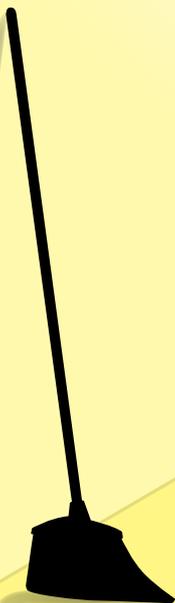


BLAST FROM THE PAST

A script by Jessamyn Fiore that draws
on the mythology surrounding the
figure of Gordon Matta-Clark.



BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

THE ELIZABETH FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

New York, New York

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BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

presents

BLAST FROM THE PAST

written by Jessamyn Fiore

Blast from the Past theatricalizes found texts about the work of Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson, combining their words with contemporaneous interviews and articles to propose the genesis of two artworks Blast from the Past (1972-73) and Reality Properties: Fakes Estates (1974) by Matta-Clark.

THE CAST

Gordon Matta-Clark: Artist

played by Kendra Sullivan

Robert Smithson: Artist

played by Angela Conant

The Sweeper: Cultural janitor

played by Frank Castanien

Interviewer: Art writer & critic

played by Dylan Gauthier

Reporter: Old-school journalist

played by Dylan Gauthier

Clive Murphy: Artist and art technician

played by Dylan Gauthier

The Crowd: Virginia Man, Christmas Man, Fitzgerald Woman,
Szent-Miklosy Man

played by Angela Conant and Frank Castanien

Stage Directions

read by James Voorhies

SPECIAL THANKS

Claire Barliant, Lauren Bierly, Victoria Keddie,
Michelle Levy, Maedhbh McCullagh, Clive Murphy,
Nate Padavick and the performers

SETTING

Ideally staged in a large raw space. The stage has a projection screen above it quite visible to audience so that projected work/text can be clearly seen. The stage is dirty, with debris already there for THE SWEEPER to sweep. There is a work table with a lamp and two chairs stage right. There is a cut wall that runs vertically center stage nearly bisecting the upstage area. This wall is referred to in the script as the "cut edge." It should be a raw cut that exposes a void between the two sides, like drywall/plaster with an empty gap for insulation.

SCENE 1

Lights up. Spotlight on GORDON MATTA-CLARK sitting up stage left and ROBERT SMITHSON standing downstage right. THE SWEEPER stands in an unlit corner with her broom, watching.

SMITHSON

My thoughts on art, like
Humpty Dumpty, have fallen off
the wall of language and will
never be put together again.

The "visual" memories of
something terrible are buried
under pressure in my tiers of
glass sheet.

Pictures of the future slip
from my sight through the
progressions of mirrors.

Memories have a way of
trapping one's notion of the
future and placing it in a
brittle series of mental
prisons.

Memory becomes sedentary and
sooner or later finds physical
shape (art)...

...and this memory emerges from
future time.

GORDON

City edges...

Allow the dead ends their
peace and quiet.

Nothing's left alone.
No space untreated
No surface uncovered
A lifeless emptiness

Opposite to the emptiness at
the end of the road
The top of the stairs

Any point of non-use

A highly simplistic view of
the edges

roof tops
water fronts
empty lots
doing alright on their own

are the target for
"improvement."

Lights dim. SMITHSON slowly moves upstage into the darkness and exits. THE SWEEPER begins to sweep in the background. GORDON jumps up and runs to the downstage left corner of the stage.

SCENE 2

Spotlight up on GORDON standing downstage left. He has a bag like a worn leather satchel resting at his feet.

Screen projection above reads: Reality Properties: Fake Estates (1973)

GORDON

(excited delivery to convince audience)

Rather than finding more ways of using and exploiting what is left forgotten and remains empty, it would be far more useful to allow dead ends their peace and quiet.

Screen projection above: images of Fake Estates by Gordon Matta-Clark.

If the cities use pattern dwindles off to the places seemingly forgotten except for each of us who finds it, enjoying a short escape from total development...

(pause)

why rush back or insist it to be altered to accommodate all?

GORDON suddenly realizes he is late. He picks up his satchel and rushes off into upstage darkness. He exits.

Lights up on center stage as REPORTER enters rushing in with a microphone. A small crowd gathers behind the reporter.

Screen projection above: image of New York Times article from October 14, 1973 reads: "'Sliver' Buyers Have a Field Day at City Sales" by Dan Carlinsky.

