratch in 1977 (fig. 5.6).<sup>100</sup> The work seems to recall the dimensions and style of the Parsons table, one of Burton's favored references in these years, while altering its key terms (such as the width of the legs).<sup>101</sup> *Splattered Table*, however, had odd proportions and a low height; one critic even called it "miniature" because of the diminutive scale (18 × 35 × 17 in. / 45.7 × 88.9 × 43.2 cm). Perreault, in his review, queried whether it was an end table or a coffee table.<sup>102</sup> Burton no doubt chose the original found object because of such ambiguities (as he also had with the under-scale *Table II*). He splattered the surface in a playful allusion to Jackson Pollock's paintings that began as horizontal—not vertical—planes, choosing colors Burton had favored when he had been a youthful painter influenced by Abstract Expressionism.<sup>103</sup> In *Pragmatic Structures*, Burton chose to put this eighteen-inch-high sculpture on a twenty-four-inch pedestal (the other three sculptures in the exhibition had no such framings; see fig. 5.7). This choice to lift the object off the floor (which Perreault called "unusually daring" in this context) literally elevated the low. It limited the functionality of this table but also demanded it be seen as a work of art. Burton also painted white the underside of the table (which on a conventional table is not painted or finished)—a detail that the elevating pedestal would have made possible to see. As if making a case that his works be seen both as sculptures and as furniture, Burton counterposed this low table on a tall pedestal with the newly designed *Table for Four*, placed directly on the floor. Likely another composite of found furniture elements, *Table for Four* was another response to the Parsons table format that substituted unorthodox dimensions and elements: it was coated in fourteen layers of heavy lacquer, had an unmodernist slight lip (as he had used in *Table I*), and rested on chunky legs that crowded the



**Figure 5.6.** Scott Burton, *Table IV (Splattered Table)*, 1974–77. Painted and lacquered wood, 18 × 35 × 17 in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

available space underneath. Roberta Smith acknowledged this reference when she wrote that *Table for Four* was “blaspheming the smooth Parsons table profile.”<sup>104</sup>

While *Splattered Table* and *Table for Four* were in conversation with their modernist sources and adaptations (and each other), the other works in the Droll/Kolbert exhibition spoke to the American vernacular as an alternate genealogy. At the center of this exhibition was *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)*, which took on the popular American form of the common Adirondack chair (fig. 5.8).<sup>105</sup> The Droll/Kolbert pair were heirs of Burton’s first iteration of this type: *Lawn Chair (“Adirondack Chair”)* was completed earlier in February of that year, when he was in Greensboro, North Carolina, as a visiting professor.<sup>106</sup> Burton’s choice to move to North Carolina for the semester put him far from New York at a crucial time in his career. (The previous month, he had premiered *Solitary Behavior Tableaux* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and exhibited his *Bronze Chair* at Hallwalls



in Buffalo.) While Burton had been interested in the vernacular in earlier works, his choice to explore the Adirondack chair may have related to the nonurban setting in which he found himself. Burton had the first version (in plain pine) made for him at a carpentry shop in Greensboro.<sup>107</sup>

The Adirondack chair was explicitly designed for outdoor use, and Burton's choice of it can be related to the larger questions of the relationship of indoor/outdoor and private/public that had long interested him. *Lawn Chair* is an outdoor chair type moved indoors, an inversion of the terms he had set with *Bronze Chair* as a domestic chair installed outdoors on the street (and with the Smithtown proposal's expansion on these terms). In these years, the indoor/outdoor dynamic was central to the ways Burton began thinking about being a sculptor and a public artist.<sup>108</sup> It offered an analogy to the dichotomy of private/public that was a site of contestation in queer experience, where the private is always shadowed by public scrutiny or exposure and where public spaces could be sites of intimacy, cruising, and accord. Such inversions (outdoor/indoor, public/private) underlie the ostensible simplicity of this adaptation of an Adirondack chair.



**Figure 5.7.** Scott Burton with his exhibition *Pragmatic Structures* at Droll/Kolbert Gallery, 1977. Sculptures from left to right: *Table for Four* (1975–77), *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* (1977, lacquered maple version), and *Table IV (Splattered Table)* (1974–77). © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

Designed in 1903 by Thomas Lee in Westport, New York, the Adirondack chair was intended as an inexpensive amenity Lee made for his family on vacation. With its wide, low, and sloping seat bed at about a thirty-degree angle from the ground, the Adirondack could not be pulled up to a table or used as an easy chair. It was made for outdoors and to view the landscape; its angles make it possible to sit comfortably on a sloped ground. Adirondack chairs are simple, made from planks, and instantly recognizable. Their distinguishing feature is that the planks forming the angled seat extend back to act as the chair's rear legs. In an evolutionary move that Burton would have appreciated, the arms of the Adirondack chair function as mini-tables because their width is based on the simple plank's proportions. The chair has become a much loved and replicated design, with many adaptations and variants of the basic type. Burton once remarked





**Figure 5.8.** Scott Burton, *Lawn Chair*, 1977. One of a pair of lacquered maple chairs, each 43.75 × 31 × 51 in. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

about the Adirondack chair, “It is a great American cultural object.”<sup>109</sup> His pet name for his *Lawn Chair*, the “Bonnie and Clyde” chair, invoked the infamous outlaws who emerged from rural poverty to capture the American imagination.<sup>110</sup> Like Bonnie and Clyde, the Adirondack chair also rose from humble origins to achieve iconic status.

Burton did not, however, duplicate the classic design of the Adirondack chair when he made his sculptures; he adapted it in important ways. Even though *Lawn Chair* is immediately recognizable as a reference to the Adirondack type, time spent with this work starts to reveal its differences and deviations. Instead of a unified square or rounded shape for the back, Burton has combined rounded planks with a central plank that has been squared off (perhaps in homage to the plank as the chair’s basic unit of construction). In another move to sculpturally exaggerate the normal form, Burton extended the back legs of his chair far beyond the limit of most Adirondack chairs, whose rear legs traditionally meet the ground close to chair’s back. Burton also added an excessively large, unified foot to the front of the chair, similar to the signified pedestals in some of his previous designs like *Table I*, *Table III*, the miniature *Chair Pair* for Berlin, or the chairs used in *Pair Behavior Tableaux*.

The unfolding peculiarity and particularity of *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* were noted by one commentator who compared these sculptures to actors: the chairs of Burton’s *Lawn Chairs*

seem the basic, backyard, woodslat variety—tall back, raked seat, long back legs—and, when plopped into, feel it, too. But look at the chairs long enough and something about them doesn’t sit right. They’re a bit “off.” The back legs are even longer than usual, out of scale, exaggerated. Actor that he is, or can be, Burton picked out a part of the lawn chair that helps make it “lawn chair” and played that up. (Think of De Niro playing up a gesture, an accent.) Burton wanted to jar a memory, conjure Americana, evoke lawnchairness.<sup>111</sup>

Given Burton’s long-standing interest of performing-as, impersonation, and dissemblance, the analogy to an actor works well. Indeed, even though the design of *Lawn Chairs* was Burton’s own and not a replica, the chairs continue to simultaneously represent a chair and perform as that chair. Each *Lawn Chair* sculpture is and it isn’t an Adirondack chair. The works offer commentary on the history of the furniture style while operating as iterations of it—another case of Burton taking something that appears at first as “normal” and familiar only to reveal its particularity and knowing self-reflexivity.

Unlike the prototype in pine, Burton had the Droll/Kolbert pair fabricated in maple, which he had carefully lacquered—a more appropriate choice for indoor furniture that reinforced the message that this was an outside design brought indoors. In some of his other furniture conceived of at this time, Burton would explore the use of precious veneers on work tables or end tables as a means of complicating their expectations and familiarity, as with *Ivory Table* (conceived 1977, fabricated 1987), *Inlaid Table* (“*Mother-of-Pearl Table*”) (1977/1978), and *Onyx Table* (1980–81). Also in 1977, he decided he wanted to make another comfortable chair—an easy chair—in a material that could survive outdoors, flipping the terms of *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* and expanding on the performance of *Bronze Chair*.<sup>112</sup> The heavy *Lounge Chairs (A Pair)* were eventually fabricated in unpolished granite, but Burton was not able to afford the costs to make these companion works to *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* until 1980 (fig. 5.9). The design for these two stone easy chairs presaged the granite and marble sculptures that would, in the mid-1980s, become his signature mode for both his independent and his site-specific outdoor sculptures. Burton would later reprise *Lawn Chairs* with the meanings of sculptural materials in mind. In 1979, he created new versions with surfaces in Formica, the decidedly domestic



**Figure 5.9.** Scott Burton, *Lounge Chairs (A Pair)*, 1977–80, fabricated 1981. Unpolished Sierra granite, each  $30 \times 36.5 \times 40$  in. Shown installed at the corner of Second Avenue and Easy Forty-Seventh Street in the Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza Sculpture Garden, New York, 1981. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

material he added as a veneer to these new wooden chairs. Formica was associated not just with versatility and practicality but also with disguise and dissemblance in its creation of faux surfaces and false depths.<sup>113</sup> Burton's choice of this material reinforced that these sculptures (unlike, say, the unpolished granite *Lounge Chairs*) were to be seen as indoor sculptures.

As with his other works of these years, Burton's engagement with furniture was directly related to performance and to the human figure. (Remember that these works were developed concurrently with the single-figure *Individual Behavior Tableaux* works and their naked, male-identified performer sharing a stage with furniture.) Burton's friend Mac McGinnes recalled, "[Scott's] interest in the body and his sculpture was evident early on. I remember a conversation with him when the pieces for the Droll/Kolbert exhibition were being fabricated. In particular he related the parts of the Adirondack chairs to the human body (the rests for forearms = wrists, the articulation of the feet = ankles, etc.)."<sup>114</sup> Unlike his tables and more so than the Queen Anne chair-turned-bronze-sculpture, *Lawn Chairs* and *Lounge Chairs* were meant to be sat in, enveloping their sitters in their homey embraces. Writing about *Lawn Chairs*, Roberta Smith would later note, "When you sit on one of these chairs, all the parts—yours and its—line up; and when observed sculpturally, unoccupied, they do not seem empty. They almost seem to be their own people."<sup>115</sup> Smith's observations were characteristic of the critical appraisal of Burton's sculpture in the 1970s, which often tried to draw out its anthropomorphism and what that might mean—especially, as I will discuss, in relation to Burton's more overtly queer work of the decade.

### **"A Sly Perverter of Furniture's Usually Self-Effacing Presence": The Reception and Queer Reputation of Burton's Sculpture in the 1970s**

In these first years of making sculpture, Burton aligned his furniture objects with his performance work (a connection he would, in the 1980s, coyly deny).<sup>116</sup> A good example of his alignment of his performance with his sculpture can be seen in his contribution to a January 1977 exhibition at Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York, which I mentioned earlier with reference to Robert Longo's reflections on *Bronze Chair*. Hallwalls was an alternative art space and incubator for early versions of appropriation art, and its principal members included the "Pictures Generation" artists Cindy Sherman, Charles Clough, and Longo.<sup>117</sup> After seeing Burton's *Pair Behavior Tableaux* at the Guggenheim and *Bronze Chair* at Artists Space, Longo invited Burton

to be in one of the last group shows he organized in Buffalo before moving to New York City with Sherman. Burton was included alongside Jonathan Borofsky, Steve Gianakos, and Jack Goldstein.<sup>118</sup> He showed *Bronze Chair* sitting on a rug next to a table with a lamp on it. In a further reversal, he took his outdoor statue and brought it back indoors. His statement for the exhibition offered a concise version of his theory of sculpture: “[My *Bronze Chair*] is an image of a chair and it is also a chair.”<sup>119</sup> Underneath the statement on the wall, Burton placed two Polaroids showing a naked Alfred Guido posing with the Mission-style chair from the Chicago *Solitary Behavior Tableaux* from earlier that month.<sup>120</sup> These images were a reminder to viewers that *Bronze Chair* should be seen in relation to the naked body, its potential homoeroticism, and the context of Burton’s performances about behavior and pose.

Many of the art critics who sought to make sense of Burton’s sculpture needed no such prompting, and the reception of his early sculpture was tied up with his reputation as an out gay artist. Much as his 1976 *Pair Behavior Tableaux* had been, his furniture sculpture was also seen as being about queer codes and behaviors. Critics (both sympathetic and antagonistic) drew out such readings as a way of understanding the skillful duplicitousness of his functional appropriations of furniture. In response to the Droll/Kolbert exhibition, Peter Frank made multiple hints that Burton’s furniture was not normal and more than it first appeared: “They are perfectly crafted and troubling to behold: one doesn’t trust them nonchalantly the way one trusts the chairs and tables in one’s house, not only because they are standing isolated in a clean white space but because they are, er, slightly ‘wrong.’ . . . Burton is a sly perverter of furniture’s usually self-effacing presence—or is he a sly disruptor of sculpture’s function?”<sup>121</sup> Burton was, indeed, a “sly perverter,” and critics tried to convey to their readers the complexity and oddness of Burton’s appropriations and adaptations.

In the early years of Burton’s sculptural practice, critics actively sought to make such associations between his objects and his performances, and they linked questions of Burton’s semiotic play with the category of “furniture” to his earlier investigations of queer signaling and body language. Roberta Smith made this connection explicit in 1978, when she wrote that Burton adapted “hallmarks of Minimalist style . . . but Burton pushes these qualities a little too far, perverting them and turning them to his own purposes.”<sup>122</sup> She continued hinting at the sexual and erotic elements of Burton’s functional objects, writing that “underlying his art is a fascination with all kinds of glamour and its latent, formalized sexual energy. It seems safe to say that Burton wants his objects to have charisma—a

physical, quasi-erotic magnetism that is both fascinating and a little repellent due to the extent to which it is abstracted and purified (and withheld).<sup>123</sup> Smith's phrase "formalized sexual energy" is indeed a useful way to characterize Burton's sculptural practice with its welcoming, anthropomorphically resonant objects that are best experienced by pressing your body against them.

In 1978, Pincus-Witten went further in the signaling of homoerotic and queer capacity in Burton's work. He knowingly titled his second major essay on Burton "Camp Meetin'." The argot "meetin'" was ostensibly a reference to Burton's interest in rusticated and vernacular furniture, but he winked at readers through suggesting camp as a context for Burton's work and by writing, "So many skittish issues are brought up by Burton's work, hard to straighten issues—especially since Burton's work, on its most obvious level, aspires to wedge between issues, all the while seeming very frank, very straight-out, very Square John."<sup>124</sup> Like Smith, Pincus-Witten was very sympathetic to Burton, and he alluded to the issue of queer camouflage and dissemblance as one of the themes of Burton's work. However, only so much was permissible in the art magazines of the 1970s, as Pincus-Witten remarked to me in an interview. Even though "everyone knew Scott was gay in the 1970s art world," Pincus-Witten said that in the 1970s such things could not be written about openly in the national art magazines (as opposed to New York-centric newspapers like the *Village Voice* or the *SoHo Weekly News*). Consequently, Pincus-Witten said that he "coded" the criticism of Burton because "Richard Martin, editor *Arts*, would only allow the hints to pass."<sup>125</sup>

Allowed only such "passing" innuendo, writers like Pincus-Witten, Smith, and Frank tried to signal the queer foundations of Burton's work in the same way that critics writing about the earlier *Behavior Tableaux* performances did. Burton's work demanded such double-speak and coding because the tactical deployment of dissemblance was the conceptual and emotional core of his multifarious practice. His furniture sculptures were exemplary in this regard, with their ability to recede into the background as "just" furniture. However, it is important to remember that Burton was, in these same years, also exhibiting alternatives to such coding, and the 1975 *Dream Sex*, 1976 *Closet Installation*, and 1977–80 *Individual Behavior Tableaux* pieces left little doubt about the queer, sexual, and homoerotic content they foregrounded. In the late 1970s, critics struggled to find an accord between these two modes of brazen sexual work and furniture sculpture, and their hints about "perversion" was one way to draw a line of connection. Some, like Pincus-Witten and Smith, did so strategically, cluing their readers into the works' deeper meanings. Others, however, tried

to slur Burton with these same tactics. Of these, perhaps the most spiteful was (not unexpectedly) from Hilton Kramer, who wrote in 1981, "What Scott Burton's [chairs and tables] amount to, I think, is a variety of 'camp' attempting to go straight, and having a difficult time of it."<sup>126</sup>

Consistent across the spectrum of responses, however, was how critics struggled to articulate the queer content they knew informed Burton's work but that was not immediately visible on the surface. They tried to convey how Burton made works that seemed normal and everyday but that, as Peter Frank said, were "er, slightly 'wrong.'" Burton reveled in the smart dissemblance of his sculptures and how they offered themselves differently to viewers. If we look for an overt queer appearance in the furniture works, we will rarely find it figured directly.<sup>127</sup> This strategy might frustrate those who want to see a gay iconography in Burton's sculpture, but it was nevertheless an outgrowth of his lifelong consideration of how queer experience could be a basis for rethinking the power dynamics of visibility, disclosure, sexuality, relations, and behavior.<sup>128</sup>

### **"There's a Displaced Democracy in My Work": *Public Table***

In the late 1970s, Burton sought to find new ways to pursue his interest in the potential of sculptural behavior. Whereas much of his performance work of the 1970s had focused on the shared space of the street and the dynamics of bodily communication, he now began to envision a practice that would bring his work into more direct contact with a wider range of audiences. This anti-elitist and democratizing aim had been with him from the start, as I have argued in earlier chapters, but it was only in the late 1970s that he began to achieve the conditions to realize it. His reputation as a sculptor had steadily grown, and for the first time he was able to live as a full-time artist (however frugally). He made independent sculptures to circulate in galleries and museums and with collectors as a means to support his ambitions to do more public and permanent projects in non-art spaces. He explained this to Costa in early 1979: "I must say too Eduardo that I am seeing some great possibilities for furniture works (future) that will really mirror our history. Not only the 'useful' artwork, also the 'beneficial.'"<sup>129</sup> The watershed object of this period was *Public Table*, designed in 1979 (fig. 5.10). Whereas *Bronze Chair* and the Smithtown proposal had cemented his desire to work in public, *Public Table* showed Burton a new view of what his work could do.

*Public Table* was designed for the 1979 exhibition *10 Artists / Artists Space* at the Neuberger Museum at the State University of New York at Purchase.



**Figure 5.10.** Scott Burton, *Public Table*, 1979. Wood, steel, and paint, 32 in. high, 168 in. diameter table on 240 in. diameter plinth. Shown here at the Neuberger Museum at the State University of New York at Purchase, 1979. Later fabricated in cast concrete. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

The exhibition focused on artists who had their first one-person shows at Artists Space in its initial three years (1973 to 1976).<sup>130</sup> Burton took the Neuberger exhibition as an opportunity to work on a grander and more public scale in the wake of his Droll/Kolbert exhibition and a subsequent exhibition, *Four Tables*, at Brooks Jackson Iolas Gallery in 1978. With the aid of a special grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Burton was able to design a mock-up of a fourteen-foot-diameter circular table balancing on a twenty-foot-diameter disk (diameters of 4.25 meters and 6 meters, respectively). *Public Table* was more assertively sculptural than his earlier sculptural appropriations and design adaptations. It has the radical and unorthodox structure of a large and very oblique cone resting on a single point in the middle of a supporting disk. This work defies conventional structural expectations to achieve the illusion of hovering—or of a top spinning. Burton planned that this work to be realized in concrete (which it would be years later), but at the Neuberger he showed a mock-up in painted wood and steel. It was his largest sculpture to date.



More than any of his previous sculptures with their remixing of furniture history, *Public Table* is an invention of a new table form. For this work, Burton said he wanted to “go further than” Constantin Brancusi’s massive cylindrical stone *Table of Silence* at Târga Jiu by making his inverted cone table.<sup>131</sup> In these years, Burton actively sought out art-historical precedents for his work, most notably Russian Constructivist artists Vladimir Tatlin, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and El Lissitzky; Gerrit Rietveld of De Stijl; and Bauhaus artists including Breuer.<sup>132</sup> At the same time, Burton also understood his work in relation to postminimal sculpture. He said that *Public Table* “was probably perceived as a second-generation minimal artwork. And it is in a way. And it’s a damn good one. Richard Serra liked that piece. . . . That amazed me.”<sup>133</sup> In addition to being a minimal form, *Public Table* is a functional table (even in its preliminary version). Burton recalled, “It was the first piece on a public scale. It was twelve, thirteen feet across. Part of that is so that your knees can get under. You need that slant. But it enlarged and made a wonderful thing for two or twenty people after we built it.”<sup>134</sup>

While people could and did sit in Burton’s earlier chairs, it was with *Public Table* that he saw the greater potential of his sculptures being used and being useful. That is, his earlier sculptures made from found objects or appropriated design styles had both disassembled as furniture and performed as furniture, but with *Public Table* Burton realized that he could design and create an object that could serve its audiences and produce the opportunity for relations. *Public Table* was the transitional work in this regard. Burton later recounted his epiphany about its public and social potential:

Late one night at the museum, Judy Pfaff, Laurie Anderson, myself, a couple other artists, the crew, the workers, and Suzanne Delehanty, maybe Larry Slotnick, we all sat around and had sandwiches. I had conceived it originally just as a cone. But it had to be on a disk to have a foot, because it was a temporary thing there. Actually the disk turned out to be as important as the cone. It became architecture. It became a room within a room. You all sat up on it—not only in a circle and not only on this fabulous shape, but up on the disk. It made such a wonderful sense of community for me.<sup>135</sup>

The public place to sit created a space for engagement, and it afforded an opportunity to bring a group of people together. The result was remarkable to many of those present that night. Delehanty, then the museum’s director, wrote later to Burton: “What a table! I keep thinking of that night

we, everyone, feasted from its generous and elegant surface. Why is it that all good things must come to an end?"<sup>136</sup>

Burton had long been aiming at this feeling of communion and commonality. His work in the early 1970s grew out of his experiences of alienation and loneliness, as he often said. He cultivated strategies for connection and accord, looking to body language and cruising signals as queer means to contend with such isolation. As his ideas about making work that was open and inclusive grew throughout the decade, he began to envision his work as demotic and anti-elitist, offering situations that crossed class lines. He wanted his works to be open to many different kinds of viewers, and this utopian desire to give space to difference was rooted in his politicized understanding of queer experience as a resource for rethinking social power dynamics. As he said in 1980, "It's kind of democratic. We wish to have a pluralistic society . . . people of all sexual persuasions."<sup>137</sup> Burton's development of a mode of public practice is informed by these same aspirations to equality, community, and self-determination. "There's a displaced democracy in my work, displaced meaning dealing with objects rather than people," he remarked in a 1981 interview.<sup>138</sup>

Burton first saw success in this aim that night in 1979, and with *Public Table* he shifted his emphasis to making new designs that could be of actual and sustained use. When he recounted the story of *Public Table* to Lewis Kachur in 1987, he said, "It's my first emotional public feeling. It's an emotional—I can't explain it—Not emotional in the sense of expressive. It's psychological—not expressive and emotional."<sup>139</sup> Stumbling over his words, Burton struggled to express the importance of this work to him and his utopian aims. Its conjuring of community and equanimity—the "public feeling"—came to animate his work with its "displaced democracy" of furniture sculptures that offered their usefulness to everyone. *Public Table* helped Burton see how he could integrate his long-running interests in proxemics, nonverbal communication, camouflage, and dissemblance with his sculptural practice. In other words, he understood how to make his work *social* through the use of objects and installations that afforded proxemic parameters for engagements both bodily and interpersonal. He excitedly wrote to Costa after the exhibition of *Public Table*, "My other new furniture is gigantic and more of a social system than just an object. With it, I can manipulate beneficently the *social* experience of the users, not just the bodily experience."<sup>140</sup> Burton's works had always been rooted in performance, but now he began to see how his works could themselves perform an openness and an embrace of different positions. His sculptures could model and shape behavior, however gently, and *Public Table's* encouragement of a community (if even for an evening) reinforced

Burton's attempt to make art that modeled attitudes and behaviors that were open to differences.

After the 1979 *Public Table* and the final performance of *Individual Behavior Tableaux* in 1980, Burton committed to being a public artist and to being a sculptor. He did not create any further performance works; instead, his independent sculptures and site-specific ensembles themselves became occasions for performance and social relations. While his subsequent work might seem, at first, unrelated to the more boisterous and multifarious activities of the 1970s, it nevertheless grew from their interlaced enthusiasms and aims. Behavior, performance, and bodily communication were central questions that Burton drew from queer experience in his search to make works that did not so much represent that experience as, rather, draw more wide-reaching lessons from it. The sculptures from the 1970s are different in significant ways from their successors in granite, concrete, and boulder, but they were the works through which Burton grappled with how sculpture and furniture behaved (and behaved as each other). The themes and questions that had driven his decade of performance art established the foundations for his making of sculpture and public art that aimed to be more public, permanent, and open to all.

# CONCLUSION

## Homocentric and Demotic

In 1980, Burton made two major pronouncements about the themes that had galvanized his work. In each of them, he introduced a concept that distilled some of his main priorities. The first was the interview with Edward DeCelle for the *Advocate* that I have cited throughout this book.<sup>1</sup> In it, Burton articulated the possibility of a “homocentric” art that addressed societal issues at large. As I discussed in the introduction, Burton’s neologism captures some of what we might think of as “queer” today. The second keyword was “demotic,” a word that Burton used in his 1980 article on Gerrit Rietveld to capture the vernacular and the egalitarian aspirations he had for his artworks.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, these two concepts summarize Burton’s thinking about his work at the crucial juncture in 1980, when he shifted emphasis to being a public artist and sculptor (fig. 6.1).

The first of these terms, “homocentric,” was coined as Burton called for queer artistic practices that would be socially and critically engaged. He opposed it to the middle-class respectability at which many gay consumers and gay artists aimed, and he wanted an art that would flout such decorum or disrupt its own consumption. Throughout the 1970s, as I have argued, Burton clearly identified his work and its priorities with queer experience, but he was never content to merely illustrate his own position or identity. By contrast, he often distracted and dissembled his autobiographical investments in the work. He used other performers; he made works that were willfully indiscernible; he mocked his own status as artist; and he created sculptures of furniture that were at once familiar and more than what they at first appear. Throughout his different modes, his aim was to raise larger questions about how we regard each other.

Burton’s term “homocentric” reflects his centrifugal aspirations for



**Figure 6.1.** Scott Burton in his Thompson Street apartment, 1980–81. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / licensed by SCALA / Art Resource.

his work. He took lessons from his own homosexuality and daily queer experience of social spaces as the center—but not the limit—of his ideas about art's uses. Burton made work *from* his identity—never simply *about* his identity. This is one of the reasons that much of his work (from his *Self-Works* of 1969 to his final sculptures of 1989) does not all *look queer* at first. Instead, many of his performances and sculptures were concerned with some of what it felt like to be queer in public. This led him to examine the power dynamics of group behavior as well as the exclusions and hierarchies produced through conventions of art history and popular culture. Throughout, he explored the pleasures of code and signal, asking how nonverbal communication and covert signaling could create queer possibilities where one might not at first discern them.

Burton's call for a "homocentric" art was in direct opposition to what he saw as the ossification of the more radical and socially challenging politics of gay liberation into a newly normative and elitist gay consumerist identity. As I quoted in the introduction, he dismissed its elitism, saying it "means good taste, linen-covered furniture and cork and blonde wood and shirts with alligators."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Burton rejected the patronizing category of "gay artist" or, indeed, any category. He explained to DeCelle,

I'm uncomfortable with ghettos, art ghettos as well as gay ones. I'm not pigeon-holed as a minimal or conceptual artist because there are no categories. None of the good artists of this period are easily pigeon-holed. We don't have names for movements of the work of the '70s.

I think it's right that art is difficult because it enables it to be a critique of the rest of the culture. My performance work is difficult. My furniture is different—art should be completely available to people as furniture, decoration, and architecture are.<sup>4</sup>

For Burton, homocentric art aimed at moral propositions such as the breakdown of elitism and the opposition to exclusion—that is, "to be a critique of the rest of the culture," as he declared. In the passage above, Burton noted that his performance work did this through its difficulty. For instance, the stringent situations of the *Behavior Tableaux* offered an analysis of the power dynamics of group behavior, coupling, and visual objectification. By crystalizing these forms of relating into slow performances with their affectual transference to the audience, he hoped to reshape an understanding of behavioral norms. His bombastic work, such as *Modern American Artist* and *Closet Installation*, also aimed at a different form of difficulty in their presentation of hyperbolic and conflicted caricatures as

means to expose mythologies and stereotypes. Across the different modes in which he worked, he employed dissemblance, misdirection, nondisclosure, and camouflage as recurring tactics to address the limitations of seeing as a way of knowing (and categorizing). None of his works aimed at an easy message, and throughout the 1970s he tried to pose open questions about the ways that people looked at and treated each other.

Burton committed to sculpture and to public art after the revelation of *Public Table*, and 1980 marks a juncture for him. His performance work had culminated in the overtly sexual and confrontational *Individual Behavior Tableaux* for Berkeley just as he began to realize his ambitions to become a public artist addressing a wider audience. That same year, he saw his first public commission completed for the courtyard at Rockdale Temple in Cincinnati. As he began to navigate the complexities of gaining commissions for public art in the increasingly homophobic environment of the 1980s United States (with its genocidal neglect of the AIDS crisis and the censorial Culture Wars), Burton would extend his investigations into camouflage, dissemblance, and infiltration toward his self-presentation as an artist. After 1980, he would less often signal the queer themes of his work as openly as he had in the 1970s, but they remained vital to his practice of making sculpture that performed “as if,” that dissembled, that hid in plain sight, that prompted relations through proxemic and kinesic signals, and that promiscuously opened itself to all. As we heard him propose above, “art should be completely available to people.”

The seeming directness and simplicity of his sculpture did not replace the performance work’s “difficulty” (as he called it), nor did it supplant the critique of culture he thought difficulty allowed. Rather, the egalitarian aspirations he had for his functional sculpture of furniture grew from the queer themes of his work of the 1970s, with their interrogation of power dynamics, critique of exclusion, and analysis of the ways that objects (and people) are more than they first appear. What shifted in 1980 was Burton’s understanding that he could pursue these aims by embedding them within the actual usability and familiarity of the furniture form. He would come to state, “one of the impulses motivating me is the desire to make some works which people can understand immediately.”<sup>5</sup> He extended his self-bracketing of the authority of the artist (begun with *Self-Works* and *Lecture on Self*) by making functional sculptures that might be used or enjoyed by people who might not know (or care) that these were works of art. He aimed to reach out to non-art audiences, to be inclusive of differences, to counterbalance the elitism of the art world, and to make work that was “demotic.”

This keyword had an important place in Burton’s second major pro-

nouncement in 1980, his essay on the De Stijl designer and artist Gerrit Rietveld.<sup>6</sup> A theoretical statement as well as a sensitive view of Rietveld's work, this essay further revealed Burton's aims for his sculpture and its social capacities. The layout of this article in *Art in America* was telling. The first page on the left, which faced the title page on the right, featured an image of Rietveld's chair made from a simple crate, which Burton paired with images of American vernacular furniture intended for mass use, including one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian-period chairs, a "Pop" version of contemporary furniture made from a shipping crate, and an early iteration of the Adirondack chair that had inspired Burton's own work. Just the year prior, Burton had remade his *Lawn Chairs* in black-lined Formica, reinforcing their significance for him. In the Rietveld article layout, the juxtapositions of these vernacular chairs and their related forms was a statement of lineage—not just about Rietveld but about Burton's own work. It visualized how modernism and vernacular furniture were related in their simplified forms and their aim to be widely available rather than rarefied. Burton identified with Rietveld, feeling that he had been overlooked in art history because of his work in furniture. As he said to DeCelle in the *Advocate* interview earlier that year, "Rietveld is an interesting case of oppression, nothing to do with sexuality. He was a furniture designer and one of the best object makers of the twentieth century and he's hardly as well known as Brancusi who he is just as good as."<sup>7</sup> Burton's *Art in America* article was both a defense of an artist and designer he considered marginalized in art history (Rietveld) and a statement of his priorities for his own work and its public aims. He titled this first section (which are the first words of the article) "Depression demotic."

"Demotic" is a term Burton would sometimes use interchangeably with the more widely understood "democratic," but I believe the former term more precisely captures his aims. Whereas "democratic" brings with it denotations and connotations of political processes and positions, "demotic" refers to the everyday language of ordinary people. Burton saw body language as ordinary and everyday—but also as the matrix through which relations and power dynamics operated in sometimes covert or invisible ways. His interest in furniture is an extension of this investigation into ordinary nonverbal languages and their effects. Burton upheld the demotic availability of the furniture form, and his understanding of it was interwoven with his investigations into the common parlance of kinesics, proxemics, gestures, and other forms of nonverbal communication in which bodies inflected and affected each other. Everyone knows what to do with a chair, he believed. The form of the chair or the table prompted certain kinds of bodily relations (sitting, for instance) without explanation.

