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Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970

Julia Bryan-Wilson

For his 1970 solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Robert Morris: Recent Works*, Robert Morris created process pieces—“spills” of concrete, timber, and steel—which filled the entire third floor of the museum (Fig. 1). These constructions, including a ninety-six-foot-long installation that spanned the length of the room, were the largest pieces the Whitney had ever exhibited (Fig. 2). Assembled over the space of ten days, the installations were built with the help of a team of more than thirty forklift drivers, crane operators, and building engineers, as well as a small army of professional art fabricators (Fig. 3).¹ An article in *Time* magazine observed, “as workmen moved in with gantries, forklifts, and hydraulic jacks to help Morris do his thing, the museum took on the look of a midtown construction site.”² To accommodate the massive installations, the walls in the gallery space were removed, and there was concern that the floor might not be able to support their weight. Instead of a traditional opening, viewers were invited to watch the labor progress day after day, although after faulty rigging left an art installer injured, pinned under a steel plate, this component of the show came to a halt.³

Using machinery and multiple assistants to create large artworks was standard practice by 1970, and contemporaneous outdoor projects by Richard Serra (*Shift*, 1970–72) and Robert Smithson (*Spiral Jetty*, 1970) dwarf Morris’s Whitney exhibition in terms of sheer grandiosity. While most artworks of this scale require help from studio apprentices or installers, this exhibit uniquely theatricalized these workers’ bodily involvement at the same time that it proposed an uneasy equality between artist and assistant. The pieces were made partially by chance; the workers rolled, scattered, and dropped concrete blocks and timbers, then left them to lie as they fell. In thus relinquishing compositional control, Morris insisted on an unprecedented degree of collaboration between himself and the workers who installed the show.

The show generated tremendous critical attention when it opened, yet it has been all but effaced from histories of the period, as well as largely overlooked within Morris’s increasingly canonized oeuvre. Against this marginalization, I argue that the 1970 Whitney show was a vital turning point, and not just for the artist’s own practice. It also critically redefined artistic labor, a crucial issue for the American avant-garde at this moment. Morris thematized the literal materials and means of construction work, and he enacted a work stoppage—an art strike—by shutting this show down early. By circumventing the studio and fabricating the work wholly on the floor of the museum, Morris figured the art itself as a specific kind of work, performed at a specific kind of work site.

In 1970, artistic work could mean anything and everything, from listing words on a sheet of paper to enacting task-based movements. This expansion and destabilization of artistic

labor had significant political ramifications. “Work,” broadly understood as a shorthand term for methods, process, and art pieces, also signaled the shifting relationship between artists and art institutions. This conception of the art institution as a work space was largely formulated by the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) and the New York Art Strike against War, Racism, and Repression (Art Strike), two interrelated, short-lived, but important organizations. The AWC, founded in New York in 1969 to protect artists’ rights, quickly expanded its agenda to include an ambitious slate of New Left concerns, including museum accessibility, diversity, and protest against the Vietnam War. The Art Strike, cochaired by Morris, came into being to initiate several antiwar actions directed against art institutions in May 1970 after the bombing of Cambodia by the United States military forces and the killing of several students during an antiwar protest at Kent State University.

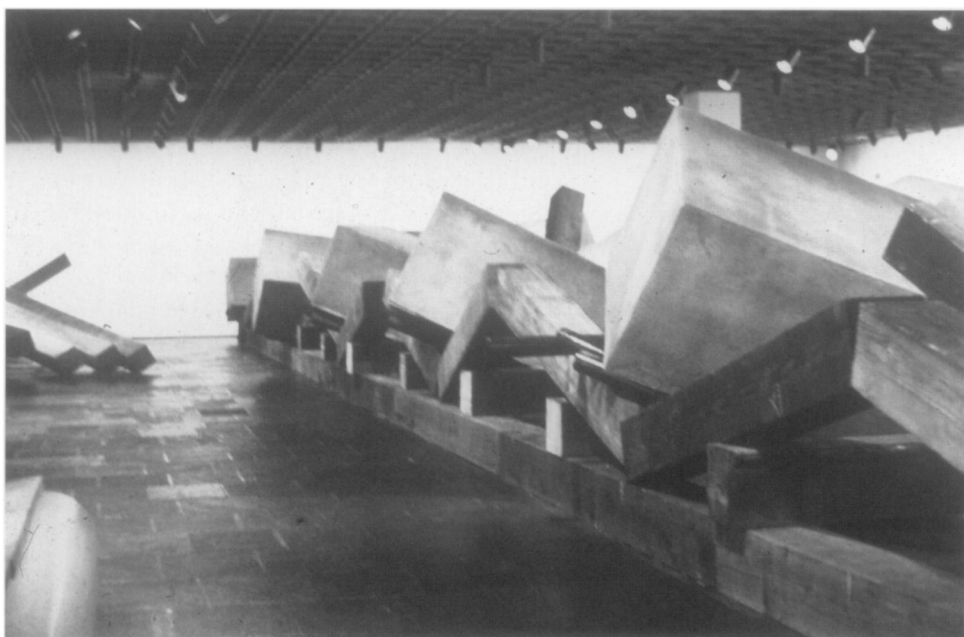
The AWC and the Art Strike have been seen primarily as vehicles for American artists’ activities protesting the Vietnam War and fights against racism and sexism in the art world. These groups did not limit themselves to such widely articulated leftist concerns, though; they also served as arenas in which artists publicly struggled to understand their positions as cultural laborers. During this period, as Helen Molesworth has asserted, they “came to see themselves not as artists producing (in) a dreamworld but as workers in capitalist America.”⁴ The names alone of both groups illustrate that artists, as well as critics and curators, began to identify *as workers*.

The story I tell about art and work in 1970 thus differs from the one chronicled by Caroline Jones in *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*.⁵ As Jones points out, this era was marked by a concern with artistic identity in which artists such as Frank Stella, Smithson, and Andy Warhol vacillated between positioning themselves as executives and as blue-collar workers. Jones contends that the widespread effort in the United States in the 1960s to link art making to traditional labor played out in the arena of artistic self-fashioning. Taking this idea further, I argue that the redefinition of artists as workers in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a collective, and primarily political, endeavor.

As the circumstances around Morris’s 1970 Whitney show will demonstrate, artists’ identifications with workers were always shadowed by an ambivalence that verged on disavowal. The *disidentification* with work was related to anti-Vietnam War politics, the historically coincident move into a different kind of labor economy, and shifts in New Left thought about the working class—a category of identity that was explicitly gendered. Morris’s exhibition rehearsed, exaggerated, and spectacularized these contradictions, in the process making clear the wider paradoxes of artistic activism, labor, and



1 Robert Morris, installation shot of *Robert Morris: Recent Works* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1970 (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt, © Estate of Rudy Burckhardt / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



2 Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, and Steel]*, installation piece for the Whitney, 1970, concrete, wood, steel, approx. 6 × 16 × 96 ft. Destroyed (artwork and photograph © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

radicalism at this explosive moment in both American art and politics.

Exhibition as Work

The 1970 Whitney show was initially intended by curator Marcia Tucker as a comprehensive midcareer survey that would complement the artist's recent solo exhibitions at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Detroit Institute of Arts in late 1969.⁶ Both Tucker and Morris agreed until late 1969 to exhibit some of his earlier, well-known pieces alongside a small number of previously unseen, new works. But by mid-December, Morris turned away from this idea, writing to Tucker, "I do not wish to show old work."⁷ As he elaborated in a letter a few weeks later:

I feel a separate room of older objects shown somewhere off the third floor is antithetical to the position I take with respect to this show and the point I want to make about a redefinition of the possibilities for one-man shows in contemporary museums of art. . . . my hope is that the museum can support a showing situation which allows the artist an engagement rather than a regurgitation: a situation of challenge for the public and risk for the artist.⁸

By trying to "redefine" conventional retrospectives, Morris sought nothing less than a total renovation of the ideas of the solo show, one that entailed both "challenge" and "risk." He wanted to use his exhibition not to solidify or historicize his reputation but to push a political and aesthetic agenda. This

was news to the curator, who had been proceeding with a catalog for a very different kind of show.⁹

Morris tinkered with plans for the exhibition right up until its first day. In the end, he decided to show only six pieces: four steel-plate sculptures and two new site-specific installations in which he subjected unrefined industrial components to a series of actions in which chance played a role. By filling the gallery space with raw materials that had been jostled, pulled, rigged, and dropped, Morris went to great lengths simultaneously to *emphasize* effort while denying conventional notions of specialized artistic skill, a denial that provoked comment in the press at the time. “What team of corduroy road-builders went berserk here?” one reviewer asked.¹⁰

These works are accessible today only as photographs, drawings, and written and verbal descriptions.¹¹ Even though the Whitney show generated a voluminous amount of documentation (photographic and filmic), a series of ten Gianfranco Gorgoni photographs, published in 1972, now constitute its primary public archive.¹² Beyond documenting the exhibit, these photographs contribute to its discursive framing; in them, Morris is repeatedly depicted at work—gloves on, shirt stained with perspiration and dirt. In one image, for example, Morris drives a forklift, a cigar planted firmly in his mouth (Fig. 4). Gorgoni places the viewer down on the street as he captures Morris hauling large timbers through the Whitney’s loading entrance. A man is removing the dolly from under the lift. His frame is contorted as he crouches below the wood, and the solid mass of the beams dwarfs his doubled-over body. Artists rarely drive their own materials in through museums’ delivery doors; the photograph produces evidence that Morris is adept at working with machinery and the matters of construction, a point reiterated in a 1970 interview when he stated that “a fork-lift truck works fine” as a tool for heavy lifting.¹³ In another image, the artist braces himself against a large wooden beam as three men scramble above him (Fig. 5). The faceless workers appear as dark silhouettes against the white museum wall, while Morris, smoking a just-lit cigar, is carefully framed by a large block behind his head. The depiction of the artist’s manual and mechanical effort actively promotes the sense that he has become, as one review remarked, a “construction man.”¹⁴

Morris’s Whitney installations—*Untitled [Timbers]* and *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*—made extensive use of building materials.¹⁵ In *Untitled [Timbers]* (Fig. 6), placed close to the stairs and elevators, wood beams from twelve to sixteen feet long were stacked in a grouping that rose seven feet high and extended almost fifty-five feet down the length of the room. Single timbers jut out diagonally at about eye level at either end, wedged under some of the beams to hoist them off the floor. Buttressed by a few smaller slats so that they point at a nearly direct forty-five-degree angle, they are provocative, resembling fulcrums or levers awaiting the viewer’s pumping hand. At one end, the pile cascaded down in a great tumble, fanning out along the floor (Fig. 7). So precarious was the pile of timbers that the museum installed signs warning visitors not to touch them.