REPORTER

Urban real estate prices being what they are, it may come as a surprise that it is possible to own a bit of turf for a nominal payment.

GORDON enters upstage, lingers in background watching the crowd. He carries a number of documents that he carefully places in the satchel.

Those who don't have their hearts set on a whole city block or on acres of rolling countryside can still manage to pick up a piece of New York at one of the surplus land auctions held every other month by the city. Bargain hunters are sure to find a dozen or so "slivers," parcels too small to build on—even in some cases too small to stand on—with prices starting at \$25.

GORDON joins the crowd.

With dimensions like one foot by a hundred feet, most slivers seem to be good only for putting up a clothesline or storing spaghetti-

(pause for laughter from the crowd)

-but often people have good reasons for wanting a particular parcel...

REPORTER looks at the crowd and pulls VIRGINIA MAN forward.

The winning bidders give varied reasons for their interest. A Virginia man drove to New York not long ago to buy a few small parcels as speculative investments for his young children.

REPORTER pushes microphone in VIRGINIA MAN's face for him to talk.

VIRGINIA MAN

The prices of New York real estate have no place to go but up!

The crowd applauds and REPORTER takes back microphone.

REPORTER

Some New Yorkers have bought plots of a few square feet to plant private vegetable and flower gardens-

REPORTER grabs CHRISTMAS MAN from crowd.

-and one man bought several useless \$25 parcels as Christmas gifts for friends who have just about everything else.

CHRISTMAS MAN

Merry Christmas!!!!

Crowd applauds as CHRISTMAS MAN hands out presents. REPORTER pulls FITZGERALD WOMAN from crowd.

REPORTER

Pegeen Fitzgerald, who has a radio program on WOR, once went to an auction to bid on an old firehouse...

FITZGERALD WOMAN

I had to leave before it came up, and I didn't want to go away empty-handed. So I got this piece for \$50 or \$75-I forget which. It turned out to be an isosceles triangle about six feet on a side, up by Yankee Stadium. The only thing I've done to it is put up a fake fire hydrant to turn it into a park for dogs.

Crowd applauds.

REPORTER

At the last city real estate auction, 180 parcels were sold for a total of \$2,418,900, which made the people at the Real Estate Department very happy because all that property is now back on the tax rolls. But even happier seemed to be the purchases of some of the tiny, low-priced pieces of land.

REPORTER grabs GORDON and brings him to the front.

REPORTER

Gordon, a 28-year-old SoHo artist, walked away with five pieces of New York- four in Queens, one in Staten Island- each purchased for less than \$100.

Crowd applauds. REPORTER puts microphone in front of GORDON, motions for him to speak.

GORDON

I got more than I expected... and I'm very happy about it.

Awkward pause. REPORTER takes back microphone annoyed that GORDON does not say more.

REPORTER

Mr. Matta-Clark intends to use his new properties in works of art he will create during the next several months. The artworks will consist of three parts: a written documentation of the piece of land, including exact dimensions and location and perhaps a list of weeds growing there; a full scale photograph of the property, and the property itself. The first two parts will be displayed in a gallery, and buyers of the art will purchase the deed to the land as well.

GORDON takes back the microphone.

GORDON

I had to buy small properties because they're manageable- I can hang the photographs on the gallery wall. I have one piece that's 1 foot by 95. The photograph will be 1 by 95. It will go on a long wall. Another piece I bought I understand from the auction catalogue I can't even get to. There's no access to it, which is fine with me. That's an interesting quality: something that can be owned but never experienced. That's an experience itself.

The REPORTER looks confused. The crowd gives a slightly confused, half-hearted applause. The REPORTER pushes GORDON aside to grab Szent-Miklosy man.

REPORTER

Another lucky bidder was Balint Szent-Miklosy Jr., a Hungarian refugee who became a city planner in New York and fell in love with the city. He bought three \$25 pieces in Queens: irregular lots of rough dimensions 1 by 46, 2 by 10 and 1 by 62.

Crowd applauds. SZENT-MIKLOSZY MAN takes microphone and center stage. As he speaks GORDON wanders away from the crowd toward the table.

SZENT-MIKLOSZY MAN

I have absolutely no idea what use the pieces will be and I haven't seen them yet. I know one has no practical access, but that doesn't bother me. I just wanted to own a piece of the city I love. I feel closer to New York now!

Round of loud applause from the crowd.

The REPORTER bows and exits. The crowd dissipates and exits. Lights down.