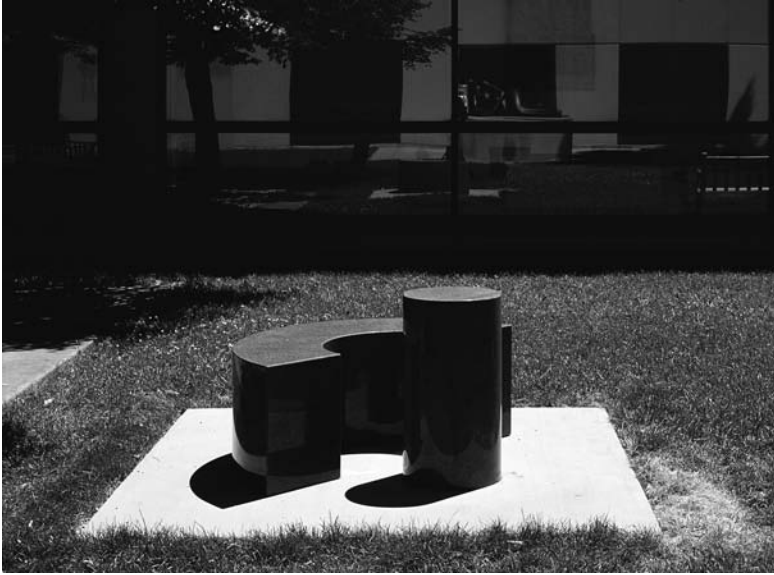


Furniture offered Burton a demotic language through which questions of sculpture's physicality and spatial relations could be conveyed without presuming an understanding of (or interest in) art or sculpture.

With the phrase "Depression demotic," Burton invoked the Great Depression (the context for the American counterparts to Rietveld's crate chair in the article's opening page), and he leaned on the necessity and inventiveness required in the making and reusing of everyday materials. For Burton, "demotic" was not limited to that historical context; it was also a condition to which he aspired. With its embrace of ordinariness, egalitarianism, and availability, the term "demotic" concisely captures Burton's stylistic and art-theoretical priorities. A few years later, in 1983, he would write, "My work is aimed at ordinary people with visual susceptibility or sensitivity, even if they don't know anything about art. . . . The regular user would sense from my works that art is not always a mysterious specialized language but that it can result from the transformation of the ordinary. These should be clearly not benches but 'portraits' of benches, and yet a little provocative because after all you can sit on them."<sup>8</sup> Ordinariness, for Burton, was both a conceptual and a practical challenge to contemporary art and its relation to audience. As with his explications of body language and pose in his performances, in his sculpture Burton aimed to increase awareness of and fluency with the demotic bodily language with which furniture addresses us. He believed that such visual sensitivity was not limited to those knowledgeable about art, and that an extension of furniture's language to public art could possibly traverse class lines. His works offered themselves to be used by all (fig. 6.2). As he also said in a 1985 interview, "It's a democratization, in a way, of the object."<sup>9</sup>

When explaining Rietveld's importance, Burton offered a summary that applies equally well to his own demotic aims for sculpture: "His furniture's rigor of form and intensity of structural definition give it an idealism, an epiphanic concision, even a sublimity, that is far from popularizing; yet its materials (mostly common-stock wood and bright-colored paint), its scale and its very simplicity give it an unpretentious attractiveness of democratic character. Avant-garde art for all."<sup>10</sup> Repeatedly in the essay, Burton demonstrated his erudition about furniture history and his zeal for explicating the moral and theoretical aspects of style. He discussed Rietveld's pivoting between abstraction and anthropomorphism in his designs, and he focused on his meaningful use of materials. Burton concluded this hagiography, "He defies category."

In 1980, Burton, too, defied category. These two major statements of this year—his interview on "homocentric" art and his article on the "demotic" Rietveld—encapsulate the foundations and aims of his artistic practice.



**Figure 6.2.** Scott Burton, *Bench and Table*, 1988/1991. Carved and polished granite: bench, 19 × 52 × 26 in. (48.3 × 132.1 × 66 cm); table, 28 in. high × 15 in. diameter (71.1 × 38.1 cm). The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago; Gift of the Smart Family Foundation in honor of Vera and A. D. Elden, 1991.255a–b. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph © The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago.

Neither can be understood without the other. His interests in making art approachable and in the value of ordinariness emerged in tandem with his critical research into dissemblance and camouflage—and his disdain for homonormative bourgeois consumerism and elitism. He sought to reach wider audiences and to speak back to exclusion and elitism. He bracketed his own authorship, preferring instead to make works that provided open-ended opportunities for contact and sociality (see fig. 6.3). As he said, “avant-garde art for all.”

Without a doubt, Burton’s belief in his sculptures and their approachability was utopian, and I see in his idealistic statements of 1980 a connection to the queer utopian impulse that José Esteban Muñoz charted as crucial to postwar art and culture.<sup>11</sup> Muñoz argued that utopian ideas could offer sustenance, resistance, survival, and hope in the present, and he connected utopian thinking to queerness “as horizon.” He opposed this to homonormativity, especially for the ways in which it reinstalled racism, classism, and exclusion. He argued that utopian visions (however much they might be deemed impractical or mired in the contradictions of the present) made it possible to conceive of queer life as livable in the face of all that would fight against or suppress it—most vitally for the queers of



**Figure 6.3.** Scott Burton, *Modular Six-Unit Seating*, 1985/86. Polished rosso imperale red/black granite, six pieces, ea. 37.5 × 17.5 × 39.5 in. (95.3 × 44.5 × 100.3 cm), gross weight 1,500 lb. Photo courtesy of the Office of Public Art, Pittsburgh, PA.

color that are Muñoz's central subjects. In particular, Muñoz discussed how the sexual culture of the 1970s became, in the era of AIDS, a structuring memory through which the crisis and the future were figured. The 1970s came to represent a lost culture of sexual possibility, and Muñoz detailed how a "utopian longing . . . is neither a nostalgic wish nor a passing fascination but, rather, the impetus for a queerworld."<sup>12</sup> Burton's work of the 1970s drew on his experience of that same sexual culture, and I believe that his sculpture and public art of the 1980s also looked back to and drew energy from it. The egalitarian and demotic aims of Burton's work were founded in and propelled by his engagement with queer cultures and experience. He attempted to extrapolate from them a critique of normative behaviors as well as to articulate an artistic practice that would dispense with art's elitism and embrace all users—"avant-garde for all." Burton's idealism fueled his desire to be a public artist, and he came to that position from an exploration of behavior and the queer experience of it in public. The utopian and demotic ambitions of his work emerged from and carry forward his queer experiences as a way of positing a mode of art and a way of living different from the here and now.

In 1982, Burton would look back on his turn to making art in 1969, saying, "In the late '60s I wanted to be politically radical, but I saw the ludi-

crousness of that in the art world. I saw that the only way to be radical as an artist is in your work.”<sup>13</sup> Performance, with its live relations with the viewer, remained central to Burton’s utopian thinking about the possibility for a demotic, egalitarian art—starting with his instructions for *Self-Works* that tested behavior and authority in 1969. As is evidenced by the multiple practices that Burton developed in the 1970s, Burton was constantly rethinking how his work could enact his aims. However, across these experiments, his baseline was performance with its shared temporality with the viewer.

As he said in 1973, performance “reevaluates the role of the artist in the culture, submitting him to the transaction with the viewer.”<sup>14</sup> It was this relatedness that Burton prized in much of his work. Whether in his street works, his durational performance art pieces, or his dissembling furniture sculpture, performance was the baseline. Most of all, it activated behavior—the ways in which people relate to and treat each other.

Burton’s sculptures of the 1980s (both public and independent) perform for, on, and with their users and viewers. They solicit touch and use. Their familiar functional capacities both speak to and direct bodies into positions and relations. They covertly signal complexity (whether through a reference to site, to design history, or to the figurative underpinnings of Burton’s sculptural practice). Theatrically, they wait to hold your body. The demotic ambitions for his sculpture’s behavior in public spaces took inspiration from street cruising, and he explored its subversions of public space and its forging of unexpected moments of “contact” (to recall Samuel R. Delany’s key term from the introduction).<sup>15</sup> His sculptures present a place to rest, to loiter, to sit, and to watch. He once remarked, “That’s my audience—people waiting for people.”<sup>16</sup> This opportunity for contact through making a place to sit is central not just to his public commissions but also to the sculptures of benches, tables, and chairs that are placed in museums, courtyards, and other trafficked spaces.

Over the years of working on Burton’s art, I have sat and watched the ease with which people use his sculptures of the 1980s. With some, as with the café tables in *Urban Plaza South* at the Equitable Center in Midtown Manhattan (fig. 6.4), there is a comfortable everydayness in how they offer themselves. With others, such as his *Rock Settees* that for many years sat in the atrium near the entrance to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (fig. 6.5), visitors would comment, perhaps puzzle a bit, but nevertheless sit down. When I first started writing this book, I was in residence at the National Gallery’s research center, and I made a point of watching how people reacted to these sculptures. The *Rock Settees* did what Burton hoped they would do: be both familiar enough for people to know what to do with them (sit) and unfamiliar enough so that their users reflected on

their own expectations for a boulder, a chair, or a sculpture. I would see visitors walk around and talk about the sculptures, before sitting down and talking with each other (about other things, no doubt). These humble moments of familiarity coupled with unfamiliarity were repeated and regular, and sometimes I sat one of the settees, too, which could also lead to conversations about these seats and the place they made.

While the NGA *Rock Settees* are from later in the 1980s, the sculptures reprise a form that characterized Burton's work in the first years of the decade. Burton had begun making these boulder works in relation to one of his earliest site-specific public commissions, for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Seattle (completed in 1983). For that project, he determined to use materials from the site, and he made seating and viewing areas from the boulders dredged from Lake Washington



**Figure 6.4.** Scott Burton, detail of *Urban Plaza South*, 1985–86, part of the site-specific installation at the Equitable Center, Avenue of the Americas and Fifty-First / Fifty-Second Streets, New York, 1985–88. Photograph: David J. Getsy.



**Figure 6.5.** Scott Burton, *Rock Settees*, 1988. Granite, two pieces, overall 38.5 × 63 × 42.5 in. (97.8 × 160 × 107.9 cm), gross weight 4,000 lb. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Gift of the Collectors Committee, 1988.68.1. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph courtesy National Gallery of Art.

in the process of constructing a pier.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Burton's sculptures of the 1970s had focused on the layered meanings of design styles, he began to expand the idea of his sculptures as useful in the 1980s. He also began to explore the creation of viewpoints and seating arrangements in these site-specific installations. This perspectival focus extended to the works themselves, and the boulder works appear as natural forms from one angle and ersatz furniture from another, interlacing usefulness and familiarity with the monumentality of earthworks to create novel furniture forms.

The rock chairs and boulder benches are meant to stand out and prompt conversation because of their unconventionality as furniture. With their performative heaviness and the displacement of the natural form of the boulder to an interior space, these sculptures looked a lot like art to some visitors. Indeed, it was the perception of them as sculpture that often led people to comment to me on the fact that this is art you can touch and use, unlike most everything else in the museum. Their unconventional form did not inhibit people's use of them (or knowledge about how to use them)

but rather became part of the experience in which something unfamiliar or odd became acknowledged and accepted for the ways in which it acted as if it was a familiar thing (an everyday bench). Even a boulder bench speaks with a demotic ease and directness.

Around 1983, Burton pivoted from the unorthodox rock chairs to (equally weighty) geometric forms that harkened back to Minimalism. These are the works for which he is most remembered, and they share the obdurate massiveness and immovability of the rock chairs but in forms that were more graspable—and that could be related and recombined into new conjugations. These works stood out less than the boulders, and they operated more like his public works with their integration into their sites. A good example of this is another Burton work that I have watched for a long time, *Low Piece (Bench)* (1985/86, fig. 6.6), at the Art Institute of Chicago. The curators have often installed this sculpture in the postwar galleries,



**Figure 6.6.** Scott Burton, *Low Piece (Bench)*, 1985/86. Himalayan blue granite, 17 × 48 × 18 in. (43.2 × 121.9 × 45.7 cm). Art Institute of Chicago; Gift of the Lannan Foundation, 1997.137. © Estate of Scott Burton / Artists Rights Society; photograph: David J. Getsy.

where it dissembles as a bench. Many simply rest on it when looking at a nearby painting (or their phones). This work does not prompt the same conversations as the *Rock Settees*, but both works are equally graspable, comprehensible, and usable as furniture. Whether self-consciously or casually, visitors sit on *Low Piece (Bench)*, responding to its solicitation to rest, to wait, and to look around.

Throughout the 1980s, Burton pursued the parallel tracks of public commissions and independent sculptures. Like his public art, his discrete and non-site-specific objects aimed at approachability, usefulness, and permanence. At the same time, they are obdurately difficult objects that vex museums, galleries, and collectors because of their solicitation of touching and bodily use (and because of their recalcitrant weight, which rivals the work of some other postminimal and land artists). In their impermeable and immovable solidity, Burton's sculptures offer contact, and this openness to touch cannot be considered apart from the AIDS crisis that paralleled Burton's turn to public sculpture after 1980. Burton lived with HIV during the time when he was designing his most ambitious public works, and their offers of bodily support, care, and ongoing solicitations of contact must all be seen in relation to the AIDS crisis and Burton's personal experience of it.<sup>18</sup> This book has charted the years of Burton's practice before the AIDS crisis changed the terms of what it meant to make contact, share space, and think about sex and intimacy as forms of community, resistance, and experience.

Both the public art and the independent sculptures of the 1980s were, as I hope my brief examples attest, emergent from the central themes that Burton explored in his performance art of the 1970s. While they might not at first look like it, they are homocentric in that they extrapolate out from a core of queer experience a larger account of how we might accept unfamiliarity and create contact. The very premise of the insult "queer" (and of its defiant reclamation) is that it describes that which has been cast out from the ordinary and the normal. Burton's work, by contrast, sought to get to the potential of the demotic, the everyday, and the ordinary through an embrace of the queer challenge to behavior and its rules. In this way, Burton refused to accept an opposition between the homocentric and the demotic, instead pursuing queer experience as a foundation from which to challenge the accepted conditions and rules that we see as ordinary and "normal."

Burton's sculptures model possibilities. They solicit multiple interactions, and they provide a complex account of how sculpture can relate to (and support) a human body. They lean on the anthropomorphism of all furniture, taking on just enough of the traits of furniture (a back, a



seat, etc.) to be seen-as and used-as a chair, a bench, a table, and so on. Viewers regularly accept his works as furniture, even if they also recognize that they are unlike other benches or seats they have seen before. In Burton's sculpture of the 1980s, the categories of "chair" or "table" would become capacious sites of potential. A boulder could become a bench, a cylinder served as a table, and any right angle was potentially a chair. His sculptures make themselves available widely and persistently. Burton developed his *Individual Behavior Tableaux* as a means of showing how the same body could signify differently depending on pose and comportment, and he also saw that epicene potential in his usable objects. "You could say that people are like furniture. They take different poses and suggest different genders," he said in 1979.<sup>19</sup> For Burton, both bodies and chairs were performing agents that could be more than they might first appear and exceed the presumptions that others brought to them.

In that 1980 interview with DeCelle, Burton clarified how his interests in the category of furniture and its functionality were also homocentric. Replying to a question from DeCelle about his current projects, Burton declared that he had plans for

a lot of furniture pieces—tables and chairs and I'm trying to get some public commissions underway. I'd like to design public parks. . . . With the furniture I wish to do work which has some meaning to people other than it being something by Scott Burton.

It has to be not only useful but interesting. Any chair is useful but a very striking looking chair—something that isn't like a usual chair—can make people perhaps more flexible in their attitudes to accept more things—to become more democratic about what a chair is. They may even become more democratic about what a person is. Art can be a moral example. The gay world doesn't get enough good moral examples from visual art.<sup>20</sup>

It was this statement that endeared me to Burton's project, and I have used it as a touchstone in my earlier writings.<sup>21</sup> Burton clearly stated the ways in which his desire to make his sculpture was rooted in demotic, queer, and utopian ambitions. His aims were to open experience to many and to break down the barriers that establish the "normal"—whether that be "normal" art, "normal" furniture, or "normal" people. Both in his sculpture's successive openness to new bodily interactions and in his performance's conjugation of possible genders located in a single body, Burton sought to make room for the acceptance of difference and possibility—to model how to be "more democratic about what a person is."

We are all limited by our own experience; Burton was no different. But what I find so compelling about his understudied work of the 1970s was how he tried to see wider potential in his queer experience. The central questions for Burton's work were behavior and public space, and he came to an understanding of the priorities for his demotic public art by interrogating performance, queer signaling, and the shared space of the street. He looked to behavior as a common language—albeit one that each person speaks with their own inflections, dialects, and purposes. For Burton, behavior was tied up with the queer imitation and arrogation of ordinary life, and he asked what it meant to be more than what was expected or seen. He saw this as an open question about how we might behave differently with each other.



# APPENDIX

## List of Performances and Other Artworks by Scott Burton, 1969–80

The following list includes Scott Burton's performances, conceptual works, installations, and other major projects (such as curation). It does not include Burton's sculpture of the 1970s, which has already been cataloged in the artist-approved list in Brenda Richardson, *Scott Burton* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1986).<sup>1</sup> Burton steadily shifted his energy from performance to sculpture in the 1970s, and the fewer entries in the later years of this chronology should be seen in relation to the growing sculptural output of the later 1970s cataloged by Richardson. However, a small number of sculptural works omitted from that catalog have been included here.

**1969**

### PERFORMANCES

*Schwitters Piece*, 15 March, for *Street Works I*

*Disguise*, 18 April, *Self-Work* for *Street Works II*

*Five Theater Works* [*POV*; *Four Changes*; *Scale (Reduction and Enlargement)*; *Body*; *Six Crosses*], 28 April through 16 May, for *Theater Works* at Hunter College, New York City

*Ear Piece*, 25 May, *Self-Work* for *Street Works III*

*Dimes*, 26 May, as part of an Art Workers Coalition protest at the Museum of Modern Art

*Dream*, 2 October, a *Self-Work* for *Street Works IV* opening party at Architectural League

*Nude*, 26 October, Lispenard Street, New York City, a *Self-Work* at close of *Street Works IV*

### OTHER ARTWORKS

*For Release: Immediate*, 16 March (including the fictional work *Take One*), as commentary on *Schwitters Piece* performance

*Adding Minutes*, April?, sound recording, for *Tape Poems*, organized by Eduardo Costa and John Perreault

### PROJECTS

Organizer, *Theater Works*, Hunter College Department of Art Auditorium, 28 April to 16 May

Curator, *Direct Representation: Robert Bechtle, Bruno Civitico, Yvonne Jacqueline, Sylvia Mangold, John Moore: Five Younger Realists*, Fischbach Gallery, New York, 6 to 25 September

Coeditor (with Dorothy Wolfberg and John Tarburton), *Exploring the Arts: An Anthology of Basic Readings* (New York: Visual Arts, 1969)

## 1970

### PERFORMANCES

*Compositions*, 14 April, for *Four Theater Pieces* at Wadsworth Atheneum; performed by Valerie Gillett, Ellen LaForge, and Flora Resnick

*Ten Tableaux: Theater as Sculpture*, 5 August, for "Two Evenings" at the University of Iowa; performed by Jana Berger, Barbara Berry, Linda Lee, Carole Messerschmidt, Susan Sheridan, Sharon Souder, Robert Ernst, Bruce Hall, Leslie Sha, Michael Sokoloff, Thomas Tindall, and Joe Wells

### OTHER ARTWORKS

*Instructions*, text work for catalog exhibition *Art in the Mind*, curated by Athena Tacha for Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, 17 April to 20 May

List of other *Self-Work* instructions incorporated into "Literalist Theater" artist talk at the University of Iowa, 25 June

(With Marjorie Strider and students from their "Art and the Urban Environment" seminar), *The Iowa City People's Hole Project*, opened 26 June in downtown Iowa City

*Furniture Landscape*, 31 July, for “Two Evenings” at the University of Iowa  
*Situational Performance: Past, Present, Future of Glitter*; Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt; photograph (collection of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt)

## PROJECTS

Organizer, *Four Theater Pieces*, Wadsworth Atheneum, 14 April

## 1971

### PERFORMANCES

*Eighteen Pieces*, 4 March, for Finch College, New York City; performed by Michelle Creedon, Frances Denney, Eileen Frawley, Suzanne Glasser, Amy Hirsch, Stephen Holden, Jane Kaufman, Grace Kipp, Peggy Leary, Alan Martell, Pam Piech, Adrienne Reilly, Libby Sampson, Frank Torres; included the following discrete works: *Walkers*; *Mannequins and Thunder*; *Changes*; *Allegorical Tableau Vivant*; *Three-Minute Sculpture*; *Bathers*; *Furniture Pieces*; *Theater of the Ear: Rape of the Sabine Women*; *Poses*; *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself*; *Statues*; *Disguise Piece*; “*Bain Turc*,” J. A. D. Ingres; *Sculpture Theater*; *Chair Drama*; *Slide Novella*; *Bodies*; *Animal Piece*<sup>2</sup>

### PROJECTS

Curator, *Films by Artists*, Wadsworth Atheneum, 19 January

## 1972

### PERFORMANCES

*Group Behavior Tableaux*, 19 April, for Whitney Museum of American Art (1 performance); performed by John Braden, James Cobb, Michael Harwood, Glen Jacobs, and Charles Stanley

*Group Behavior Tableaux*, 27–29 October, for American Theater Lab (6 performances); performed by John Smead, Charles Stanley, Carl Wilson, Terry Wilson, Bruce Wolmer

### PROJECTS

Curator, *The Realist Revival*, American Federation for the Arts for the New York Cultural Center, 6 December 1972 to 7 January 1973

**1973****PERFORMANCES**

*Lecture on Self* (draft), 10 April, as part of *Five Evenings* at School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

*Lecture on Self*, 5 May, as part of *Festival of Contemporary Art*, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio (premier of *Modern American Artist*)

*Modern American Artist*, 5 May (first version, included at conclusion of *Lecture on Self* at Oberlin College)

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

*The Many Faces of Marcel Duchamp*, cover design for *ARTnews*, September 1973

**1974****PERFORMANCES**

*Performance Portrait of the Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus* (featuring the second version of *Modern American Artist*), 25 April, for the series *PersonA* at Artists Space, New York City

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

*Photonovella*, sixty-foot light box wall sculpture with photographs taken for the 1971 *Slide Novella*, 1971–74<sup>3</sup>

**PROJECTS**

Begins major work on the “Gay Issue” for *Art-Rite* (through 1976)

**1975****PERFORMANCES**

*Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, 18–23 and 25–30 March, Idea Warehouse (22 Reade Street), Institute for Art and Urban Resources (12 performances); performed by Elke Solomon

Burton’s 1975 sculpture *Bronze Chair* is left outside across the street from his exhibition at Artists Space, Saturdays in December

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

*Photochair*, one-to-one-scale foreshortened photograph of chair, cut out and attached to wall, for *Not Photography*, curated by Edit deAk, 1–11 November

*Pastoral Chair Tableau*, installation at Artists Space, New York, 6–27 December

*Dream Sex* (triptych incorporating photographs of the second and third versions of *Modern American Artist*), for *Lives: Artists Who Deal with Peoples' Lives (Including Their Own) as the Subject and/or the Medium of Their Work*, curated by Jeffrey Deitch, 29 November to 20 December

*Odd Years*, text work for catalog to *Lives: Artists Who Deal with Peoples' Lives (Including Their Own) as the Subject and/or the Medium of Their Work*, curated by Jeffrey Deitch, Fine Arts Building, 105 Hudson Street, New York

A one-to-one scale mustache sculpture, intended to be cast in metal (lost or never completed)

An unspecified number of miniature chairs and tables in bronze and perhaps silver (including a reduced *Table for Four?*),<sup>4</sup> 1975–76

**1976****PERFORMANCES**

*Pair Behavior Tableaux*, 24 February to 4 April, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (30 performances); performed by Charles Stanley and John Smead (alternate: Alfred Guido)

*Chair Tableau*, 22 to 24 September 1976, Akademie der Künste, Berlin<sup>5</sup>

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

*Closet Installation*, site-specific installation for the exhibition *Rooms at P.S. 1*

*Chair Pair* (also called *Miniature Bronze Pair of Platform-Chairs*) shown at Akademie der Künste, Berlin, exhibition *New York—Downtown Manhattan: SoHo*, curated by René Block

*Boy Scout Triptych*, June 1976, prints<sup>6</sup>

Proposal for *American Town Parlor* for Smithtown, New York



**1977****PERFORMANCES**

*Solitary Behavior Tableaux* (later called *Individual Behavior Tableaux* Chicago), 5 to 8 January, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; performed by Alfred Guido

*Figure Tableaux* (later called *Individual Behavior Tableaux* Philadelphia), 22 to 24 April, held in unused building in downtown Philadelphia and sponsored by the Philadelphia College of Art; performed by Alfred Guido

*Figure Tableaux* (later called *Individual Behavior Tableaux* Kassel), 28 to 30 June, documenta 6, Bürgersaal of the Kassel Rathaus, Kassel; performed by Julius Webster

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

Indoor installation of *Bronze Chair* with rug, side table, and lamp at Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York, 17 January to 3 February

Two Polaroid photographs of Alfred Guido rehearsing for the Chicago *Solitary Behavior Tableaux*, exhibited at Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York, 17 January to 3 February

*Study for Window Tableau*, proposal the Institute for Art and Urban Resources Street Museum project<sup>7</sup>

**1978****OTHER ARTWORKS**

*Fabric for Window Curtains*, made as resident at Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia<sup>8</sup>

**1979****PERFORMANCES**

Impromptu gathering at the maquette for *Public Table* at exhibition *10 Artists / Artists Space*, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York

**OTHER ARTWORKS**

Proposal for *Serpentine Double Banquette*, unrealized<sup>9</sup>

**1980**

**PERFORMANCES**

*Individual Behavior Tableaux*, 13 February to 2 March, Berkeley Art Museum;  
performed by Kent Hines



# NOTES

## Introduction

1. Some months after the incident, Burton claimed that it was “unrelated to art or politics,” by which he meant that it was neither properly an artwork nor a political statement. Burton to Costa, 5 September 1971. This later qualification came in response to a letter from a 31 July 1971 letter in which Costa wrote, “I am telling everyone about that secret art work a friend of mine did, so that they can see how good the real new American art is and not get misleading information through official art publications about its degree of development.” Both letters in ECC.
2. For a discussion of the complexities of Minimalism’s political claims, see the chapters on Carl Andre and Robert Morris in Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). An illuminating account of the politics of Judd’s empiricism and of his interest in leveling hierarchies can be found in David Raskin, “Specific Opposition: Judd’s Art and Politics,” *Art History* 24, no. 5 (November 2001): 682–706. See also Robert Slifkin, “Donald Judd’s Credibility Gap,” *American Art* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 56–75; Dominic Rahtz, “Indifference of Material in the Work of Carl Andre and Robert Smithson,” *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (March 2012): 31–51.
3. Telephone interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
4. Burton was not the only artist angry at Judd in the summer of 1971. See Andrew Wasserman, “Judd’s Space: A Marginal Absence in the Fight for SoHo Housing,” *Visual Resources* 31, nos. 3–4 (September–December 2015): 155–76.
5. Telephone interview with Eduardo Costa, 16 March 2010. In 1969, Burton had been among the twenty-four signatories (along with others such as Eva Hesse, Robert Indiana, and Michael Snow) of a letter to the editors of *Artforum* (Summer 1969, pp. 7–8) protesting the controversial plan for a Lower

Manhattan Expressway that would have fundamentally altered the Lower East Side, Little Italy, and South Village neighborhoods.

6. Telephone interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
7. CW 50.
8. On the centrality of such assertions of masculinity as supposedly neutral and performatively reasserted, see Amelia Jones, “Dis/playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform Their Masculinities,” *Art History* 17, no. 4 (December 1994): 546–84; and Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). For a discussion of the heteronormativity of postwar art and the proscriptions on being visibly queer in it, see Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Jonathan D. Katz, “The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art,” in *Visions of a Future: Art and Art History in Changing Contexts*, ed. Kornelia Imesch and Hans-Jörg Heusser (Zurich: Swiss Institute for Art Research, 2004), 147–58.
9. As Anna Chave has argued, “The erasure of artistic subjectivity that seemed such a radical prospect to certain male artists in the 1960s could hardly portend the same for their female contemporaries, for whom erasure was almost a given.” Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 154. While there were women artists associated with Minimalism (such as Anne Truitt, Jo Baer, Adrian Piper, Judy Chicago, and Mary Corse), their work was met with discrimination, and they experienced uphill battles to acceptance.
10. For example, Joseph Masheck, “Corn-Fed Egotism [Letter to the Editor],” *Studio International* 177, no. 911 (May 1969): 209–10; Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, “Don Judd,” *Fox* 2 (1975): 129–42; Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 5 (1990): 44–63. See also Lynn Zelevansky, *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994); Susan L. Stoops, ed., *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s* (Waltham, MA: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996).
11. The writer John Preston declared in 1980, “The public has a view of the art world that sees an unbridled bohemia filled with free spirits doing, saying and depicting outrageously free things. . . . Here, certainly, must be one arena of life where gayness is truly liberated. *It's not true.*” John Preston, “The New York Galleries: Non-competitive Exposure,” *Alternate* 2, no. 12 (March/April 1980): 13 (emphasis added). See a similar assessment in Walter Weissman, “John Perreault: The Road to Art Criticism Starts with a Small Success in Poetry [Interview],” *Artworkers News*, April 1980, 18. More overt queer work was being done in New York’s underground theater and film scenes, notably Charles Ludlam’s Ridiculous Theater Company, Andy Warhol’s films, Jack Smith, Kenneth Anger, the Angels of Light, and the Hot Peaches. As well, a greater range of out artists in the 1970s worked in photography—a me-

dium that, at the time, had distinct historical trajectories and supporting institutions that were not always coextensive with the art world. Within the art world, silence about and nondisclosure of gay or lesbian identity were more common—indeed, they were modes of resistance to homophobia, as argued in Katz, “Silent Camp.”

12. Telephone interview with Michael Auping, 13 July 2017.
13. Gay-focused commercial galleries began to emerge in New York City in the second half of the 1970s, but they privileged figuration, photography, and erotica. See Preston, “New York Galleries.” Lesbian art production (nationally) was more robust in the 1970s, in part supported by the alternative institutions created out of the feminist movement. See discussion in Laura Cottingham, “Eating from the *Dinner Party* Plates and Other Myths, Metaphors, and Moments of Lesbian Enunciation in Feminism and Its Art Movement,” in *Seeing through the Seventies: Essays on Feminism and Art* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts, 2000), 133–59; Jennie Klein, “The Lesbian Art Project,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2010): 238–59; Tara Burk, “In Pursuit of the Unspeakable: *Heresies*’ ‘Lesbian Art and Artists’ Issue, 1977,” *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly* 41, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2013): 63–78; Margo Hobbs Thompson, “D.I.Y. Identity Kit: The Great American Lesbian Art Show,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2010): 260–82. Also of crucial importance was Jill Johnston’s *Lesbian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).
14. DeCelle 10.
15. CW 244.
16. They moved some time in 1952. John Button explained, “[Hortense] moved to Washington, in the first place, because Scott had been tested for IQ and psychologically at the U. of Alabama when he was 12. The results showed that he was far above average in intelligence and very ‘different’ psychologically. Hortense, with unerring instinct, decided on the spot to get out of the small town and into a big city where Scott would have more opportunity. HOW RIGHT SHE WAS.” John Button to Gerald Fabian, 5 June 1966, JB/GF.
17. “Radford E. Mobley, 64, Dies, Retired Newsmen, Publicist,” *Washington Post* 1969, B6. Burton described him as “the hero of our family—my father was absent, so the man of the family was my mother’s brother, who was a journalist and writer and college poet.” Kachur I, 3. Burton attributed his interest in literature to his uncle’s influence.
18. John Button to Gerald Fabian, 5 June 1966, JB/GF.
19. Kachur I, 15.
20. For instance, Pincus-Witten remarked in 1976, “Burton now understands this fascination [with furniture] to be an evocation of his ‘longing for an ideal family life.’ He construed the reordering of the furniture in his room as ‘the re-living of one’s childhood in an ideal way.’” Robert Pincus-Witten, “Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance as Sculpture,” *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 1 (September 1976): 114.