Other gallery spaces besides the Whitney were overflowing with lumber around 1970. Serra, in a show at the Pasadena Art Museum, placed twelve red and white fir logs, each sawed into three parts, in rows on a large concrete slab (Fig. 8). To



3 Workers installing Morris’s Whitney exhibition, 1970 (photograph © Lippincott Inc., provided by the Lippincott Inc. photograph collection, 1968–77, and undated, in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

align the logs, each four feet in diameter and more than twenty feet long, required cranes, pulleys, and a sizable crew of hired workers. Serra wanted to build a viewing platform to give visitors a better perspective on the enormous geometry of the work. Such installations, using the raw materials of construction and depending on teams of wage laborers, took the measure of the artist’s own investment—economic outlay, man hours, rented equipment, and bodily effort.

This bodily effort was emphatically gendered. As Peter Plagens, writing about Serra’s *Sawing* as well as an earlier lumber work of Morris’s in the same review, maintained:

The museum functions as a vagina, the invited artist as a penis. The museum, a pampered spinster by breeding, has discovered the thrill of getting herself roughed up in fleeting encounters with difficult artists. . . . The more difficult the posture (outsized logs in a *cul-de-sac*), the greater the burden (tons of material), the more critical the inconvenience (demands of manpower), the greater the titillation.¹⁶

Such an astonishing assertion makes clear how art making performed on an outsized scale using heavy industrial materials was understood as the exclusive domain of men. This association went beyond the sphere of art making, as blue-collar labor, like construction and steel work, was steeped in a rhetoric of masculinity. The construction worker, or “hard hat,” was seen as paradigmatic of both the “working class” and unbridled manliness.¹⁷ Plagens’s comment, even as it means to deflate the grandstanding of some Minimalist art, reinforces overblown claims about large-scale artworks and the artists who made them.¹⁸ It ignores the many female artists using industrial materials, while it also reductively figures the museum as feminine, its interior space a penetrated orifice “roughed up” by invited artists.



4 Gianfranco Gorgoni, Morris drives a forklift as he installs his Whitney exhibition, 1970, photograph (photograph © Gianfranco Gorgoni / Contact Press Images)



5 Gorgoni, Morris and workers assembling the Whitney pieces, 1970, photograph (photograph © Gianfranco Gorgoni / Contact Press Images)

Morris himself has recently looked back at this moment, admitting the sexism implicit in the equating of outsize sculpture, heavy labor, and masculinity:

The minimal artists of the sixties were like industrial frontiersmen exploring the factories and the steel mills. The artwork must carry the stamp of *work*—that is to say, men’s work, the only possible serious work, brought back still glowing from the foundries and mills without a drop of irony to put a sag in its erect heroism. And this men’s work is big, foursquare, no nonsense, a priori.¹⁹

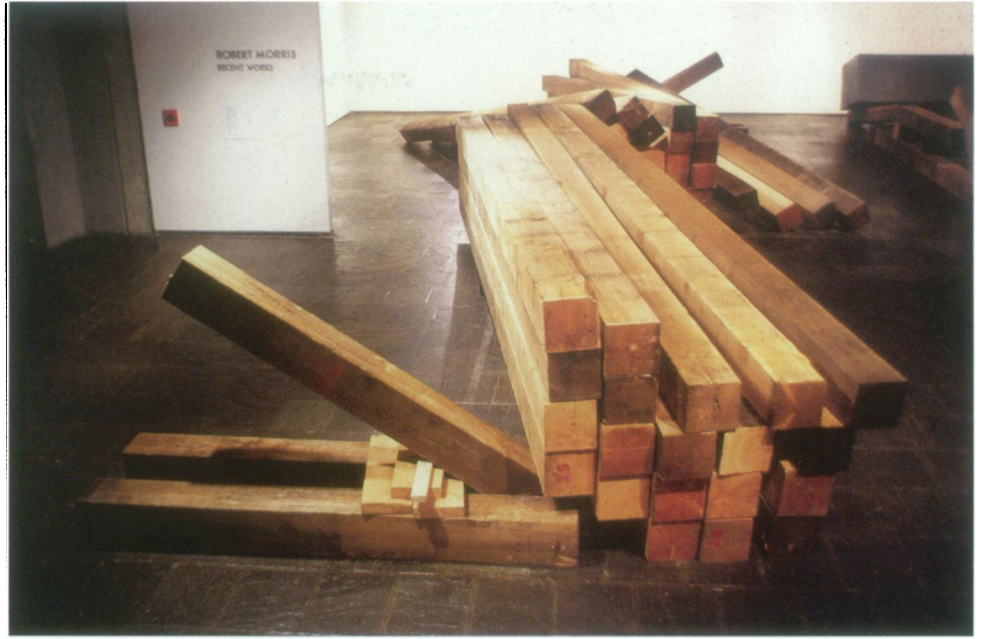
The use of industrial procedures, or “men’s work,” cements Morris’s repeated solicitation of an alliance or an affiliation with working-class culture, which is implicitly gendered male

(and—the worker under Morris’s forklift notwithstanding—racially coded white).²⁰

These concerns were not new to the artist; his *Site* of 1964 sharply delineated the bodily politics of construction and minimal form. In this performance, Morris, wearing heavy-duty gloves and a mask of his own face, dismantled and reassembled a large plywood box (Fig. 9). A soundtrack of jackhammers and drills accompanied his actions, audibly linking art making to construction, even if Morris’s “work” consisted not of building but of complex rearranging. As he removed the sides of the box, Carolee Schneemann was revealed reclining inside, (un)dressed and posing as Édouard Manet’s *Olympia*.

Maurice Berger contends that *Site* puts two forms of labor

6 Morris, *Untitled [Timbers]*, 1970, installation piece for the Whitney, wood, approx. 12 × 20 × 50 ft. Destroyed (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt, © Estate of Rudy Burckhardt / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



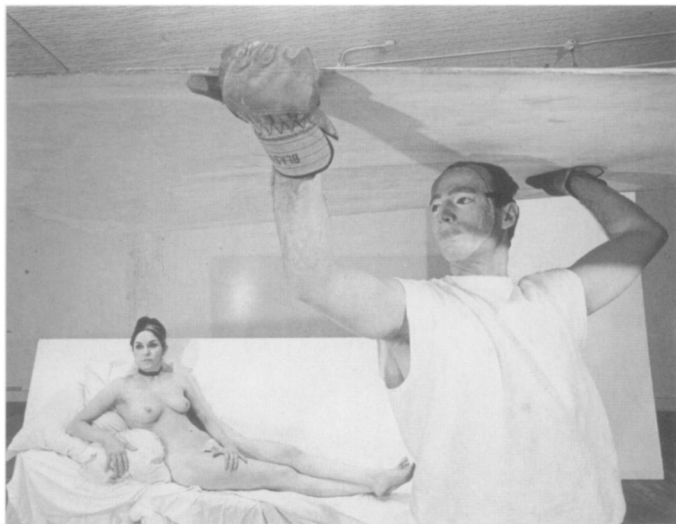
7 Morris, *Untitled [Timbers]*, detail (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt, © Estate of Rudy Burckhardt / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



(sex work and art making) into tension.²¹ If, in Plagens's view, the "white cube" of the museum is gendered female, in *Site*, the feminized component of the cube of Minimalist sculpture is similarly revealed—even though, with its exaggerated role-playing, that feminization is partial and compromised.²² Richard Meyer suggests that "while Morris's *Site* might seem to criticize the sexual economy of modernist art-making, it also simulates it, and that simulation bears significant traces of its sources, traces of domination, bravado, and inequity."²³ In other words, *Site* both affirms and disavows the inanimate female nude as the repressed source



8 Richard Serra, *Sawing: Base Plate Measure (12 Fir Trees)*, installation piece for the Pasadena Art Museum, 1969, wood, 35 × 50 × 60 ft. Destroyed (artwork and photograph © Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



9 Morris, *Site*, 1964, performance with Carolee Schneemann (photograph © Hans Namuth Estate, provided by the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona)

of art. Insofar as *Site* is also about the gendering of *labor*, it asks as well what kind of bodily labor occupies museums and studios.²⁴ In the Whitney show, with its all-male crew of haulers and installers, those laboring bodies are distinctly and unironically masculine.

Even before *Site*, Morris manifested an interest in how the making of simple cubes could reflect on questions of labor; take, for instance, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*. In 1961 Morris built a small walnut box, recording the noises of this activity: sawing, drilling, and nailing. The process took over three hours, and the audiotape of Morris's work was then played from inside the finished box. This in effect absents the body of the maker, leaving only an aural record of its actions. With *Untitled [Timbers]*, almost a decade later, Morris exploded the little box, extravagantly increasing the scale of his materials, and with this increase came vastly augmented effort, a laboring intentionally, even anxiously, made visually available for the public and press to witness. As crews of workmen and mechanized equipment replaced Morris's modest saw and hammer, *Box's* simple record of making was transformed into a stage set with elaborately orchestrated demonstrations of physical work.

The Value of Scale

While the elements in *Untitled [Timbers]* were importantly hefty—they weighed as much as 1,500 pounds each—the second installation at the Whitney was truly, impressively, gigantic. *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]* was made by pushing concrete blocks on steel rods down two parallel rows of timbers until they tipped and toppled in random patterns along the steel rollers (Fig. 10). A Gorgoni photograph records this process (Fig. 11); in it, four men pull with all their might, muscles bulging with the strain. The men stand between two parallel tracks of wooden beams and lean back with the effort required to tug the concrete. Just out of the frame of the picture is the concrete block they are hauling. We see mostly a chain of hands and arms grasping at the



10 Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, 1970, detail (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Peter Moore)

ropes; the camera focuses on the effort rather than the object.