SCENE 3

Lights up as GORDON switches on table lamp and places his bag on the table. THE SWEEPER enters and joins GORDON at the table.

GORDON

(GORDON talks to THE SWEEPER and himself.)

The failing of the architectural state set mentality is its homogenous accessibility to all and an oppressive mania for influencing the entire fabric in all of its details over all its surfaces. Nothing's left alone.

GORDON begins to remove the contents of the bag: various papers, maps and photographs. THE SWEEPER helps him organize everything- matching photos to deeds and creating piles.

The professional devotion to care and responsibility leaves no space untreated, no surface uncovered...

GORDON pauses considering a map- turns it upside down- nods and hands it to THE SWEEPER who places it in a new pile.

...whose final effect is a lifeless emptiness completely opposite to the emptiness at the end of the road or at the top of the stairs or at any point of non-use.

Beyond the wrong thinking of promoting more use, more total coverage in a city edges project there is also a highly simplistic view of the edges-

GORDON sits down frustrated. He turns away from the table.

Again the issue is exploiting undeveloped areas. Therefore rooftops, waterfronts, empty lots, whatever known usable surfaces that are doing alright on their own are target for "improvement." Due to that logic a whole range of obvious additions goes unseen, misunderstood...

THE SWEEPER puts a hand on GORDON's shoulder.

...unenjoyed...

GORDON stands up throwing off THE SWEEPER's hand and picks up a large pile of papers.

...if it can't be built on or worked with.

He throws the papers so they are a mess again on the table and floor.

GORDON exits. THE SWEEPER reorganizes the piles of documents and photos.

THE SWEEPER

(to the audience)

I think perhaps one of the most interesting parts of Fake Estates is that we don't think he ever even showed it. Someone has a memory of it being in 112 Greene Street but I could never verify that--and I tried, believe me. So in his life time it was never on a wall--just in a box.

THE SWEEPER takes an empty box and begins placing the materials in it delicately.

Boxes filled with photographs, deeds, maps. And then of course there are the physical properties themselves.

So it is a conceptual piece. And that concept--by now it's been taken and inhabited by so many. It's been elevated or sublimated--it's been appropriated most I suppose.

THE SWEEPER carries the box down stage to show it directly to the audience.

But for tonight... let's look at what it means to us--here and now--our relationship to this work at its core.

THE SWEEPER pulls a map out of the box.

It's a treasure hunt, you know? The fantasy--the longing--to go and to find these hidden places--a scavenger hunt of quirky

New York City real estate.

THE SWEEPER holds up more documents from the box showing them to audience then letting them fall.

And to search these properties out--to locate them and stand there and say--ha--I found you! I found your property! I am now here--in this place as you were. A part of this history; being in the exact same slice of space just in a different time. I put in the work and I found it!

THE SWEEPER drops the box.

To be a part of history. To time travel.

Spotlight up on SMITHSON stage left. THE SWEEPER is startled and immediately begins putting all the papers back in the box.

SMITHSON is walking very slowly across the stage carefully pouring out sand and gravel from a bag.

SMITHSON

The "time traveler" as he advances deep into the future discovers a decrease in movement, the mind enters a state of "slow motion" and perceives the gravel and dust of memory on the empty fringes of consciousness.

THE SWEEPER grabs the broom and follows behind SMITHSON sweeping up the sand into piles.

Like H.G. Wells, he sees the "ice along the sea margin"--a double perspective of past and future that follows a projection that vanishes into a nonexistent present.

SMITHSON exits. THE SWEEPER exits sweeping after him.

Lights down.

SCENE 4

Spotlight up on INTERVIEWER far stage left.

Screen projection above: Anarchitecture images by Gordon Matta-Clark (1974).

INTERVIEWER waits as if standing in a doorway debating whether to enter.

INTERVIEWER

I've always thought of you as working within an architectural context.

Spotlight up on GORDON leaning against the table.

GORDON

Not architectural in the strict sense.

He smiles charmingly and gestures for INTERVIEWER to enter.

Most of things I have done that have "architectural" implications are really about non-architecture, about something that's an alternative to what's normally considered architecture.

INTERVIEWER moves center stage looking around as if the space is a messy artist's studio full of work.

The Anarchitecture show at 112 Greene Street last year- which never got very strongly expressed- was about something other than the established architectural vocabulary, without getting fixed into anything too formal.