21. See Burton's reminiscences in Gerald Marzorati, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Furniture Maker," *Metropolitan Home* 15 (November 1983): 32.
22. Interview with Robert Pincus-Witten, 6 May 2005. Burton would say in 1987, "I do identify with the underdog." Kachur I, 61.
23. Scott Burton to Leon Berkowitz, dated "April 1957," Leon Berkowitz and Ida Fox Berkowitz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
24. Kachur I, 2.
25. Eduardo Costa, "Racial Conflict in Recent Poetry from the US: Analysis from a Third World Perspective," 1974, research report submitted to Department of Philosophy and Literature, University of Buenos Aires, translated by Jen Hofer and John Pluecker and courtesy Patrick Greaney. Costa also wrote in the thesis, "To Scott Burton, who represents that portion of the white population of the US with which it is possible for a Latin American to sustain true friendship." Costa also recounted a story to me about Burton's time as a professor at the School of Visual Arts. During a public meeting at which there was a proposal to protest the deaths of American soldiers in the war on Vietnam, Burton asked if the deaths of the Vietnamese people should also be addressed by the protest—only to be silenced by the school's director, Silas Rhodes. This incident contributed to Burton being fired from SVA. Telephone interview with Eduardo Costa, 16 March 2010.
26. "It was way too sophisticated for me. The teaching was having people use big bedsheets because it was cheaper than canvas, and teaching them how to stain and pour paint on it. The man's name was Morris Louis. . . . I was terrified. I didn't go back to class. . . . I never went back. But then, indeed, I would get sheets of my mother's and stain. I could make very bad Morris Louises, Helen Frankenthalers at the age of fourteen or fifteen." Kachur I, 25.
27. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
28. "I have responded to GIDE. read IMMORALIST, CORYDON, NOW IF IT DIE, and soon STRAIT IS THE GATE." Scott Burton to Leon Berkowitz and Ida Fox, n.d. [Spring 1958], Leon Berkowitz and Ida Fox Berkowitz Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
29. John Button to Gerald Fabian, 5 June 1966, JB/GF.
30. Kachur I, 53. McNally and Burton regularly went to Fire Island together.
31. For example, Burton wrote in 1960, "If anybody can make W[est] S[ide] S[tory] into a movie, you are *them*. If anybody can make me miss them & think of them & love them, you are also *them*." Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 10 May 1960. By that autumn, it had become "All I have to say is that I love you and think about you and miss you—nothing has changed on my part except that I've about given up hope of ever seeing you again—except in my dreams, where you appeared last night, warm & close." Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 19 October 1960, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

32. As Button recalled, "We have never been apart since that time. He moved right in and Robbins was furious. There were several scenes with Scott and one with me." John Button to Gerald Fabian, 5 June 1966, JB/GF.
33. On the social dynamics of the New York School much has but written, but see in particular Lytle Shaw, *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of Coterie* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006); Maggie Nelson, *Women, the New York School, and Other True Abstractions* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007); Russell Ferguson, *In Memory of My Feelings: Frank O'Hara and American Art* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999).
34. See Lewis Ellingham and Kevin Killian, *Poet Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 231-35. See also John Button, "Some Memories," 1980, *No Apologies*, no. 2 (May 1984): 28-31.
35. John Button to Gerald Fabian, 15 November 1961. By the mid-1960s, Button, Burton, and Robbins had begun to ease tensions. As Button wrote in 1966, "In fact, I have begun to be rather fond of the old thing [Robbins], in the same way I'm fond of Allen Ginsberg with all of his silliness." John Button to Gerald Fabian, 5 June 1966, JB/GF.
36. For example, Bill Berkson. Burton: "Bill and I were rivals. We didn't like each other at all." Kachur I, 54.
37. Joe LeSueur, *Digressions on Some Poems by Frank O'Hara: A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 133. See also John Perreault, "Scott Burton's Escape from Language," in *Scott Burton*, ed. Ana María Torres (Valencia: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, 2004), 36-42.
38. John Romine, "Scott Burton [Interview]," *Upstart* 5 (May 1981): 7.
39. The curator Linda Shearer, who later brought *Behavior Tableaux* to the Guggenheim in 1976, recalled being an intern at the MoMA bookstore in 1963, where she first met Burton. She returned every summer to work at the bookstore while in college, and they became close friends. Burton eventually became the godfather to Shearer's son. Telephone interview with Linda Shearer, 28 June 2017.
40. John Button to Gerald Fabian, 4 May 1965, JB/GF.
41. In a letter from the spring of 1963, Kirstein wrote of his early support, "[Your play] is full of charming ideas and delightful intellectual surprises, ingenious notions and a truly delicate sense of brainy fun; it is pretty in the best sense and in every way a lovely job. Whether or not it could be *played*, I just don't know. Maybe if you played it, with Jason Robards, but maybe you never intended for it to be played. It is delicious to read and I am in your debt for letting me see it." Lincoln Kirstein to Scott Burton, 5 May 1963, SBP I.9. By the end of 1963, however, Kirstein had commissioned Burton's *Saint George* for the Shakespeare Memorial Theater, where he was a producer. Lincoln Kirstein to Scott Burton, 31 December 1964, SBP I.9.
42. In Edit deAk and Walter Robinson, "An Article on Scott Burton in the Form of a Resumé," *Art-Rite* 8 (Winter 1975): 10.



43. Critic Allen Hughes remarked, "'Shadow'd Ground' is certainly big in some ways, and it attempts to be both revolutionary and thoughtful, but it fails in almost every way." Allen Hughes, "Notes on New Ballets," *New York Times*, 31 January 1965, X7. Button noted, "Scott's ballet went very well, really. Especially considering that no one was actually in charge of it. . . . But it came off very well—despite the asinine critics. It wasn't great, but it wasn't bad." John Button to Gerald Fabian, 15 February 1965, JB/GF.
44. See Carter Ratcliff's comments in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* (New York: Soho, 2003), 41.
45. Scott Burton, "Old Master at the New Frontier," *ARTnews* 65, no. 8 (December 1966), 52-55, 68-70 (CW 35-44). Burton's first full-length article, however, was on Anne Arnold and published in *Art and Literature* in 1965. CW 155-61.
46. CW 71-78.
47. Scott Burton, *Direct Representation: Robert Bechtle, Bruno Civitico, Yvonne Jacquette, Sylvia Mangold, John Moore; Five Younger Realists* (New York: Fischbach Gallery, 1969); and Scott Burton, *The Realist Revival* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1972). Essays reprinted with commentary in CW 195-212.
48. SBP II.44 and IV.22.
49. Interview with Betsy Baker, 28 March 2019.
50. Dorothy Wolfberg, Scott Burton, and John Tarburton, eds., *Exploring the Arts: An Anthology of Basic Readings* (New York: Visual Arts, 1969).
51. Most of these are mentioned in Kachur I.
52. Interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
53. Mac McGinnes, telephone interview with the author, 29 April 2010.
54. Emphasis in the original. John Button to Gerald Fabian, n.d. [early November 1968], JB/GF.
55. John Button to Gerald Fabian, n.d. [early November 1968], JB/GF. Or, in a letter to Rosenblum from 1969, Button talked about a confrontation with Burton at "a new after-hours place called *Hades*. You wouldn't believe it. It's a leather & chain *dancing* bar." John Button to Robert Rosenblum, 14 August 1969, Robert Rosenblum Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
56. John Button to Gerald Fabian, 15 November 1968, JB/GF.
57. "Gay Power" was both a political rallying cry and, at that time, the title of an activist magazine. On the pivotal role of *Gay Power* from 1970 to 1972, see Richard Meyer, "Gay Power circa 1970: Visual Strategies for Sexual Revolution," *GLQ* 12, no. 3 (2006): 441-64.
58. Interviews with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010 and 2 November 2012.
59. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
60. See David J. Getsy, "The Primacy of Sensibility: Scott Burton Writing on Art and Performance, 1965-1975," CW 1-32.
61. CW 101.
62. CW 101.

63. In this way, Burton was also in accord with women artists who also sought to activate viewers' differences through spurs to memory. For related discussions, see Miguel de Baca, *Memory Work: Anne Truitt and Sculpture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); and Sarah Hamill, "'The Skin of the Earth': Mary Miss's *Untitled* 1973/75 and the Politics of Precarity," *Oxford Art Journal* 41, no. 2 (2018): 271–91.
64. CW 43, my emphasis. Such an understanding of *Die* (and of Minimalism) as promoting questions of difference and embodiment would be later argued in Amelia Jones, "Art History / Art Criticism: Performing Meaning," in *Performing the Body / Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London: Routledge, 1999), 39–55.
65. Frances Colpitt has comprehensively analyzed how Minimalism coalesced as a primarily critical consensus around (and sometimes departing from) individual artists' and artist-critics' practices in Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1990). See also the important account of the movement and its divergences in James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
66. On boredom as a strategy in relation to Minimalism, see Frances Colpitt, "The Issue of Boredom: Is It Interesting?," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 359–65.
67. Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 1986, in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 38.
68. Burton in a 10 October 1979 interview partially transcribed in Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 79.
69. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 12–23.
70. The literature on Fried's essay is vast, but a particularly insightful unpacking of Fried's "theatricality" in relation to the work of Stanley Cavell can be found in James Meyer, "The Writing of 'Art and Objecthood,'" in *Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried*, ed. Jill Beaulieu, Mary Roberts, and Toni Ross (Sydney: Power Institute, 2000), 61–96.
71. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 15.
72. Scott Burton, "Time on Their Hands," *Art News* 68, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 40 (CW 79).
73. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 16. I am indebted to conversations with James Meyer, who emphasized to me the importance of such passages.
74. CW 60.
75. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 21, emphasis in the original. It should be noted that when "Art and Objecthood" was reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), 140, the final words "waiting for him" were ultimately added to this sentence for clarity.
76. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 16.
77. For further discussions on the psychodynamics of Fried's encounter/cruis-

ing scene, see Jones, *Body Art*, 111–13; Jennifer Doyle, *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 114–16; Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy, “Queer Formalisms: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation,” *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 58–71; Hannah B. Higgins, “Reading Art and Objecthood While Thinking about Containers,” *nonsite.org* 25 (2018); and David J. Getsy, “Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity, and Passive Resistance,” *Criticism* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1–20.

78. For a discussion of the homophobia in writing about theater in the mid-1960s (and Fried’s echoing of it), see Stephen J. Bottoms, “The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid: Unpacking the Performance Studies / Theatre Studies Dichotomy,” *Theatre Topics* 13, no. 2 (September 2003): 173–87. See also Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); David Savran, *A Queer Sort of Materialism: Recontextualizing American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), and D. A. Miller, *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). In my previous book, I discussed another way in which theater had been used in Minimalist art as a sign for homosexuality (and its problematic relationship to visibility) in my discussion of Dan Flavin’s 1962 *Coran’s Broadway Flesh*, which the artist dedicated to “a young English homosexual who loved New York City” in a published statement. David J. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), 212–27.
79. Christa Noel Robbins, “The Sensibility of Michael Fried,” *Criticism* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 429–54.
80. Michael Fried to Philip Leider, 21 January 1967, Philip Leider Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. After this passage, Fried went on about the idea he wanted to include in the essay that became “Art and Objecthood”: “even if the faggots didn’t kill Kennedy (and I love this guy Garrison for insinuating they did) they ought to be kicked out of the arts and forced to go to work on Wall Street or something. *I would love to do it*” (my emphasis). Fried referred to the district attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, who sought publicity by advancing a series of conspiracy theories about John F. Kennedy’s assassination, the first of which was that it was perpetrated by a group of thrill-seeking homosexuals.
81. Robbins, “Sensibility of Michael Fried,” 432.
82. Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 20, emphasis in the original. Later attempting to clarify his intentions, Fried reiterated how he saw theatricality as inauthentic and unnatural (his word is “monstrous”): “My critique of the literalist address to the viewer’s body was not that bodiliness as such had no place in art but rather that literalism theatricalized the body, put it endlessly on stage, made it uncanny or opaque to itself, hollowed it out, deadened its expressiveness, denied its finitude and in a sense its humanness, and so on. There is, I might have said, something vaguely *monstrous* about the body

- in literalism.” Michael Fried, “An Introduction to My Art Criticism,” in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 42, emphasis in the original. A strong critique of this and other aspects of Fried’s rhetoric can be found in Amelia Jones, *In Between Subjects: A Critical Genealogy of Queer Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 152–59.
83. “Notes on Camp” originally appeared in *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1964), and was republished in 1966 as Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” in *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 275–92. Fried remarked that Sontag’s essays in *Against Interpretation* “amount to perhaps the purest—certainly the most egregious—expression of what I have been calling theatrical sensibility in recent criticism.” Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 23n17. When Fried anthologized “Art and Objecthood” in his collected essays in 1998, the long footnote deriding Sontag’s *Against Interpretation* was deleted. See Fried, *Art and Objecthood*; the excised footnote would have appeared on p. 171.
84. Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” 287.
85. Sontag, 288.
86. Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 23n17. Here, Fried was responding to the discussion of the frivolous in a long passage from Sontag’s “On Culture and the New Sensibility,” the essay immediately following (and building on) “Notes on ‘Camp.’”
87. Sontag noted, “The peculiar relation between Camp taste and homosexuality has to be explained. While it’s not true that Camp taste *is* homosexual taste, there is no doubt a peculiar affinity and overlap” (Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” 290). Sontag’s essay became a sensation—even *Time* magazine did a story on it. On the reception of Sontag’s essay in the 1960s, see James Penner, “Gendering Susan Sontag’s Criticism in the 1960s: The New York Intellectuals, the Counter Culture, and the *Kulturkampf* over ‘The New Sensibility,’” *Women’s Studies* 37 (2008): 921–41; and Benjamin Moser, *Sontag: Her Life and Work* (New York: Ecco, 2019), 228–42.
88. Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” 280. Moser makes this connection even clearer by reprinting the text of an unpublished draft for “Notes on Homosexuality” (1958), which was the foundation for “Notes on Camp.” See Moser, *Sontag*, 230–31.
89. Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” 288.
90. Pincus-Witten would later recall, “sometimes—there are moments in which I think a single word grabs the zeitgeist.” Oral history interview with Robert Pincus-Witten by Francis Naumann, 23–24 March 2016, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
91. For a discussion of the complexities of postminimalism as a category, see Stephen Melville, “What Was Postminimalism?,” in *Art and Thought*, ed. Dana Arnold and Margaret Iverson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 158. Focusing on Hesse and Serra (and, quite problematically, dismissing Benglis

from serious consideration despite her fundamental role), Melville's essay hinges on the pressures the term "postminimalism" puts on a periodizing account of postwar history and its nomination of movements.

92. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Postminimalism," in *The New Sculpture 1965–1975: Between Geometry and Gesture*, ed. Richard Armstrong and Richard Marshall (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), 24.
93. Lucy Lippard, "Eccentric Abstraction," *Art International* 10, no. 9 (20 November 1966): 28, 34–40; Lucy Lippard, "Eros Presumptive," *Hudson Review* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 91–99. See discussion in Getsy, *Abstract Bodies*, 13–17.
94. CW 71–78. For a useful discussion of the role of the body and performance in this watershed exhibition, see Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History, and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 84–103.
95. CW 79–85.
96. Linda Shearer, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Memorial Exhibition* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972); Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: Da Capo, 1976).
97. Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973).
98. I have listed only a few of the key exhibitions of these years. For further, see Richard J. Williams, *After Modern Sculpture: Art in the United States and Europe, 1965–70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). See also Richard Armstrong, "Between Geometry and Gesture," in Armstrong and Marshall, *New Sculpture 1965–1975*, 12–18.
99. Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London, 1977), 16. On the centrality of women artists to postminimalism, see Whitney Chadwick, "Balancing Acts: Reflections on Postminimalism and Gender in the 1970s," in Stoops, *More Than Minimal*, 14–25. See also Anna C. Chave, "Sculpture, Gender, and the Value of Labor," *American Art* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 26–30. For a discussion of another postminimalist who explored queer themes and experience, see the astute analysis of Harmony Hammond's abstract wall sculptures in Margo Hobbs Thompson, "'Lesbians Are Not Women': Feminine and Lesbian Sensibilities in Harmony Hammond's Late-1970s Sculpture," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 12, no. 4 (2008): 435–54.
100. As Foster later summarized it, "minimalism considers perception in phenomenological terms, as somehow before or outside history, language, sexuality, and power. In other words, it does not regard the subject as a sexed body positioned in the symbolic order any more than it regards the gallery or museum as an ideological apparatus." Foster, "Crux of Minimalism," 43.
101. Pincus-Witten, "Postminimalism," 25.
102. Chave, "Minimalism and Biography." Or, as Wayne Enstice noted of the reassertion of artistic authorship in Minimalism: "But the unsettling blankness of Minimalism dislodged the artist more completely from behind the craft of making art, to stress his executive presence." Wayne Enstice,

- “Performance Art’s Coming of Age,” in *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 144.
103. Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism*, 13–14. See also his publication of his critic’s journals (with commentary on postminimalism’s character) as Robert Pincus-Witten, “Naked Lunches,” *October* 3 (1977): 102–18. For a sympathetic account of Andre’s attempts at “absenting the self,” see Dominic Rahtz, “Literality and Absence of Self in the Work of Carl Andre,” *Oxford Art Journal* 27, no. 1 (2004): 61–78.
104. Interview with Robert Pincus-Witten, 6 May 2005.
105. Rosemary Mayer, “Performance and Experience,” *Arts Magazine* 47, no. 3 (December–January 1973): 36. On Mayer, see Gillian Sneed, “Pleasures and Possible Celebrations’: Rosemary Mayer’s Temporary Monuments, 1977–1982,” in *Temporary Monuments: Work by Rosemary Mayer, 1977–1982*, ed. Marie Warsh and Max Warsh (Chicago: Soberscove, 2018), 533.
106. There are far too many histories of performance in the 1960s to cite here, but I would point a group of studies initially written in the 1960s or 1970s: Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-modern Dance*, new ed. (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), originally published in 1973; Michael Kirby, *Art of Time: Essay on the Avant-Garde* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 52–66; Lucy Lippard, “The Geography of Street Time: A Survey of Streetworks Downtown,” 1976, in *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 52–66; Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*, 1978 (London: Methuen, 1986); and RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).
107. Burton cited Rainer in his letter explaining his *Lecture on Self* (Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, Allen Memorial Art Museum Curatorial Archives, Oberlin College). Rainer recalled seeing Burton occasionally at events in the 1960s, but the two were not in close contact. Conversation with Yvonne Rainer, 24 June 2015.
108. These three are among the foundations for performance that he discusses in detail in his 1973 *Lecture on Self*, CW 227–43.
109. Perreault even credited Strider with coining the term. “I invented the term Street Works (taking off of Earth Works) and artist Marjorie Strider eventually came up with Performances as a better term than Theater Works.” Perreault, “Scott Burton’s Escape,” 36. See also Jon Gams, “Interview with Marjorie Strider, April 5, 2003,” in *Dramatic Gestures: Marjorie Strider* (Lenox, MA: Hard Press Editions, 2004), 103.
110. Michael Kirby, “Introduction: Performance at the Limits of Performance,” *The Drama Review* 16, no. 1 (March 1972): 70–71.
111. “Mac has gone to Chicago to play a starring role as a woman,” Burton wrote to Costa on 2 February 1972, ECC. A drag version of Jack Kirkland’s Depression-era play *Tobacco Road* (1933), based on Erskine Caldwell’s 1932 book, was the reason for McGinnes’s move. The play was put on by the

Godzilla Rainbow Troupe, which Gary Tucker (who had previously worked with Ludlam) founded in 1971 in the Ridiculous style. McGinnes stayed in Chicago after the play closed and was one of the founders of Victory Gardens Theater in 1974.

112. For example: datebook entries for 3 October 1970 (SBP III.1) and 30 October 1974 (SBP III.3).
113. A promotional flier they created explained, “The Association for Performances is an organization founded to promote, present and preserve new forms of artists’ theatre, specifically those referred to as Performances.” SBP II.17.
114. CW 230.
115. CW 229.
116. See Mark Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003); Ben Gove, *Cruising Culture: Promiscuity, Desire and American Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); John Rechy, *Rushes* (New York: Grove, 1979); Dianne Chisolm, *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Joel Czarlinsky, “Sexual Culture,” in *Petit Mort: Recollections of a Queer Public*, ed. Joshua Lubin-Levy and Carlos Motta (New York: Forever and Today, 2011), 15–19; Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Jonathan Weinberg, *Pier Groups: Art and Sex along the New York Waterfront* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019); Fiona Anderson, *Cruising the Dead River: David Wojnarowicz and New York’s Ruined Waterfront* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019); “‘Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public’: Forging a Gay World in the Streets,” in George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 179–205; Jennifer Moon, “Cruising John Rechy’s City of Night: Queer Subjectivity, Intimacy, and Counterpublicity,” *disclosure: A Journal of Social Theory* 15 (2006): 42–59; and “Ghosts of Public Sex: Utopian Longings, Queer Memories,” in José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 33–48. For further context, see also Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon, 2004); and Pat Califia, “Public Sex,” 1982, in *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex* (San Francisco: Cleiss, 1994), 71–82.
117. This is attested to in many memoirs of the period. See, for instance, Samuel R. Delany, *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village*, 1988 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); John Rechy, *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1977); Edmund White, *City Boy: My Life in New York during the 1960s and*

- '70s (London: Bloomsbury, 2009); Felice Picano, *Nights at Rizzoli* (New York: OR Books, 2014); John Giorno, *You Got to Burn to Shine* (New York: High Risk Books / Serpent's Tail, 1994); Douglas Crimp, *Before Pictures* (Brooklyn, NY: Dancing Foxes, 2016). And of course there was the salacious and stereotyping novel by Gerald Walker, *Cruising* (London: W. H. Allen, 1971), the film adaptation of which by William Friedkin would in 1980 be a source of protests for the gay rights movement. See discussion in chapter 4.
118. Leo Skir, "The Gay World," in *The New York Spy*, ed. Alan Rinzler (New York: David White, 1967), 376. This remarkable pre-Stonewall text offered a detailed account of cruising and other aspects of gay life in New York City. However, Skir was at pains to equate homosexual and heterosexual activities in the city, claiming that gay subculture had "a definitive relation to universalist aims" (373). Consequently, when discussing cruising, he fabricated a comparison to the "New York girl" whose "aims and ethics are similar to those of homosexuals" as someone else who cruised the streets (377). Such rhetorical moves no doubt facilitated the publication of this instructional essay in this book for a general audience. According to Alan Rinzler, the book's editor, the book was intended both for New Yorkers and for those visiting the city. Rinzler had an interest in supporting a diverse view of the city, and *The New York Spy* included essays on Jewish New York, on immigrant communities, and on Harlem (by the acclaimed novelist Claude Brown). Telephone conversation with Alan Rinzler, 18 October 2019.
119. Skir, "Gay World," 381.
120. For instance, see the discussion in Samuel R. Delany, "Street Talk / Straight Talk," in *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts and the Politics of the Paraliterary* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 41–57. The complexity (and variability) of sexual identities among those who cruise was also argued in Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*, 1970, enlarged ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction, 2006).
121. For other perspectives on cruising, see, for instance, Liz Rosenfeld, "My Kind of Cruising," in *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender Conformity*, ed. Mattilda a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore (Emeryville, CA: Seal, 2006), 149–58; Liz Rosenfeld, "This Should Happen Here More Often: All My (w)Holes and All My Folds of Cruising," *Third Text* 35, no. 1 (2021): 25–36; Denise Bullock, "Lesbian Cruising: An Examination of the Concept and Methods," *Journal of Homosexuality* 47, no. 2 (2004): 1–31.
122. I should note that I am differentiating cruising from hustling, which involves the exchange of some form of currency for sex. The two have many overlaps, but their constituencies and practices are not identical. For a detailed history, see Barry Reay, *New York Hustlers: Masculinity and Sex in Modern America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010). For a practical account, see John Preston, *Hustling: A Gentleman's Guide to the Fine Art of Homosexual Prostitution* (New York: Masquerade Books, 1994).



123. While many have made this observation, a particularly lucid account of this condition can be found in Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of Gay Self*, trans. Michael Lucey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
124. Initially published in 1987, Bech's study offers a useful narrative of the complexities of gay experience in the 1970s and 1980s. While his focus is European, I have found his analysis to be in accord with (and perceptive of) the accounts of gay life offered in American literature of the 1970s and 1980s (and the epistolary archives on which the present study is based). The book was first translated in 1997 as Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity*, trans. T. Mesquit and T. Davies, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 99–100.
125. Edward William Delph, *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978).
126. Much of the foundational sociological literature on cruising focused on semipublic zones and what Delph called "erotic oases" (Delph, *Silent Community*), as with Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade*. In addition to Delph, another 1978 study (of Toronto) also recognized the importance of these different levels of publicness: John Alan Lee, *Getting Sex: A New Approach; More Fun, Less Guilt* (Don Mills, Ontario: Musson, 1978). See also a later perspective in Gordon Brent Ingram, "'Open' Space as Strategic Queer Sites," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay, 1997), 95–125.
127. Delph, *Silent Community*, 31.
128. For an analysis of the policing of behavior and comportment by homosexual men (and, in particular, of mannerisms deemed effeminate) in the decades in which Burton grew to be an adult, see Craig M. Loftin, "Unacceptable Mannerisms: Gender Anxieties, Homosexual Activism, and Swish in the United States, 1945–1965," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (2007): 577–96.
129. Delph, *Silent Community*, 28–30.
130. See Gavin Brown, "Sites of Public (Homo)Sex and the Carnavalesque Spaces of Reclaim the Streets," in *The Emancipatory City? Paradoxes and Possibilities*, ed. Loretta Lees (London: Sage, 2004), 99; Gayle Rubin, "Sites, Settlements, and Urban Sex: The Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America," in *Archaeologies of Sexuality*, ed. Ellen Lewin and William Leap (New York: Routledge, 2000), 62–89; and Ingram, "'Open Space.'"
131. On the latter, see John Hollister, "A Highway Rest Area as a Socially Reproducible Site," in *Public Space / Gay Sex*, ed. William Leap (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 55–70.
132. Bech, *When Men Meet*, 113–14. Emphasis in the original.
133. See discussion in Philip Brian Harper, *Private Affairs: Critical Ventures in the Culture of Social Relations* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 82.
134. He wrote, "Very importantly, contact is also the intercourse—physical and conversational—that blooms in and as 'casual sex' in public rest rooms, sex

- movies, public parks, singles bars, and sex clubs, and on street corners with heavy hustling traffic." Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 123.
135. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 126. As Delany noted, "if every sexual encounter involves bringing someone back to your house, the general sexual activity in a city becomes anxiety-filled, class-bound, and choosy. This is precisely *why* public rest rooms, peep shows, sex movies, bars with grope rooms, and parks with enough greenery are necessary for a relaxed and friendly sexual atmosphere in a democratic metropolis" (127).
136. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 127.
137. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 55. Tim Dean has also expanded on Delany's foundational insights to argue that "cruising exemplifies a distinctive ethic of openness to alterity," and "ultimately, the ethics of cruising is an ethics of the stranger in modernity." Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 176 and 177. Alternative arguments about cruising and ethics can also be found in John Paul Ricco, *The Logic of the Lure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and Brown, "Sites of Public (Homo)Sex."
138. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 158. See also the discussion in Gavin Brown, "Ceramics, Clothing and Other Bodies: Affective Geographies of Homoerotic Cruising Encounters," *Social and Cultural Geography* 9, no. 8 (January 2008): 915-32; Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy*, 185; Delph, *Silent Community*; Lee, *Getting Sex*; Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade*.
139. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 23 August 1972, ECC.
140. In this note from the mid-1970s titled *Hot Brothers*, Burton also offered a typology of the "styles of h[omosexuality]," citing examples such as "Golden Boy" J. J. [Mitchell] and "new h[omosexual]" Jim Fouratt, the gay rights activist. For artists, he proposed former partners Robbins and Button as well as Andy Warhol. Fittingly, he ended the page with "SELF."
141. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
142. The increasing publicness of this slang term by the late 1960s is indicated in one of the first books on US gay culture intended for a general readership: Robert Hoffman, *The Gay World: Male Homosexuality and the Social Creation of Evil*, 1968 (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), and in the useful 1967 account of New York's gay cultural geography with which it shares the title: Skir, "Gay World."
143. Burton also regularly called himself, defiantly, "homosexual," as was also in practice in the 1970s. "Homosexual" has been used to refer to a sexual identity (whereas "gay" often implies, wittingly or not, a shared culture and a move out of the closet). Among the reasons early activists rejected "homosexual" as a pejorative and pathologizing term was because it contained the word "sex." To avoid conjuring images of sex, terms such as "homophile" were used as alternatives until "gay" became the dominant term. After the

emergence of “gay,” however, “homosexual” remained in use. Later activists reclaimed this term in opposition to the desexualizations that terms such as “homophile” and “gay” enact. Consequently, the targeted use of “homosexual” (by Burton as well as by others in later decades) should be understood to be related to subsequent generations’ embrace of the insult “queer” as a rallying cry. This can help explain how, in recent years, some have returned to the outdated term “homosexual” as another confrontational self-nomination. Such moves happen in relation to the disapprobation of the term in public discourse. See the overview in Jeremy W. Peters, “The Decline and Fall of the ‘H’ Word,” *New York Times*, 21 March 2014, ST 10.

144. As Delany (born just three years after Burton) recalled about the late 1950s and early 1960s, the term “queer” was “the working-class term in general use back then.” Delany, “Coming/Out,” in *Shorter Views*, 80. See also the genealogy of queer as performative offered in E. Patrick Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother,” in *Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 124–57.
145. For more on “failure” and its potential, see Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
146. The foundational articulation is Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 631–60.
147. See David J. Getsy, “Introduction: Queer Intolerability and Its Attachments,” in *Queer*, ed. David Getsy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 12–23; David J. Getsy, “Queer Relations,” *ASAP/Journal* 2, no. 2 (2017): 254–57; David J. Getsy, “Ten Queer Theses on Abstraction,” in *Queer Abstraction*, ed. Jared Ledesma (Des Moines, IA: Des Moines Art Center, 2019), 65–75; Doyle and Getsy, “Queer Formalisms.”
148. This 1980 interview was published in early 1981 as Edward DeCelle and Mark Thompson, “Conceptual Artist Scott Burton: ‘Homocentric’ Art as Moral Proposition,” *Advocate*, no. 310 (22 January 1981): T11. The published version was edited and abridged from the longer conversation, and in the remainder of the book I cite the edited transcript prepared by DeCelle or refer to untranscribed sections of the audio recording, both in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Costa recalled, “Scott was quite happy with [the interview]. Mostly because he talked to a gay paper at a time when he was not in need of press attention, perhaps his activism showing up.” Email from Eduardo Costa, 14 March 2010.
149. Lisa Duggan defined homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.” Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon,

- 2003), 50. See also Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 175–94; and, for an alternate and critical view of the term and its history, Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* 100 (Winter 2008): 45–57.
150. For a useful contemporary account of the resurgence of homophile assimilationism in US gay social movements of the mid-to-late 1970s, see Barry D. Adam, "A Social History of Gay Politics," in *Gay Men: The Sociology of Male Homosexuality*, ed. Martin P. Levine (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 285–300.
151. DeCelle 21.
152. DeCelle and Thompson, "Scott Burton," T7.
153. Interview with Mac McGinnes, 2 November 2012.
154. DeCelle 11.
155. Betsy Baker, memorial service speech, 1990, SBP IV.90.
156. Email from Brenda Richardson, 15 May 2012.
157. Nancy Princenthal, "Scott Burton: Chaise Longings," in *Scott Burton: Chaise Longings* (New York: Max Protetch Gallery, 1996), 3.
158. Telephone interview with Eduardo Costa, 16 March 2010.
159. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
160. Email from Brenda Richardson, 15 May 2012.
161. Robert Rosenblum, "Scott Burton," in *Loss within Loss: Artists in the Age of AIDS*, ed. Edmund White (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 243. Burton enjoyed the disruption that Eritz would cause in art events. As Jane Rosenblum recalled, "A lot of it had to do with making everyone else uncomfortable. . . . Scott was a Southern gentleman with perfection in terms of manners. Jon was not." But she also recalled that, for Burton, "being with Jon was a political act." Telephone interview with Jane Rosenblum, 25 November 2019.

## Chapter One

1. Dorothy Wolfberg, Scott Burton, and John Tarburton, eds., *Exploring the Arts: An Anthology of Basic Readings* (New York: Visual Arts, 1969); and Scott Burton, "Notes on the New," in *When Attitudes Become Form*, ed. Harald Szeemann (Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), n.p.
2. Scott Burton, *Direct Representation: Robert Bechtle, Bruno Civitico, Yvonne Jacquette, Sylvia Mangold, John Moore; Five Younger Realists* (New York: Fischbach Gallery, 1969).
3. For these and the above texts, see CW.
4. Kachur I, 65.