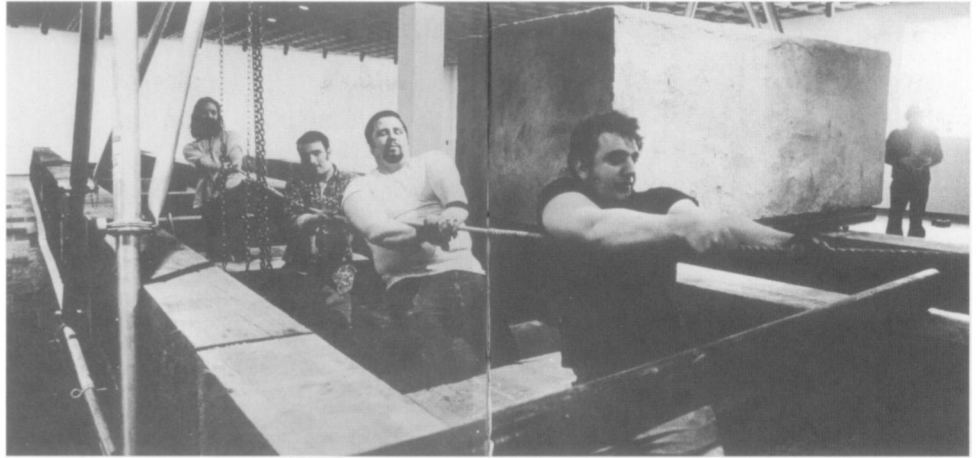
The blocks were in fact a compromise: Morris wanted to use blocks of rough-quarried granite, but engineers warned that the floor was likely to collapse under the weight, so he replaced them with hollow concrete cubes.²⁵ The blocks, supported by crossbeams, were pushed along the tracks until they reached an unsupported area and caved in, tilting the beams up around them, with some of the steel poles crowded alongside the cube's wooden cradle. At one end the blocks crashed all the way to the floor (Fig. 12).

The work's very composition (or lack thereof)—unstable, loosely arranged, contingent—was meant to have a political significance; as Morris commented in a 1967 essay, “openness, extendibility, accessibility, publicness, repeatability, equanimity, directness, and immediacy . . . have a few social implications, and none of them are negative.”²⁶ This essay, penned some three years before the Whitney show, provides a template for Morris's process work of the late 1960s, including his contemporaneous felt works. At this time, he was deeply interested in the properties of chance and gravity—the component parts of what was called *antiform*.²⁷ Of all his art, the Whitney works go the furthest in demonstrating how, for Morris, this “publicness” and “openness” have positive social implications—ones that rest on notions of labor. As he wrote in an essay published just as the Whitney show was opening:

Employing chance in an endless number of ways to structure relationships, constructing rather than arranging, allowing gravity to shape or complete some phase of the work—all such diverse methods involve what can only be called automation and imply the process of making back from the finished work. . . . At those points where automation is substituted for a previous “all made by hand” homologous set of steps, the artist has stepped aside for more of the world to enter into the art.²⁸

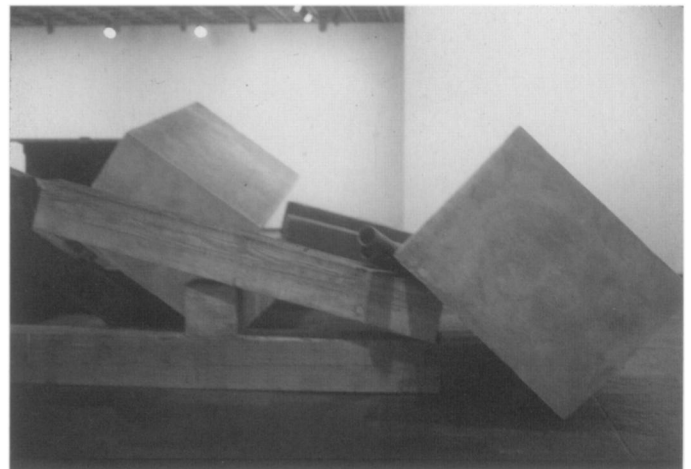
Morris has aligned chance and automation because they both deemphasize the artist's hand. This is an analogical

11 Gorgoni, installation of Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, 1970 (photograph © Gianfranco Gorgoni / Contact Press Images)



model of argument: if his process is like work, it becomes work. Analogical and metaphoric thinking of this kind grew to be critically important as leftist artists like Morris sought to refashion themselves as workers. They were *akin to* workers, and this likeness was meant to register their work's political claims. For Morris, relinquishing control in his process works expressed a desire to have his art take place in an arena of social and political relevance, to have "more of the world" enter in. Morris's repeated use of the word "automation" is also significant for its registration of a turn to de-skilling and machinic factory fabrication.

Many saw the Whitney works as ideal instances of "anti-form," a term that was itself ideologically loaded. To build on Berger's work on this subject, "form" was a key word in Herbert Marcuse's widely circulated tracts on progressive aesthetics.²⁹ In 1967, Marcuse gave a lecture at the New York School of Visual Arts, subsequently reprinted in *Arts Magazine*, in which he spoke of art's need to find a new way to model relations to the world. Marcuse did not prescribe what such revolutionary art practice, or form, would look (or sound) like.³⁰ He stressed, though, that all modes of production, including art making, needed new collaborative conditions of labor, stating that "the social expression of the liberated work instinct is cooperation, which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom."³¹ Morris attempted to demonstrate these lessons in the Whitney show by seeking to initiate a type of meaningful artistic labor, with meaningful real materials, and in concert with "real" workers. Morris stipulated that all the materials he used for the Whitney show be acquired "on loan," that is, cycled back into the economy of construction after the exhibit was taken down. The steel was to be sent back to its manufacturer, the timbers to their mill, and the granite to its quarry.³² (Substituting concrete blocks, which had to be specially made, threw a kink into this planned closed circuit.) Assembled rather than transformed, the materials for the Whitney show underwent no physical changes that would compromise them in future building projects. (Likewise, for his show at the Tate Gallery, London, in 1971, Morris used plywood that he hoped would be recycled "for something I feel good about . . . given to artists, used for necessary housing."³³) The museum was transformed into a way station on the trip from mill to skyscraper or apartment complex.



12 Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, 1970, detail (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Peter Moore)

Morris further insisted that the economic value of the show be no more than the cost of the materials and the hours of labor paid to himself and the installers.³⁴ Since these works were never for sale, for whom was this "value" calculated? It is unclear how this gesture functioned aside from its symbolism. The works were designed to be temporary, thereby enacting a resistance to the commodity nature of the art object familiar to the late 1960s and early 1970s, a resistance taken up and extended by the "dematerialized" nature of much of conceptualism.³⁵ To call this show a simple instance of dematerialization, however, misses Morris's dual insistence on raw, massive materiality as well as its "rented," transitory nature. The Whitney show was a concrete, even monumental endeavor, and hence of a different nature than dematerialized linguistic conceptual art, with its attempts to banish the object by turning art into utterance (attempts that were thwarted by the eventual institutional absorption of conceptual magazine pages, postcards, and so on).

Moreover, the word *dematerialization* was not limited to conceptual art practices and to the commodity character of art. It also pertained to the changing conditions of work in late capitalism. Marcuse used the word in his 1969 *An Essay on Liberation*, arguing that advanced industrialism is marked by "the growing technological character of the process of pro-



13 Morris assisting Donald Lippincott (photograph © Lippincott Inc., provided by the Lippincott Inc. photograph collection, 1968–77, and undated, in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

duction, with the reduction of the required physical energy and its replacement by mental energy—dematerialization of labor.³⁶ Thus, the term itself marks a shift from manual to intellectual labor. In the Whitney show, these paired dematerializations—one of the art object, one of the emergent conditions of labor—inform each other, particularly around the question of value.

Part of Morris's political project in 1970 consisted of an attempt to liquidate the work of art's special commodity character *as art*, by insisting that the only "value" of his pieces were the sum of their materials' exchange value.³⁷ Morris treated his materials as if they had no symbolic value; he wanted them to function in the realms of industry and construction (where they went back to be reused) rather than to merely metaphorize such uses. Only by materializing the labor of the artist, Morris seemed to say, can the object be properly dematerialized. He wanted his labor's value to be equivalent to that of the riggers and installers, so he refused to transform the materials into high-priced collectibles. The timbers, steel, and concrete would bear no trace of his artistic hand; returned back to the factories, they would resist even the aura of a readymade. Nonetheless, these now-destroyed, "uncommodifiable" installations circulate as photographs; more to the point, following Pierre Bourdieu, the museum show itself increased Morris's own cultural value and is inexorably intertwined with the market.³⁸ Although he earnestly invested in this manual work, it was fleeting, while his "mental energy" and his status as an artist fueled the economy of worth.

Still, the Whitney show represents Morris's best effort to find new models of making and displaying art, and he hoped these models would defeat both the co-optation of artistic labor and the commodity logic of the object. The artist

wanted to reject fetishism outright (even as the process of making itself becomes somewhat fetishized). With their careful, public deployment of physical work, the installations endeavored to retain—to depict and inscribe—the labor power that went into their construction (Fig. 13). Much of this inscription was achieved by the art's sheer scale, as it specifically implicated the space of the Whitney as a work site. As Annette Michelson put it in her 1970 *Artforum* review:

The multiplicity and strenuousness of action, the series of pragmatic recalculations and adjustments . . . the hoisting, toppling, hammering, rolling of great weights and volumes produced a spectacle, framed, intensified, by the low-ceilinged, rectangular space of the galleries, animated by the sounds of hammer upon steel and wood, of chains and pulleys and the cries of crewmen calling to one another.³⁹

Artistic work as "hard labor" reached an apex of visibility with the Whitney show, and the frame of the museum walls, its very institutionality, proved integral to this spectacularization.