Screen projection above: image and text Splitting (1974).

INTERVIEWER

Do you see the Humphrey Street building as a piece of anarchitecture?

GORDON

No.

INTERVIEWER shrugs, moves downstage looking around and ignoring GORDON. THE SWEEPER enters and stands quietly upstage with broom, unseen and watching.

Screen projection above: Anarchitecture images by Gordon Matta-Clark (1974).

Our thinking about anarchitecture was more elusive than doing pieces that would demonstrate an alternative attitude to buildings, or rather to the attitudes that determine the containerization of usable space. Those attitudes are very deep set...

INTERVIEWER is distracted by looking around, nearly falls off the stage but is pulled back by GORDON. INTERVIEWER turns to face him, laughing and embarrassed.

Architecture is environment too. When you're living in a city the whole fabric is architectural in some sense. We were thinking more about metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed.

INTERVIEWER:

(pause)

What's a metaphoric void?

GORDON:

Metaphoric in the sense that their interest or value wasn't in their possible use...

INTERVIEWER:

You mean you were interested in these spaces on some non-functional level.

GORDON:

Or on a functional level that was so absurd as to ridicule the idea of function. For example, the places where you stop to tie your shoe-laces, places that are just interruptions in your own daily movement. These places are also perceptually significant because they make a reference to movement space.

GORDON retrieves the box of Fake Estates and brings it to the table. INTERVIEWER follows. SMITHSON enters stage left and watches them.

When I bought those properties at the New York City Auction the description of them that always excited me the most was "inaccessible." They were a group of fifteen micro-parcels of land. In Queens, left-over properties from an architect's drawing. One or two of the prize ones were a foot strip down somebody's driveway and a square foot of sidewalk. The others were curbstone and gutterspace.

INTERVIEWER takes a map that GORDON has held up, looks at it briefly, puts it down and smiles politely.

SMITHSON:

... a double perspective of past and future that follows a projection that vanishes into a nonexistent present.

INTERVIEWER wanders away from the table looking around again. GORDON follows.

GORDON:

What I basically wanted to do was designate space that wouldn't be seen and certainly not occupied. Buying them was my own take on the strangeness of existing property demarcation lines.

INTERVIEWER stops and bends down to look at the swept piles of sand and gravel. SMITHSON moves towards the piles.

SMITHSON:

I have constructed some replicas of such perspectives, but I find they tell me less and less about the structure of time.

INTERVIEWER stands back up and looks straight at GORDON. She points off stage like a question and he nods. INTERVIEWER exits in the direction she pointed. GORDON gives a half wave goodbye. He returns to the table.

GORDON:

Property is so all-pervasive. Everyone's notion of ownership is determined by the use factor.

GORDON turns off table lamp leaving only SMITHSON and the piles of sand lit. GORDON exits.

SMITHSON:

(looking sadly at the dirt)

The perspectivism of my esthetic has caved-in along orderly rows, or a surface illusionism has collapsed into deposits at the bottom of boxes.

SMITHSON slowly walks towards audience. THE SWEEPER follows sweeping.

The continuous dimensions of space with all its certainties and rationalisms have broken through my consciousness into the discontinuous dimensions of time where certainties and rationalisms have little value.

SMITHSON stands still and THE SWEEPER sweeps in a circle around him.

The calamitous regions of time are far from the comforts of space.

SMITHSON exits. THE SWEEPER continues to sweep in a circle.

Lights down.

SCENE 5

THE SWEEPER drops the broom and a spot light comes up stage center. THE SWEEPER moves into the spotlight.

Screen projection above: installation image of Blast from the Past by Gordon Matta-Clark (1972/73).

THE SWEEPER:

(said conspiratorially to the audience)

So there's this little piece by Gordon I really like called

Blast from the Past. He did it in 1972 or maybe 1973.

Lights up on GORDON upstage facing audience and CLIVE MURPHY downstage next to a pedestal with Plexiglas cover. GORDON has a camera around his neck and items in his hands.

The ingredients of the work:

1. Handwritten letter/instructions

GORDON holds up letter.

2. Photograph of pile of sweepings from Gordon's floor

GORDON holds up camera.

3. A Ruler

GORDON holds up ruler.

Now this ruler is given as part of the work and it is also in the photograph to show the scale.

4. The pile of debris from Gordon's floor

GORDON motions to debris on floor.