5. "Program of Poetry Events at Robert Rauschenberg's Loft, May 25th, 1968," reprinted in Judy Collischan and John Perreault, eds., *In Plain Sight: Street Works and Performances, 1968-1971* (Lakewood, CO: Lab at Belmar, 2008), n.p.
6. With regard to the hybrid role of artist-critic, Perreault was no doubt a model in these early years because of his work in poetry and performance as well as his active, and unique, role as art critic for the *Village Voice*. For a reflection on his own art criticism in these years, see John Perreault, "First Person Criticism," *Art Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1979): 3-12.
7. For an overview, see Lucy Lippard, "The Geography of Street Time: A Survey of Streetworks Downtown," 1976, in *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 52-66.
8. John Perreault, "Street Works," *Arts Magazine* 44, no. 3 (December/January 1969/70): 18; Strider quoted in "Artists, 'Doing Thing,' Do Streets," *New York Times*, 17 March 1969, 44.
9. Jon Gams, "Interview with Marjorie Strider, April 5, 2003," in *Dramatic Gestures: Marjorie Strider* (Lenox, MA: Hard Press Editions, 2004), 103.
10. John Perreault, "Free Art," *Village Voice*, 1 May 1969, 14. Kaltenbach made a practice of creating fictional artworks. See Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, "Altered Ego: Stephen Kaltenbach," *Artforum* 49, no. 1 (2010): 137-38.
11. Perreault, "Street Works," 18.
12. Lippard, "Geography of Street Time," 54.
13. As Giorno recalled, "I handed out bags of roofing nails to five friends and we all got to work. At first, we sprinkled them in the middle of the side streets where there was no traffic. I made sure that at least some of these nails stoop upright, their wide heads on the cobblestones. We fanned out through the neighborhood, picking up new bags of nails that I had stashed at strategic locations. And finally, when it got dark, I threw handful after handful of nails across Canal Street in between traffic lights, and watched what happened. Cars ran over the nails, driving for only a few blocks before their tires went flat. In the Holland Tunnel, there were dozens of cars with flat tires, and dozens more backed up outside. Hundreds of disabled vehicles fanned out across SoHo and beyond." John Giorno, *Great Demon Kings: A Memoir of Poetry, Sex, Art, Death, and Enlightenment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020), 239.
14. John Perreault, "Para-visual," *Village Voice*, 5 June 1969, 17.
15. Gregory Battcock, "The Last Estate," *GAY*, 15 November 1969, 22.
16. See John Perreault, "Trying Harder," *Village Voice*, 1 January 1970, 16. Perreault erroneously stated the date was 26 December, but he also references the newspaper ad that was the only announcement for the show. The advertisement lists 21 December. A clipping can be found in the Marjorie Strider Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
17. Hannah Weiner, "World Works," 1970, in *Hannah Weiner's Open House*, ed. Patrick Durgin (Berkeley, CA: Kenning Editions and Small Press Distribution, 2007), 24.

18. Anna Dezeuze, "In Search of the Insignificant: Street Work, 'Borderline' Art and Dematerialisation," in *Objects in Progress: After the Dematerialisation of Art*, ed. Ileana Parvu (Geneva: MetisPresses, 2012), 35-64.
19. Perreault, "Street Works," 18.
20. For an account of the *Street Works* cadre, see Perreault, "Free Art," 14. It is also worth noting that Lee Lozano appears to have included both the *Street Works I* after-party and the *Street Works II* event in her *General Strike Piece* of 1969. See Lee Lozano, "General Strike Piece," *o to 9 6* (July 1969): 57.
21. The longer title for *Following Piece* was given in Perreault, "Street Works," 19. For a useful analysis of Acconci's contributions to the *Street Works* events, see Elise Archias, *The Concrete Body: Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).
22. While never claiming to be an organizer, Burton was nevertheless central to the conversations behind *Street Works*. For instance, in 2003, Vito Acconci erroneously recalled that Burton and Costa were co-organizers with Perreault, rather than Marjorie Strider and Hannah Weiner. See Thurston Moore, *o to 9 and Back Again: An Interview with Vito Acconci* (Florence, MA: Ecstatic Peace, 2006), n.p.
23. Gregory Battcock, "Museums' Anti-shows," *Art and Artists* 4 (January 1970): 57.
24. Perreault, "On the Street," *Village Voice*, 27 March 1969, 17. In the brochure for a 2015 exhibition at the Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, *Acciones en la Calle: Street Works in New York and Latin America circa 1970*, Gillian Sneed observed that the chalk circle tactic had already been employed by the Argentine artist Alberto Greco (*Living Finger Art*, 1962) and that many street works (in various locals) have arrived at comparable ideas and practices.
25. Perreault, "On the Street," 17.
26. Perreault, 17.
27. The *o to 9* "Street Works" supplement includes two reproductions of Mayer's *101 Instructions*: one in the scale of an index card and another expanded to an 8.5 × 11 in. page for readability (n.p.). *101 Instructions* related to Mayer's attempts to establish a poetic mode of and about the quotidian. For context, see Linda Russo, "Poetics of Adjacency: *o-9* and the Conceptual Writing of Bernadette Mayer and Hannah Weiner," in *Don't Ever Get Famous: Essays on New York Writing after the New York School*, ed. Daniel Kane (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive, 2006), 122-50; and Andrew Epstein, *Attention Equals Life: The Pursuit of the Everyday in Contemporary Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 156-95.
28. Of course, it is possible that work as reproduced in *In Plain Sight* was in red ink, but the tonal range of the black-and-white photocopy does not seem to support that. Regardless, there is no number listed; consequently, the page Perreault reproduced was an unnumbered "original" contradicting its own description of itself in other ways. At the time of writing this book, Perreault's archives were not accessible, and their contents may shed more light on this enigmatic and otherwise unknown "work."

29. The only occurrence I have found of *For Release: Immediate* is its inclusion (from Perreault's personal archive of *Street Works* events) in Collischan and Perreault, *In Plain Sight*, n.p.
30. Burton's conceptually gymnastic critique of authorship could also be related to his conversations with Costa, who created a similar critique in January 1970 with his *A piece that is essentially the same as a piece made by any of the first conceptual artists, dated two years earlier than the original and signed by someone else*. On this work, see Patrick Greaney, "Essentially the Same: Eduardo Costa's Minimal Differences and Latin American Conceptualism," *Art History* 37, no. 4 (2014): 648–65; and Miguel A. López, "How Do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?," *Afterall* 23 (2010): 3–21.
31. A parallel tactic was explored by Burton in one of his first conceptual artworks. In 1969, Perreault and Costa organized and published *Tape Poems* in 1969, in which all the contributors wrote poems explicitly for stereophonic audio recording. Burton's poems, like many others in the collection, were never written down but rather existed only as words spoken to the recorder. Burton's contribution, *Adding Minutes*, was characteristic of his later performances—he recorded a banal conversation he had while waiting for minutes to pass, effectively reframing the everyday mundane experience of making tea as a poem. In the recording, Burton said that the title was "Twenty-one minutes," and this derives from the formula he used for saying when the tape recorder would be turned off—6 then 5 then 4 then 3 then 2 then 1. This arbitrary mathematical ordering harkened to Minimalist formulae, but Burton uses it to break up but also stage the conversation about the work being had by him and Costa. In short, the structure was about bracketing and calling attention to the mundane. For context on *Tape Poems* and Costa's use of tape recording, see Patrick Greaney, ed. *Conceptualism and Other Fictions: The Collected Writings of Eduardo Costa 1965–2015* (Los Angeles: Les Figues, 2016), 54–57; Tom McEnaney, "Real-to-Reel: Social Indexicality, Sonic Materiality, and Literary Media Theory in Eduardo Costa's Tape Works," *Representations* 137 (Winter 2017): 143–66; Nadja Rottner, "Eduardo Costa, Oral Literature, and the Legacy of Noncochlear Sound," *Art Journal* 78, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 102–15.
32. For a discussion of Strider's work in relation to her more well-known Pop paintings of the 1960s, see Rachel Middleman, *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 89–116.
33. During *Street Works I*, Costa handed out a text that included the explanation: "These art works were intended to attack the myth of the lack of utility in the arts, while being in themselves a modest contribution to the improvement of city living conditions." Eduardo Costa, "Useful Art Manifesto," 1969, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions*, 53.
34. See Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, "After Pop, We Dematerialize: Oscar Masotta, Happenings, and Media Art at the Beginnings of Conceptual-

- ism,” in *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*, ed. Inés Katzenstein (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 156–72; Daniel Quiles, “Dead Boars, Viruses, and Zombies: Roberto Jacoby’s Art History,” *Art Journal* 73, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 38–55; Greaney, “Essentially the Same”; and Patrick Greaney, “A Creator of Genres,” in Costa, *Conceptualism and Other Fictions*, i–x.
35. In Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 79.
  36. John Perreault, “Scott Burton’s Escape from Language,” in *Scott Burton*, ed. Ana María Torres (Valencia: Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, 2004), 40.
  37. “So John Perreault and Marjorie Strider . . . and I are making an ‘Association for Performances,’ so we can get college dates and other productions for us and others, and keep records of activities in this art form.” Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 1 October [1970], Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. One printed announcement read: “The Association for Performances is an organization founded to promote, present and preserve new forms of artists’ theatre, specifically those referred to as Performances.” SBP II.17.
  38. John Perreault, “Street Works in Colorado,” *Artopia* blog post, 6 October 2008, [http://www.artsjournal.com/artopia/2008/10/street\\_works\\_in\\_colorado\\_libes.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/artopia/2008/10/street_works_in_colorado_libes.html), accessed 18 October 2011.
  39. Perreault, “Free Art,” 14.
  40. Scott Burton, “Self-Works,” *The Drama Review* 16, no. 1 (March 1972): 79.
  41. Perreault, “Free Art,” 14–15.
  42. CW 218, emphasis in the original.
  43. Perreault, “Free Art,” 14.
  44. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  45. CW 242.
  46. Laura Levin, *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.
  47. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  48. Perreault, “Free Art,” 15.
  49. This 1960s performance culture was discussed by Esther Newton, who completed a dissertation in 1968 that was first published in 1972: Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, 1972, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
  50. Burton, “Self-Works,” 79.
  51. Gams, “Interview with Marjorie Strider,” 103.
  52. CW 242.
  53. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  54. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
  55. Lucy Lippard, “The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women’s Body Art,” in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), 127.



56. CW 218. See also Perreault, “Para-visual,” 17.
57. An instructive comparison can be drawn to another *Street Works* artist—Adrian Piper, in whose work Burton was interested, as I discuss in the notes to chapter 4. In particular, I am thinking of her contribution to an afternoon of performance art at Max’s Kansas City that occurred on 2 May 1970, about a year after *Ear Piece* and *Street Works III*. In it, Piper blocked her senses of sight, hearing, smell, and touch (with gloves, ear and nose plugs, and a blindfold) while walking around the bar for an hour amid the other performances and attendees during the hour-long performance event. Perreault reported on this event in John Perreault, “Only a Dummy,” *Village Voice*, 14 May 1970, 16, 18. He noted that Burton “did not do the brilliant work he originally planned.” See also Collischan and Perreault, *In Plain Sight*, 8. In 1981, Piper recounted the performance in Adrian Piper, “Untitled Performance for Max’s Kansas City,” 1970, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-art 1968–1992* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 27. Piper’s experience of sensory deprivation, unlike Burton’s largely imperceptible *Ear Piece*, turned her into a public spectacle, “creating a startling image,” as Perreault observed. Both Piper and Burton understood that such interruptions of one’s senses disrupted the social field (and its presumptive normativity), and they used the performance art event as the ground against which to pose this bodily difference. Whereas Piper’s work was seen as disruptive and, by some, confrontational, Burton’s bordered on the indiscernible. However much there are points of comparison between Burton’s and Piper’s performances, there are very different implications for these actions, and I would point to the forceful argument about blackness and Piper’s performance in the conclusion to Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 233–54.
58. Notes for *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself* (1971 version of *Lecture on Self*), performed at Finch College, 1971, SBP II.52.
59. Draft text for Burton, “Self-Works,” in SBP II.17. The section on *Ear Piece* was not included in the published version.
60. CW 242.
61. Another useful comparison would be to Linda Mary Montano’s *Three Day Blindfold* (1974), in which Montano negotiated spaces, tasks, and interpersonal relationships without her sense of sight.
62. CW 218.
63. CW 218.
64. CW 218–19.
65. CW 219–20.
66. CW 219. I should note that Burton’s emphasis on pretending to do everyday actions (and having the performances be visually indistinguishable from them) differs from the poetic or open-ended recasting of the everyday that is

characteristic of Fluxus event scores (and here I am thinking, in particular, of Yoko Ono and George Brecht).

67. SBP II.18.
68. CW 220.
69. Vito Russo, "Camp," 1976, in *Gay Men: The Sociology of Male Homosexuality*, ed. Martin Levine (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 207-8.
70. For "double consciousness," see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Critical Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 11.
71. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 68.
72. This is not to equate the different positions and access to the social experienced across races, genders, and abilities, but rather to open the question about how different queer subjects navigate issues of covertness/overtness and of normative expectations for behavior. As Marlon B. Ross has discussed, "racialized minorities may operate under different social protocols concerning what it means to be visible and invisible within normative sites like the family, the classroom, the workplace, the church, the street, and the community more generally." See Marlon B. Ross, "Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm," in *Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 183.
73. As Ross has compellingly argued, the overapplication of this metaphor fails in many ways, but most importantly it cannot fully account for the histories and varieties of nonwhite queer subjectivities. Furthermore, his analysis makes clear that the focus on the closet as the defining trait of gay subjectivity is inextricable from the racism of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment privileging of the white subject as well as colonialist rhetorics of primitivism and social Darwinism. Ross, "Beyond the Closet."
74. Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of Gay Self*, trans. Michael Lucey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 98.
75. For a broad assessment of camouflage as a terrain of queer visibilities, see Magda Szcześniak, "Blending In and Standing Out: Camouflage and Masking as Queer Tactics of Negotiating Visibility," *View: Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 5 (2014), <http://widok.ibl.waw.pl/index.php/one/article/view/167/322/>. As well, posing is often discussed in relation to the founding example of Oscar Wilde, who was convicted for "posing as a sodomite." While no acts could be proven, the very willingness to represent oneself as queer was Wilde's crime. This has been much discussed, but see in particular Ed Cohen, "Posing the Question: Wilde, Wit, and the Ways of Man," in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (New York: Routledge, 1996), 35-47; and the discussion of posing in Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* (Chicago: Macater, 2010).
76. "When Attitudes Become Form: Notes on the New," 1969, CW 76.
77. CW 219.

78. The look-back is a classic tactic in sidewalk cruising and is discussed as such in Edward William Delph, *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978), 47-49. See also Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 83-84.
79. DeCelle 1.
80. Laud Humphreys, *Out of the Closets: The Sociology of Homosexual Liberation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 75.
81. Humphreys, 25.
82. Audio recording of interview between Scott Burton and Edward Brooks de Celle, March 1980 (side B, 4:22), Edward Brooks de Celle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
83. In the midst of the monthlong event, Perreault remarked in his column that "my feeling now is that more people should have been involved, but some limit had to be set." John Perreault, "Taking to the Street," *Village Voice*, 16 October 1969, 15.
84. Battcock, "Museums' Anti-shows," 57.
85. Press release for *Street Works IV*, reproduced in Gams, "Interview with Marjorie Strider," 96.
86. Perreault, "Taking to the Street," 15.
87. Program for *Street Works IV*, 1969, SBP II.17.
88. "Dream," 1969, SBP II.17.
89. CW 221.
90. *Street Works IV* Calendar of Events, SBP II.17.
91. Perreault described the Montgomeries as "an excellent country-rock group made up of poets." Perreault, "Taking to the Street," 15.
92. Press release for *Street Works IV*, reproduced in Gams, "Interview with Marjorie Strider," 96.
93. CW 221.
94. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
95. Burton, "Self-Works," 79, emphasis in the original.
96. "Dream, a Performance Work," 1969, SBP II.17.
97. "Dream, a Performance Work."
98. See Dominic Johnson, *Unlimited Action: The Performance of Extremity in the 1970s* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2019); and Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).
99. Interview with Mac McGinnes, 2 November 2012.
100. CW 242-43.
101. "Dream, a Performance Work," 1969, SBP II.17.
102. For more on immotility as an ethical proposition to the viewer, see David J. Getsy, "Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity, and Passive Resistance," *Criticism* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-20.
103. Handwritten notes for "Dream, a Performance Work," 1969, SBP II.17.

104. There is a page of performance instructions for *Dream* that list the Architectural League's address as the site at which the outgrowth performance was to have been held. SBP II.17.
105. CW 220.
106. Notes for *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself* (1971 version of *Lecture on Self*), performed at Finch College, 1971, SBP II.52.
107. Burton, "Self-Works," 79.
108. For a critical assessment of the place of Genet in queer history and theory, see Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History*, Theory Q (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
109. CW 220.
110. CW 243.
111. Kachur II, 61.

## Chapter Two

1. CW 229.
2. CW 229.
3. These histories and ideals were articulated in the catalogue essays for the exhibitions of contemporary realist painting he curated these same years: Scott Burton, *Direct Representation: Robert Bechile, Bruno Civitico, Yvonne Jacqueline, Sylvia Mangold, John Moore; Five Younger Realists* (New York: Fischbach Gallery, 1969); and Scott Burton, *The Realist Revival* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1972)—CW 195–99 and 200–210, respectively.
4. CW 204.
5. John Perreault, "Burton's Robot Lovers," *Soho Weekly News*, 11 March 1976, 16.
6. Scott Burton to Eugene C. Goossen, 31 March 1969, SBP II.17.
7. SBP II.17.
8. In an undated note for a performance titled "Female and Male," Burton listed the different positions the performance would demonstrate: "1 man / 1 woman / 1 convincing man as woman / 1 convincing woman as man / 1 obvious man as woman / 1 obvious woman as man / 1 indeterminate? / 1 indeterminate?" SBP II.51.
9. In 2007, the artist Henrik Oleson also saw queer content in the brief description of this otherwise undocumented performance. He included the published description of *Four Changes* in his work *Some Faggy Gestures* in a section about how gay men used clothing "to signal homosexuality." Oleson juxtaposed Burton's instructions with a listing of the "Hanky Code," the semiotic system popularized in the 1970s for signaling sexual interests and priorities through the use of colored handkerchiefs. As Oleson asserted by including Burton in this context, the deployment of clothing was a mode both of camouflage and of signaling used by gay men. Henrik Oleson, *Some*

*Faggy Gestures* (Zurich: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst and JRP/Ringier, 2008), 14.

10. The two exceptions are a small announcement article: "Anti-expressionism," *New York Magazine*, 5 May 1969, 48; and John Gruen, "The Underground," *Vogue*, 1 August 1969, 66.
11. Burton continued his involvement with off-Broadway theater, in particular. In December 1971, he worked as stage manager for Michael Townsend Smith's play *Country Music*, about which Smith recalled, "Scott Burton stage managed; he was sometimes impatient with my realism, but he helped me get the effect I wanted." Michael Townsend Smith, "Country Music," n.d., <http://www.michaeltownsendsmith.com/country-music>, accessed 21 February 2017. At the same time, Burton was frustrated by the world of theater and the egos at play within it. About his experience with *Country Music*, Burton wrote to his friend Costa "I hated this job and hate actors and theater types—worse than art world—so probably will never get out of an art world, que lástima." Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 2 February 1972, in ECC.
12. Kachur I, 64.
13. The tableau vivant did have an impact on the development of cinema, it should be noted. For instance, see Vito Adriaenssens and Steven Jacobs, "The Sculptor's Dream: Tableaux Vivants and Living Statues in the Films of Méliès and Saturn," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13, no. 1 (2015): 41–65.
14. Richard Shepard, "Still Lives," *New York Times*, 27 October 1972, 28.
15. For an assessment of the history and later uses of the tableau vivant in performance art, see Aura Satz, "Tableaux Vivants: Inside the Statue," in *Articulate Objects: Voice, Sculpture and Performance*, ed. Aura Satz and Jon Wood (Bern: Peter Lang), 157–81.
16. John Howell, "Acting/Non-acting: Scott Burton [Interview]," *Performance Art* 2 (1979): 8.
17. "Notes on 'Body Language' Piece," 1971, CW 225.
18. In later notes on his *Tableaux* performances, he listed the different artistic media that the format hybridized, including theater, painting, photography, and sculpture. "Notes on Tableaux" (ca. 1977–81), SBP II.98.
19. Burton cited Rainer in his letter explaining his *Lecture on Self*. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, Allen Memorial Art Museum Curatorial Archives, Oberlin College.
20. DeCelle 20.
21. Conversation with Yvonne Rainer, 24 June 2015.
22. Burton in Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 9.
23. Notes for *Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself* (1971 version of *Lecture on Self*), performed at Finch College, 1971, SBP II.52.
24. Descriptions of these other works by their makers are included in Burton's essay for the *Four Theater Pieces* brochure, *From Literature to Performances*, reprinted in CW 222–24. For a transcription of Costa's work, see Eduardo Costa, "You See a Dress," 1970, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions: The Col-*

*lected Writings of Eduardo Costa 1965-2015*, ed. Patrick Greaney (Los Angeles: Les Figues, 2016), 70-71.

25. CW 222-23.
26. There are a small number of shorthand descriptions of the poses interspersed among the otherwise functional directions for body placement. Pose 18, with figures lying close together, was "heap," while pose 16, with figures lying far apart, was called "bomb." The central performer of pose 6, on bended knees with arms extended to hold the hands of both flanking performers, Burton called "Mama." SBP II.23. Photographic documentation is in II.63.
27. This Minimalist maxim was coined by Donald Judd in his formative essay "Specific Objects." "The order is not rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another." Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965): 82. For more on Minimalist nonrelational composition, see Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1990), 41-66.
28. CW 223.
29. "Lecture on Self," CW 242. The description of *Ear Piece* as "autobiographical" (in Burton's own scare quotes) can be found in the initial draft of the text that would be published (without including *Ear Piece*) as Scott Burton, "Self-Works," *The Drama Review* 16, no. 1 (March 1972): 79. The draft is in SBP II.17.
30. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance as Sculpture," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 1 (September 1976): 114.
31. "From Literature to Performance," CW 223.
32. SBP II.31.
33. "Notes on Tableaux" (1977), SBP II.98.
34. Undated notes on the history of tableaux, probably 1977, SBP II.98.
35. It is also of note that Burton continued to organize events for the Wadsworth, as on 19 January 1971, when he organized a films series entitled "Films by Artists," with two sections, "Films in Real-Time" and "Films of Juxtaposition." For the former, he included a film about walking by Bruce Nauman (presumably *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner*, 1967-68); films by Robert Huot (*Black and White Film*, 1968-69) and Richard Serra (*Hands Scraping*, 1968, and *Hand Catching Lead*, 1968); and an excerpt from Andy Warhol's *Kitchen* (1965). "Films of Juxtaposition" included Joseph Cornell's 1939 *Rose Hobart*; a film by Rudy Burckhardt identified as *Made in Maine* (likely his 1970 *Summer*); *Sunline* (1970) by Yvonne Jacquette; and Marjorie Strider's film documentation (by Franklin Miller) of a piece done the previous summer when she and Burton were in Iowa City—1970's *Color Me (A Two-Part Autobiographical Work)*. "Films by Artists" program, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives. The events are also detailed in "Film Program Set for Atheneum by Gotham Artist," *Hartford Courant*, 18 January 1971.
36. On this history, see Hans Breder, "Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal," *Per-*

*forming Arts Journal* 17, no. 2/3 (May–September 1995): 112–20. For a useful history of the concept of intermedia (defined and popularized by Dick Higgins in 1966), see Hannah B. Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 91–99.

37. See Julia P. Herzberg, “Ana Mendieta, the Iowa Years: A Critical Study, 1969 through 1977” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1998); and John Perreault, “Ana Mendieta: The Politics of Spirituality,” in *Covered in Time and History: The Films of Ana Mendieta*, ed. Howard Oransky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 36.
38. Kachur I, 70.
39. Letter from Burton to Jerome Robbins, 20 June 1970. Jerome Robbins Papers, Performing Arts Library, New York Public Library.
40. Sandy Skoglund quoted in Herzberg, “Ana Mendieta, the Iowa Years,” 98, and paraphrased 136n32.
41. Gregory Battcock, “Museums’ Anti-shows,” *Art and Artists* 4 (January 1970): 1.
42. Letter to the editor from “Members of the Art and Urban Environment Course,” *Daily Iowan*, 7 July 1970, 2. The Larew Plumbing Company building was located at 227 E. Washington Street, and *The Iowa City People’s Hole* was at 229 E. Washington Street.
43. Letter to the editor from “Members of the Art and Urban Environment Course,” 2.
44. This is mentioned in the description of the project offered by a graduate student in the course, Michael Eilenfeldt: “A big concrete box in the ground which once enclosed a basement and which now lies open and exposed to the city sky and air. . . . Passersby toss in trash as they walk along the rickety fence which is painted with folk poetry in large letters such as ‘Gay Power.’” Marjorie Strider Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Series 5, 3.8.
45. Marjorie Strider Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Series 5, 3.1.
46. I was reminded of this by Jack Fritscher who explained to me that the publishers of one of his books in 1970 did not allow the word. “I was limited to using the word ‘homophile’ and we discussed how academia and media were both wary of the word ‘gay.’ It was 1970, only eight months after Stonewall, which had not yet gestated all it came to symbolize.” Electronic communication from Jack Fritscher, 18 September 2017. As well, in 1971 the Gay Activists Alliance had their application for incorporation rejected on the basis of their name, which was deemed by the deputy secretary of state to be not “appropriate” because of its “connotations.” See Walter H. Waggoner, “Fight Is Pressed by Homosexuals,” *New York Times*, 25 February 1971, 32.
47. Letter to the editor from Peter Lytle, *Daily Iowan*, 18 July 1970, 2.
48. Unidentified newspaper clipping, 1970, Marjorie Strider Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

49. See Herzberg, "Ana Mendieta, the Iowa Years," 98–101. Burton did not meet Mendieta until 1983.
50. See Breder, "Intermedia," 115.
51. Letter from Burton to Jerome Robbins, 6 July 1970, Jerome Robbins Papers, Performing Arts Library, New York Public Library.
52. *Furniture Landscape* was shown on campus grounds on 31 July 1970, with Strider's *For D.W.* and Breder's *Eclipse I*. SBP II.4.
53. In his customary fashion, Burton would later describe this early work in self-deprecatory terms: "The work was the temporary installation, which wasn't exactly a performance. You moved through rooms. There were clearings in the forest. . . . Very corny." Kachur I, 71–72. This 1987 statement could be contrasted to the 1983 laudatory remarks (see next endnote) on the work.
54. Gerald Marzorati, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Furniture Maker," *Metropolitan Home* 15 (November 1983): 36.
55. Draft notes titled "Some Recent Works: A Lecture on Myself" (1971 version of *Lecture on Self*), SBP II.52.
56. It was up for at least a few months. The artist Miriam Bloom, then a painting student at Iowa, remembers seeing it in the subsequent fall semester. See Herzberg, "Ana Mendieta, the Iowa Years," 100.
57. *Ten Tableaux* was shown at the University Theater on 5 August 1970, with Strider's *Cinematic* and *Color Me (A Two-Part Autobiographical Work)* and Breder's *Eclipse II*. SBP II.4. *Ten Tableaux* was performed by Jana Berger, Barbara Berry, Linda Lee, Carole Messerschmidt, Susan Sheridan, Sharon Souder, Robert Ernst, Bruce Hall, Leslie Sha, Michael Sokoloff, Thomas Tindall, and Joe Wells.
58. Scott Burton to James Elliot, 25 August 1970, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives.
59. SBP II.4.
60. SBP II.19.
61. SBP II.19.
62. SBP II.19.
63. In an early note with ideas for performance, he proposed a piece titled *Card Players* that recalled Paul Cezanne's famous paintings on the same theme. SBP II.15.
64. "Lecture on Self," CW 238–39.
65. "Lecture on Self," CW 239.
66. SBP II.52.
67. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 16 November 2019.
68. Telephone interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
69. Marcia Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble: Forty Years in the New York Art World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 88. In my interviews with them, both Kaufman and Solomon emphasized the importance of this group. This group, in turn, contributed to the spread of feminist ideas in the art world as its founding members (such as Tucker) established new institutions. See Michelle Moravec, "Toward a History of Feminism, Art,



and Social Movements in the United States,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 22–54.

70. Burton’s involvement with the Art Workers Coalition was informed by the idea that the AWC was advocating for women and Black artists. This idea proved limited, and accusations of sexism led to the breakaway group Women Artists Revolutionaries in 1969. Before this, Burton was part of the protests for free admission to museums that were called for by the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition and the AWC in 1969. In a protest action that was one of Burton’s first performances, he handed out dimes to Manhattan elites as they entered the museum for a VIP exhibition opening. As Lucy Lippard noted, this was “an ironic emulation of John D. Rockefeller’s habit of distributing dimes to workers while making millions of dollars off them.” See Lucy Lippard, “Biting the Hand: Artists and Museums in New York since 1969,” in *Alternative Art, New York, 1965–1985*, ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 97–98. I refer to this as “Dimes” in the works list, and I believe that it occurred as part of the AWC protests at the opening of *Twentieth-Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection*, which opened at the Museum of Modern Art on 26 May 1969. For discussion of this evening, see Alex Goss, *The Untold Sixties* (New York: Cross-Cultural Research Project, 2010), 418, which also provides a detailed first-person account of the AWC’s factionalisms.
71. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
72. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
73. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
74. Kaufman relayed a story from the mid-1970s that gives an indication. Burton tried to get Donald Droll, his gallerist and friend, to take on Kaufman at the gallery. Droll initially refused, saying he did not want a feminist artist, and was swayed only once Burton got angry and threatened to leave the gallery. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
75. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
76. Kachur I, 20.
77. In his catalogue for the *Realist Revival* exhibition, Burton quoted from a 1968 lecture Nochlin gave at Vassar College, where she taught at the time. CW 201. This talk was part of the research for Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971).
78. Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” *ARTnews* 69, no. 9 (January 1971): 22–39, 67–71.
79. Sabra Moore, *Openings: A Memoir from the Women’s Art Movement, New York City 1970–1992* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 71.
80. Finch was struggling financially. When it was forced to close in 1975, the museum sold off its collections. Grace Glueck, “Finch College Museum Sells Collection,” *New York Times*, 4 June 1975, 24.
81. *Eighteen Pieces* was performed by Michelle Creedon, Frances Denney, Eileen Frawley, Suzanne Glasser, Amy Hirsch, Stephen Holden, Jane Kaufman,

Grace Kipp, Peggy Leary, Alan Martell, Pam Piech, Adrienne Reilly, Libby Sampson, and Frank Torres. The majority of the performers were students at Finch, but Burton brought in Kaufman and Frank Torres for *Disguise Piece* as well as two men performers for the dreamlike *Allegorical Tableau Vivant*.

82. Email from Michael Harwood, 23 March 2017.
83. Ronny Helene Cohen, "A Piece on 'Pieces,'" *Forum*, 1971, clipping in SBP II.34.
84. Telephone Interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
85. SBP II.34.
86. Sound script for *Theater of the Ear: Rape of the Sabine Women*, 1971, SBP II.34.
87. The Finch College newspaper reported, "The Nicolas Poussin canvas received stiff competition if not complementation from the highly entertaining sound track which penetrated the air of the darkened auditorium, bringing the signs [*sic*], grunts, & ecstasies of different victories and defeats, using the sounds of a cavalry horde in beginning and terminating the audial narrative. The ear was taken on a trip through the different motives similar to the journey the eye takes in analyzing an art work." Ronny Helene Cohen, "A Piece on 'Pieces,'" *Forum*, 1971, clipping in SBP II.34.
88. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010. A full list of the sounds used in the film is in SBP II.34.
89. Cohen called it a "highly entertaining sound track," in "A Piece on 'Pieces,'" 1971, clipping in SBP II.34.
90. I have not been able to view the film, the only copy of which is in SBP V.31 and is in need of restoration. Consequently, my analysis comes from descriptions by Kaufman and Burton's notes in SBP II.34.
91. SBP II.34.
92. SBP II.34.
93. For historiographic discussion of this tendency, see Wendy Leeks, "Ingres Other-Wise," *Oxford Art Journal* 9, no. 1 (1996): 29-37.
94. Marilyn R. Brown, "The Harem Dehistoricized: Ingres' *Turkish Bath*," *Arts Magazine* 61 (Summer 1987): 58-68; Leeks, "Ingres Other-Wise"; and, for further context, Carol Ockman, *Ingres's Eroticized Bodies: Retracing the Serpentine Line* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
95. Telephone Interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
96. SBP II.34.
97. My identification of the statue is based on the slides used for Burton's *Lecture on Self*, which include five different views of a plaster of Falguière's sculpture as the entry for *Sculpture-Theater*. SBP II.52 for slide list, with slides at SBP V.11. The choice of Gérôme's Phryne (via Falguière) is significant for its characteristic pose in which Phryne's right arm covers her eyes in self-protection after being exposed to the jury of men. It raises issues of voyeurism and scrutiny that would have been readable from this pose even for viewers without knowledge of the myths surrounding Phryne. On the use of this pose and iconography in debates about aestheticism and

morality in the nineteenth century, see Judith Ryan, “More Seductive Than Phryne: Baudelaire, Gérôme, Rilke, and the Problem of Autonomous Art,” *PMLA* 108, no. 5 (October 1993): 1128–41.