Although the two large process pieces formed the centerpieces of Morris's Whitney show, he also displayed four steel sculptures, three of which—the *Steel Plate Suite*—were set alongside the back wall of the gallery (Fig. 14). The works in this suite were made of two-inch-thick steel plates assembled with brackets specially designed by Morris and slotted into different geometric configurations (rectangle, triangle, I shape). The brackets held the plates together without screws or drilling; thus undamaged, the plates could be recycled. The fourth work consisted of two steel plates lying at a slant on a low, polished stone column (Fig. 15). The *Steel Plate Suite* (in distinction to the chance-oriented, process pieces) was

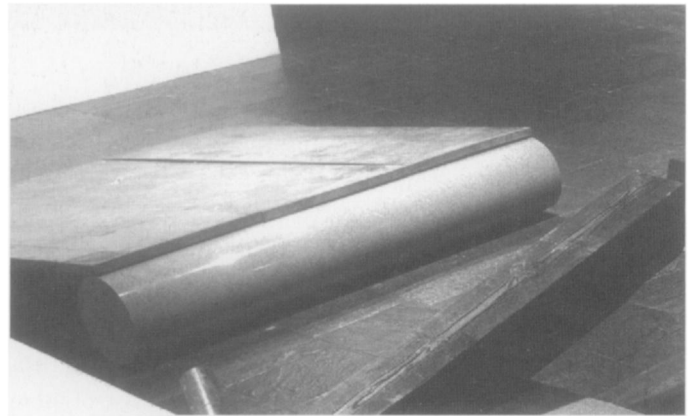
14 Morris, *Steel Plate Suite*, 1970, installation piece for the Whitney, steel, each plate $2 \times 60 \times 120$ in. Destroyed (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Peter Moore)



based on drawings, and a version of this series had been shown at the Corcoran in 1969; unlike the other works, it was hence not uniquely “performed.” However, because the “rented” steel came from different local mills for both the Corcoran and the Whitney, the plates themselves were subtly distinct in each show. Morris pointed out that “steel doesn’t come the same twice from the mill. . . . I like that kind of difference.”⁴⁰ The name of Morris’s fabrication company, Lippincott Inc., is visibly scrawled in chalk on some edges, like an author’s signature. Although simply slotted together, the steel plates were also conceived to make labor evident, as they required gantries and cranes to rig them and many human hands to assemble them (Fig. 16).

Contemporary reviewers of the Whitney show were awestruck by aspects of the colossal; they mentioned the sheer mass of the show, the numbers of workers, the heaviness of the elements. Statistics pile up like so many rough-edged timbers. Michelson highlighted the magnitude of the steel and marble piece: “the weight of the steel in this piece was 12,000 pounds.”⁴¹ According to Cindy Nemser, the Whitney show cost the museum “an unprecedented amount of money to install.”⁴² The exhibition was framed as a Herculean expenditure of labor power and capital, and the installations’ rugged monumentality—their spills, valleys, and peaks—lent themselves to classically American metaphors. For example, *Untitled [Timbers]* was referred to as “a great mass of the biggest timbers this side of the Wild West.”⁴³

More minimal in style than the large installations, the steel-plate works received little critical attention, except for a hand-wringing notice from a reviewer for *Art News*. “Though these works obviously required machine labor to assemble, they are more dangerous than huge; they’re on a human scale which places the slab’s rusted edges right where they could do the most damage to a careless viewer’s forehead or shinbone.”⁴⁴ This review is striking in how it recapitulates the emphasis on art’s relation to the spectator’s body (a relation at the forefront of the critical literature on Minimalism) and recasts it in the



15 Morris, *Untitled*, 1970, installation piece for the Whitney, steel and marble. Destroyed (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt, © Estate of Rudy Burckhardt / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

most negative light possible. By moving the confrontation between object and viewer into the realm of physical harm, this review makes overt the fear latent in Michael Fried’s influential account of how Minimalism’s “aggressive” theatricality is an explicit result of its corporeal scale.⁴⁵

Importantly, scale became for Morris not only a function of perception but also a measure of bodily effort. E. C. Goossen pressed this issue in a 1970 interview with Morris:

ECG: It’s interesting that most of what we call architectural standards, like $4 \times 8'$ plywood . . . are really related to arm length . . . to what a man can carry, what a carpenter can handle. . . . But there are new units now being built which are much too heavy to be handled even by a number of men because they’re geared for fork lifts and cranes and other systems.

RM: Yes.⁴⁶



16 Morris's *Steel Plate Suite* being assembled, 1970 (photograph © Lippincott Inc., provided by the Lippincott Inc. photograph collection, 1968–77, and undated, in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

Minimalism is often said to have “activated” the body—the body of the viewer, that is—but this quote points to the ways it also activated the *body of the maker* as a worker. Scale, in other words, became a measure of how much work was done, and whether the body, alone and unaided, could do the job. The larger the art object, the more work was needed—whether from machines or teams of workers.

Scale was central to the reception of Morris's Whitney exhibition. As Michelson put it: “No consideration of this exhibition can do without some mention, some sense of these dimensions and of the demands made by scale and weight of materials upon the resources of the Museum's space, its circulation potential.”⁴⁷ Michelson comprehends the way in which Morris's scale entailed an institutional component; that is, how scale seeks to put pressure on the museum's very limits of feasibility. What can the museum hold, how much can it support, how much flexibility does it allow its artists and its audiences?

Morris addressed these questions in literal and symbolic terms. First, he compromised on his materials because of fears that the Whitney floor would not bear the weight of his sculptures. Second, when he rejected a retrospective and instead used the exhibition as a showcase for collective, public physical effort, he raised institutional issues about the kind of artistic labor usually represented in museum shows (needless to say, primarily singular and private). These ideas were crucial for Morris in the early 1970s, as he aimed to “go beyond the making, selling, collecting, and looking at kind of art, and propose a new role of the artist in relation to society.”⁴⁸

Artists and Workers / Artists as Workers

Morris's exhibition took place at an especially charged moment in American history, one that must be tracked to fully

understand what happened in the aftermath of his Whitney opening. My title invokes a very specific periodization: 1970. A brief political time line, charting a span of six tumultuous weeks from April to mid-May 1970, fills in the contested circumstances of Morris's show: the Whitney show opened (April 9), the United States bombed Cambodia (April 29), the National Guard shot and killed four students at Kent State (May 4), and, in a highly publicized confrontation, New York City construction workers attacked antiwar protesters (May 8). On May 15, Morris decided to shut down his show two weeks early in a self-declared strike—a vexed gesture that stemmed from, and was implicated in, debates about labor and laborers in the United States.

In the spring of 1970, artists felt that their collective organizing as art workers offered a platform for major change, as vital reconsiderations regarding the valuation of artistic labor were being debated. The Art Workers' Coalition was formed in 1969 when a small group of artists rallied around kinetic artist Takis's view that the Museum of Modern Art, New York, was ignoring artists' rights in its shows.⁴⁹ The group quickly moved to debate other questions about museum policy and leftist politics, and it became a powerful organ through which New York artists voiced their discontent with institutionalization, gender bias, and the art world's stance on the Vietnam War. The war became a focus and rallying point, and the Museum of Modern Art in particular increasingly came under fire by artists and activists because of the members of its board of trustees and their economic connections to industries that profited from the war.

In the midst of this antiwar organizing—and in large measure because of its mainstream visibility—the AWC garnered a small measure of institutional leverage. One of the AWC's prominent campaigns included its successful promotion of a free day at the Museum of Modern Art, which was first held

on February 9, 1970. As the AWC membership ranks swelled to their highest numbers in early 1970, the organization concentrated on two concerns, broadly linked under the heading of injustice: protesting the Vietnam War and investigating the feasibility of forming an artists' union.⁵⁰ As the AWC's advocacy for a museum free day generated momentum, a wider feeling grew that artists could successfully mobilize themselves to radically reform their economic situation by demanding rental fees for their works. Some even advocated a system of wages for all artists, to be underwritten from the profit gained by the resale of works of dead artists; this would circumvent the problem of how, within the "star system," only a select few artists are compensated.⁵¹ As one AWC flyer read, "Artists in America still have no union to protect them, no royalty agreements, no meaningful protection for their work and their livelihood. The modern museum is doing everything it can to preserve the 19th-century image of the starving artist. The Artists Coalition intends to change all this."⁵²

Some felt the AWC should model itself on professional unions such as those for composers or for skilled tradesmen.⁵³ What is interesting about this skilled-trade model is that many members of the AWC, while embracing the label of art worker, had moved their art further from the traditional paradigms of making (such as handiwork) by using unmanipulated, industrially manufactured objects. The roster of active participants in the AWC contains many prominent New York Minimalist and Conceptualist artists, such as Carl Andre, who, by farming out their labor to professional fabricators, stressed de-skilled art over handicraft.⁵⁴ But artists like Andre also went out of their way to reinscribe their work within the general umbrella of manual labor.⁵⁵

Others have also observed that the aesthetic of Minimalism asserted a parallel to blue-collar labor.⁵⁶ At a time when art making increasingly relied on the assistance of steel workers and construction teams, this identification with the white working class was both seductive and riven by contradictions. "At 30," writes Morris, "I had my alienation, my Skilsaw, and my plywood."⁵⁷ There is a double meaning implicit in this quote, as it equally invokes art and the characteristically "alienated" condition of modern labor. Morris claims his alienation with some pride, treating it as another aspect of Minimalist art making, one that goes hand in hand with the tools and materials of construction—construction increasingly done with the help of manufacturing plants.