So the letter reads:

GORDON

(reads letter aloud)

Puzzle kit... contains all the parts necessary to recreate this compelling scene from history of my floor ... Just use this simple diagram to put everything in its proper place.

GORDON folds up letter and places it in pocket. CLIVE MURPHY sets up a workstation around pedestal. GORDON goes to THE SWEEPER who gives him the broom. GORDON begins to sweep "creating" the piece.

THE SWEEPER:

And the action-to make it-is of course imbued with that essential element of compulsion-need-to solve this puzzle.

GORDON places the ruler next to pile and takes a photo. He then proceeds to sweep the pile of debris into a small plastic slide film container. CLIVE MURPHY brings over a box to GORDON and they delicately put all the items of the work into it.

Anyone who stares at it long enough in its case under the Plexiglas has to fight the urge to just get in there and keep manipulating the pile of debris until it is exact.

CLIVE MURPHY brings the box to the pedestal and GORDON follows watching.

Of everyone who gets to see the work—only a very select few actually get to try their hand at the game.

Like myself who on the occasion of this exhibition installed the work with Clive Murphy—artist and art technician.

CLIVE MURPHY nods his head to the audience then nods his head to THE SWEEPER. They both put on latex gloves and begin to install the work.

THE SWEEPER:

A compulsion to make exact—yes—this scene from your floor. It is compelling— you are right!

CLIVE MURPHY pours debris out of box onto plinth and they both set about manipulating it with tweezers.

To place the cigarette just so in the upper right corner and manipulate the matches to fan out just like in the photo... but there are discrepancies—so much dirt has been lost how can we really ever recreate this? It's impossible!

THE SWEEPER picks up a lump and looks at it.

And oh my god—is that hash? That is a lump of hash I swear—

CLIVE MURPHY takes the lump and moves to hold it up in the light.

CLIVE MURPHY:

Well—it's certainly not a rock.

THE SWEEPER:

Between that and the pills...

He was prescribed these pills in college for Addison's disease—put on steroids for years until finally a different doctor had the sense to stop it.

CLIVE MURPHY:

In the photo it looks like there are three pills.

THE SWEEPER:

But, here are four.

CLIVE MURPHY:

(looking at photo)

I think one is hidden under those two in the corner.

THE SWEEPER:

But how to place them like that?

CLIVE MURPHY:

(adjusting debris)

You have to balance one on top just so... there.

THE SWEEPER:

And the ruler...

CLIVE MURPHY picks up the ruler and turns it around to show the back to THE SWEEPER. Written on the back is "Hello there."

THE SWEEPER:

(reading)

Hello there.

GORDON:

Hello there!

CLIVE MURPHY:

It's a message from your step-dad.

THE SWEEPER:

From the great beyond...

GORDON:

Enjoying the puzzle?

THE SWEEPER:

(mock ghost sound)

Oooooooooo...

THE SWEEPER and CLIVE MURPHY place the ruler on the pedestal. GORDON moves away into the darkness upstage and exits. CLIVE MURPHY goes back to obsessively manipulating the debris. THE SWEEPER gives up and moves toward the audience.

THE SWEEPER:

It is incomplete. It will only ever become more so with each installation as more and more is lost. He asks you to complete it. This is an impossible task. But we all want to try. When you look at it you want to engage with it. Because of the instruction but more for the connection and the puzzle—the unsolvable puzzle—it beckons.

Forever incomplete we are compelled to complete it.

To be a part of history. To time travel.

Lights dim. CLIVE MURPHY exits. THE SWEEPER finds the broom again

and begins to sweep slowly in the background.

Spotlight up on SMITHSON downstage right holding a mirror. He plays with it catching the light while he speaks.

SMITHSON:

Mirrors in time are blind, while transparent glass picks up reflections in this spaceless region of inverse symmetry and shifting perspectives--the mirror reflects the blank surface in the suburbs of the mind.

There is nothing to "understand" about such a region except the consciousness that makes understanding impossible.

Only when art is fragmented, discontinuous and incomplete can we know about that vacant eternity that excludes objects and determined meanings.

Lights out.

SCENE 6

Lights up. GORDON center stage looking at the cut edge. THE SWEEPER is standing quietly in the background, unseen and watching. INTERVIEWER enters.

Screen projection above: images of Circus-The Caribbean Orange by Gordon Matta-Clark (1978).

INTERVIEWER wanders around the stage looking up and around.

GORDON:

The thing I would really like to express...