98. SBP II.34. Burton also referred to *Poses* as *Twelve Poses* in later notes.
99. “Lecture on Self,” CW 239.
100. Descriptions of *Eighteen Pieces*, 1971, SBP II.34. Burton’s *Disguise Piece* was also in direct conversation with Costa, whose *You See a Dress* (performed in Burton’s program *Four Theater Pieces* for the Wadsworth Atheneum the year before) also used gender transgression in this way. In a spoken-word piece he compared to hypnotism, Costa asked audiences to imagine a play with a beautiful woman in a dress who slowly takes off her clothes to reveal that her breasts are prosthetic and that she has a penis. Costa’s piece relied on verbal description of an imagined scene, whereas Burton’s *Disguise Piece* visualized the ways in which clothing could be used to transform oneself. Costa, “You See a Dress,” 70–71.
101. Cohen, “A Piece on ‘Pieces,’” 1971, clipping in SBP II.34.
102. Such investigations with clothing continued. In notes for a 1973 performance for five people, he sketched out an idea in which five actors would perform five different gender positions, including a “woman posing as a man” and a “man posing as a woman” with ten poses that were “stereotypically masc[uline] or fem[inine].” The final performer would be “totally ambiguous—man or woman?—standing perfectly still.” Scott Burton, notes for “5 People, Sexes” performance, 1973 [?], SB II.51. In another early note, he had an idea for a “Drag piece [with] 4 or 5 friends / 5 min each onstage.” SBP II.15.
103. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 May 2010.
104. Telephone interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
105. SBP II.34. Also of note was *Allegorical Tableau Vivant*, which Burton called a “private allegory” and a “psychological piece.” This intentionally opaque allegory about love and time was the only work that evening to include a naked performer: “Youth, a male prostrate boy wrapped in the skirts of Love,” as Burton’s notes described him. Cohen, for the Finch *Forum*, slyly and dryly remarked that the audience’s “interest focused on the nude male member, who along with his partner worshipped the second masked female.” Cohen, “A Piece on ‘Pieces,’” 1971, clipping in SBP II.34. Harwood recalled about the evening at Finch that it was “so colorful, witty and opulent, and even incorporated a nude man.” Email from Michael Harwood, 23 March 2017. If we understand Burton’s *Eighteen Pieces* as asking how he might engage with feminism’s critique of the use of images of women in art history and visual culture, which I think is borne out by the consistency of the works’ themes, then it is striking that the one naked live body was of Youth lying face down.
106. Richard Meyer, “Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 383.

107. "Lecture on Self," CW 241.
108. Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Ray Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970); Robert Sommer, *Personal Space: The Behavioral Basis of Design* (New York: Spectrum Books, 1969); Albert Schefflen and Alice Schefflen, *Body Language and Social Order: Communication as Behavior Control* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972). There are also scattered references to McLuhan (SBP II.18) and Bateson (SBP II.68) in Burton's notes. For further context, see Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Donna De Salvo, ed. *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970* (London: Tate, 2005); Pamela Lee, *Think Tank Aesthetics: Midcentury Modernism, the Cold War, and the Neoliberal Present* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020); Catherine Spencer, *Beyond the Happening: Art and the Politics of Communication* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); and Judith Rodenbeck's special issue of *Art Journal* 67, no. 3 (2008) dealing with legacies of cybernetics.
109. Scott Burton to Martin Friedman, 14 March 1972, Walker Art Center Archives. Quoted in Joan Rothfuss and Elizabeth Carpenter, eds., *Bits and Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole: Walker Art Center Collections* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2005), 146.
110. The notes for the film are undated, but they contain references to literature published in 1977.
111. Telephone interview with Mac McGinnes, 29 April 2010.
112. Hall's book was also important to others in Burton's circle, such as Vito Acconci. See Karen Wright, "Vito Acconci," *Interview Magazine* online, 9 August 2009, at <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/vito-acconci-1>, accessed 16 July 2018.
113. Hall, *Hidden Dimension*, 1.
114. As Hall explained about his cross-cultural chapters, their aim was "first, to shed additional light on our own out-of-awareness patterns and by this means hopefully contribute to improved design of living and working structures and cities as well; and second, to show the great need for improved intercultural understanding. Proxemic patterns point up in sharp contrast some of the basic differences between people." Hall, 129.
115. For instance, there are notes for an unrealized performance titled *50 Gestures* that Burton would have performed himself. This idea seems to predate *Behavior Tableaux*. SBP II.15.
116. Burton may have also encountered Birdwhistell's ideas in a more concise form because of his work in the 1960s in teaching literature at the School of Visual Arts. A widely read book that helped popularize the cybernetic study of communication and media was Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, eds., *Explorations in Communication* (Boston: Beacon, 1960). It was an ambitious and popular book with many prominent names (include Daisetz Suzuki on Buddhist symbolism, Sigfried Giedion on prehistoric art, and

Fernand Léger on color). Birdwhistell is represented in the book in a brief essay on kinesics (which was later incorporated into *Kinesics and Context*), and it follows the literary critic Northrop Frye's essay "Language of Poetry." Burton's later notes (for instance, for the didactic film) compare Frye's analysis of the rhythms of speech as an analogue to the ways in which non-verbal bodily language operated. In particular, Burton cited Northrop Frye, *The Well-Tempered Critic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963) in SBP II.43.

117. For instance, in interviews with Richard Francis in 1985 (unpublished, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 756A) and Lewis Kachur in 1987 (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution).
118. This work was tied up with the internationalist politics of the Cold War and the increasingly complex problems of intercultural communication and translation. In fact, the early publication of Birdwhistell's annotation method was sponsored by the Foreign Service Institute of the US Department of State (which also was encouraging cross-cultural and area studies in American universities). See Ray Birdwhistell, *Introduction to Kinesics: An Annotation System for Analysis of Body Motion and Gesture* (Washington, DC: Department of State Foreign Service Institute, 1952).
119. On the centrality of film in Birdwhistell's methodology and, more generally, in the study of behavior in these years, see Seth Barry Watter, "Scrutinizing: Film and the Microanalysis of Behavior," *Grey Room* 66 (Winter 2017): 32–69.
120. Sommer noted, "This is not intended to be a book for architects, designers, or city planners as such, even though several chapters are aimed more or less in their direction." Sommer, *Personal Space*, 7.
121. "Notes on 'Body Language' Piece," 1971, CW 225.
122. "Application to Jerome Robbins Fund," 1972, CW 226.
123. It is listed on a note page titled "Material for Linda S." in SBP II.59.
124. Sommer's book is discussed in Kachur II, 8.
125. Kachur II, 8.
126. Julius Fast, *Body Language* (New York: M. Evans, 1970).
127. Julius Fast, *What You Should Know about Human Sexual Response* (New York: Putnam, 1966).
128. In the following decade, when Burton was asked about proxemics and kinesics in interviews, he would swipe at the popularized literature. In 1985, he remarked, "A few of the scientists—social scientists—study [body language]. This guy Birdwhistell and a couple of other people, but there hasn't been—and there's been one dreadful popularized book. I mean the guy says a woman wants to get fucked, she sticks her tits out. I mean, it's so superficial." Scott Burton interviewed by Richard Francis, 1985, Tate Gallery Archives, TAV756A. For all its sometimes indulgent detail, Fast's book does not really fit this description, especially since it is also at times technical and contentious with its sources (notably, in a disagreement with Birdwhistell on pp. 153–60). It is more likely that Burton was referring to the later *Man-*

*watching: A Field Guide to Human Behavior* by Desmond Morris (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977). Especially as Burton became a serious student of these concepts in the course of the 1970s, he became highly critical of the genre of popularized scientific writing such as this. As well, he was at pains to emphasize the seriousness of his study of these concepts, so had to repudiate their pop culture manifestations.

129. Fast, *Body Language*, 30, emphasis in the original.
130. Fast, 31.
131. It is also important to note that Fast's account of male-male intimacy takes as its foil Arab societies and what he describes as their permissiveness toward male-male touching. This counterexample was derived from the Orientalism embedded in Hall's study, which offered a cross-cultural analysis of spatial relations focusing on Arab and Japanese alternatives. This theme is exaggerated in Fast's retelling of it. Again, a homoeroticism surges beneath Fast's Orientalist fantasies of Arab men touching: "The Arab likes to touch his companion, to feel and to smell him. To deny a friend his breath is to be ashamed." Fast, 38. This account fits only too well in the long tradition of Western gay culture looking to North Africa and the Middle East as zones of erotic potential. For history and critique of such perspectives, see Joseph Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
132. Fast, *Body Language*, 104.
133. Fast, 148.
134. Fast, 76–77.
135. The 1971 edition published by Pan Books, London.
136. My favorite line from Fast's book recounts an autobiographical episode. It follows after a discussion of organizational hierarchies and their visual symbols: "But even without the symbols, the pecking order remains. I have seen privates in a shower room deferential to sergeants without knowing who they were or what their rank was." Fast, *Body Language*, 47.
137. Schefflen and Schefflen, *Body Language and Social Order*.
138. Albert Schefflen, *How Behavior Means* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974).
139. Fast, *Body Language*, 130.
140. Schefflen and Schefflen, *Body Language and Social Order*, 78.
141. Schefflen and Schefflen, 64.
142. Schefflen and Schefflen, 64. For more on "swish" behaviors and attempts to suppress them, see Craig M. Loftin, "Unacceptable Mannerisms: Gender Anxieties, Homosexual Activism, and Swish in the United States, 1945–1965," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (2007): 577–96.
143. Excerpts from a 10 October 1979 interview in Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 80–81.
144. Burton quoted in Patricia Krebs, "Body Movement Key to His Art," 1977, undated press clipping from *Greensboro News and Record*, SBP II.68.

### Chapter Three

1. Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 91.
2. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
3. In his negotiations with Joachim Diederichs, curator of performance for documenta 6, Burton called *Individual Behavior Tableaux* the “third and last set of my series, ‘Behavior Tableaux’ (the first set was at the Whitney in 1972, the second at the Guggenheim this year).” Scott Burton to Joachim Diederichs, 10 December 1976, SBP II.75.
4. Kachur II, 13.
5. A good indication of this reputation is in the foundational history of performance art: RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 111. Goldberg first discussed Burton in RoseLee Goldberg, “Recent Performance Work,” *Studio International* 191, no. 981 (May/June 1976): 290.
6. Scott Burton and Linda Shearer interviewed by Mimi Posner for New York Public Radio’s series Round and about the Guggenheim, WNYC-FM, 24 March 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives. The Guggenheim’s claim is based on the length devoted to a single performance, and it was likely in competition with the Whitney Museum’s major series Performances: Four Evenings, Four Days, also in late February 1976.
7. Both Nina Felshin and Max Protetch recall there being a “box of videotapes,” but there are no video recordings in the MoMA archive, nor have I been able to locate videos elsewhere. There is evidence throughout the archive of Burton commissioning video recordings of the performances, including at the Whitney and the Guggenheim. Neither museum has been able to locate any copies. The one extant video documentation is of the 1980 *Individual Behavior Tableaux*, housed in the Pacific Film Archive. There is also a brief inclusion of some of the video footage of the 1976 *Pair Behavior Tableaux* in the 1980 film *14 Americans: Directions of the 1970s*, dir. Michael Blackwood.
8. Burton quoted in Auping, *30 Years*, 11.
9. Burton characterized these works as drawing on Minimalism but also expanding into postminimalism’s engagement with variation and empathetic content. He explained in 1973 that he “made the order and length [of the scenes in *Group Behavior Tableaux*] purely thematic—abandoning the last link with Minimalist and systemic structure. . . . Emotionally charged material (this time of social transaction rather than isolation) is also present and also distanced.” “Lecture on Self,” CW 239–40.
10. Burton in John Howell, “Acting/Non-acting: Scott Burton [Interview],” *Performance Art 2* (1979): 8.
11. Stanley’s experimental dance performances, such as *Le Roi Soleil* (1972), would also use blackouts, poses, and costumes in ways Burton had started

- using in 1971. See Don McDonagh, "Dance: 3 in the 'Village,'" *New York Times*, 12 December 1972, 63. Starting in the 1960s, Stanley had been an actor in productions at Judson Memorial Church and the important Off Off Broadway venue Caffe Cino, which he ran from 1967 to 1968. In addition to being a playwright and experimental choreographer, he was one of the founders of the Talking Band. See Don McDonagh, "Charles Stanley, 38, An Actor and Dancer," *New York Times*, 18 September 1977, 44.
12. He continued, "He would get really upset if we moved in a jerky way or in a way that wasn't neutral." Telephone interview with Michael Harwood, 21 April 2010.
  13. Burton in Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 8. The hairstyles of the five performers differed in the Whitney *Group Behavior Tableaux* (which, after all, only had one performance), but later multigure performances would have a greater degree of interchangeability and uniformity.
  14. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  15. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  16. DeCelle 16-17.
  17. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
  18. SBP II.18.
  19. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
  20. Email from Michael Harwood, 14 March 2017.
  21. Peter Frank, "Performances and Publications," *Soho Weekly News*, 24 April 1975, 16.
  22. See discussions in Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1990); Frances Colpitt, "The Issue of Boredom: Is It Interesting?," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 359-65; and Richard Lind, "Why Isn't Minimal Art Boring?," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 195-97.
  23. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017. Burton's work could also be compared to the mobilization of boredom by Jack Smith, whose work Burton knew and whose performances he attended. See Dominic Johnson, *Glorious Catastrophe: Jack Smith, Performance and Visual Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 35-57.
  24. John Perreault, "Burton's Robot Lovers," *Soho Weekly News*, 11 March 1976, 16.
  25. Perreault, 16.
  26. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance as Sculpture," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 1 (September 1976): 116.
  27. Janet Kardon, "Scott Burton at Idea Warehouse," 1975, unpublished manuscript in SBP II.58.
  28. CW 229.
  29. Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 9, my emphasis.
  30. Kardon, "Scott Burton at Idea Warehouse."
  31. As Teresa Brennan argued, "the transmission of affect means that we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction



between the “individual” and the “environment.” But transmission does not mean that a person’s particular emotional experience is irrelevant. We may influence the registration of the transmitted affect in a variety of ways; affects are not received or registered in a vacuum.” Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 2004 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), EPUB loc 200.

32. Scott Burton to Joachim Diederichs, 10 December 1976, SBP II.75.
33. Scott Burton to Stephen Weil, 31 May 1971, Burton File, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives. Burton sent to Weil a version of the text reprinted in CW 225–26.
34. This consolidation to two weeks of concentrated activity was new that year. Stephen Weil to Scott Burton, 9 July 1971, Burton File, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives. The festival kicked off with a concert by Duke Ellington and included separate evenings of dance works by Yvonne Rainer, Viola Farber, and James Cunningham/Acme Dance Company. The avant-garde theater troupe Mabou Mines performed short works by Samuel Beckett and Lee Breuer, and poetry events included readings by Gerard Malanga, David Antin, and Ted Berrigan as well as a multimedia performance of Kenneth Koch’s extended poem “The Artist” with visuals by Larry Rivers. See Stephen E. Weil, “Performing Arts,” in *The Whitney Review 1971–1972* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972), 8–11.
35. Weil responded to Burton, “I liked the outline of the ‘Body Language’ piece immensely and *would* be interested in talking about it for the Museum. The problem, as you say, is one of money.” Stephen Weil to Scott Burton, 9 July 1971, Burton File, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives.
36. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 22 July 1971, in ECC.
37. Their correspondence started up again around 1969, when Burton wrote a letter to Robbins after he had heard that Robbins had been in the hospital for an operation, parenthetically adding a note about his breakup: “The praying mantis left me.” Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, n.d. (ca. 1969), Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts.
38. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 22 July 1971, in ECC.
39. Robbins’s foundation, because of tax laws, could not give grants to individuals, so they developed a plan to have the Whitney make the application. Burton wrote to Weil, “Do you think, Steve, that the Whitney could check this out? It’s the only way I know I could get money to do the piece.” Scott Burton to Stephen Weil, 9 August 1971, Burton File, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives. In Robbins’s papers, there are two letters that indicate how this was arranged. The first, written by Burton in carefully printed script, has a formal tone. It starts, “First let me thank you for making your recent trip here to discuss my project with me,” and then goes on to discuss an application to Robbins’s foundation for a grant so that Burton could produce a performance. Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 15 August 1971, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts. A more

hastily written note by Burton follows in the archive. This one starts, “Hope this letter is all right. . . . The tone of the letter is formal but the point—my thanks for help—is absolutely genuine.” Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 17 August 1971, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts. Robbins’s reply took up the same veneer of professionalism, saying, “It was good to meet with you in Crete and I was fascinated with your ideas. . . . What a shame to be in Crete and only spend such a few days there. I guess business should always be done in New York.” Jerome Robbins to Scott Burton, 27 August 1971, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts. In the end, the foundation provided a grant of \$500, half of the \$1,065 of the application. Burton File, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives. Burton received a second grant from the Robbins Foundation that was funneled through the Creative Arts Public Service Program (CAPS) of the City of New York in the amount of \$500 in support of the American Theater Lab performances. The Robbins Foundation would later provide Burton with a grant of \$400 to support the Idea Warehouse performances in 1975. SBP II.58.

40. Harwood recalled, “Scott was the only one of the cast I knew socially, and the only ‘intrigue’ or disruption I recall was caused by Jean-Claude, my boyfriend at the time, who ran lights for the tableaux. He was an actor, but taller than Scott wanted for the cast and so offered to tech. On the night prior to the Whitney performance, Jean-Claude threatened to quit because his pay was lower than the cast’s (\$75 vs. \$100, something like that), which he’d already known since day one of rehearsals. Scott had to give in, but that ruined their friendship, no doubt Jean-Claude’s intention, and that was the last time I’d be asked to perform in the Behavior Tableaux.” Email from Michael Harwood, 14 March 2017.
41. “Lecture on Self,” CW 242.
42. Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 1 May 1972, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts. This letter also contains the information that, at this time, Burton was in a relationship with the openly gay playwright Lanford Wilson, whose work often engaged with queer experience and social outcasts, as with the well-received 1965 *Balm in Gilead* or the (unrealized) adaptation from Tennessee Williams’s *One Arm*. See Don Shewey, “Lanford Wilson Hears America Talking,” *Rolling Stone*, 22 July 1982, 18.
43. “Lecture on Self,” CW 241.
44. “Lecture on Self,” CW 240.
45. “Lecture on Self,” CW 241.
46. See, for instance, the sections “The Subjected ‘Soul’” and “Caricature and Collectivity” in Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of Gay Self*, trans. Michael Lucey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 63–76.
47. Scott Burton to Lincoln Kirstein, 24 April 1972, SBP II.44. Kirstein did support the American Theater Lab performances in the amount of \$500. Lin-

coln Kirstein to Scott Burton, 1 September 1972, SBP II.44. He was listed as an “anonymous donor” on the program. Kirstein wrote back to Burton: “It was good to hear from you. I have missed seeing you more than you perhaps realize. However, the age-gap grows and one hesitates to assume that it can be easily bridged.” Lincoln Kirstein to Scott Burton, 1 September 1972, SBP II.44.

48. When Burton presented *Group Behavior Tableaux* at American Theater Lab later in 1972, he revised the thematic scenes and shortened the work. In the revised version, there were five themes. Burton changed the second half of the piece, with the one-on-four ringleader theme and the four-on-one bullying theme being reworked and interwoven. This allowed Burton to re-group some tableaux into a fifth theme in which all five characters are isolated from each other, with all community or concord broken down. He also shortened the overall piece, since the extreme duration of the first version was too taxing for some audience members, who walked out. Letter from Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 1 May 1972, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts. An overview of the revision’s themes can be found in Roberta Smith, “Scott Burton, American Theater Lab,” *Arts Magazine* 47, no. 3 (1973): 81–82. A summary of the structure of the American Theater Lab version (which, unfortunately, conflates some details with the Whitney version) can also be found in Ronald Argelander, “Scott Burton’s *Behavior Tableaux* (1970–72),” *The Drama Review* 17, no. 3 (September 1973): 109–13. Despite his work on the revision, Burton would later (as in *Lecture on Self*) recount the first Whitney Museum iteration of *Group Behavior Tableaux* as definitive.
49. Burton quoted in Edit deAk and Walter Robinson, “An Article on Scott Burton in the Form of a Resumé,” *Art-Rite* 8 (Winter 1975): 10. I have changed the duration to thirty seconds in accord with Burton’s handwritten corrections of this article in the Linda Shearer papers, Guggenheim Museum Archives.
50. Excised passage in paginated slide notes for *Lecture on Self*, 1973, p. 17, SBP II.52.
51. Interview with Mac McGinnes, 2 November 2012.
52. These instructions are taken from the flash cards and handwritten lists of instructions in SBP II.37.
53. “Theatre Project for Whitney Museum / Application to Jerome Robbins Fund (1972),” CW 226.
54. Selections from *Group Behavior Tableaux* script [character E], collection of Michael Harwood. For readability, I have written out Harwood’s abbreviations for stage location used in the manuscript, e.g., “Table Upstage” for TU and “Downstage Right Cot” for DRC.
55. Email from Michael Harwood, 14 March 2017.
56. *Group Behavior Tableaux* occurred in one of the large painting galleries of the Whitney’s Marcel Breuer building. According to Burton (Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15), there was

seventy-five-foot distance, which remained Burton's ideal for the format. One reviewer erroneously claimed it was just forty feet, conflating it with the more compressed American Theater Lab presentation, the distance of which was reduced by about 30–35 percent from the Whitney's seventy-five feet. Argelander, "Burton's *Behavior Tableaux*," 110. Throughout the decade, Burton maintained that the minimum distance was fifty feet.

57. CW 229.
58. John Perreault, "A Dance of Silent Victims," *Village Voice*, 27 April 1972, 32.
59. Perreault, 32.
60. These names come from the list of seats reserved by Burton for the performances at American Theater Lab, SBP II.44.
61. Scott Burton to Jerome Robbins, 1 May 1972, Jerome Robbins Papers, New York Library for the Performing Arts.
62. Edith Weismann, Secretary, Jerome Robbins Foundation, to Scott Burton, 18 March 1975, SBP II.58.
63. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
64. In his letter of application to the Idea Warehouse program, Burton listed *Slide Novella* along with the Whitney and Finch performances as a means of contextualizing his idea for a single-person tableaux work. Scott Burton to Idea Warehouse, n.d. [1975], P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art. Kaufman recalled of *Slide Novella* that it told a story of a woman who lost her lover. Many of the scenes were of her upset ("a lot of shots of me curled up in bed") until, in the closing images, she goes into the street where she drops a scarf ("a symbol of being free from the pain"). Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017. The slides are in SBP II.35.
65. Burton had earlier written to Solomon (in her capacity as a curator) at the Whitney Museum proposing this sixty-foot light box wall sculpture for their lobby space. (With the name change, Burton redated *Photonovella* to 1971–73.) Scott Burton to Elke Solomon, 15 September 1974, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives. He discussed it in deAk and Robinson, "Article on Scott Burton," 10.
66. Probably because of the melodramatic visual conventions on which Burton drew for *Slide Novella*, this photograph also oddly appeared as an illustration in an otherwise unrelated article by Arnold Hutschnecker, "Beauty and Health: Is Fear Contagious?," *Vogue* 165, no. 5 (1975): 145.
67. *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior* precedes Solomon's own performances, which she stated began in 1976. Unlike the silent work of Burton's, Solomon's performances were voluble and based in wordplay. Elke Solomon interview by Flavia Rando, 3 May 2006, New York Feminist Art Institute Oral History Project, Rutgers University Library.
68. SBP II.58.
69. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
70. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
71. Alanna Heiss to Charlemagne Palestine, 5 February 1975, SBP II.58.

72. Later in the decade, Burton said that he had intended Solomon to perform in the nude, but that it was too cold in the space. This may have been a retrospective invention to link the work to the nude *Individual Behavior Tableaux* works on which Burton was engaged when he gave the interview. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15. If the space was cold, the nightgown Solomon wore seems ineffectual.
73. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
74. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
75. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 4 April 1975, in ECC. For financial reasons, he was forced to start up again at the magazine half time once the performance had completed.
76. Kardon, "Scott Burton at Idea Warehouse."
77. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
78. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa 4 April 1975, in ECC.
79. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
80. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
81. Telephone interview with Linda Shearer, 28 June 2017.
82. In addition to making this claim, both Burton and Shearer emphasized the nomenclature of "exhibition" in their radio interview with Mimi Posner for New York Public Radio's series Round and about the Guggenheim, WNYC-FM, 24 March 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.
83. An internal memo to Guggenheim curator Linda Shearer noted, "I also thought you'd be pleased to know that a total of 832 people attended the thirty performances, out of a possible 900." H.B. to Linda S[hearer], 22 April 1976, SBP II.59.
84. Stanley and Smead were both in the American Theater Lab *Group Behavior Tableaux* (Stanley had also been in its Whitney premiere) and performed together throughout the early 1970s in Stanley's experimental dance performances. Smead (who later also went by the nickname Jack Smead) was a musician in the Chicago protopunk band the Banshees and moved to New York in 1971, becoming a fixture in the East Village, where he cofounded the in-house band at St. Mark's Bar in addition to a number of other musical groups.
85. Scott Burton to Linda Shearer, 15 May 1975, SBP II.59.
86. Initially, Burton had intended there to be two beds, which in the final version became the large central bench shared by both. Scott Burton to Linda Shearer, 15 May 1975, SBP II.59. Also in 1976, Burton used platforms on his miniature bronze chairs (five inches high) made for his exhibition at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
87. Burton described it as "Imperceptible make-up. It just sort of washed the features." Kachur II, 10.
88. Scott Burton to Linda Shearer, 15 May 1975, SBP II.59.
89. The reviewer for the *Village Voice* explained, "*Pair Behavior Tableaux* takes

place in the Guggenheim Museum's auditorium, but with no normal use of the auditorium's space—the rows of cushioned seats are left empty, while the tiny audience (capacity 30) is seated in hard folding chairs in what is usually the cross-aisle between the orchestra and mezzanine. The result is to put an unbridgeable gulf between the spectators and the performers onstage." Michael Feingold, "Mr. Burton Makes Music with Bodies," *Village Voice*, 8 March 1976, 93.

90. Telephone interview with Linda Shearer, 28 June 2017.
91. Perreault, "Burton's Robot Lovers," 16.
92. Feingold, "Mr. Burton Makes Music with Bodies," 93.
93. Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 10.
94. Notes on *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, SBP II.59.
95. The reference is to Douglas Sirk, the filmmaker of arch melodramas that became an inspiration to queer filmmakers such as Rainer Fassbinder (whose famous *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* took Sirk's 1955 *All That Heaven Allows* as its model), John Waters, and Todd Haynes (whose *Far from Heaven* returned to the same movie). Fassbinder's films before encountering Sirk's work were more intellectually than emotionally driven, often using a static shot to emulate the effect of theater. With this double reference to the two filmmakers, Perreault signaled a queer context for Burton's work while also providing an apt comparison for its muted narrative and intellectual rigor. It should also be noted that one of Fassbinder's most direct films about homosexuality, *Faustrecht der Freiheit* or (in the English version) *Fox and His Friends*, had come out the year before and was heralded as one of the first crossover films that featured gay characters. As I discuss in chapter 4, Burton would cite this film in his 1976 installation for the *Rooms* exhibition the same year as *Pair Behavior Tableaux*. So, even though Perreault specifies "pre-Sirk," Fassbinder's reputation in 1976 was imbued with queer themes because of the interest in the post-Sirk *Fox and His Friends* in Burton and Perreault's circles, in particular.
96. Perreault, "Burton's Robot Lovers," 16.
97. Perreault, 16.
98. Peter Frank, "Performance Diary," *Soho Weekly News*, 1 April 1976, 42.
99. Feingold, "Mr. Burton Makes Music with Bodies," 93.
100. Steven Simmons, "Scott Burton, Guggenheim Museum," *Artforum* 14, no. 9 (May 1976): 66–67.
101. Goldberg, "Recent Performance Work," 290. The reference is to the gay British painter David Hockney, whose work of the late 1960s and early 1970s included extremely large-format double portraits of couples who, like Burton's performers, were stiffly related. Jack Hazan's *A Bigger Splash*, a fictionalized documentary about Hockney that was frank in its depiction of homosexuality and sex, was released in 1973 in the United Kingdom and circulated in the United States by 1974.
102. Stefan Brecht, "Scott Burton's Pair Behavior Tableaux," 1976, unpublished

- manuscript in the Stefan Brecht Papers, Fales Library, New York University, MSS.355, box 4, folder 11, p. 1.
103. Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*, 1978 (London: Methuen, 1986).
  104. On Brecht's derisive use of "faggot" in his criticism, see Stephen J. Bottoms, "The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid: Unpacking the Performance Studies / Theatre Studies Dichotomy," *Theatre Topics* 13, no. 2 (September 2003), 173-87.
  105. Brecht, "Scott Burton's Pair Behavior Tableaux," 3.
  106. Martin Levine, in his ethnography of this stereotype, analyzed at length how gay men in the 1970s adopted forms of dress that drew from working class style but identified them to one another as gay men. Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). For a discussion of the political capacity of the clone's cultural visibility in the 1970s, see John Preston, "Good-Bye to Sally Gearhart," 1981, in *The Christopher Street Reader*, ed. Michael Demeny, Charles Ortleb, and Thomas Steele (New York: Coward-McCann, 1983), 368-80. See also the discussion in Richard Meyer, "Warhol's Clones," in *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects*, ed. Monica Dorenkamp and Richard Henke (London: Routledge, 1995), 92-122.
  107. Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 8.
  108. Brecht, "Scott Burton's Pair Behavior Tableaux," 2.
  109. Brecht, 3.
  110. Feingold, "Mr. Burton Makes Music with Bodies," 93. Another commentator went so far as to say, "Another bodily perception seems to emerge, occasionally reminiscent of the dilations, distortions or 'losses' of time produced by an LSD trip—but without any of the 'expansiveness' or irrationality: something like the cold, sober, immediate, detached hallucinatory relief born out of the 'minimal' exploration of scenic gesturality and temporality." Guy Scarpetta, "The American Body: Notes on the New Experimental Theatre," 1977, in *The Tel Quel Reader*, ed. Patrick French and Roland-François Lack (New York: Routledge, 1998), 214.
  111. Simmons, "Scott Burton, Guggenheim," 67.
  112. Perreault, "Burton's Robot Lovers," 16.
  113. Perreault, 16.
  114. "Body Language," *Newsday*, 8 February 1976, clipping in the Guggenheim Museum Archive.
  115. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  116. "Proposal for a Video on Body Language," 1977, SBP II.43.
  117. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
  118. Burton quoted in Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 9.
  119. Scott Burton in Janet Kardon, ed. *Time* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia College of Art, 1977), 12.
  120. Howell, "Acting/Non-acting," 10.
  121. There are notes for the Chicago performance (that refer to a chair and bed)

- filed in the archive among other notes for the Kassel performance (which used a chaise longue) in SBP II.75.
122. She recalled that it was supposed to be dark beige, but the felt came back more yellow. So, she ran around Chicago looking for spray paint to change it to the correct color. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 10 July 2017.
  123. SBP II.75. The custom-made furniture created by Kaufman features in the Polaroids.
  124. *Performance Art*, brochure produced by Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for its January 1977 series, SBP. II.67.
  125. SBP II.75.
  126. Patricia Stewart, "Scott Burton," *Philadelphia Arts Exchange* 1, no. 4 (July/August 1977): 8.
  127. Scott Burton interview, 1979, P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, III.B.15.
  128. DeCelle 7.
  129. The response to this was not uniformly positive (as it had largely been with the 1976 Guggenheim performance), and it appears the nudity of the performer activated the audience in different ways. One response to the embarrassment of confronting the nude body is shaming laughter, and one Chicago viewer disrupted a performance with it. A critic wrote, "During the performance I attended, a woman in the audience burst into compulsive giggles, effectively disrupting the pretentious seriousness of the atmosphere. . . . The emptiness of Burton's involuted 'art about art' strategy was also exposed." Christine Tamblyn, "Performance," unidentified 1977 clipping in SBP II.67. Reading this account, I cannot help but think of the analogous responses and scornful laughter that Édouard Manet's paintings generated in the nineteenth century, also claiming "art about art" as a spur.
  130. DeCelle 1.
  131. "Zum Arsenal der Mittel der figurativen bildenden Kunste." Scott Burton quoted in Joachim Diederichs, "Scott Burton," in *Documenta 6* (Kassel: Druck Verlag, 1977), 296.
  132. The program notes for the 1977 MCA performance also made sure to reference backward into history and to create a scene of imagined, more intimate viewing: "In adopting the tableaux form, Burton harkens back to a fully developed tradition in the late 18th and early 19th century when tableaux were often used as a form of drawing room entertainment." *Performance Art*, brochure produced by Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for its January 1977 series, SBP. II.67.
  133. DeCelle 2.
  134. Of the many writings on this topic in the 1970s, two landmark essays are Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ARTnews* 69, no. 9 (January 1971): 22-39, 67-71; and Carol Duncan, "The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art," *Heresies* 1 (January 1977): 46-50. For a thorough historiographic analysis, see Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia



- Mathews, “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (September 1987): 326–57.
135. For instance, see the discussions in Eunice Golden, “The Male Nude in Women’s Art: Dialectics of a Feminist Iconography,” *Heresies* 3, no. 4 (1981): 40–42; Linda Nochlin, “Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art,” in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730–1970*, ed. Thomas Hess and Linda Nochlin (New York: Newsweek / ARTnews Annual, 1972), 8–15. More recently, see Rachel Middleman, *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); and Richard Meyer, “Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 362–83.
136. Nochlin, “Eroticism and Female Imagery,” 13.
137. The naked/nude distinction was popularized in Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, Bolligen Series (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956).
138. Patricia Krebs, “Body Movement Key to His Art,” 1977, undated press clipping from *Greensboro News and Record*, SBP II.68. In this article, Burton’s reference to cothurni is also discussed.
139. Unidentified 1979 newspaper clipping in the archives of Eduardo Costa (perhaps from January 1979 Brazilian *Vogue?*). Costa wrote about Oiticica’s reference to Burton’s work, “Enclosed find also an excerpt of an article by Hélio where we are mentioned together.” Eduardo Costa to Scott Burton, 18 May 1979, in ECC.
140. SBP III.3.
141. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 14 August 1973, in ECC.
142. SBP II.75.
143. See Kardon, *Time*.
144. Telephone interview with Sid Sachs, 11 July 2017. Kardon recalled that the performance was “momentous and incredibly affecting.” Telephone interview with Janet Kardon, 18 September 2017.
145. Burton had also been specific about the side on which the chaise’s arm would be, but there was some confusion in the communication of this request. The piece went ahead with a left-arm chaise, whereas Burton had intended (but perhaps not clearly enough communicated) his desire for the arm to be on the right. Telephone interview with Janet Kardon, 18 September 2017. Both of the subsequent performances of *Individual Behavior Tableaux* in Kassel and in Berkeley had right-armed chaises.
146. Undated notes on furniture, SBP II.11.
147. Burton quoted in Auping, *30 Years*, 80.
148. This furniture choice was specified by Burton around the time he was finalizing the Philadelphia performance. Joachim Diederichs, that year’s documenta curator for performance, arranged a loan from the Staatstheater Kassel. Joachim Diederichs to Scott Burton, 27 May 1977, SBP II.75.