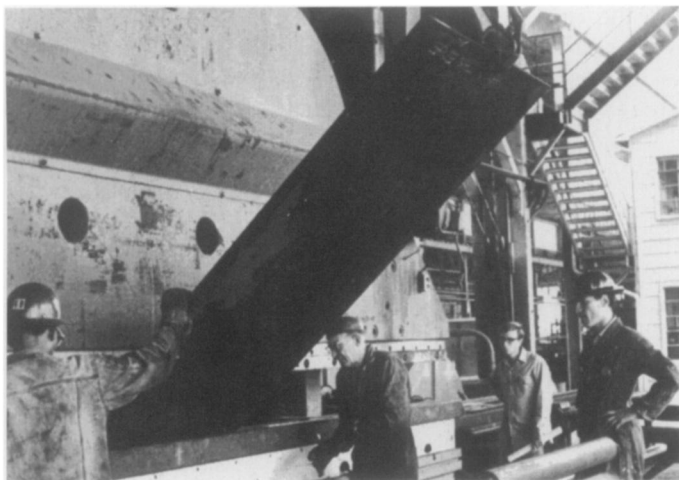
In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the use of factory fabrication fascinated artists and the art press alike, and accounts of successful working partnerships between artist and manufacturers were reported in great detail.⁵⁸ Finding appropriate fabricators was challenging for those 1960s artists, from the Minimalists to an artist like Claes Oldenburg who wanted large-scale works. Contrary to the argument that much factory fabrication entailed giving up artistic control, many artists required detailed oversight of their works. Even as they were barred, in some instances, from shop floors because of union regulations, they wanted to monitor and in some cases participate in every aspect of their works' fabrication.⁵⁹ The dilemma was partially remedied in 1967 by the opening of Lippincott Inc., the first large-scale firm to utilize industrial working procedures in North America devoted exclusively to

making sculpture. Advertisements placed in major art magazines announced Lippincott's services and showcased some of its completed works. Other firms joined the burgeoning ranks of those that manufactured sculpture, a potentially promising area of growth for industrial plants otherwise in danger of becoming obsolete, such as Treilt-Graz and Milgo Industrial, Inc.⁶⁰

Overseen by Donald Lippincott and occupying ten acres in North Haven, Connecticut, Lippincott Inc., encouraged artists to build their works "all at once," that is, to work directly with the materials full-scale, rather than first perfecting the design with a small model and then enlarging it. In a laudatory article in *Arts Magazine*, Barbara Rose pointed to the unique situation initiated by Lippincott, in which "artists were encouraged to work on the spot, directly assisting the welders and joiners and making alterations as they work."⁶¹ (Here, the *artists* assist the *workers*, rather than the other way around.) The firm became the manufacturer of choice for Robert Murray, Oldenburg, Barnett Newman, and Morris, and artists raved about what Rose called "the humanized environment of the 'factory.'"⁶² The scare quotes around "factory" matter; because of its highly specialized focus on art only, Lippincott was never considered a true manufacturing plant. Although it often made editions of works (such as the multiple versions of Newman's *Broken Obelisk*), it was by no means an industrial setup primed to pump out identical objects ad infinitum.⁶³ Many artists, despite the unique amount of control that Lippincott allowed artists over the production of their works, chose to continue to work with traditional factories such as Arko Metal and Bethlehem Steel (Fig. 17), preferring an "authentic" industrial environment.

Not everyone was sanguine about the successful collaboration between artist and blue-collar factory worker. Some saw it as an undermining of "real" artistic work. As Dore Ashton wrote in 1967, "The beaming solidarity of workers and sculptures is certainly pleasant to encounter in the rash of machine-shop photographs used to illustrate articles on the new 'movement.' But it is a feature-story writer's fabrication, designed to elevate fabrication itself into artistic virtue."⁶⁴ Yet factory fabrication was increasingly validated as part of the sculptural process, even as the fabricators were marshaled into identities other than that of simple workers—that is, artisanal assistants.

The strict separation between artist and assistant was often blurred. Take the ad for the Lippincott factory published in the fall 1970 edition of *Avalanche* (Fig. 18). Here, again, Morris drives a forklift—a further demonstration that the work, while machine-manufactured in a quasi-industrial factory, still had some sort of a relation to the artist's laboring body. This photograph presents a nostalgic view of the kind of honest toil that was amply on display in the Whitney show and offers it up to prospective clients of Lippincott, suggesting that they, too, could participate in the evidently "hands-off" yet participatory procedures of factory fabrication. The ad is selling not the final product—Morris's sculpture—but a fantasy about getting to inhabit the position of the laborer. It is also an image that wants to extend the boundaries of the artwork; art is a process, it implies, that takes place on the streets and in the factories, although the presence of the



17 Robert Murray (far right) at Bethlehem Steel during the making of *Duet*, 1965 (photograph by Douglas Fox, © Robert Murray)

woman in the photograph clearly codes it as “art” more than the overwhelmingly male domain of “work.”

If the artist was authorized to slip into the role of the laborer on the shop floors of Milgo and Lippincott, in a reciprocal move, were the workers allowed to inhabit the role of the artist? Murray, who contracted with Bethlehem Steel to make some of his steel-plate sculptures, reported that at the end of making his work *Duet*, the shop crew gave the foreman the gift of a beret with a card that read, “Trade in your hard hat.”⁶⁵ The beret is, of course, meant as a joke, and a good-spirited one at that; it is a marker of bohemia, if not slightly foppish effeminization. The punch line of the hat swap actually underscores the distinction between the artist and the foreman and demonstrates that when the artist becomes a “worker,” it is ultimately at the level of the engineer, manager, or overseer.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s there were two separate, but intertwined, discourses regarding large-scale sculpture and its fabrication. On the one hand, artists dissociated themselves totally from production, thereby claiming for the work the status of a manufactured object like any other; on the other hand, artists insisted that they were factory producers, with as much claim to the shop floor as the products themselves. Morris veered back and forth between these paradigms; in his “Notes on Sculpture,” part 3, he extols “repetition and division of labor, standardization and specialization,” but then, in the same essay, he asserts that “specialized factories and shops are used—much the same as sculpture has always utilized special craftsmen and processes.”⁶⁶ Did artists understand this new way of working as a de-skilling of art or as a revival of the old-fashioned workshop? Or were Morris’s contradictory claims an attempt to reassert specialized “artistic” skills in the face of the alleged erasure of hands-on finish?

“De-skilling” was itself implicated in wider debates about the beginnings of the post-Fordist, postindustrial age, which saw the decline of skilled manual work in the early 1960s (although de-skilling had been a main feature of the division of labor in classic industrial capitalism as well). Harry Braver-

man put the term *de-skilling* into wide circulation in his 1974 *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*.⁶⁷ In what is now termed *deindustrialization*, the early to mid-1960s saw a precipitous decline in blue-collar factory jobs in the United States (a loss of almost a million jobs between 1953 and 1965), while simultaneously marking a rise in white-collar employment; this wholesale transformation marks the shift to what has been called the postindustrial age.⁶⁸

The “postness” implied by this term is somewhat misleading, as manufacturing continues in so-called developing nations. Such jobs have been rendered more invisible to American eyes—but are no less productive—as they are relocated away from nearby mill towns and steelyards. Whether termed *postindustrial* or not, a profound shift clearly occurred in the 1960s, one that marked a decisive turn away from an American manufacturing base. In 1964 the president of the AFL-CIO reported a loss of jobs to automation at the rate of 80,000 per week, most of them blue-collar, semiskilled positions in places such as steel mills and coal mines.⁶⁹ It was precisely at this moment that artists became interested in factory work themselves.

Process

Rather than viewing factory fabrication of artwork as indicative of the general shifts in the economy, some artists—Morris among them—saw it as part of a wider, self-conscious attempt to move art making into the political sphere. For Morris, process was key. As Morris stated, “much present work gets more and more beyond studios and even factories. . . as process becomes a part of the work instead of prior to it, one is enabled to engage more directly with the world in art making because forming is moved further into presentation.”⁷⁰ In other words, art goes from the realm of the individual to that of the political when the process—the effort, the labor—becomes the art itself. Morris moves to make *work* the work of art.

The Whitney works are “process pieces,” that is, art that straddles the lines between performance, sculpture, and installation and that does not result in a “final,” salable object. Like Conceptual art, Process art was viewed as resisting conventional ideas of artistic labor. As Joseph Kosuth explained, “The *activity* was the art, not the residue. But what can this society do with *activity*? Activity must mean labor. And labor must give you a service or a product.”⁷¹ Well, not really: audiences and art spaces alike quickly found use for artists’ objectless process works. Process as a distinct artistic category became increasingly institutionalized, with exhibitions such as the 1969 Edmonton Art Gallery’s *Place and Process*, which featured, among other works, Morris riding quarter horses.⁷²

Grace Glueck, in “Process Art and the New Disorder,” her *New York Times* review of Morris’s 1970 Whitney exhibition, commented, “the process, to paraphrase McLuhan, is also the product.”⁷³ Although she does not specify what this product is, Glueck’s formulation keeps alive the notion that in Process art there is still some remainder of the action that might be bought and sold. Clearly, the photographs are one such product; as mentioned, a prodigious number of images were taken of this exhibit, indicating that this might have been an event as much to be recorded as seen live.