GORDON takes INTERVIEWER by the arm and moves them both to the cut edge.

...is the idea of transforming this static, enclosed condition of architecture on a very mundane level into this kind of architecture which incorporates this sort of animated void.

The reason for the void is so that the ingredients can be seen in a moving way--in a dynamic way.

You have to see them by moving through them.

They imply a kind of kinetic, internal dynamism of some sort.

INTERVIEWER:

But it is the voids, the cuts, or the removals which are the lines.

GORDON:

Right--

(Gestures to the cut edge)

and also because they are open, it also provides an extension of the line and animates the way you encounter it.

INTERVIEWER:

What one reads, then, are those openings or the negative space.

GORDON:

I don't know if you read the negative space...

(pause)

You read through the negative space to the edges of the building...

GORDON uses his whole body to gesture this kind of movement.
INTERVIEWER laughs.

What you brought up before about being obsessed with the edge--

He takes INTERVIEWER's hands and places them on the cut edge.

I mean the edge is what I work through, try to preserve, spend this energy to complete, and at the same time what is read...

For me the difference between my kind of edge and a lot of other people's edges is the majority of edges are very finished somehow, manicured. And this is a raw edge...

He runs hands along the cut edge.

...which people seem to find different in some way. Actually it is more informative.

INTERVIEWER:

You said somewhere that it's in that edge that you read the autobiography.

GORDON:

Well, that's true in certain cases where there is an autobiography.

INTERVIEWER nods and then moves away looking up again.

INTERVIEWER:

When I look at this building, those edges seem so delicate and so fragile...

GORDON:

In some cases they are.

INTERVIEWER:

...and then underneath is another void, and another delicate edge. It seems to me that this is what is so surprising about all that heavy work and physical process.

GORDON quietly moves to just behind INTERVIEWER.

GORDON:

The contradiction.

INTERVIEWER:

(Startled by his close proximity)

Exactly-

(she composes herself)

it is contradiction. Delicate lines, and then large empty spaces.

INTERVIEWER turns to face GORDON, they are close.

GORDON:

But the thing that is even more fascinating...

(intimacy of telling a secret)

...there were things that would have been done, but it turned out not to work...

INTERVIEWER:

(shared secret whisper)

What were they?

GORDON:

What I would love to do is to actually... let's say...

Extend the building above... I mean extend it below as much as above...

INTERVIEWER looks confused. He excitedly tries to win back her understanding.

Like an alchemical motif where there is that definite dichotomy-or balance-between above and below.

If you think about shelter as a form of being, which it is, obviously, as it incorporates the full extent of your human potential...

(he speaks faster animatedly circling her)

Or at least it has throughout our evolution and through

all the various kinds of climatic conditions. People have survived by living in caves, and survived living in trees; survived in all kinds of different levels...

Somehow I think that a building could be-in addition to a micro-archaeology-a kind of micro-evolution... or some sort of wholly internalized expression of a total generic or evolutionary development...

GORDON stops and takes INTERVIEWER's hand.

Let's say I have a master plan somewhere which exists and has not been used yet.

GORDON leads INTERVIEWER over to the table and politely offers a seat.

Which does incorporate the underground and the sky, and the building...

They sit. THE SWEEPER, holding a towel on arm like a waiter, brings over two tumbler glasses and a bottle of tequila.

What we all understand as building-or see as urban landscape-is just this sort of middle zone.

THE SWEEPER pours two glasses, stands back and waits.

If you had to deal with a metaphysical equivalent, it would be... another something that exists between the earth and the very lowest cosmic level.

GORDON and INTERVIEWER toast their glasses.

The same thing is true pretty much for the building and you see it as just that given ingredient which is somewhat useful and is obedient...

GORDON gestures as he speaks so that the drink is spilling out of the glass all around him.

But is really just the beginning of speculations about what could be beyond it and what numbers of directions there could be...

THE SWEEPER cleans up spills with the towel as GORDON drinks whatever is left in glass and slams it down on the table in emphasis.

I see a building as something which exists and is passionately beautiful in itself, but also demands or excites a certain

kind of extension.

INTERVIEWER quickly downs her drink to keep up with GORDON.

INTERVIEWER:

What about archeology? Not the kind of archeology that shows you the old wallpaper or leftovers of people's lives with a building, but I wonder about the romanticism.

THE SWEEPER refills their glasses.

GORDON:

That whole idea about romanticism...

GORDON lifts his glass and they toast again.