149. Scott Burton to Joachim Diederichs, 10 December 1976, SBP II.75.
150. Burton had to fight with the curators for the budget to cover Webster's fees and travel expenses, and he rejected their suggestion that he find a performer in Germany instead. Correspondence and contracts in the documenta 6 Arbeitsgruppe "Performance" Files, documenta Archiv, Kassel.
151. Telephone interview with Michael Auping, 14 July 2017.
152. Joachim Diederichs to Hans Eichel, 21 June 1977, documenta 6 Arbeitsgruppe "Performance" Files, documenta Archiv, Kassel. This letter of application to the Oberbürgermeister for use of the Rathaus's hall came just five days before Burton's first performance on the twenty-sixth. This space was vast, and Burton likely loved the odd combination of a grand neo-baroque public building with its functionalist, International-style additions, including the long Bürgersaal with its walls of plate-glass windows and clean geometries. More than anything else, however, the hall afforded Burton the seventy-foot distance that he found ideal.
153. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 16 November 1979, in ECC.
154. "I designed a very abstracted *chaise longue* for the guy to sit on, to use. It meant a lot—it was very related to some of the other pieces, but that's about the only instance." Scott Burton, audiotape of interview with Richard Francis, 1985, Tate Gallery Archive, London, TAV 756A.
155. Another member of the company was Marcia Tucker, who briefly discusses Hines in Marcia Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble: Forty Years in the New York Art World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 139–41, 164. Tucker referred to Hines as her best friend, and she included him in the inaugural exhibition in the programming of what would become the New Museum: *Memory*, in 1977 at C Space in Tribeca. Hines was also a member of the team that helped to realize Red Grooms's *Ruckus Manhattan* in 1975.
156. Telephone interview with Michael Auping, 13 July 2017.
157. 10 October 1979 interview in Auping, *30 Years*, 81, my emphasis.
158. In Auping, 80.
159. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This differs from the published version, which makes more vague the line about Burton's participation in street cruising. In his transcription from the recording, DeCelle replaced the phrase "street corners I frequent" with "on the streets." (I might speculate that this was DeCelle trying to avoid implying that Burton was a hustler. Nevertheless, the mention of the bars and bathhouses remained unchanged and clear.) In the unpublished transcription, I should also note that there was some adaptation of Burton's line about personal experience, which was simplified to "This work would be meaningless if its content were not my own personal experience" (DeCelle 17). The final 1981 published version edited this second line even further, to read: "I try to get the poses and attitudes that I see in bars, in baths and on the street. This work would be meaningless if its content were only my

personal experience.” Edward DeCelle and Mark Thompson, “Conceptual Artist Scott Burton: ‘Homocentric’ Art as Moral Proposition,” *Advocate*, no. 310 (22 January 1981): T10.

160. DeCelle 1–2.
161. Another example of Burton’s attempt to reject a narrow categorization of his work as gay art (and an example of a disingenuous claim that the queer themes were not conscious) is a 1979 interview with John Howell, who prompted, “But, you know there’s more personal content than you’ve let on.” Burton replied “I know there’s a certain homosexual content which I do not put in. But somehow it comes out. The actors never do anything sexual. The audience may see something like that but it’s not there.” Howell, “Acting/Non-acting,” 10. Again, Burton’s notes and statements about *Behavior Tableaux* contradict this claim, and it relied on an overly literal interpretation by Burton that there was no sexual contact depicted.
162. The range of cruising’s possible locations and elaborate behavioral codes in 1970s New York City are detailed in Edward William Delph, *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978).
163. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 9 April 1979, in ECC.
164. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 21 September 1978, in ECC. Burton’s date-books include mentions of shifts at the Mineshaft beginning in March 1978 (with the latest being September), indicating that he was at least intermittently employed there for over half of 1978. SBP III.5. He continued his involvement with the club for at least another year, as is evidenced by his founding of the Short Ass Club at the Mineshaft in 1979 (see discussion in chapter 4).
165. Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon, 2004), 19. For further context, see John Preston, “The Theater of Sexual Initiation,” in *My Life as a Pornographer and Other Indecent Acts* (New York: Richard Kasak, 1993), 47–63; Peter Braunstein, “‘Adults Only’: The Construction of an Erotic City in New York during the 1970s,” in *America in the Seventies*, ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 129–56; and the extensive discussion in Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer; A Memoir of the Sex, Art, Salon, Pop Culture War, and Gay History of “Drummer Magazine,” the Titanic 1970s to 1999*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Palm Drive, 2008), 447–92.
166. Letter from Wally Wallace to prospective members of the Mineshaft, 2 October 1976. Wally Wallace Papers, Leather Archives and Museum, Chicago. For further on the architecture of the Mineshaft, see Ira Tattelman, “Staging Sex and Masculinity at the Mineshaft,” *Men and Masculinities* 7, no. 3 (January 2005): 300–309; Preston, “Theater of Sexual Initiation,” esp. 52–56; and Jack Fritscher’s December 1977 *Drummer* review (with a subsection wittingly titled “Up a Steep and Very Narrow Stairway”) reprinted in Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco*, 1:483–85.
167. Letter from Wally Wallace to prospective members of the Mineshaft, 2 October 1976. Wally Wallace Papers, Leather Archives and Museum, Chicago.

168. Moore, *Beyond Shame*, 26.
169. Joel Brodsky, "The Mineshaft: A Retrospective Ethnography," *Journal of Homosexuality* 24, no. 3 (1993): 234. See also Tattelman, "Staging Sex and Masculinity at the Mineshaft."
170. In addition to analyses in Moore, *Beyond Shame*, and Preston, "Theater of Sexual Initiation," one could point to the Mineshaft's celebration in novels such as Brad Gooch, *The Golden Age of Promiscuity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 153-90; Leo Cardini, *Mineshaft Nights*, 1990 (Herndon, VA: STARbooks, 2007); John Preston, *Mr. Benson* (San Francisco: Alternate, 1983); and Samuel R. Delany, *The Mad Man*, 1994 (New York: Open Road, 2015).
171. Writing of the employees at the Mineshaft, Brodsky noted that "like most employees in the ghetto, Mineshaft employees were workers in the secondary labor market, and dependent on tips. They dressed like customers, fraternized freely with customers, and in some cases might become customers during their free time. This apparently vague line between the two roles was characteristic of ghetto employment, but was especially vague at the Mineshaft." Brodsky, "Mineshaft," 246.
172. His participation had grown over the course of the decade. Since the late 1960s, Burton had been a regular participant in the burgeoning gay scene in New York and its nighttime culture. As his (by then ex) Button remarked about Burton's newfound freedom in 1968, "he spends four-day weekends at Fire Island and he goes out every night to the bars." Letter from John Button to Gerald Fabian, [1968], JB/GF.
173. For discussions of the sexual ecologies and communication systems of gay bathhouses, see Delph, *Silent Community*, 135-48; Ira Tattelman, "The Meaning at the Wall: Tracing the Gay Bathhouse," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay, 1997), 391-406; Ira Tattelman, "Presenting a Queer (Bath)House," in *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*, ed. Joseph A. Boone et al. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 222-59; and Ira Tattelman, "Speaking to the Bathhouse: Communicating in Sexually Charged Spaces," in *Public Sex / Gay Space*, ed. William Leap (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 71-94.
174. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
175. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
176. Interview of 10 October 1979 in Auping, *30 Years*, 81, my emphasis.
177. DeCelle 17.
178. This had been an interest of his throughout the 1970s, as registered in notes from 1973 for an unrealized "Performance on the Sexes," which involved a series of "stereotypically masc[uline]" poses struck by female-presenting

performers, with feminine poses struck by male-presenting performers, followed by a third movement of “totally ambiguous” poses. SBP II.51.

179. Interview with Robert Pincus-Witten, 6 May 2005.  
 180. John Perreault, “Scott Burton’s Escape from Language,” in *Scott Burton*, ed. Ana María Torres (Valencia: Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, 2004), 40.

#### Chapter Four

1. Walter Weissman, “John Perreault: The Road to Art Criticism Starts with a Small Success in Poetry [Interview],” *Artworkers News*, April 1980, 18.
2. I should note that, on the West Coast, there were more parallels to Burton’s overt works of the years discussed in this chapter. I am thinking in particular of artists such as Joey Terrill, Mundo Meza, Teddy Sandoval, Robert Legorreta, Tee Corinne, and the Lesbian Art Project. See, for instance, C. Ondine Chavoya and David Evans Frantz, eds., *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.* (Munich: DelMonico Books–Prestel, 2017); Robb Hernández, *Archiving an Epidemic: Art, AIDS, and Queer Chicano Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); Stefanie Snider, “Beyond the Static Image: Tee Corinne’s Roles as a Pioneering Lesbian Artist and Art Historian,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17, no. 1 (2013): 87–102; and Jennie Klein, “The Lesbian Art Project,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 14, nos. 2–3 (2010): 238–59.
3. Harmony Hammond, “A Lesbian Show,” in *In A Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice*, ed. Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder, and Amy Scholder (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 46.
4. John Preston, “The New York Galleries: Non-competitive Exposure,” *Alternate* 2, no. 12 (March/April 1980): 13. See also James Saslow, “Closets in the Museum: Homophobia and Art History,” in *Lavender Culture*, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 215–27; and the discussion in Arthur Bell et al., “Extended Sensibilities: The Impact of Homosexual Sensibilities on Contemporary Culture,” 1982, in *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 130–53.
5. On the genre of lecture-performance, see Mashinka Firunts, “Staging Professionalization: Lecture-Performances and Para-institutional Pedagogies, from the Postwar to the Present,” *Performance Research* 21, no. 6 (2016): 19–25; Rike Frank, “When Form Starts Talking: On Lecture-Performances,” *Afterall* 33 (Summer 2013): 4–15; Patricia Milder, “Teaching as Art: The Contemporary Lecture-Performance,” *PAJ: A Journal of Art and Performance* 33, no. 1 (January 2011): 13–27; Kathrin Jentjens, ed. *Lecture Performance* (Berlin: Revolver, 2009).
6. The transcript is included under the title “Literalist Theater” in CW 217–21.
7. CW 221.

8. An early idea involved an audio recording of the lecture with Burton standing onstage while it played, with possible titles including "Portrait of the Artist" or "The Prelude." In the same notes, this idea for a lecture-performance evolved into "talking about self for one hour." He thought of modifying the performance by engaging in various forms of self-exposure or in clichés of the persona of the artist. He also considered including a telephone conversation with his mother in the performance or giving the lecture while smoking a joint; he even thought about shooting blanks from a gun at the audience ("shot. imm[ediate] blackout. rock music. screen lights up. dance"). Other options were "cut own hair" and "model own clothes." All references in SBP II.15.
9. Burton showed sixteen slides of his previous work, according to the lecture script in SBP II.52.
10. Descriptions of *Eighteen Pieces* in SBP II.34.
11. See Ellen H. Johnson, *Fragments Recalled at Eighty: The Art Memoirs of Ellen H. Johnson*, Women Artists' Monographs (Vancouver: Gallerie, 1993).
12. Athena Tacha to Scott Burton, 10 January 1973, Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM) Curatorial Files, Oberlin College; and Ellen Johnson to Scott Burton, 12 March 1975, SBP I.10. Tacha had first been introduced to Burton by Costa, whose suggestion led to Burton's inclusion in Tacha's important early exhibition of conceptual art, *Art in the Mind*, at the AMAM in 1970. See Eduardo Costa, "Letter to Athena Tacha about the *Art in the Mind* Exhibition," 1970, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions: The Collected Writings of Eduardo Costa 1965-2015*, ed. Patrick Greaney (Los Angeles: Les Figues, 2016), 68; and Patrick Greaney, "Essentially the Same: Eduardo Costa's Minimal Differences and Latin American Conceptualism," *Art History* 37, no. 4 (2014): 648-65.
13. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 16 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College. I am grateful to Tacha and to Joseph Romano, Visual Resources Curator, for assisting me in gaining access to these files.
14. Athena Tacha to Scott Burton, 19 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
15. Burton noted, "It was quite a surprise to me to have someone say, 'But it's not a work of art!' I take it to mean that I've made something unfamiliar and new." Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
16. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
17. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College. Duchamp was on Burton's mind in 1973, the year of a major traveling retrospective of the artist. As Costa recalled of these years, "We talked a lot about Duchamp." Conversation with Eduardo Costa, 19 November 2018. Burton even designed a work (featuring four photographs of Duchamp's alter egos) for the cover of *ARTnews* (September 1973), titled *The*

*Many Faces of Marcel Duchamp*. About it, Costa recalled, “Scott thought of these [photographs by Duchamp] as very early examples of art photography, and was happy to have been able to lay them out as the cover of an art magazine.” Eduardo Costa, “Scott Burton and Photography,” 2004, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions*, 120. Costa made a diagram about Burton’s cover work and included it in a letter of 5 October 1973 (ECC), writing “I enclose a diagram I did when high last night ’bout your last piece. Take it as proof of my admiration for your work and yourself. . . . You make at the same time a portrait of the whole Duchamp through life, and an archetype—artist of all times—portrait, as well as your own.”

18. Scott Burton, “*Lecture on Self*, May 5, 1973, Oberlin,” *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1973): 134.
19. Burton seems to have performed a draft version of *Lecture on Self* on 10 April 1973 at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston a few weeks before the Oberlin performance. This is referenced in Edit deAk and Walter Robinson, “An Article on Scott Burton in the Form of a Resumé,” *Art-Rite* 8 (Winter 1975): 10. However, the advertisement for the Boston performance series (in SBP II.52) described Burton’s performance as “not dance, theater, or multimedia; it’s a performance with his troupe,” indicating that something like *Behavior Tableaux* was initially planned. It is possible that Burton substituted the work in progress commissioned for Oberlin by Tacha some months before. However, the complete performance with its final reveal was most likely not included at Boston, since Burton’s datebook for 30 April 1973, some three weeks after Boston, reminded him to “pick up overalls.” SBP III.3. Importantly, Pincus-Witten’s major article on Burton from 1976 aligns *Lecture on Self* with the Oberlin performance, indicating that Burton considered this the definitive one. See Robert Pincus-Witten, “Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance as Sculpture,” *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 1 (September 1976): 112–17. Also, there is a slide of the first version of *Modern American Artist* that Burton labeled with reference to its Oberlin and Artists Space performances (SBP V.10), further indicating that the complete performance was first shown at Oberlin.
20. Burton in John Howell, “Acting/Non-acting: Scott Burton [Interview],” *Performance Art* 2 (1979): 9. Already in 1969, Burton started to have such suspicions. See, for instance, his comments on Robert Morris and Bruce Nauman in CW 84.
21. See discussion in Frazer Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders: Performance Art and Audience* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2012), and the discussion of Burden in Wayne Enstice, “Performance Art’s Coming of Age,” in *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 142–56.
22. Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 128.
23. Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (1997): 14. See further Jones, *Body Art*.

24. Burton's attitudes would temper in the later 1970s as body art became increasingly important to feminist art and criticism over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s (as with his support of Ana Mendieta). For discussion of feminist body art, see Lucy Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women's Body Art," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), 121-38.
25. Pincus-Witten, "Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance," 114. Pincus-Witten was not at the performance, so Burton likely fed him this description for the 1976 article.
26. In this regard, Burton's *Lecture on Self* differs from its main precedent, Robert Morris's 21.3 performance at the Surplus Theater in New York in 1963. In that piece, Morris lip-synched a recording he had made of himself reading passages from Erwin Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* to question the readability of gesture that was a theme of the Panofsky excerpt. On this work, see Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 1-4; Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Firunts, "Staging Professionalization."
27. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
28. In his 24 January 1973 letter to Tacha, Burton said that there would be slides of other artists' work, but the extant slide list for the talk (which maps onto the notes) has only one slide called "Performance" between the slide with his signature and the slides of works by Burton. It is my best guess that the first half of the talk (on theories of performance and other artists) was not illustrated.
29. CW 234.
30. CW 228.
31. CW 230.
32. CW 233-34.
33. CW 234. He would explain further his admiration for Warhol's films in his "Make a Political Statement" of the following year (CW 245).
34. Pincus-Witten, "Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance," 114. Pincus-Witten mentions white makeup as part of the Oberlin *Modern American Artist*, but this is incorrect. There simply would not have been time for the reveal if he had to put on makeup in addition to the quick change of clothes. The lack of white makeup for the performance was reiterated to me by Athena Tacha and Richard Spear, and I am grateful to both for sharing their recollections of Burton's performance. Pincus-Witten did not see the performance, and his article includes an account of it that was largely supplied by Burton. Pincus-Witten likely relied on and conflated the later photographic versions of *Modern American Artist* (1974 onward, in which Burton adopted white clown makeup) with its 1973 Oberlin premier.
35. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 16 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.



36. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 24 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
37. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 5 March 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
38. Email from Athena Tacha, 31 May 2015. In another email to me, she stated, “It was like an apparition when he came to the podium, and I think I remember him holding his notes and lecturing with [the protruding dildo].” Email from Athena Tacha, 9 May 2015.
39. “Tragic Priapic artist” is Burton’s phrase in his 1975 autobiographical work *Odd Years*. See CW 246.
40. DeAk and Robinson, “Article on Scott Burton,” 10.
41. Burton demarcated these three versions in the labels on the photographs relating to the *Modern American Artist* project in SBP V.10, V.47, and V.53.
42. “I have finally read a little Roland Barthes and it is very useful.” Burton to Costa, 14 August 1973, ECC. Burton does not mention Barthes much after this letter (the first of his to Costa since embarking on the *Modern American Artist*), and I would speculate that Barthes’s opening essay—“The World of Wrestling,” which relates professional wrestling to ancient Greek theater—proved inspirational to Burton’s caricature of “the Artist” through references to the same. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 13–23.
43. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 10.
44. Yvonne Sewall-Ruskin, *High on Rebellion: Inside the Underground at Max’s Kansas City* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth, 1998).
45. Andre would later change his tune and provide an alternate explanation for his trademark overalls. Calvin Tomkins reported that “when [Andre] started wearing overalls exclusively, in the late sixties, people took it as a political statement—a declaration of working-class solidarity by a man who espoused Marxist doctrines and took a leading role in the anti-establishment Art Workers Coalition. Not true, he told me. ‘No, no, never. It was because of my belly. All my life, my weight has fluctuated enormously, and these were the only clothes that fit me.’” Calvin Tomkins, “The Materialist: Carl Andre’s Eminent Obscurity,” *New Yorker*, 5 December 2011m <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/12/05/the-materialist>.
46. In 1973, this equation of artistic creativity with virility was discussed at length in Carol Duncan, “Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Vanguard Painting,” *Artforum* 12, no. 4 (December 1973): 30–39.
47. It is worth interjecting here that, a decade later, Burton would be strongly affected by the death of Ana Mendieta, by most accounts at the hands of Carl Andre, in 1985. According to their mutual friend Costa, Burton asked him to be introduced to Mendieta in 1983 after he had reviewed her work for the Prix de Rome (which she was awarded). Email from Eduardo Costa, 14 June 2018. See also Eduardo Costa, “Memories of Ana Mendieta,” 1988, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions*, 87–90. Mendieta had been a student at

the University of Iowa in 1970 and, as I have indicated elsewhere, was influenced by Burton's *Furniture Landscape*. By 1983, Mendieta had been seeing Andre for four years, and the two would marry in 1985, the same year of her suspicious death.

48. For more on this contradiction, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 41–81.
49. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe quoted in Robert Katz, *Naked by the Window: The Fatal Marriage of Carl Andre and Ana Mendieta* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 234–35.
50. For instance, at the Oberlin symposium in 1973, Andre gave a short talk titled “Dialectical Materialism Is the Sexual Reproduction of History” that positioned heterosexuality and procreation as values opposed to the asexuality he saw in Duchamp’s conception of the readymade. This statement was first published in the Oberlin symposium proceedings—“The Role of the Artist in Today’s Society,” 1973, *Art Journal* 34, no. 4 (1975): 327–31. Andre also revised his statement and published it the same year as Carl Andre, “Against Duchamp,” 1973, *Praxis* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 115. Importantly, Andre’s republished extract includes neither the original title nor the first line that Andre spoke at Oberlin: “Idealism in all its myriad forms is the asexual reproduction of history.”
51. Andre quoted in David Bourdon, “The Razed Sites of Carl Andre,” *Artforum* 5, no. 2 (October 1966): 15.
52. See Scott Burton, “My Brancusi,” *Art in America* 78, no. 3 (March 1990): 148–59.
53. See the now classic critique of this statement in Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 5 (1990): 44–63; and further, Anna C. Chave, “Grave Matters: Positioning Carl Andre at Career’s End,” *Art Journal* 73, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 5–21.
54. Bourdon, “Razed Sites of Carl Andre,” 15.
55. Email from Mac McGinnes, 4 January 2012.
56. As Marshall Green argued in a discussion of Alycee J. Lane’s writing on the racial ideology of the dildo, “The black or brown dildo was not just a dildo; it could not be detached from the black body ideologically, the cisgender black stereotyped mandingo figure.” K. Marshall Green, “Troubling the Waters: Mobilizing a Trans\* Analytic,” in *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 73. In the history of dildos, nonrepresentational and chromatically inventive versions were developed as a counter to the sexist, heteronormative, racist, and cisgendered implications of representational dildos (and their ideologies), but even under erasure the broader questions about implied, idealized, and fetishized bodies remain pressing. For histories of the dildo as a site of ideological debate, see Hallie Lieberman, *Buzz: A Stimulating History of the Sex Toy* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017); and Lynn Comella,

*Vibrator Nation: How Feminist Sex-Toy Stores Changed the Business of Pleasure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

57. In his historically important essay, Kobena Mercer analyzed the problem of how such racist discourses operated in the work of artists who saw themselves as sympathetic: Kobena Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe," in *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 171-219.
58. In thinking about the difficulty and emotional conflict in this work, I have taken inspiration from the analysis in Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).
59. Scott Burton to Athena Tacha, 16 January 1973, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College.
60. DeAk and Robinson discussed their memories (with some historical errors) of *PersonA* in Claudia Gould and Valerie Smith, eds., *5000 Artists Return to Artists Space: 25 Years* (New York: Artists Space, 1998), 37-40.
61. Acker quoted in Chris Kraus, *After Kathy Acker: A Literary Biography* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2017), 131. It seems that Kraus mistakenly substituted Chris Burden in this quotation.
62. See Artists Space Archives, folder "Evening Events at Artists Space, 2/74-5/75," Fales Special Collections Library, New York University. Roger Welch recalled, "Scott was a friend and his performances, such as the behavior tableaux at the Whitney, were groundbreaking." Email from Roger Welch, 11 October 2011. Anderson recalled her performance that evening in Gould and Smith, *5000 Artists Return to Artists Space*, 33.
63. Conversation with Walter Robinson, 5 January 2015. See also Gould and Smith, *5000 Artists Return to Artists Space*, 39. In that interview, Robinson also said that there was "some document or relic, a work on paper or photo or something" (39). I have not been able to corroborate this, nor have I been able to ascertain what recording Burton wanted played.
64. Lippard, "Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth," 127.
65. An influence on Burton's *Performance Portrait* was Gilbert & George's *Singing Sculpture*, which was presented in New York at Sonnabend Gallery in October 1971 and which was referenced by Burton as one of the foundations of performance art in the text of *Lecture on Self*. CW 234.
66. Benglis explained, "I got involved with the image of me, 'Machorina,' a name I coined, and I placed an ad in *Art Forum* posing with my Porsche, the first in a series of sexual mockeries." Lynda Benglis, "Interview: Lynda Benglis," *Ocular* 4, no. 2 (1979): 34.
67. Berger, *Labyrinths*, 160.
68. For "de Sadean," see "Collage," *ARTnews* 73, no. 7 (September 1974): 44.
69. The November 1974 issue also contained Robert Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," *Artforum* 13, no. 3 (November 1974): 54-59, and the copresence of advertisement and feature article (with the pinup image of

Benglis) was understood by some to be a not-too-tacit endorsement of the artist's shock tactics by the magazine. This included a revolt by five of the six associate editors, who published a group letter in the following issue: Lawrence Alloway et al., "Letter to the Editor," *Artforum* 13, no. 4 (December 1974): 9. The scholarly journal *October* was formulated out of this revolt. For further on this incident, see Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962–1974* (New York: Soho, 2003); Amelia Jones, "Postfeminism, Feminist Pleasures, and Embodied Theories of Art," in *New Feminist Art Criticism: Art, Identity, Action*, ed. Cassandra Langer, Joanna Frueh, and Arlene Raven (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 16–41; Richard Meyer, "Bone of Contention," *Artforum* 43, no. 3 (November 2004): 73–74, 249–50; Susan Richmond, "Sizing Up the Dildo: Lynda Benglis' 1974 *Artforum* Advertisement as a Feminist Icon," *n.paradoxa* 15 (2005): 24–34; Susan Richmond, *Lynda Benglis: Beyond Process* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 2–9; and Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seungduk Kim, eds., *Lynda Benglis* (Dijon, France: Les presses du réel and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2009).

70. *Moving Polaroids*, 8 to 16 November 1975, the Kitchen, New York. See Richard Meyer, "Miss Lynda," *Artforum* 48, no. 5 (January 2010): 178–81. The Polaroids make up Benglis's 1974–75 series *Secret*, reproduced in full in Gautherot, Hancock, and Kim, eds., *Lynda Benglis*, 68–78.
71. Deitch also claimed that *Bronze Chair* was included in the *Lives* exhibition. Telephone conversation with Jeffrey Deitch, 9 April 2018. While the *Lives* exhibition opened first, on 29 November 1975, it overlapped with Burton's exhibition at Artists Space, where *Bronze Chair* was shown throughout December. It may have been that the work was shown first at *Lives* before moving to Artists Space.
72. For information on the Fine Arts Building's history, I am indebted to the online exhibition and text by Marc H. Miller, *98 Bowery: 1968–89; View from the Top Floor* (2008) at <https://98bowery.com>.
73. *Not Photography* ran 1–11 November 1975 and *Self-Portraits* 15–25 November. Burton's *Photochair* was an unusable illusionistic image of a chair that can be understood as a counterpart to the 1975 exhibition of *Bronze Chair* as a functional realist sculpture of a chair. Burton's process photographs and installation shots of the work are in SBP V.51, and there is a portrait of Burton making *Photochair* by Lil Picard in V.10. Another photograph (by Peter Grass) of Burton installing *Photochair* is in "The Younger Generation: A Cross Section," *Art in America* 65, no. 5 (September–October 1977): 89.
74. Deitch had moved into an apartment on Thompson Street, near Burton's, around 1974. They struck up a friendship one afternoon when Deitch witnessed Burton being thrown out of a laundromat on the street (along with a pile of wet clothes). Deitch worked at John Weber Gallery and met many of the artists in *Lives* through it. Burton introduced Deitch to artists such as Strider, Wilke, and John Jack Baylin. Telephone conversation with Jeffrey Deitch, 9 April 2018. For an account of *Lives*, see the expansive interview with

- Deitch by Parinaz Mogadassi, *Purple Magazine* 14 (Fall/Winter 2010), <https://purple.fr/magazine/fw-2010-issue-14/jeffrey-deitch/>.
75. Marc H. Miller, *98 Bowery*, 2008, <https://98bowery.com/conceptual-artist/fine-arts-building>. Wilke also exhibited photographs of a naked Claes Oldenburg in 1975 at the Fine Arts Building, either in *Not Photography* or, perhaps, in *Lives*. See Richard Meyer, “Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 380.
76. Burton’s friend Wilke also felt upstaged by Benglis, and she staged her *Invasion Performance* at the opening of Benglis’s exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery (for which the *Artforum* spread was the ostensible advertisement). Unannounced and without permission, Wilke took off her clothes at the opening and had herself photographed.
77. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
78. Pincus-Witten, “Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance,” 116.
79. Scott Burton to Bruce Kurtz, 26 April 1975, SBP II.47.
80. Pincus-Witten in Newman, *Challenging Art*, 237.
81. Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 154.
82. “Collage,” 44. Morris’s April 1974 poster advertised his exhibitions *Labyrinths* and *Voice*, which explored issues of domination and gender (as with the gender-crossing soundtracks used in the work *They* within *Voice*). See Berger, *Labyrinths*, 148–62, in which he discussed the “aggressive sensuality of Morris’s project” (160). See also Andy Campbell, “The Schematics of Control: Robert Morris’s Philadelphia *Labyrinth* and *In the Realm of the Carceral*,” in *Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System*, ed. Risa Puleo (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2019), 186–93. The photograph for the poster was taken by Rosalind Krauss. See discussion in Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” 154.
83. For an example, the artist Jimmy Wright recalled seeing Morris’s poster hung in Keller’s, the venerable New York City leather bar, in 1974 when he was the props manager for the film *Saturday Night at the Baths*. As he recalled, the poster was readily available at Castelli Gallery, and Wright also had a copy himself, which he put prominently on display (along with Lynda Benglis’s pinup announcement card) as decorations in the apartment of the central gay character in the film. Telephone interview with Jimmy Wright, 26 May 2020. See also John Corbett and Jim Dempsey, *Jimmy Wright: Bathroom, Meatpacking District, and Dream Cards / New York Underground 1973–90* (Chicago: Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2016), 9. In 2019, the poster was also included in the *Art after Stonewall* exhibition because of its reception history as homoerotic, but curator Jonathan Weinberg rightly noted, “Yet posturing as a sexual deviant is not quite the same thing as actually being a part of a queer subculture.” Jonathan Weinberg et al., eds., *Art after Stonewall: 1969–*

- 1989 (Columbus, OH: Columbus Museum of Art; New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2019), 20.
84. Robert Morris, “Labyrinth II: Interview with Robert Morris by Anne Bertrand,” in *Robert Morris: From Mnemosyne to Clio: The Mirror to the Labyrinth (1998–1999–2000)* (Lyon: Musée d’Art contemporain de Lyon, 2000), 212.
85. For discussions of the complexities of leather communities in these decades, see Mark Thompson, *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice* (Boston: Alyson, 1991); Gayle Rubin, “The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M,” 1981, in *Deviations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 109–36; Larry Townsend, *The Leatherman’s Handbook II* (New York: Modernismo, 1983); Geoff Mains, *Urban Aboriginals: A Celebration of Leathersexuality*, 1984, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Daedalus, 2002); Larry S., “S and M and the Revolution,” *Come Out!* 2, no. 8 (Winter 1972): 6–7; Guy Baldwin, *Ties That Bind: The SM / Leather / Fetish Erotic Style*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Daedalus, 2003). For larger context on the artistic and material cultures of leather communities, see Andy Campbell, *Bound Together: Leather, Sex, Archives, and Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).
86. Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), 101. A useful analysis of the retrenchments of this essay can be found in Marcie Frank, “The Critic as Performance Artist: Susan Sontag’s Writing and Gay Cultures,” in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, ed. David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 173–84.
87. Interview with Robert Pincus-Witten, 6 May 2005.
88. Interview with Mac McGinnes, 2 November 2012.
89. After noting that the image of Morris in “s-m regalia has caused some displeasure,” Gilbert-Rolfe’s defense of the poster becomes tangential to the extreme when he out-of-the-blue invokes anal insertion: “In Richard Foreman’s play *Pain(t)*, the word ‘painter’ is shoved up a woman’s behind, a metaphorical gesture that seems repulsive on several levels, and, because of that, obliges one to reconsider the entire set of conventions on which the play, and one’s experience of it, rely. The provocation of Morris’ poster may, perhaps, be analogous to that sequence of Foreman’s.” Foreman’s play had been performed earlier that year in SoHo. Gilbert-Rolfe’s invocation of (female) anal play registered the allusions to gay BDSM sex culture that would have been far less vague in the minds of his readers when looking at the full-page illustration of Morris’s poster on the facing page. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, “Robert Morris: The Complication of Exhaustion,” *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 44.
90. Pincus-Witten, “Lynda Benglis,” see esp. 59.
91. See datebook entry for 6 October 1974, SBP III.3.
92. Burton had some enlargements made as well as large transparencies, and he may have had plans to make a larger light box work from the third version. SBP V.53.