Lippincott Inc.
400 Sackett Point Road, North Haven, Conn. 06473

large scale sculpture
212 249-1647 203 248-9334

Works with Robert Morris

18 Advertisement for Lippincott Inc., originally published in *Avalanche* 1 (Fall 1970) (photograph © Lippincott Inc.)

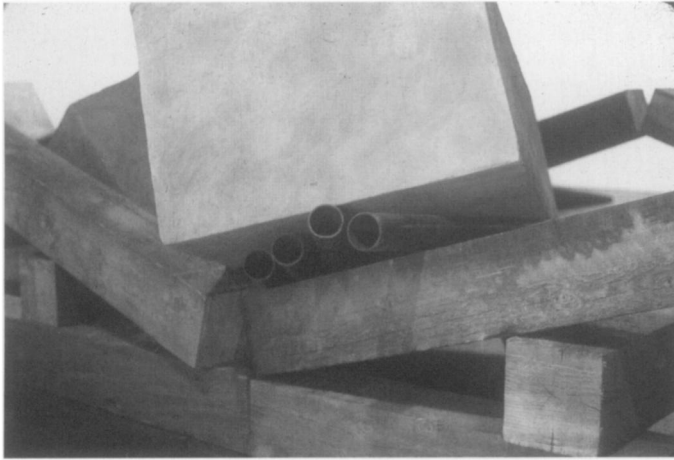
Morris's attempt to lay bare the constructedness of his sculptures within the museum was both sincere and unstable. The artist put his own labor on display in order to demonstrate how the physical work of the artist becomes reified. To quote a relevant passage from Karl Marx, "labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity."⁷⁴ Process does not by itself adequately describe Morris's exhibition of his own modes of production: he presents it as work, and himself as the commodified object of that work. Not that this work was universally read as honest labor; in fact, the Whitney show had mixed, if voluminous, critical responses. Some reacted quite negatively, particularly to its heralded move toward viewer interactivity. Invoking what he called Morris's "severely limited imagination," Carter Ratcliff in *Art International* asserted that "Morris's productions establish a static, half-dead condition for themselves and for the viewer."⁷⁵ *Art News* erroneously reported that one of the installations was removed from the exhibition because "it got too dangerous for spectators."⁷⁶ The mistake is telling because it demonstrates that Morris's decision to make his retrospective a situation of "risk" for himself—even though the installers were the ones most directly in harm's way—was promptly perceived as one of threat to the audience.

The works do seem to invite physical interaction, even as their tenuous construction makes that interaction perilous. Increasingly, Morris evinced a fascination with the risky elements of interactive art, declaring in 1971, "I'd rather break

my arm falling off a platform than spend an hour in detached contemplation of a Matisse. We've become blind from too much seeing."⁷⁷ With this purposefully contentious statement, does Morris mean to imply that violence is the only "real" or appropriate relationship one might have with art? Of course, he had no interest in actually injuring his audience; rather, his comment reveals his intense uncertainty about the value of aesthetic objects at a time when passive spectatorship was aligned with regressive politics.⁷⁸

For Morris, the way out of such "detached contemplation" was art that actively courted the audience's participation. As political theorist Carole Pateman argued in 1970, participation became a stand-in for "democracy," particularly in industrial work contexts;⁷⁹ likewise, artists felt that the more they could do to recruit the viewer into the work, the more egalitarian the work's ideological import. Moreover, Morris's statement places participation in the realm of (potentially confrontational) physical interaction. Observing art from a distance is safe; for it to have any impact, one needs to be thrust into the middle of it, and at times the stakes of participatory art are ratcheted up to the point of danger.

It is important to point out, then, that one year after the Whitney show, Morris turned his 1971 Tate Gallery retrospective into an audience-interaction obstacle course.⁸⁰ In this show, he invited viewers to perform tasklike activities—dragging rocks along on ropes, pushing small weights, climbing up sloping plywood inclines, and walking along low tight-



19 Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, detail (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt, © Estate of Rudy Burckhardt / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



20 Morris, *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, detail (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by Peter Moore)

ropes. The show was closed five days after it opened because, in the course of “participating” in his rickety jungle gym, visitors inadvertently sustained sprains, gashes, and bruises.⁸¹ The Whitney show, with its cautions against touching, prohibited this kind of interaction; even as critics wrote that the public “participat[ed] in the action,” its only involvement was to spectate.⁸²

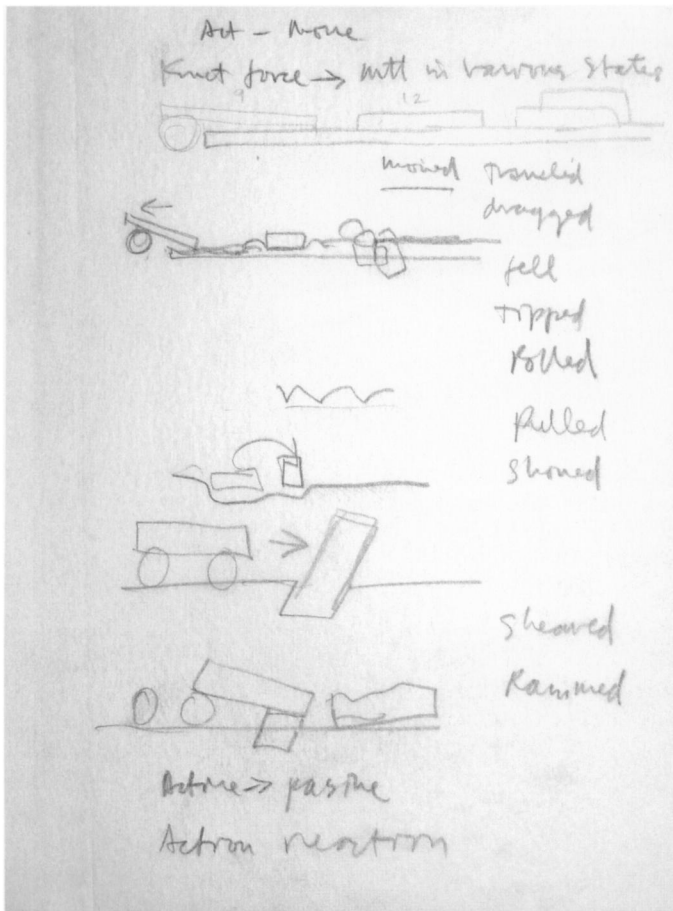
Some reviewers saw the Whitney works as aesthetic failures—unsuccessful marriages of compositional chaos and control. One review criticized the neat patterns that ensued after such an ostensibly disordered process: “the untitled amalgam of things looks . . . as though a bomb had hit some huge structure and the debris had been knocked over and fallen in an unaccountable straight line.”⁸³ Morris himself recalls being somewhat disappointed with how ordered *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]* turned out.⁸⁴ And their composition does appear rather carefully woven even though they were made in large part by chance. In *Untitled [Timbers]*, the contingency of the spilled end beams does not detract from so much as underscore the alignment of the rest of the stack.

In *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*, the round ends of the steel poles punctuate the phrasing of the solid tipped blocks with a series of holes (Fig. 19). The different elements provide a study in textural contrasts: the relatively smooth, light gray surfaces of the concrete atop the dense, dark lumber track. There is a regularized rhythm to the work, which places block after block in a linear configuration like units rolling down an assembly line (Fig. 20). Despite Morris’s wish to break with conventional sculpture, one commentator observed the “almost-symmetry and almost-balance and almost-phrasing in this piece that puts it very nearly into the orthodox sculptural context.”⁸⁵ It is perhaps *because* the installations were unplanned that they became so repetitive and, hence, composed.

How does one manage a crew of thirty to forty workers with so few plans and preliminary drawings? As Morris wrote to Tucker when the show was in its developmental stages, “I’m planning a large timber piece that I have never tried—it involves 12’ × 12’ timbers falling down in a particular way. . . . Can’t draw this since I don’t know what it will look like.”⁸⁶ One drawing that resembles the Whitney works harks back to Serra’s 1967–68 verb list: it details actions—“dragged, fell, tipped”—done to unspecified materials as directional arrows indicate blocks and rollers in motion (Fig. 21). The single extant plan Morris did for these works appears grossly insufficient for the task of coordinating this team and the materials for the process installations, even wrought as it is on the official, to-scale museum floor plan (Fig. 22). A Gorgoni photograph shows Morris consulting this plan, and while he examines it with all due intensity, it merely indicates the eventual placement of the sculptures—as in the small drawings of the steel-plate works—not the layout of their parts or their overall contours (Fig. 23). In the picture, he resembles a foreman with his blueprint, wielding a pencil with precision with one hand as he clutches a stumpy cigar with the other.

Given the absence of a real blueprint, most likely the crew figured out a way to roll the concrete along the timber and then repeated that process with each block multiple times along the stretch of the piece—although it was supposed to communicate disarray, it came out ordered. Another preparatory drawing in the same vein reveals Morris’s interest in much looser heaps of materials (Fig. 24). The works’ final regularity no doubt results in large part from the collaborative aspect that Morris was so invested in. The hired hands that worked to assemble these pieces did what workers are trained to do and rewarded for doing: they executed their task efficiently, with as little wasted time and motion as possible, rolling blocks down the tracks in the same manner over and over. (It is curious that Morris anticipated chaos to ensue from two parallel tracks and neat, identical squares of concrete—compositional elements that severely curtail possibilities for asymmetry.)

Despite the various appraisals of the Whitney show’s quality, the press was unified on one theme: Morris’s installations effectively merged, or at least destabilized, the positions of laborer and artist. In interviews during this time, Morris often mentioned his working-class origins and his persistent work ethic; the show went even further to secure this affiliation.⁸⁷ Here, the vital, active participants were not the audience but the workers, and their exceptional visibility within the mu-



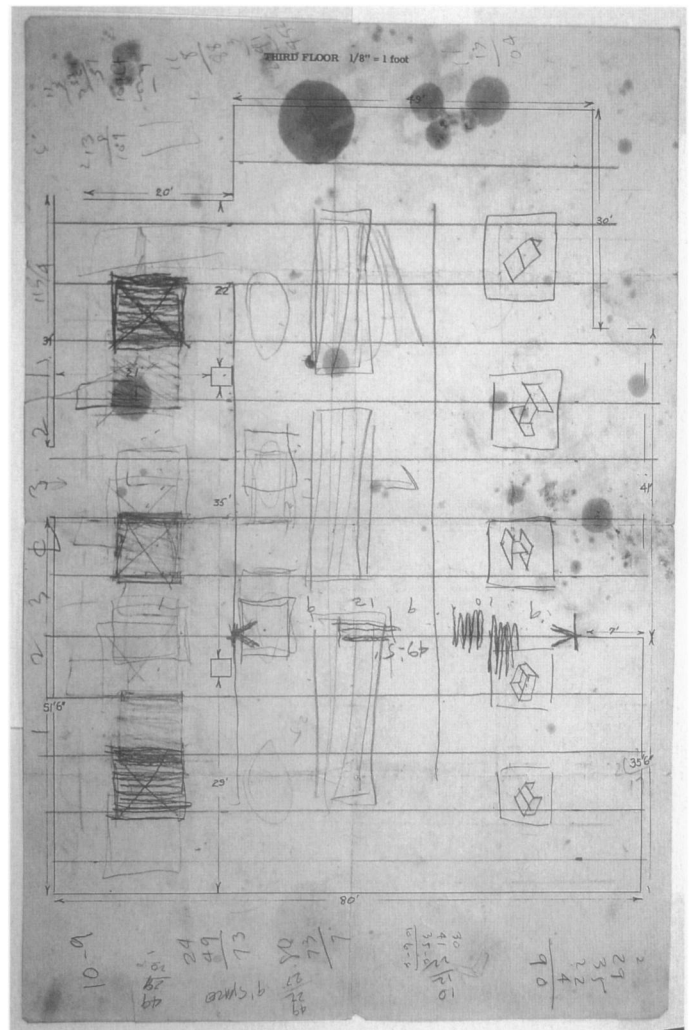
21 Morris, *Art-Move*, ca. 1970, pencil on paper, 8½ × 11 in. Collection of the artist (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by the author)

seum made it look “as if Uris Brothers had moved in with a load of raw materials for a construction project.”⁸⁸ The trade that Morris inhabits is clearly specified: construction, which was in 1970 a tendentious and politically besieged identity.