We have basically as a so-called modern culture, a very strange relationship to the word romanticism as it comes out of the obviously very competitive kind of history where the mechanistic tendencies have been fighting with the poetic for years, right?

So because of that, and because of this whole kind of "modernity"...

Machine-age modernity, I think that romance, or poetry, whatever it might be...

INTERVIEWER leans forward in anticipation.

I think of it more as memory.

INTERVIEWER leans back disappointed.

Trying to encourage the inclusion of some sort of expanded being-

I think, in fact, that that's what memory is. I think we are physically a very fine memory device. Things that include that, enhance that reality are, in fact, infinitely more accurate than all of the machine vocabulary or the modernity vocabulary.

He finishes his drink, slams down glass.

I find archeology baffling, impossible.

INTERVIEWER:

But you don't look for clues? You are not trying to find out anything about a building or site or...

THE SWEEPER refills their drinks.

GORDON:

A specific something, no.

INTERVIEWER lifts glass for a toast but GORDON just downs his drink and stands up.

When confronted with real time, with the real mysteries of time...

GORDON moves away from the table toward the audience.

There's a kind of central nervous spasm that takes place when you get really into it, which just amounts to a sort of all-consuming gag, all-consuming quake of some sort, which you really don't understand.

INTERVIEWER stands up drunk and swaying. She is about to speak then covers her mouth. INTERVIEWER exits rushing off stage like she is going to be sick.

SMITHSON enters unseen by others. THE SWEEPER begins to clean the table but is stopped by GORDON. They stare at one another and then the sweeper exits. GORDON takes the bottle and goes to the cut edge. Lights dim except for spotlight on SMITHSON and GORDON.

GORDON:

Buildings are fixed entities in the minds of most--the notion of mutable space is virtually taboo, even in one's own house. People live in their space with a temerity that is frightening. Home owners generally do little more than maintain their property. It's baffling how rarely people get involved in fundamentally changing their place by simply undoing it.

SMITHSON:

(To GORDON)

Unity is a natural idea, that belongs more to life (also called reality) and not to the terrible dualities of great art.

GORDON:

(To SMITHSON, gesturing to cut edge)

The act of cutting through from one space to another produces a certain complexity involving depth perception. Aspects of stratification... not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface that reveals the autobiographical process of its making.

SMITHSON:

And every cosmic system is a false one, that at times slips into the chaos of nature.

GORDON:

There is a kind of complexity which comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present.

(takes a drink and pauses, considering)

Each building generates its own unique situation.

GORDON runs his hand along the cut edge. The spotlight on him fades to black.

SMITHSON:

This falseness must be protected from the murky waters of life's truth.

(to audience)

Nothing is more corruptible than truth.

Lights down.

THE END**TEXTS QUOTED IN BLAST FROM THE PAST**

All Gordon Matta-Clark texts & interviews can be found in:
Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings by Gloria Moure, Ediciones Poligrafa, Barcelona, 2006.

Scene 1, Scene 2, And Scene 3 Gordon:

"City Edges" by Gordon Matta-Clark, From Notebook 1261, ca. 1970 (Moure, p. 359)

Scene 2 Reporter, Gordon, And Crowd:

"'Sliver' Buyers Have a Field Day At City Sales" by Dan Carlinsky, The New York Times, October 14th, 1973.

Scene 4 Gordon And Interviewer:

"Gordon Matta-Clark: Splitting the Humphrey Street Building" An Interview by Liza Bear May 1974, first published in Avalanche, December 1974, pp. 34-37. (Moure, p. 166)

Scene 6 Gordon And Interviewer:

"Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark" by Judith Russi Kirshner, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, February 13, 1978. (Moure, 324-327)

Scene 6 Gordon:

"Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections" by Gordon Matta-Clark, Typewritten Statement, Undated. (Moure, p. 132)

Smithson (Throughout Play):

"The Shape and the Future and Memory" by Robert Smithson, 1966. From Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings, edited by Jack Flam, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, p. 322-323

ABOUT

Jessamyn Fiore is a writer, curator and co-director of the Gordon Matta-Clark Estate. She has researched extensively on the work and life of Matta-Clark and curated a number of related exhibitions, including the group show 112 Greene Street: The Early Years (1970-1974) at David Zwirner Gallery in 2011. In 2012, she edited the accompanying publication 112 Greene Street: The Early Years (1970-1974) published by David Zwirner and Radius Books.

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