93. I am grateful to Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw for this question about the resemblance to Piper's work.
94. The two likely met through *Street Works* in 1969, but the only reference I have found to her in Burton's datebook is April 1970. Datebook entry for 13 April 1970, SBP II.1 This was a month before they were both to appear in an afternoon of performance art at Max's Kansas City, discussed in chapter 1. Perhaps because of the shared questions he saw between his *Self-Works* (e.g., *Ear Piece*) and Piper's performances that tested behavior (such as the Max's Kansas City performance and *Catalysis*, 1970–72), Burton expressed interest in writing an article for *Art in America* sometime in 1971. As Piper recalled, the editor pulled the piece: "I am not sure he even got to write it. As I recall his recounting of the incident, Jean Lipman ([editor] of *Art in America*) axed the assignment when she saw the photographs of me performing the *Catalysis* series." Email from Adrian Piper, 25 August 2011. (N.b., Lipman resigned as editor in 1971.) Piper also recounted this story in the 1996 foreword to her collected writings: "[In the late 1960s] I was being systematically marginalized: by one major art magazine editor who disinvited an article (by Scott Burton) upon learning that its subject was a woman and a student." Adrian Piper, "Introduction: Some Very FORWARD Remarks," in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 1, *Selected Writings in Meta-art 1968–1992* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), xxxv. On the *Catalysis* series, see Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 95–151; John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender, and Embodiment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 162–204; and the essays by Kobena Mercer and Nizan Shaked in Cornelia Butler and David Platzker, eds., *Adrian Piper: A Reader* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2019).
95. Like many, Burton's exposure to *Mythic Being* would have been limited to the small and enigmatic classified advertisements that Piper took out in the *Village Voice*. Piper performed *Mythic Being* in 1973 and 1974 only in unannounced and non-art settings; she did not create audience-oriented performances in art spaces until *Some Reflective Surfaces*, first shown in December 1975 (in the context of the *Lives* exhibition). Piper did also participate in *PersonA* in 1974, but in lieu of appearing live as the Mythic Being she merely distributed a short text—most likely the one preserved in the Artists Space archives titled "Notes on 'The Mythic Being,' March 1974." Fales Library, New York University. Piper would not publish it until 1975 in John Perreault's special issue "Anti-object Art" for *TriQuarterly* 32 (Winter 1975): n.p. Part 2 was written in January 1975 and published later along with part 1 and a portfolio of images in Alan Sondheim, ed. *Individuals: Post-movement Art in America* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), 270–89. On the shifting identifications of *Mythic Being* and the advertisements through which the title character first became known in the art world, see Cherise Smith, "Re-member the Audience: Adrian Piper's Mythic Being Advertisements," *Art Journal* 66, no. 1

- (Spring 2007): 46–58; and Cherise Smith, *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). See also Tavia Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 76–98.
96. Burton mentioned this work when discussing the small-scale bronze sculptures of chairs (such as *Chair Pair*) that he began making in 1975 in relation to his work casting *Bronze Chair*. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 1 June 1975, ECC.
97. Mustaches were a topic of conversation. Also in 1975, deAk wrote an article on women's use of pencil-thin mustaches: Edit deAk, "Pencil Moustache Makes Up," *Art-Rite* 11–12 (Winter/Spring 1975/1976): n.p. (Piper—here with one of these small mustaches the Mythic Being also wore—was illustrated.) On disguises and alter egos, see also Lucy Lippard, "Transformation Art," *Ms.* 4 (October 1975): 33–39.
98. On Johnson, see Miriam Kienle, "Ray Johnson's Robin Gallery: Queer Publicity Network as Counterpublic," *Oxford Art Journal* 42, no. 2 (2019): 197–215; Miriam Kienle, "Facing Others: Ray Johnson's Portrait of a Curator as a Network," *Archives of American Art Journal* 59, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 24–45; José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 115–30; Kate Dempsey Martineau, *Ray Johnson: Selective Inheritance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018). On the queer performativity of correspondence art, see Kirsten Olds, "'Gay Life Artists': Les Petites Bonbons and Camp Performativity in the 1970s," *Art Journal* 72, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 16–33; and C. Ondine Chavoya, "Exchange Desired: Correspondence into Action," in Chavoya and Frantz, *Axis Mundo*, 210–29.
99. Scott Burton to David Bourdon, 17 December 1975, David Bourdon Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, I.12.
100. Jeffrey Deitch, *Lives: Artists Who Deal with Peoples' Lives (Including Their Own) as the Subject and/or the Medium of Their Work* (New York: Fine Arts Building, 1975), n.p. The text of Baylin's "Treatise on Gorgeousness" was also published in *FILE* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1975): 35–39, but it is not clear to me how it was exhibited in *Lives* or what (if any) images were included.
101. On Baylin, Dowd, and, more generally, the relationship of mail art to fan culture in the 1970s, see Kirsten Olds, "Fannies and Fanzines: Mail Art and Fan Clubs in the 1970s," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no. 2 (2015): 171–93. On Dowd, see further Thomas Albright, "Correspondence Art," in *Correspondence Art: Source Book for the Network of International Postal Activity*, ed. Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts), 220–23. There is an unidentified clipping of an interview with Dowd by Ronnie Cutrone in SBP II.49. In it, Dowd talks about working at the leather bar. Dowd was the subject of a 2017 exhibition curated by Shannon Michael Cane for Printed Matter, which demonstrated the extent of Dowd's subversive prac-



tice. As Cane noted, “For Dowd and many mail artists, this artistic process was inevitably one of mythologizing, an opportunity to issue a self-styled version of the imagined self.” Exhibition statement for *The John Dowd Fan Club*, <https://www.printedmatter.org/programs/events/589>.

102. SBP II.46.
103. I should note that it is possible that, in fantasizing about the mustache, Burton (like many others in the mail art network and its subsequent literature) had conflated or confused Baylin with Dowd because of the interwoven authorship and fandom of their projects. It is not clear that Burton ever met Baylin in person, unlike Dowd.
104. On *Art-Rite*, see David Frankel, “The Rite Stuff,” *Artforum* (1 January 2003): 65–66; Phong Bui, “In Conversation: Walter Robinson,” *Brooklyn Rail*, 5 November 2014, <https://brooklynrail.org/2014/11/art/walter-robinson-with-phong-bui>; and Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 121–45.
105. Edit deAk and Alan Vega, “Edit deAk and Alan Vega in Conversation with Mathieu Copeland,” in *Alan Suicide Vega: Infinite Mercy*, ed. Mathieu Copeland (Lyon: Musée d’art contemporain de Lyon, 2009), 66.
106. Lucy Lippard quoted in Allen, *Artists' Magazines*, 125.
107. DeAk and Robinson, “Article on Scott Burton.”
108. “We Asked a Number of Artists to Respond to This: Make a Political Statement,” *Art-Rite* 6 (Summer 1974): 24–25. Burton’s response is in CW 244–45.
109. CW 245.
110. Telephone interview with Joyce Kozloff, 22 February 2017.
111. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
112. Audio recording of March 1980 interview with Burton by Edward DeCelle, Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
113. The first published overview was the “Lesbian Art and Artists” issue of *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* (vol. 3, 1977). See discussion in Tara Burk, “In Pursuit of the Unspeakable: *Heresies*’ ‘Lesbian Art and Artists’ Issue, 1977,” *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2013): 63–78. It should be noted that this issue was met with substantial criticism for not including lesbians of color, and the Combahee River Collective’s letter of protest was included in the following issue.
114. See Steven F. Dansky, *Hot August Night / 1970: The Forgotten LGBT Riot* (Lexington, KY: Christopher Street Press, 2012). On the Gay Liberation Front’s ambitions and complexities and the Gay Activists Alliance, see Terence Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York’s Gay Liberation Front, 1969–1971,” *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 103–34; Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971); Barry D. Adam, “A Social History of Gay Politics,” in *Gay Men: The Sociology of Male Homosexuality*, ed. Martin P. Levine (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 285–300.
115. Richard Meyer, “*Gay Power* circa 1970: Visual Strategies for Sexual Rev-

- olution,” *GLQ* 12, no. 3 (2006): 441–64. See also Weinberg et al., *Art after Stonewall*.
116. On the Gay Academic Union exhibition, see James Saslow, “Emerging Symbols in Gay Art: Finding Our Collective ‘Eye,’” *Gay Community News*, 27 December 1975, 11. On the context of gay-themed galleries in the 1970s, see Preston, “New York Galleries.” By the time of writing this article in 1980, Preston could count five such galleries in New York. See also the discussion in Sam Hardison and George Stambolian, “The Art and Politics of the Male Image,” *Christopher Street* 4, no. 7 (March 1980): 14–22.
  117. For a recollection, see Hammond, “Lesbian Show,” 45–47; and Harmony Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000), 44–48.
  118. Dorothy Wolfberg, Scott Burton, and John Tarburton, eds., *Exploring the Arts: An Anthology of Basic Readings* (New York: Visual Arts, 1969), 117–22.
  119. John Romine, “Scott Burton [Interview],” *Upstart* 5 (May 1981): 8.
  120. In his address book, Burton had multiple numbers for Nochlin at Vassar and in New York, including her home numbers. SBP II.71. According to his datebook, he attended a lecture by Nochlin on 3 December 1974 at Cooper Union and 11 February 1975 at the Institute of Fine Arts. There are multiple other instances of Nochlin appointments. SBP III.3 and III.4.
  121. Scott Burton to Bruce Kurtz, 26 April 1975, SBP II.47.
  122. In 1976, Battcock proposed an anthology of essays (generally not about art, however) from the newspaper *Gay* as an anthology. See Gregory Battcock, “Proposal for an Anthology of Writings from *Gay*,” 1976, in Gregory Battcock, *Oceans of Love: The Uncontainable Gregory Battcock*, ed. Joseph Grigely (London: Koenig Books, 2016), 152–54.
  123. The *Ladder* was published by the Daughters of Bilitis from 1956 to 1972. Whitworth was the first and only art editor, and she oversaw a robust inclusion of writing on (and reproductions of) art in the final, highly ambitious years of the magazine. On the history of the *Ladder*, see Manuela Soares, “The Purloined *Ladder*: Its Place in Lesbian History,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no. 3/4 (1998): 27–49; and Barbara Grier and Coletta Reid, *The Lavender Herring: Lesbian Essays from the “Ladder”* (Baltimore: Diana, 1976). In addition to being the art editor for the *Ladder*, Whitworth was a registrar at the Whitney Museum in the early 1970s. On Whitworth, see Catherine Lord, “Their Memory Is Playing Tricks on Her: Notes Toward a Calligraphy of Rage,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 449.
  124. Scott Burton to David Bourdon, 17 December 1975, David Bourdon Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, 1.12.
  125. See David J. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), 239–41, 259, 262–63.
  126. Dynes recalled, “In those days I had started my efforts in what was then termed gay studies, by working on a bibliography with a librarians’ group. We

- sought to combat then-prevalent negativity regarding same-sex relations—and we did. Jim W[itcliff], btw, eventually became a good friend. I did not realize then that my contribution was not destined to be in the field of art—a divergence I still do not understand. Anyway, when Scott came to see me, I was immediately attracted to him, but spoiled my chances by criticizing Warhol, whom he adored. So, the connection pretty much withered.” Email from Wayne Dynes, 5 August 2017. Witcliff was working on a historical project about gay art in these years, and Dynes put him and Burton into contact.
127. Scott Burton to Boyd McDonald, *Straight to Hell* 17 (1975), reprinted in the biography by William E. Jones, *True Homosexual Experiences: Boyd McDonald and Straight to Hell* (Los Angeles: We Heard You Like Books, 2016), 72.
  128. SBP II.48.
  129. Burton recounted a sophisticated understanding of the history of gay art, from Winckelmann onward, in his interview with Edward Brooks DeCelle.
  130. SBP II.74.
  131. Here, I am thinking of the foundational work of writers such as Ann Gibson, Harmony Hammond, Jonathan D. Katz, Richard Meyer, Kenneth Silver, and Jonathan Weinberg.
  132. SBP II.50.
  133. SBP II.47.
  134. On Varble, see David J. Getsy, “Stephen Varble’s Xerographic Dreams,” in *Stephen Varble: An Antidote to Nature’s Ruin on this Heavenly Globe, Prints and Video from the Early 1980s* (Lexington, KY: Institute 193, 2018), 3–28.
  135. DeCelle 6.
  136. Interview with Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, 14 September 2017. Burton also made a photographic work from items from Lanigan-Schmidt’s *Sacristy of the Hamptons* in 1970, which he titled (on the back) *Situational Performance: Past, Present, Future of Glitter; Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt* (1970, collection of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt).
  137. Telephone interview with Jimmy Wright, 23 May 2020. For further on Wright’s drawings, see Corbett and Dempsey, *Jimmy Wright*.
  138. Scott Burton to Bruce Kurtz, 26 April 1975, SBP II.47. Burton chose these particular drawings because they captured the gender confusion of glam rock (that he found so inspiring in Bowie’s work), and he said admiringly that “it was as if a high school girl was making them,” as Wright joked. Conversation with Jimmy Wright, 8 July 2016.
  139. Gary Grant had been Jasper Johns’s and Donald Judd’s studio assistant. Johns assisted Grant in getting an exhibition at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, where he displayed hand-sewn canvases, and he also showed minimal versions of these in Judd’s studio. His work became more architectonic, and he had two exhibitions at Paula Cooper Gallery in 1969 to 1971. During the second of these, he asked viewers to transcribe texts handed out at the door on the walls of the gallery. Grant said, “It was a graffiti environment that I dedicated to Gene Swenson who had just died. . . . He was In with the In

- people, but definitely out. I felt the same.” Gregory J. M. Portley, “Today’s Art Tomorrow: Gary Grant,” unpublished manuscript in SBP II.48, p. 6.
140. Interview with Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, 14 September 2017.
141. SBP II.47 and II.48.
142. SBP II.47.
143. Bruce Kurtz, “Lynda Benglis: Dildo Doré,” unpublished manuscript, 1975, SBP II.47.
144. Scott Burton to Bruce Kurtz, 26 April 1975, SBP II.47. On this video, see Susan Richmond, “The Ins and Outs of *Female Sensibility*: A 1973 Video by Lynda Benglis,” *Camera Obscura* 23, no. 3 (2008): 81–109.
145. Scott Burton to Bruce Kurtz, 26 April 1975, SBP II.47.
146. Dan Cameron, *Extended Sensibilities: Homosexual Presence in Contemporary Art* (New York: New Museum, 1982), v.
147. Most importantly, in Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” *October* 3 (Spring 1977): 68–81; Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2,” *October* 4 (Autumn 1977): 58–67.
148. Steven Alexander and Eugene Diserio, eds., *Rooms P.S. 1, June 9–26, 1976* (New York: Institute for Art and Urban Resources, 1977), 122. The exhibition catalogue, published in 1977, contained photographs of all the site-specific works plus a collection of artists’ statements reflecting on the exhibition.
149. Jimmy Wright joked with me that Burton’s “work with the fist was inappropriately installed in a closet!” Telephone interview with Jimmy Wright, 23 May 2020. For an overview of the closet as metaphor, see Henry Urbach, “Closets, Clothes, Disclosure,” *Assemblage* 30 (1996): 62–73; and the history-making study by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
150. John Russell, “An Unwanted School in Queens Becomes an Ideal Art Center,” *New York Times*, no. 89 (20 June 1976): 89. Of the reviews, only Perreault dared to discuss the content of Burton’s work (John Perreault, “P.S. One I Love You,” *Soho Weekly News*, 17 June 1976). Burton was perfunctorily mentioned in a list of participating artists in *Artforum*’s cover feature on *Rooms*: Nancy Foote, “The Apotheosis of the Crummy Space,” *Artforum* 15, no. 2 (October 1976): 28–37. In her 1977 essays, Krauss astonishingly declared that—despite the range of artworks—when it came to variety of content there was “almost none” (Krauss, “Notes on the Index,” 81).
151. I should note that, unlike the dildos discussed earlier in this chapter, fisting dildos appeared to have been created only in lighter skin tones at the time. I am grateful to Hallie Lieberman for sharing some of her research on early Doc Johnson catalogues with me. See Lieberman, *Buzz*, for a fuller history of sex toy manufacture. Ted Marche of Marche Manufacturing had been producing rubber dildos on a large scale since 1966. In 1976, Reuben Sturman founded the most famous sex toy producer of the 1970s, the Doc Johnson company, and hired Marche. See John Heidenry, *What Wild Ecstasy: The Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997),

- 74–77. These and other sex toys were widely available in New York at the chain of Pleasure Chest stores, the first of which opened in 1971 in the West Village, with branches opening in Los Angeles in 1975 and Chicago in 1977. In 1974, the feminist-oriented sex store Eve's Garden opened in New York City. For further history, see Comella, *Vibrator Nation*. On the wide range of options available in Lower Manhattan in 1975, see the narrative of shopping for sex toys of all types in Janel Bladow, "Christmas Presents: From under the Bed . . .," *Soho Weekly News*, 18 December 1975, 12. See further Gayle Rubin, "A Little Humility," in *Gay Shame*, ed. David Halperin and Valerie Traub (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 372–73.
152. Perreault, "P.S. One I Love You."
153. Alexander and Diserio, *Rooms P.S. 1*, June 9–26, 1976, 122.
154. See discussion in Ronald Gregg, "Fassbinder's *Fox and His Friends* and Gay Politics in the 1970s," in *A Companion to Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, ed. Brigitte Peucker (Chichester: Blackwell, 2012), 564–78; and, for a contemporary debate, Bob Cant, "Fassbinder's 'Fox,'" *Gay Left* 2 (Spring 1976): 22.
155. Burton quoted in John Russell, "Art People," *New York Times*, no. 61 (13 August 1976): C18.
156. Telephone conversation with Jeffrey Deitch, 9 April 2018.
157. Perreault, "P.S. One I Love You."
158. One of the aims of the protest was for the *Voice* to cease its limit on the number of advertisements with lesbian or gay content. A.G., "Village Voice Picketed," *Gay Liberator* 44 (April–May 1975): 3. It is not uncoincidental that the *Village Voice* had undergone a major editorial redirection in June 1974 when its previous editors lost their controlling interest (as a condition of the sale of the paper five years before). At that moment, the ethos of the paper changed, and longtime writers such as Jill Johnston (author of *Lesbian Nation*) were shut out. See Jill Johnston, "Introduction," in *Admission Accomplished: The Lesbian Nation Years (1970–75)* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998), viii–vi.
159. Vito Russo, "Gay Sensibility: The Disney Version [Letter to the Editor]," *Village Voice*, 14 July 1975, 3–4, in response to John Lombardi, "Selling Gay to the Masses," *Village Voice*, 30 June 1975, 10–11.
160. Richard Goldstein, "S&M: The Dark Side of Gay Liberation," *Village Voice*, 7 July 1975, 11.
161. Goldstein recounted his pursuit of an interview with the sculptor Nancy Grossman (whose work had been misconstrued as merely representing leathersex and BDSM culture and whose request to be left out of the article Goldstein ignored). He relayed a story about Grossman having a conversation with Burton about a performance in which "a woman was compelled to execute a series of awkward and painful body movements." She is reported as saying "that's really SM." Burton, who like many saw resemblances of Grossman's practice to the iconography of BDSM, replied: "I guess I'll have to accept that, coming from you" (Goldstein 13). Goldstein made the com-

- mon mistake of conflating Burton with Chris Burden (whose 1971 *Shoot* is mentioned by Goldstein in the previous paragraph). The description of the performance in question does not match up with Burden's practice, but it does resemble Burton's *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*, which had happened just two months before the article. For further on the misrecognition of Grossman as representative of the culture of leathersex and BDSM, see Getsy, *Abstract Bodies*, 146–207.
162. Goldstein would eventually become editor of the *Village Voice*. He was responsible for its first gay-themed issue in 1979.
163. Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer; A Memoir of the Sex, Art, Salon, Pop Culture War, and Gay History of "Drummer Magazine," the Titanic 1970s to 1999*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Palm Drive, 2008), 467.
164. Telephone interview with Elke Solomon, 15 November 2019.
165. As Sontag demanded her readers recall, Morris wore "what appears to be a Nazi helmet" because he said such imagery was the only "that still has any power to shock: a singular virtue to those who take for granted that art is a sequence of ever-fresh gestures of provocation" (Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," 101).
166. Fascist iconography was more prevalent in biker culture (such as the Hell's Angels), and it became conflated with leather and BDSM communities (both gay and straight) to the point of caricature. For discussion of the imbricated histories of bikers and leathersex (and their disentanglement in the post-Stonewall era), see the essay "Old Guard: Its Origins, Traditions, Mystique and Rules" (1991) reprinted in Baldwin, *Ties That Bind*, 107–15; and, for a critique of the aping of fascist symbols in some parts of gay leather culture, see Arnie Kantrowitz, "Swastika Toys," in Thompson, *Leatherfolk*, 193–209.
167. Goldstein, "S&M," 13. Goldstein recounted an erratic interview with the elusive graphic artist Rex about fascist imagery in his erotic drawings. Positing Rex's confrontational and disturbing statements as standing for the entire leather community, Goldstein made an unsubtle equation of "terminal sex," as he called it, with fascism. Many in the leather community found Goldstein's calumny to be not just unrepresentative but treacherously misleading. On the complexities of such divisions within the gay community on the meanings and histories of fascism, see Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 147–71.
168. See discussion in Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon, 2004); and John Preston, "The Theater of Sexual Initiation," in *My Life as a Pornographer and Other Indecent Acts* (New York: Richard Kasak, 1993), 47–63. By 1983, when Larry Townsend updated his wildly popular handbook about leather and BDSM (originally published in 1972), he remarked, "For some reason, [fist-fucking] has become the most popular of the kinky sports practiced by gay men. It is an art unto itself." Townsend, *Leatherman's Handbook II*, 164.

169. An influential 1984 account of fisting that emphasized its communal and spiritual potential was Mains, *Urban Aborigines*, esp. 131–47. As David Halperin has discussed with relation to Michel Foucault’s participation in the BDSM and leather scenes, “Fist-fucking and sadomasochism appear in this light as utopian political practices, insofar as they disrupt normative sexual identities and thereby generate—of their own accord, and despite being indulged in *not* for the sake of politics but purely for the sake of pleasure—means of resistance to the discipline of sexuality, a form of counterdiscipline—in short, a technique of asceticism.” David Halperin, *Saint Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 97. For one of Foucault’s most direct commentaries on this, see Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity, 1984, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–84*, vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1998), 163–73. I would add (as would Foucault) that fisting is, of course, not an exclusively gay male practice, and it is available to all genders and bodies. Indeed, its supragenital capacity (for all) is another reason why it has been seen, as Halperin notes, as a counterdiscipline. This point was elaborated by Paul B. Preciado: “The practice of fist-fucking (anal or vaginal penetration with the fist), which saw systematic growth in the gay, lesbian, and trans cultures beginning in the 1970s, should be considered an example of high countersexual technology. Workers of the anus are the new proletarians of a possible countersexual revolution.” Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, 2011, trans. Kevin Gerry Dunn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 30. More broadly, for a discussion of the ways in which BDSM becomes a site of political and discursive contestation, see Gayle Rubin, “Leather Menace.”
170. In a 1962 letter, John Button wrote to his friend, “roll out the carpet for my little tiny boyfriend. Truly Scott is about 5’4.”” John Button to Gerald Fabian, 13 July 1962, Gerald L. Fabian Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
171. Burton wrote to Costa in April of 1979: “[I] am starting, with a friend, a sex club for ‘tough little guys’ to meet each other—called *short ass club*. (Beautiful old popular military slang)—*Great* invention.” Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 9 April 1979, in ECC. Sponsored by the Mineshaft, this club did form in 1979. In the Mineshaft’s spring newsletter that year, there is an item titled “The Little Man Has Been Neglected Long Enough!” that explains “Requirements: Liberated guys 5’6” or under with a maximum weight of 150lbs. If you qualify and think two short asses balling is a hot scene just imagine a group.” Wally Wallace Papers, Leather Archives and Museum, Chicago.
172. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 9 April 1979, in ECC.
173. SBP II.46.
174. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 30 June 1980, in ECC.
175. One important precedent was Philip Masnick’s exhibition of photographs of fisting and leathersex at SoHo Gallery in 1973. As John Preston noted, “It lasted less than 48 hours before a vehement group of ‘liberated’ artists

- succeeded in having it taken down.” Preston, “New York Galleries,” 13. Robert Mapplethorpe committed to photographing aspects of the leather and BDSM communities during the period 1976 to 1980 (including being invited by Jack Fritscher to photograph cover models for *Drummer*), and his first exhibition of them was *Erotic Pictures* at the Kitchen in February 1977. (There were, however, earlier examples of Mapplethorpe collages and photographs that showed men in leather.) See Ryan Linkof, “On the Edge,” in *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Photographs*, ed. Paul Martineau and Britt Salvesen (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2016), 54–57. Others who began, in the mid-to-late 1970s in New York, to include imagery of the leather and BDSM in their work include Alvin Baltrop, Hilton Brown, Kas Sable, Arthur Tress, and Jimmy Wright. Outside of the art world, images also circulated from the likes of Tom of Finland, Etienne (Dom Orejudos), Rip Colt (Jim French), and Ed Gallucci, who published photographs of the leather and BDSM communities (beyond exclusively gay ones) in a popularizing book of anecdotes. Michael Grumley and Ed Gallucci, *Hard Corps: Studies in Leather and Sadoomasochism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977). For discussion of more recent artists who address leathersex, see Campbell, *Bound Together*.
176. See Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 236–38; and the insightful discussion of the movie and its protests in Damon R. Young, *Making Sex Public and Other Cinematic Fantasies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 122–55.
177. DeCelle 8–9.
178. DeCelle 9.
179. DeCelle 18–19.
180. DeCelle 9.
181. John Perreault, “I’m Asking—Does It Exist? What Is It? Whom Is It For?,” *Artforum* 19, no. 3 (November 1980): 74–75. Instances of articles in mainstream art magazines that discussed homosexuality in art in positive terms were very rare and often brief; however, an important exception was Kermit Champa, “‘Charlie Was Like That,’” *Artforum* 12, no. 6 (March 1974): 54–59, which incorporated a circumscribed discussion of Charles Demuth’s homosexuality as part of a biographical account of the artist’s work. In the gay press, 1980 also saw a number of attempts to assess gay male art, most notably: Preston, “New York Galleries”; John Preston, “The Gallery Owners: Three Profiles,” *Alternate* 2, no. 12 (1980): 23–25; Hardison and Stambolian, “Art and Politics of the Male Image”; James Saslow, “The Ascent of the Gay Esthetic: Toward a Post-pornographic Art,” *Advocate*, no. 295 (26 June 1980): 20–21, 27–29; and Burton’s wide-ranging interview published as Edward DeCelle and Mark Thompson, “Conceptual Artist Scott Burton,” *Advocate*, no. 310 (22 January 1981): T7–11. For perspective on this moment, see James Saslow, *Pictures and Passions: A History of Homosexuality in the Visual Arts* (New York: Viking, 1999), 259–310.



182. Perreault, “I’m Asking,” 75.
183. The overall issue, as editor Ingrid Sischy explained, was about the presence of the human form in recent art, so Burton’s work did double duty in its contextualization of the Perreault interview on gay art (which is here assumed to be only figurative) and to the overall theme. Ingrid Sischy, “Editorial,” *Artforum* 19, no. 3 (November 1980): 61.

## Chapter Five

1. “Lecture on Self,” CW 235.
2. Burton remarked, “actually I see myself as someone who lives in an Italian tenement in the South Village and not as a SoHo artist at all.” Quoted in John Russell, “An Unwanted School in Queens Becomes an Ideal Art Center,” *New York Times*, no. 89 (20 June 1976): 61.
3. “Furniture into Art / Art into Furniture,” statement for 1977 exhibition at Hallwalls, Buffalo, SBP II.76. He later reiterated: “There were these empty rooms. I didn’t have anything.” Kachur II, 15.
4. Brenda Richardson, *Scott Burton* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1986), 75.
5. Kachur II, 14–15.
6. Gerald Marzorati, “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Furniture Maker,” *Metropolitan Home* 15 (November 1983): 36.
7. This is indicated in Brenda Richardson’s notes for her 1986 retrospective, prepared from conversations with Burton. On her handwritten notes, she indicates that *Table I* had its “base cut down from old table / top new / ‘transitional piece’ / altered readymade.” SBP IV.27.
8. Art Collection List, 1990, SBP IV.60.
9. In a 1975–76 note, he referred to Breuer’s Parsons table as “one of *the* minimal statements of our century, a fundamental source for the geom[etric] sculptors of the ‘60s, not to mention Int[ernationa]l Style Arch[itecture].” Scott Burton, “The Platonic Parsons Table” (1975–76?), SBP II.11. That he saw this influence in relation to LeWitt is evidenced in a 1977 letter to the editor of *Art in America*. Intervening in a scuffle between Joseph Masheck and Donald Kuspit over LeWitt, Burton displayed a magisterial grasp of furniture history and questioned Masheck’s citation of a Parsons table by Jean-Michel Frank as a precedent for LeWitt’s sculpture. Whereas the Parsons table is generally attributed to Frank, Burton offered an alternative genealogy that tied its proportions to Breuer, the Bauhaus, and their Constructivist roots. He concluded with a reminder of LeWitt’s table made for Hesse, concluding, “We’d like to see a photo of that, please, before we continue the quarrel over art and style.” Scott Burton, “On the Table [Letter to the Editor],” *Art in America* 65, no. 2 (March–April 1977): 5.
10. Scott Burton, “Furniture Journal: Gerrit Rietveld,” *Art in America* 68, no. 9

- (November 1980): 102–8. LeWitt's collection of Rietveld chairs would later go on permanent loan to the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1980, and Burton made a special trip to Hartford to see them in the context of the Rietveld exhibition there. Kachur II, 18. See further discussion in the conclusion.
11. An additional spur to Burton's decision in 1972 to call his altered found and repaired furniture "sculpture" may have been the exhibition *Furniture Designed by Artists* in September of that year at Castelli Gallery. In that exhibition, Judd contributed what at first looked like one of his reductive cuboid volumes, but one of the two overlapping planes that made up the box's top was on a sliding track, making it function much as a toy chest would. I cannot imagine that Burton would have not seen this show (but I have found no evidence that he had), and I believe he would have been amused and somewhat irritated at how Judd's move to functionality was self-referential and barely usable. Later, in 1987, Burton would remark, "Judd's furniture and his architecture seem to me really deeply a failure and kind of a compromise of his sculpture." Kachur II, 52.
  12. Edit deAk and Walter Robinson, "An Article on Scott Burton in the Form of a Resumé," *Art-Rite* 8 (Winter 1975): 10.
  13. Suzanne Delehanty, "Furniture of Another Order," in *Improbable Furniture*, ed. Suzanne Delehanty (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1977), 28.
  14. "Furniture into Art / Art into Furniture," statement for 1977 exhibition at Hallwalls, Buffalo, SBP II.76.
  15. See discussion in Charles Stuckey, "Scott Burton Chairs," in *Scott Burton: Chairs* (Cincinnati: Contemporary Arts Center, 1983), 7–18.
  16. Perreault would later write about Burton's functional sculptures, "the Duchampian double-take effect is intensely operative. In Burton's case another level is introduced, that of use. His tables and chairs may be used as real tables and chairs." John Perreault, "False Objects: Duplicates, Replicas and Types," *Artforum* 16, no. 6 (February 1978): 26.
  17. Burton in Linda Shearer, "[Interview with Scott Burton]," in *Young American Artists: 1978 Exxon National Exhibition*, ed. Linda Shearer (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1978), 19.
  18. Thomas Hess, "The Greeks Beware Boring Gifts," *New York* 8, no. 9 (3 March 1975): 60–61. Marcia Tucker was among the curators that year, along with John Hanhardt, James Monte, and Elke Solomon (who would a few months later perform in Burton's *Five Themes of Solitary Behavior*). Tucker advocated for a more inclusive exhibition program at the museum. See discussion in oral history interview of Marcia Tucker by Paul Cummings, 11 August 1978, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
  19. Hess, "Greeks Beware Boring Gifts," 60.
  20. "Pieces," SBP II.34. *Chair Drama* is illustrated in Scott Burton, "Furniture Landscape / Furniture Pieces / Chair Drama," *TriQuarterly* 32 (Winter 1975): n.p.