Detroit and Hard Hats

A few months before the Whitney show, Morris produced a work outside the Detroit Institute of Arts that formally foreshadowed his Whitney installations (Fig. 25). Near the colossal scale of the Whitney pieces, it relied on a similar process of collective construction. Composed in part out of chunks of the demolished I-94 overpass that Morris spotted when driving from the Detroit airport, this found-object work was for him an instance of bricolage. He employed forty-ton industrial derricks to move the concrete, railroad ties, timbers, and scrap metal. Then, with the help of the Sugden Company construction crew, Morris installed his work on the north lawn of the Detroit Institute; the materials were roughly piled into a long, overlapping stack that resembled a toppled or destroyed structure (Fig. 26).

Interestingly, some in the Detroit press focused less on Morris’s art than on the actual laborers who helped to assemble these pieces. A reporter for the *Detroit Free Press* even interviewed the crane operator, Bob Hutchinson, who commented with evident satisfaction, “Only in America can a



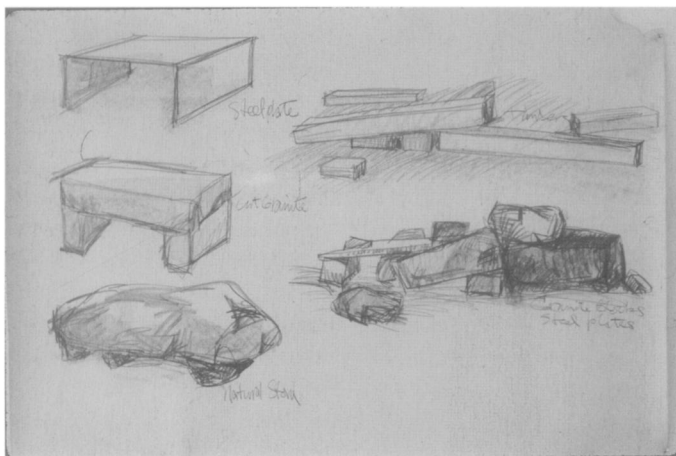
22 Morris, floor-plan drawing for the Whitney exhibition, 1970, pencil on paper, 11 × 17 in. Collection of the artist (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by the author)

man awake a crane operator and go to sleep an artist.”⁸⁹ (Although referred to as a “semi-sculptor” in the article, Hutchinson, it was revealed, was not invited to the show’s opening.) Not everyone was so pleased with this vaunted collaboration; Otto Backer, the construction foreman (also called, with some sarcasm, a “co-creator” of the art), complained that the work was “a mess” that might invite citations for zoning violations. Backer was especially unhappy about the prospect of removing the broken bridge abutment when the show was over; Morris did not stay to assist with the work’s dismantling.

In the outdoor Detroit piece, as in the Whitney works, Morris invested in the monumental as a way to make labor visible. As he elucidated in his retrospective look back at this decade, “The great anxiety of this enterprise—the fall into the decorative, the feminine, the beautiful, in short, the minor—could only be assuaged by the big and heavy.”⁹⁰ Slipping into the realm of decor—problematically coded as female, hence, frivolous—would belittle Morris’s enterprise to reestablish art’s cultural necessity. That necessity can be located in the “risk” he mentioned to Tucker: not just chal-



23 Gorgoni, Morris consulting his floor-plan drawing for the Whitney exhibition, 1970, photograph (photograph © Gianfranco Gorgoni / Contact Press Images)



24 Morris, *Untitled (5 Studies Using Steel Plates, Timbers, Granite, and Stones)*, 1969, pencil on paper, 42 × 59 in. Collection of the artist (artwork © 2006 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph by the author)

length for the viewers, but also the risk he took regarding his work's market value, given its increasing massiveness. Jack Burnham perceived the institutional impossibility of the De-



25 Morris, *Untitled*, 1970, installation piece for the Detroit Institute of Arts, scavenged concrete, steel, timbers, 16 × 25 × 40 ft. Destroyed (artwork © Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)



26 Morris, *Untitled*, 1970, different view of Fig. 25 (artwork © Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

troit outdoor work in terms of Morris's resistance to its commodification: "Last year Morris mentioned some of the problems connected with storing, paying for, and selling these goliaths. 'What do you do if they don't sell?,' I asked. 'Make them larger,' he replied."⁹¹

In fact, these works were to Morris mere sketches and models for much more ambitiously sized projects. As he proposed to curator Sam Wagstaff a few months after his Detroit Institute show,

I have a work in mind that is better, far better, than the one we did last winter and no more expensive. . . . Get one of those stingy steel merchants and crooked highway contractors to throw in a few tons of metal and a few tons of wet concrete and I'll make a work that will make the *Monument to the Third International* look like a wine rack at Hammacher Schlemmer.⁹²

The proposition casually distances Morris from the overseers of manual work, with its mentions of "stingy merchants" and

“crooked contractors.” At once recognizing the political import of Vladimir Tatlin’s monument while also denigrating it, Morris implies with his swaggering claim that his artwork would assert its significance in a way that Tatlin’s maquette could not, primarily at the level of scale. (This was scarcely fair: Tatlin’s piece was, after all, a *model*.) Here, Morris measures his work’s importance against smallness—such as an upscale wine rack—and asserts that his gritty, monumentally sized works of construction materials will leave the realm of effete decoration behind.

Possibly due to the press about the participation of a construction crew, the Morris show in Detroit was viewed as a rare art show that had cross-class appeal. Enthused one supporter to Wagstaff: “Don’t know how you do it—but you’ve brought in a whole new audience to art—hard hats!—and made everyone stop and ask that crucial question (again); what is art?”⁹³ The recruitment of hard hats both as art makers (the crane operator) and as a newfound audience for art would take on special significance for Morris’s Whitney show. Who were these workers that were relentlessly summoned both as the makers and the improbable spectators of post-Minimalist sculpture?

In 1970 hard hats served as the paradigmatic emblem of blue-collar culture. According to historian Joshua Freeman, “By the 1970s, the hardhat itself became the central symbol of American labor, a role earlier filled by the leather apron, the lunch pail, and the worker’s cap. . . . The multiple symbolic meanings of the hardhat were intensely gendered.”⁹⁴ The hat itself functioned almost as a symbolic totem that conferred on its wearer associative powers of working-class masculinity. This was more than a matter of symbols; statistically speaking, women had virtually no representation in the construction industry before 1978, when the government began requiring construction companies to employ affirmative action policies along gender lines. A decade later, women still made up only 2 percent of the building fabrication workforce.⁹⁵

Aside from invoking clearly gendered resonances, recruiting hard hats as participants in the making or viewing of art also reflected a brand of antielitism familiar to leftist ideologies. Within the AWC, organizing as workers provided a certain leverage, since, as artists attempted to model themselves on other trade unions, moments of actual association with hard-hat culture were perhaps understood to literalize or bolster their claims to this identity. The crane operator’s fantasy of class mobility is inverted in the *déclassement* of the art worker: only in America, one could say, could one go to sleep an artist and wake up a worker. In the context of the Vietnam War, this alliance between hard hats and artists proved, not surprisingly, untenable. It unraveled precisely around the Whitney show even as Morris explicitly invoked construction and manufacture as the basis for art’s formal means.

On May 8, 1970, a few weeks after Morris’s show opened, several hundred prowar construction workers lashed out at students who gathered in lower Manhattan to protest the bombing of Cambodia. “War Foes Here Attacked by Construction Workers” read the front-page headline in the *New York Times*. Seventy people were injured—men with long hair were singled out for especially brutal treatment—as construction workers, “most of them wearing brown overalls and

orange and yellow hard hats, descended on Wall Street from four directions.”⁹⁶ The workers proceeded to storm City Hall and forced officials to raise the American flag that had been lowered to half-mast to honor the four students shot dead by the National Guard at Kent State on May 4.

Now known as the hard-hat riots, the incident received widespread media coverage at the time and has become a flash point in discussions of alliances between blue-collar workers and the New Left during the Vietnam War. Some have used the assaults to validate the viewpoint that the American working class was a conservative, prowar force; others have asserted that the workers on May 8 were instigated by unknown forces, “managed” in some way by gray-suited bosses.⁹⁷ In any case, their identification as hard hats—in some way metonymic of a mainstream “American public”—was central. In the words of one construction worker who participated in the May 8 riot, “The construction worker is only an image that’s being used. The hard hat is being used to represent all of the silent majority.”⁹⁸ More than any other single event, the hard-hat riots served to redefine publicly the position of the laborer as politically conservative.