21. See Elaine Louie, “The Many Lives of a Very Common Chair,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1991, C10.
22. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98. Burton is referring to this object’s role in the 1975 *Pastoral Chair Tableau* (see next section in this chapter) rather than *Furniture Pieces*.
23. “Lecture on Self,” CW 236.
24. This was in reference to the unrealized performance *Chair Scenes* (likely a version of *Chair Drama*) included in the Association for Performance flier’s offerings. SBP II.17.
25. From a 10 October 1979 interview partially transcribed in Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 79.
26. Scott Burton, notes for a performance for one male performer, 1973 [?], SBP II.51.
27. From a 10 October 1979 interview partially transcribed in Auping, *30 Years*, 79–80.
28. Arthur C. Danto, “The Seat of the Soul: Three Chairs,” *Grand Street* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 171.
29. Danto, 174. See also the brief history of furniture’s anthropomorphism in Robert Pincus-Witten, “The Furniture Paradigm,” in Delehanty, *Improbable Furniture*, 8–16.
30. “Ein ‘Chair-Tableau’ gleicht der Performance-Kunst weil es ZETI-begrenzt ist und sich auf das Theater bezieht (Publikum und Schauspieler). . . . Die Stühle repräsentieren das menschliche Leben.” Scott Burton, “Ein ‘Chair-Tableau,’” 1976 (extant only in German), SBP II.66. The context for this statement was the exhibition organized by René Block for the Akademie der Künste Berlin in 1976: *New York—Downtown Manhattan: SoHo*, in which Burton showed his only other furniture “performance” after 1971. *Chair Tableau* was performed on 22 to 24 September 1976. It had no movement; the chairs remained static in their arrangements implying interpersonal and proxemic relations. Documentation in SBP V.26. *Chair Tableau* lasted for the full opening hours (10 a.m. to 7 p.m.) for three days and was listed among the other time-based works, and Burton polemically wanted it to be seen as a performance. I have been unable to determine if the furniture was moved and, if so, how frequently, but there were likely few changes since the found chairs all stood on cinder blocks placed on their ends to act as a tall cuboid pedestal under each leg—like platform shoes. When looking to acquire used furniture for the work in Berlin, Burton pursued his enthusiasm for Rainer Fassbinder (which spurred the dedication of *Closet Installation* earlier that year). As Mac McGinnes recalled, “he went to the antique dealer that was the real-life model for the one in Fassbinder’s film.” Email from Mac McGinnes, 4 January 2012. At the exhibition, Burton also exhibited the miniature *Chair Pair*.
31. Burton in a 1979 interview in Auping, *30 Years*, 79.

32. Burton would later say his “installation pieces, meant only to be looked at (collections of ‘found’ furniture in certain *arrangement*) . . . are *tableaux*.” Scott Burton, “Furniture into Art / Art into Furniture,” statement for 1977 exhibition at Hallwalls, Buffalo, SBP II.76.
33. On Artists Space, see Trudie Grace, “Artists Space,” *Art Journal* 34, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 322–26; Irving Sandler, “Artists Space,” 1979, in *From Avant-Garde to Pluralism: An On-the-Spot History* (Lenox, MA: Hard Press Editions, 2006), 260–65; and Stephanie Edens, “Artists Space,” *Art-Rite* 5 (Spring 1973): 3–4.
34. Oldenburg once remarked, “Furniture equals sculpture.” Moderna Museet, *Claes Oldenburg: Skulpturer och tekningar* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1966), n.p. In a review of Burton’s show, John Russell cited Oldenburg’s 1963 *Bedroom Ensemble*, which he said “confronts us as theater” much like Burton’s work does. John Russell, “Scott Burton and Pamela Jenrette,” *New York Times*, 13 December 1975, C17.
35. Jenrette, who had been Poons’s studio assistant, was invited just two weeks before the show opened. She had work ready because she was preparing to send works to documenta, but they cancelled her participation.
36. Pamela Jenrette interview memoir in Claudia Gould and Valerie Smith, eds., *5000 Artists Return to Artists Space: 25 Years* (New York: Artists Space, 1998), 69.
37. Such grass contributed to the performance of what Michael Pollan has called the “supermarket pastoral” in American grocery stores. The material’s faux idyllic nature no doubt contributed to Burton’s adoption of it for his “pastoral.” See Michael Pollan, “Naturally,” *New York Times Magazine*, 13 May 2001. I am grateful to Adam Mack for suggesting this connection.
38. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98. In a note in which he sketched out his history of making tableau works, Burton said that he worked on *Pastoral Chair Tableau* for five years before its exhibition at Artists Space. “My Tableaux,” SBP II.98.
39. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 2, SBP II.98.
40. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98. The klismos is a type of chair from ancient Greece.
41. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98.
42. Burton stated, “I’m also a Conceptual artist in that I don’t do any of the actual constructing myself but have my pieces fabricated by someone else. But, of course, that is also a characteristic of Minimal Art.” Shearer, “[Interview with Scott Burton],” 19. Smith’s discussion of the telephone order of *Die* is in Lucy Lippard, “Homage to the Square,” *Art in America* 55, no. 4 (July-August 1967): 53.
43. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98.
44. Telephone interview with Thomas Abate Marco, 27 October 2017.
45. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 1, SBP II.98.
46. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976–77), 2, SBP II.98.

47. Scott Burton to Phyllis Plous, undated letter (1976-77), 1, SBP II.98.
48. "My Tableaux," SBP II.98.
49. Burton paraphrased in deAk and Robinson, "Article on Scott Burton," 10.
50. Burton paraphrased in deAk and Robinson, "Article on Scott Burton," 10. A similar reading of the central chair was offered in Carter Ratcliff, "Reviews: New York," *Artforum* 14, no. 7 (March 1976): 61. In my interview with Abate Marco, he also volunteered that the central chair was "like a solitary person," 27 October 2017.
51. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010.
52. Ernest Cardinale is not to be confused with Ernesto Cardinale, the Nicaraguan liberation theology priest, poet, and politician whose first book in English was not published until 1971, two years after Burton found Ernest Cardinale's name on the windowsill of the apartment.
53. Burton paraphrased in deAk and Robinson, "Article on Scott Burton," 10.
54. Shearer, "[Interview with Scott Burton]," 22.
55. Statement for Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York: "Furniture into Art / Art into Furniture," January 1977, SBP II.76.
56. Burton in conversation with George Segal and Nan Rosenthal, 6 December 1987, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Audio recording in the "Notable Lectures" podcast series at <http://www.nga.gov/podcasts/>.
57. See Kenneth Ames, "Good Timing and a Flair for Leadership," in *Grand Rapids Furniture: The Story of America's Furniture City*, ed. Christian Carron (Grand Rapids, MI: Public Museum of Grand Rapids, 1998), 7-19.
58. The Queen Anne style is not clearly defined in its original historical prototype (the architectural and design style is understood to have extended far beyond the death of Queen Anne in 1714) or in its mid-to-late nineteenth-century revival. For instance, the characteristic cabriole leg that the nineteenth-century revivals of Queen Anne style emphasized has been argued to have been anachronistically attributed to a later eighteenth-century style prototype. For a general assessment of the Queen Anne Revival style, see Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement, 1860-1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); and Norman Vandal, *Queen Anne Furniture: History, Design, and Construction* (Newtown, CT: Taunton, 1990).
59. Cardinale's chair had only the cabriole legs and arms and the vase-shaped splat attributed to the Queen Anne Revival style. The splat is flat and featureless, despite its traditional contour (and, indeed, may have possibly been part of Burton's later repair of the original chair). Similarly, only the front legs exhibit the characteristic curves, whereas the back legs are straight, solid, simple, and rectilinear pieces of wood. Traditionally, the back stiles of a Queen Anne Revival chair would have a gentle concave curve. No doubt, Burton recognized how much the chair was a pastiche of more simplified American construction with Queen Anne stylistic references.
60. John Ashbery, "Trashing the Sixties," *New York Magazine*, 29 May 1978): 65.

61. David Shulman, “Borax Reconsidered,” *American Speech* 60, no. 3 (1985): 283.
62. John Perreault, “Fluxus and the Permanent Wave,” *Soho Weekly News*, 11 December 1975, 19.
63. Burton received an \$8,000 Visual-Artists Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1975, some of which was most likely used to pay the expenses of casting the prototype for *Bronze Chair*. He had previously received a NEA short-term activities grant in the amount of \$3,000. (N.b., the annual report listed him by his formal name of Walter Burton, leaving out the middle name “Scott,” which he used in all other arenas.) Also in 1975, he received a \$3,600 Creative Arts Public Service (CAPS) grant from the State of New York in the multimedia category “to create ‘Living Pictures’ performance pieces,” which likely funded the Idea Warehouse performance. SBP II.44 and II.55.
64. Interview with Marsha Pels, 16 April 2003.
65. Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965): 80. Fred Orton’s comments on Jasper Johns’s use of bronze are helpful in considering Burton’s choice: “Traditional and out of favour in relation to the constructed sculpture of [David] Smith and others, cast bronze might have had a value, like sculp-metal, as a daft material with which to make serious avant-garde sculpture that was different from usual avant-garde sculpture.” Fred Orton, *Jasper Johns: The Sculptures* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1996), 33. By the mid-1970s, bronze was considered old-fashioned as an art material, and it was rarely used by conceptually driven postminimalist artists. When it was, such as with Lynda Benglis’s *Eat Meat* (1973), the commemorative connotations of the material were seen as an irreverent counterpoint to abstract forms (as with Benglis’s scatological pile).
66. This process was not actually bronze casting, but rather a method of electroplating a veneer of metal to the baby shoes. On the history of this fad, see Deborah Hofmann, “Bronzing Memories Happily,” *New York Times*, 18 March 1993, C2.
67. For an overview of the iconography of the empty chair and its psychological potency, see Tomáš Jirsa, “Portrait of Absence: The Aesthetic Mediality of Empty Chairs,” *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* 7, no. 2 (2016): 13–38. During the postwar era, the anthropomorphism of the chair can be seen in works ranging from Eugène Ionesco’s 1952 *The Chairs* to George Brecht’s 1961 *Three Chair Events* to Carolee Schneemann’s 1977 iteration of *ABC—We Print Anything—In the Cards*. There is perhaps no more resonant reminder of the possibility of chairs to stand in for people than one of the most popular sitcoms of the 1970s, *All in the Family* (1971–79) in which the central characters—and their differences—were visualized through the chairs that stood at the center of the set.
68. Robert Longo to Scott Burton, February or March 1977, SBP II.76, ellipses and punctuation as in the original.
69. Robert Longo to Scott Burton, February or March 1977, SBP II.76, punctu-

ation and irregular spellings as in the original. Longo's comments were somewhat erratic because, as he said, "I haven't slept in two days so forgive the language."

70. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 21.
71. Quoted in Michael Gibson, "The Strange Case of the Fluorescent Tube," *Art International* 1 (Autumn 1987): 105.
72. John Perreault, "Pin Ball Wizard," *Soho Weekly News*, 24 November 1977.
73. Most other sculptures of found or made chairs in the 1960s and 70s were decidedly afunctional, such as Richard Artschwager's *Chair/Chair III* (1974, one of only two readymades in his career), Geoffrey Hendricks's *Cut Chair*, 1975, Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, or Robert Rauschenberg's *Pilgrim*, 1960. In one undated note on furniture, Burton listed a range of artists who were using furniture within art: "represented as such, the indiv[id-ual] object and freestanding—Artschwager, [Lucas] Samaras. In situations, mises-en-scène—[Robert] Rauschenberg, [Edward] Kienholz]. The actual thing: [John] Chamberlain, *Burton*." SBP II.11, emphasis original. Here Burton is referring to Chamberlain's sprawling Styrofoam couch sculptures—understudied works that, like Burton's own use of functionality, staged corporeal and intercorporeal participation. For useful overviews of Burton's peers and precedents in the use of furniture in art, see Pincus-Witten, "Furniture Paradigm"; Delehanty, "Furniture of Another Order"; and Stuckey, "Scott Burton Chairs." Burton was also likely aware of George Brecht's 1961 Fluxus performance/score *Three Chair Events*, in which three everyday chairs of three different colors became the predicate for unprescribed occurrences initiated by the participant's taking a seat or noticing the chairs. Burton was working at *Art in America* in 1974 when the July/August issue featured this and other works by Brecht. When Brecht's *Chair Events* was performed at Martha Jackson Gallery in 1961, gallery visitors treated the chairs as "normal" chairs without acknowledging their contribution to the event score—much the way Burton would, some fourteen years later, capitalize on the chair's functionality to blend in as a useful and unremarkable thing. Brecht, however, had copies of the score handed out to gallery visitors to contextualize the chairs (which most viewers overlooked). For a discussion of Brecht's work and the invisibility of *Chair Events*, see Anna Dezeuze, "In Search of the Insignificant: Street Work, 'Borderline' Art and Dematerialisation," in *Objects in Progress: After the Dematerialisation of Art*, ed. Ileana Parvu (Geneva: MetisPresses, 2012), 39; and Anna Dezeuze, *Almost Nothing: Observations on Precarious Practices in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017), 87–88.
74. One exception is the handful of small statuettes of furniture Burton made when he had access to a foundry. These included two five-inch-high bronze "platform chairs" titled *Chair Pair*, which were made to be shipped to Berlin for the 1976 exhibition *New York—Downtown Manhattan: SoHo* at the Akademie der Künste. SBP V.26. Anomalous in Burton's oeuvre, these small

bronze chairs play with the idea of the platform cothurni that occupied him in the *Modern American Artist* and for the set of *Pair Behavior Tableaux*. In his review of Burton's 1977 solo exhibition at Droll/Kolbert, Perreault said that there was also a "bronze version in miniature of the handsome, life-size, lacquered wood "Table for Four." Perreault, "Pin Ball Wizard." This may be documented in SBP V.45.

75. E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Bollingen Series (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 80.
76. Etienne Gilson, *Forms and Substances in the Arts*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 87.
77. Rosalind Krauss, "Objecthood," in *Critical Perspectives in American Art* (Amherst, MA: Fine Arts Center Gallery, 1976), 25.
78. Because of the need to protect the patina, the Art Institute of Chicago has disallowed viewers from sitting in *Bronze Chair* even though it was intended by Burton to be usable. The museum does not, however, put such restrictions on its other Burton sculptures in more durable materials, such as its 1986 *Low Piece (Bench)* (fig. 6.6).
79. Telephone interview with Jane Kaufman, 3 May 2010. "That's so Scott," she said. "He was afraid someone was going to steal it. Not that six men could lift it."
80. "On Saturdays we put it out instead of all the time. It would have been good to bolt it in so you could leave it. But we had to watch it." Burton in Kachur II, 25.
81. Kachur II, 25.
82. DeAk and Robinson, "Article on Scott Burton," 10.
83. Quoted in "Artists, 'Doing Thing,' Do Streets," *New York Times*, 17 March 1969, 44. According to Perreault, "by morning most of [the frames] had been appropriated by passers-by." John Perreault, "On the Street," *Village Voice*, 27 March 1969, 17.
84. Russell, "Scott Burton and Pamela Jenrette," C17.
85. Jenrette in Gould and Smith, *5000 Artists Return to Artists Space*, 69. The \$40,000 amount seems incongruous and may have been an exaggeration in Jenrette's recollection of this event from many years before.
86. Jenrette in Gould and Smith, 69. Gerry Morehead, who had a show following Burton's, recalled sitting in the chairs of *Pastoral Chair Tableau*, "much to Helene's [Winter, the director] dismay and to the chagrin of Scott. Helene thought it was inappropriate. I would venture to say Scott thought it was interesting." Gerry Morehead in Gould and Smith, 73.
87. Burton in Kachur II, 25.
88. The obdurate immobility of a statue has performative force, to which viewers react in ways from the affectionate to the antagonistic. See David J. Getsy, "Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity, and Passive Resistance," *Criticism* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-20.
89. Robert Campbell and Jeffrey Cruikshank, "Interview: Scott Burton," in



*Artists and Architects Collaborate: Designing the Wiesner Building*, ed. Robert Campbell and Jeffrey Cruikshank (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 61.

90. Kachur II, 26.
91. Kachur II, 26 and 27.
92. The competition was notable because, unlike with most, a public vote decided to which of the three finalists (chosen by a panel from seventy-one applicants) the commission would be awarded. This was a new initiative for public art organized by the New York State Council on the Arts. The finalists were Burton, Tacha, and George Trakas. See Kathy Slobogin, "Smithtown Voters Seek a Haven," *New York Times*, 11 April 1976, 448.
93. Campbell and Cruikshank, "Interview: Scott Burton," 61.
94. The fact that *Bronze Chair* played a special role in Burton's thinking is indicated by the replica he made (for his friend and gallerist Donald Droll) in which he reiterated the initial monumental function of the work by inscribing it to his friend. In 1982, Burton suggested that the AMAM at Oberlin College (where he had performed *Lecture on Self*) acquire *Rustic Table* (which it did not) and that Droll donate the replica of *Bronze Chair* (which he did). Burton noted that "this replica is identical to the original piece but is inscribed to Donald." Burton to Richard Spear, 1982, and Richard Spear to Donald Droll, 8 December 1982, AMAM Curatorial Files, Oberlin College. The 1979 cast had initially been created for Marion ("Kippy") Stroud, the founding director of the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, where Burton had been a resident in 1978. It had been planned since at least 1977. While intended for her personal collection, she also wanted it for an exhibition of designs from the workshop at the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia, but it was not completed in time for the exhibition's June 1979 opening. Letter from Kippy Stroud to Scott Burton, 30 May 1979, SBP II.83. Burton's other gallery, Protetch-McIntosh Gallery in Washington, DC, had advanced the money to Burton for the casting of the replica the previous year. Nancy McIntosh to Scott Burton, 8 October 1978, Nancy Drysdal Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Droll evolved from Burton's long-term friend to gallerist in the late 1970s (see Kachur II, 68-73) and, at one point, was listed as owner of the first *Bronze Chair* (in the catalogue to the 1977 exhibition *Improbable Furniture* at the ICA Philadelphia). I am unclear how the 1975 sculpture returned to Burton or how Stroud's 1979 cast ended up being inscribed to and given to / sold to / exchanged with Droll.
95. Kachur II, 26. Burton was referring to a proposal he made along the same lines for the Geier Esplanade in Cincinnati: *American Furniture Tableaux*, composed of bronze casts of furniture "to anthologize historical periods (from late 17th-century Colonial to 1930s) and special types (high-style, middle-class, humble) of American furniture (and therefore national identity)." Scott Burton to Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners, 10 August 1980, SBP II.88. Burton showed maquettes for the public installation in Au-

- gust 1980 (in the display window of the House of Yore Antiques store). Tina Holsapple, “Geier Esplanade Renovation under Park Board Consideration,” *Eastern Hills Journal*, 1980, undated press clipping in SBP II.88. The project was ultimately rejected in 1982, in part because of unresponsiveness by Burton, presumably because he had lost interest as other commissions with his new furniture designs accelerated.
96. Perreault, “Pin Ball Wizard.”
  97. This would be apparent to many reviewers of his early sculpture. See, for example, from the following year Roberta Smith, “Designs on Minimalism,” *Art in America* 66, no. 6 (November–December 1978): 138–40.
  98. Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London, 1977).
  99. Robert Pincus-Witten, “Scott Burton: Conceptual Performance as Sculpture,” *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 1 (September 1976): 112–17.
  100. In 1977, it was referred to simply as *Splattered Table*, but Burton named it as the fourth of his table series in his 1986 retrospective exhibition catalogue. At one point, it was also referred to as *Polychrome Table #2*. This is indicated on a group of photographs sent of the Droll/Kolbert exhibition in the Irving Sandler Papers (I.4.9), Getty Research Institute.
  101. The Parsons table is named after the Parsons School of Design, where Frank taught on its Paris campus. A Parsons table’s legs are of equal thickness to the top and flush with its edges. Each leg is square in its cross-section. Burton thought much about the efficient simplicity of the Parsons table: “It’s a *form* of table, not a *type*.” Scott Burton, “The Platonic Parsons Table” (1975–76?), SBP II.11.
  102. John Russell, straining with attempted humor to deal with his discomfort with Burton’s works, said of *Table IV*, “The miniature painted table suggests that a very intelligent dwarf has done it after a long day at the Seurat exhibition at the Met.” John Russell, “Masters of Collage,” *New York Times*, 25 November 1977, 83.
  103. In her notes on works for the 1986 retrospective, Brenda Richardson remarked that Burton “used colors he liked as [a] painter” for *Table IV*. SBP IV.27.
  104. Smith, “Designs on Minimalism,” 139.
  105. Burton changed the title of this series a few times, and I have used what he settled on for his retrospective. They have also been called *Lacquered Chair, Edition of 2* or *Chair, Edition of 2*. See, for instance, Richard Lorber, “Robert Wilson; Scott Burton,” *Artforum* 16, no. 6 (February 1978): 64–65.
  106. Drawing for *Lawn Chair*, dated February 1977, SBP II.90. There are multiple versions of *Lawn Chair*. The first was fabricated in pine in 1977 (destroyed by Burton in 1979), and *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* in lacquered maple was also fabricated that year for the Droll/Kolbert Gallery exhibition. Burton remade both the individual and the pair versions in 1979, adding Formica over plywood. See Richardson’s notes in SBP IV.27.
  107. Stuckey, “Scott Burton Chairs.” Burton had it completed in Greensboro so

- that it could be shown in the exhibition *Improbable Furniture* at the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia in March 1977. Suzanne Delehanty to Scott Burton, 27 January 1977, SBP II.69. The lacquered maple *Lawn Chairs (A Pair)* in the Droll/Kolbert exhibition was fabricated in New York City in 1977.
108. One can also see a play with the dynamic of inside/outside and public/private in Burton's work with the Fabric Workshop. His *Window Curtains* (1978) consisted of opaque curtains printed with a paned window (in an oblique reference to Duchamp and to Rose Sélavy's *Fresh Widow*). See Marion Boulton Stroud, ed. *An Industrious Art: Innovation in Pattern and Print at the Fabric Workshop* (New York: W. W. Norton). Burton apparently referred to them as "anti-claustrophobic" curtains. See John Ashbery, "Decoration Days," *New York Magazine*, 2 July 1979, 51.
109. Burton quoted in Paula Deitz, "Design Notebook: The Perennial Adirondack Chair," *New York Times*, 4 July 1985, 9. As well, in his 1980 treatise on democratizing aspects of De Stijl artist Gerrit Rietveld's furniture, he cited the Adirondack chair as arriving at a similar simplicity and directness exhibited by Rietveld's revolutionary work. Burton, "Furniture Journal: Gerrit Rietveld," 102. See further discussion in the conclusion.
110. This reference is recounted in Stuckey, "Scott Burton Chairs," 11. The Bonnie and Clyde mythology had been reignited in the late 1960s with the release of Arthur Penn's 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*.
111. Marzorati, "Portrait of the Artist," 28.
112. As Charles Stuckey noted, Burton's inspiration for his new design came from a photograph of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's interior of the Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau (1925). Stuckey, "Scott Burton Chairs," 12.
113. See Susan Grant Lewin, *Formica and Design: From the Counter Top to High Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991); and Mark Adamson, *Formica Forever* (New York: Metropolis Books, 2013).
114. Email from Mac McGinnes, 4 January 2012.
115. Smith, "Designs on Minimalism," 139.
116. Especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Burton would draw connections between his sculpture and performance, while also maintaining their distinctness as modes of his practice. As with the ways he talked about sexuality in relation to his work, he tried to avoid easy categorizations and generalizations about his aims. A useful statement connecting the terms of his performance with his sculpture can be found in John Romine, "Scott Burton [Interview]," *Upstart* 5 (May 1981): 8.
117. On Hallwalls, see Sarah Evans, "There's No Place Like Hallwalls: Alternative-Space Installations in an Artists' Community," *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no. 1 (2009): 95–119.
118. The exhibition ran from 17 January to 3 February 1977 and was done in partnership with the Upton Hall Gallery of Buffalo State College; see <http://www.hallwalls.org/visual/351.html>. I am particularly thankful to Edmund Car doni for his assistance in uncovering details of Burton's 1977 exhibition.

119. Scott Burton, Hallwalls statement, 1977, SBP II.76.
120. The Polaroids shown in Buffalo, featuring Guido with a chair, have been lost, but documentation of them installed in the exhibition can be found in the Hallwalls Archive. The Polaroids were likely taken at the same time as the ones featuring the bench/bed from the Chicago performance (SBP II.75), discussed in chapter 3. Burton was trying to find a use for some of these photographs, and he also incorporated one into a proposal for the Institute of Art and Urban Resources Street Museum project *Study for Window Tableau*, 1977. P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
121. Peter Frank, “Small Is Beautiful,” *Village Voice*, 5 December 1977, 93.
122. Smith, “Designs on Minimalism,” 138.
123. Smith, 139.
124. Robert Pincus-Witten, “Camp Meetin’: The Furniture Pieces of Scott Burton,” *Arts Magazine* 53, no. 1 (September 1978): 103.
125. Interview with Robert Pincus-Witten, 6 May 2005. Martin was also gay, but his reticence to print material openly about gay culture in a national art magazine was characteristic of the 1970s (and, indeed, one reason for Burton’s attempt at a “Gay Issue” of *Art-Rite* earlier in the decade). Decades later, Martin would go on to make significant contributions to the history of homoerotic visual culture, most notably in his articles on the American illustrator J. C. Leyendecker and as Diana Vreeland’s successor as curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On Leyendecker, see Richard Martin, “Gay Blades: Homoerotic Content in J. C. Leyendecker’s Gillette Advertising Images,” *Journal of American Culture* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1995), 75–82; Richard Martin, “J. C. Leyendecker and the Homoerotic Invention of Men’s Fashion Icons, 1910–1930,” *Prospects* 21 (October 1996): 453–70.
126. Hilton Kramer, “Post-minimalists Show Recent Sculpture,” *New York Times*, 24 July 1981, C22.
127. There are examples in which Burton would more directly render the figurative and homoerotic sources for his sculptures. See David J. Getsy, “Scott Burton, *Two-Part Chair*, 1986,” in *Art after Stonewall: 1969–1989*, ed. Jonathan Weinberg et al. (Columbus, OH: Columbus Museum of Art; New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2019), 132–33.
128. An important early attempt to argue for what we might now call a queer reading of Burton’s sculptural practice that avoided a crass search for iconography can be found in the catalogue to the history-making exhibition by Dan Cameron, *Extended Sensibilities: Homosexual Presence in Contemporary Art* (New York: New Museum, 1982), 23–24.
129. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 9 April 1979, in ECC. Burton was referencing Costa’s ideas from the late 1960s about the “useful” artwork, such as the text Costa handed out for *Street Works I*: “Useful Art Manifesto. See Eduardo Costa, *Conceptualism and Other Fictions: The Collected Writings of Eduardo Costa 1965–2015* (Los Angeles: Les Figues, 2016), 53. Burton started this letter with a reminder that it had been ten years since the 1969 events.

130. Helene Winer, ed., *10 Artists / Artists Space* (Purchase, NY: Neuberger Museum, 1979).
131. Relayed in telephone interview with Thomas Abate Marco, 27 October 2017.
132. In 1978 he said, "My most important intellectual source and inspiration are the Russians. Tatlin, Rodchenko and Lissitzky, and what they did after the Revolution. They laid down their brushes and went out to do applied art, for the people. Of course, those were revolutionary times and we're not in even a vaguely similar situation now. The Bauhaus has also been important to me because there they believed that art and craft were unified." Shearer, "[Interview with Scott Burton]," 19–21. In 1981, he replied to a question about his most important artistic influences: "Conceptually, Tatlin. Visually, Brancusi. I can't get Brancusi out of my mind. I love him so much. . . . Morally, I would say my greatest influence has been Andy Warhol." Burton often paired Tatlin with Warhol, whom Burton also saw as making art (albeit infused with queer themes) that aimed at a general, non-art audience. The mundanity of Warhol's work (in which people talked about or were themselves) and its working-class roots were at the heart of Burton's admiration for it: "His meaning is liberation in every day: sexual, artistic, social." Romine, "Scott Burton [Interview]," 7. See further comments on Warhol in the 1974 "Make a Political Statement" (CW 244–45) and in Peter Schjeldahl, "Scott Burton Chairs the Discussion," *Village Voice*, 1 June 1982, 86.
133. Kachur II, 31.
134. Kachur II, 28.
135. Kachur II, 28–29.
136. Suzanne Delehanty to Scott Burton, 2 October 1979, SBP II.84.
137. DeCelle 3.
138. Romine, "Scott Burton [Interview]," 7.
139. Kachur II, 29.
140. Scott Burton to Eduardo Costa, 18 November 1979, ECC.

## Conclusion

1. Throughout, I have relied primarily on the edited transcript of the March 1980 interview (DeCelle) as well as the untranscribed passages of the audio recording of the interview (Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution). The transcript was significantly cut down and edited for its publication in 1981 as Edward DeCelle and Mark Thompson, "Conceptual Artist Scott Burton," *Advocate*, no. 310 (22 January 1981): T7–11.
2. Scott Burton, "Furniture Journal: Gerrit Rietveld," *Art in America* 68, no. 9 (November 1980): 102–8.
3. DeCelle 21. "Shirts with alligators" refers to the Izod/Lacoste polo shirts that became iconic of the "preppy" (prep school) look in the late 1970s.

4. DeCelle 19.
5. Scott Burton, audiotope of interview with Richard Francis, 1985, Tate Gallery Archive, London, TAV 756A.
6. Burton, “Furniture Journal: Gerrit Rietveld.” A catalyst for this article was the 1980 Rietveld exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum, to which Sol LeWitt contributed much of his personal collection of Rietveld chairs. Kachur II, 18.
7. DeCelle 16.
8. Mailgram from Scott Burton to Nina Freudenheim and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, 4 May 1983. Burton was making his case for an early public commission for Buffalo, New York: bronze sculptures of benches that adapt the Arts and Crafts style characteristic of the region’s Roycroft community. Titled *Pair of Bronze Settees* (1983), they were originally installed at the Allen Hospital Station and then placed in storage for some time before being relocated in December 2018 to Utica Station. I am grateful to Edmund Cardoni for his assistance in tracking down these works when they were not on view.
9. Scott Burton interviewed by Richard Francis, 1985, audio recording in the Tate Gallery Archives, TAV 756A.
10. Burton, “Furniture Journal: Gerrit Rietveld,” 103.
11. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
12. Muñoz, 48.
13. Peter Schjeldahl, “Scott Burton Chairs the Discussion,” *Village Voice*, 1 June 1982, 86.
14. CW 230.
15. Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
16. Burton quoted in Patricia Lowry, “Artist Pulls Up Chairs at One Mellon Plaza,” *Pittsburgh Press*, 15 May 1986, 49.
17. Burton stated, “My principle was to use the elements of the surrounding environment rather than to introduce new ones. My attempt was to blur boundaries, especially with the use of plantings and boulders, so that one is not quite sure where my contribution begins or ends.” Quoted in Patricia Fuller, *Five Artists at NOAA* (Seattle: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with Real Comet Press, 1985), 25.
18. See, for instance, David J. Getsy, “Scott Burton, *Two-Part Chair*, 1986,” in *Art after Stonewall: 1969–1989*, ed. Jonathan Weinberg et al. (Columbus, OH: Columbus Museum of Art; New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2019), 132–33.
19. Burton in interview of 10 October 1979 in Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 81.
20. DeCelle 15.
21. David J. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), 274–76.

## Appendix

1. It also does not include the majority of the snapshot photographs taken by Burton in the 1970s, which have been compiled by Eduardo Costa and exhibited as artworks; see the exhibition pamphlet *Scott Burton's Photographs: Nature, Furniture, Architecture, and Performance* (Miami: Ideobox Artspace, 2009). Costa maintained a (now-defunct) website on Burton's photographs, and its lead essay is reprinted as Eduardo Costa, "Scott Burton and Photography," 2004, in *Conceptualism and Other Fictions: The Collected Writings of Eduardo Costa 1965–2015*, ed. Patrick Greaney (Los Angeles: Les Figues, 2016), 119–23. More recently, Cosmocosa Gallery in Buenos Aires has shown enlarged digital prints based on scans from Burton's slides, but these have an ambiguous status.
2. Works that were at one point planned but not included: *Theater Fire*, *Instructions*, *Dance Piece*.
3. The *Photonovella* transparencies are in SBP II.21, but it is unclear if the work was ever realized. A drawing for the light box construction can be found in a letter from Burton to Elke Solomon, 15 September 1974, in the Whitney Museum of American Art Archives, Artists' Correspondence files.
4. Some photographs are in SBP V.45. Burton mentions working on these in a letter to Eduardo Costa from 1 June 1975 (ECC).
5. *Chair Tableau* was listed as a nine-hour performance each day for three days. The collection of chairs on cinder-block stilts likely remained static for most, if not all, of this time.
6. SBP II.28.
7. Documentation of photocollage in P.S. 1 Archives, Museum of Modern Art.
8. Burton also apparently made a jumpsuit with a printed pattern while at the Fabric Workshop; see SBP II.83.
9. Burton recalled: "And for the same show [*10 Artists / Artists Space* at the Neuberger Museum], I made a small model of something very important to me, that I call the 'Serpentine Double Banquette.' Isn't that a marvelous name? Not truly a banquette, because that's actually a bench against a wall. This is a two-sided—in public furniture, this thing has recurred—this two-sidedness or more-than-one-sidedness." Kachur II, 29. Photographs of the model are in SBP V.17.

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- DeCelle Edited transcript of an interview of Scott Burton by Edward Brooks DeCelle, March 1980 (later published in abridged form in the *Advocate*, 22 January 1981). Edward Brooks DeCelle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. When relevant, I quote from the full audio recording, which was only partially transcribed.
- ECC Correspondence collection of Eduardo Costa, Buenos Aires. While both sides of his correspondence with Burton are in his possession, Costa also transcribed extracts of Burton's letters. These partial transcripts are in SBP IV.12.
- JB/GF John Button correspondence in the Gerald L. Fabian Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- Kachur Scott Burton interview with Lewis Kachur, Oral History Project, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Interview 1: 22 May 1987. Interview 2: 25 September 1987.
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