Photographs of the riot depict crowds of white men—not all of them in hard hats—massing together with American flags and hand-lettered “USA” signs held aloft (Fig. 27). This counterdemonstration was taken as proof that the working class—which, after all, was drafted into the armed forces in disproportionate numbers—was finally having its say about the war.⁹⁹ Hard hats became strongly linked to hawkish, prowar positions, an association that lingered even as labor increasingly turned against the war in the early 1970s, a move that was arguably crucial to the ultimate end of the United States’ involvement in Vietnam.¹⁰⁰ Construction workers in particular became known as militantly conservative, and, as photographs of prowar hard hats continued to circulate in the press and the art world, the hard hat itself became a marker of aggressive patriotism.

The May riots irrevocably colored the symbolism of construction workers. For example, in a by-now familiar campaign strategy designed to show the honest, plain-folks side of the politician, Richard Nixon was presented with a hard hat by a coalition of union presidents on May 26, 1970. Although he was photographed wearing the hat, he refused to let the photograph be published because of the hat’s negative associations with the worst kind of prowar brutishness. “Shrinks with horror at idea of hard hat,” explained one Nixon official in an internal memo, “*no hard hat* . . . would never live it down.”¹⁰¹

Strike

The hard-hat riots constituted but one instance in an incredibly inflammatory period in 1970 that encompassed an unprecedented amount of protest and demonstration throughout the United States. In April and May 1970, the bombing of Cambodia and the killings at Kent State and Jackson State, Florida, propelled the antiwar movement to a new level of vigor. Even the Nixon administration perceived the difference in degree of radical resistance spreading through the streets, in workplaces, and on campuses; worried one official, “We are facing the most severe internal security threat this



27 "Hard-hatted construction workers breaking up an antiwar rally at the Subtreasury Building," *New York Times*, May 9, 1970, 1 (photograph © Carl T. Gossett, Jr. / *The New York Times*)

country has seen since the Depression."¹⁰² These antiwar disruptions dovetailed with a surge of labor unrest. In 1970 the number of strikes by union workers had reached a post-war high; as labor historians have documented, "large strikes were more important in 1970–72 than at any time during the 1930s, and the proportion of workers involved in them was surpassed only in 1946–49."¹⁰³ During what has been termed "the Vietnam era labor revolt," a postal wildcat strike in March 1970 halted the U.S. mail in fifteen states, and record numbers of wildcat strikes by autoworkers shut down plants in the Midwest.¹⁰⁴ Then in April 1970, the Teamsters, air traffic controllers, steelworkers, various teachers' unions, and workers in New York newspapers held strikes.¹⁰⁵

Not included in this statistic are the vast strikes called against the Vietnam War, such as student walkouts (which climaxed the week of May 8 and virtually paralyzed the nation's institutes of higher learning, with more than 80 percent of universities closing), nonunion work stoppages to protest the war (such as those enacted by the film industry in May 1970), and the ongoing Women Strike for Peace campaign. As the *Washington Post* observed on May 6, 1970, "The nation is witnessing what amounts to a virtual general and uncoordinated strike."¹⁰⁶ In his comprehensive account of the antiwar movement, Tom Wells contended that "[in May 1970], the antiwar movement was alive as never before. The political possibilities seemed stupendous. A truly general strike against the war was not inconceivable—just shut the whole country down."¹⁰⁷

Artists were swept up by the promise of work stoppages, walkouts, and boycotts. On May 13, in New York, the artists in the Jewish Museum group show *Using Walls* voted to close the exhibit to protest the American government's escalating violence in Southeast Asia and on campuses.¹⁰⁸ Morris participated in this show and the subsequent shutdown; inspired by the forceful message of artistic blackout, he decided to dismantle his Whitney show several weeks early. As a prominent

artist who had just launched a major solo show that mimed the procedures of construction building and hence provided fresh evidence for the art worker's self-descriptor, Morris was uniquely positioned to capitalize on the ethics of mass shut-down. On May 15 he sent a notice to the Whitney Museum demanding that his exhibit be ended immediately, stating, "This act of closing . . . a cultural institution is intended to underscore the need I and others feel to shift priorities at this time from art making and viewing to unified action within the art community against the intensifying conditions of repression, war and racism in this country."¹⁰⁹ He declared himself "on strike" against the art system and further demanded that the Whitney close for two weeks to hold meetings for the art community, to address both the war and a general dissatisfaction with the art museum as an agent of power. In Morris's view, "A reassessment of the art structure itself seems timely—its values, its policies, its modes of control, its economic presumptions, its hierarchy of existing power and administration." The Whitney administration at first refused his request, but after Morris threatened to use the museum as a site for a massive sit-in, it acquiesced and closed the show on May 17.

Morris's demand was a stunning instance of an artist using the polemical language of the strike for political purposes.¹¹⁰ Although not initially involved with the AWC, Morris was propelled to the forefront of New York artistic activist circles when he shut down his Whitney retrospective. The day after his show was closed, concerned artists held a meeting at New York University's Loeb Center to discuss what they could do to protest the bombings of Cambodia. Over one thousand people attended, and "Robert Morris, Robert Morris, Robert Morris was the name on everyone's lips."¹¹¹ He was elected chairman of an offshoot of the AWC formed that night known as the New York Art Strike against War, Racism, and Repression. (Poppy Johnson, in a gesture of gender conciliation, was elected cochair.)¹¹²

The Art Strike was by no means unified about its overall strategy or how overarching artists' withdrawal should be. Some pressed for the cessation of all art except antiwar protest art—a surprisingly popular view, and one Morris evidently endorsed as he asserted, in a moment of overheated posturing, that abstract art was racist and bourgeois and should possibly be stopped.¹¹³ “If art can't help the revolution, get rid of it,” proclaimed one anonymous poster created during the Art Strike.¹¹⁴ Some articulated the belief that art making should be stopped in favor of reaching out to the proletariat. As Cindy Nemser reported, some artists (she does not name them) “demanded that artists make works that could be used as propaganda to unite the artists with the workers.”¹¹⁵ This proposal, seen as a call for old-fashioned Social Realism, was roundly rejected, and not only because artists were looking for wholly unprecedented models for political artistic practice. The invocation of “the workers” was also challenged: “Mention of the workers had driven a frantic Ivan Karp to the podium. Wringing his hands, he reminded the hotheads of what the construction men had done to the students only a week before. ‘Remember who your enemies really are,’ he implored.”¹¹⁶ In short, hard hats had gone, in the space of a few weeks, from idealized participants in artists' efforts to democratize their practices to alignment with their enemies.

Artists at the meeting ratified a motion about the efficacy of an art strike. They demanded that New York museums shut down on May 22, seeking to stop business as usual for one day as a gesture of protest against military involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Some museums and galleries agreed to close their doors. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which failed to do so, was picketed by a group of several hundred artists, led by Morris and Johnson, who acted as spokespeople for the event (Fig. 28). With its unified look featuring monochromatic, text-only posters, the Art Strike was, as one observer commented, “put into action like a new kind of artform,”¹¹⁷ and some strikers felt that protest action might bleed into—or displace—their aesthetic work (Fig. 29).

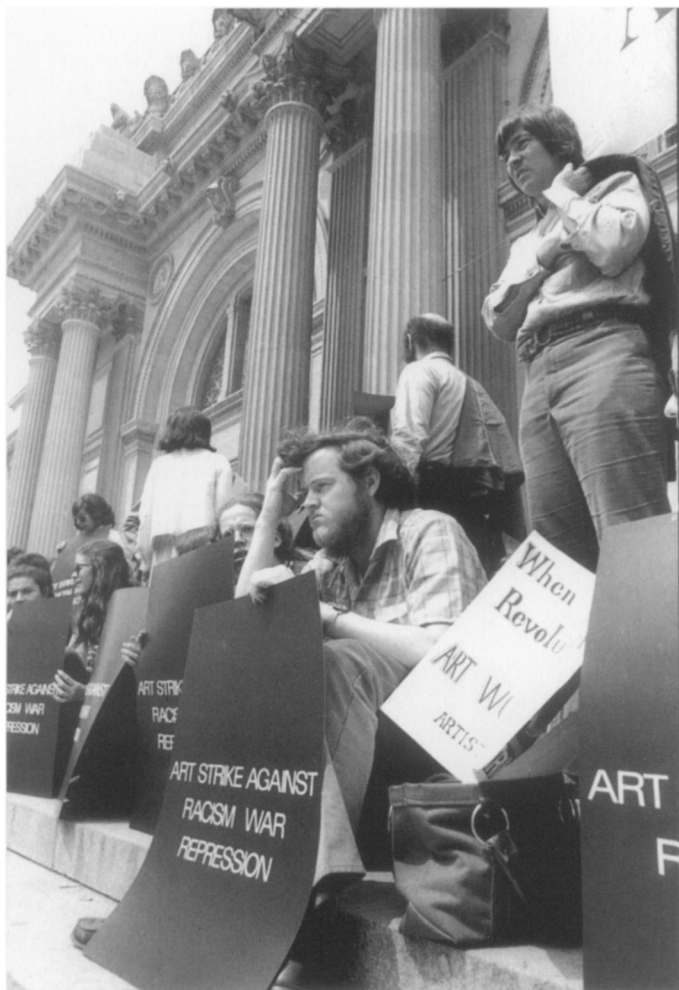
Throughout this spring, strike sentiment among artists gained momentum. The International Cultural Revolutionary Forces (consisting of two longtime members of the Guerilla Art Action Group, Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, along with occasional others) took the notion of a strike quite literally, calling for “all artists to stop producing art, and become political and social activists.”¹¹⁸ Artist and critic Irving Petlin declared that artists should participate in the “waves of strikes, calls, interruptions, demands, non-cooperation, sabotage, resistance, by no business as usual anywhere.” He called on artists to “withhold their work, deny its use to a government anxious to signal to the world that it represents a civilized, culturally-centered society while melting babies in Vietnam. No.”¹¹⁹ While artists as image makers were positioned to take an active part in the battle of images being fought about the popularity of the war, many chose instead to stop showing their work. Jo Baer and Robert Mangold removed the works they had on view at the Museum of Modern Art for the month of May to protest the Cambodia bombings; Frank Stella closed his solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art for the day of the Art Strike. At an earlier



28 Jan van Raay, *May 22, 1970, Art Strike at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, 1970*, silver gelatin print. Collection of the artist (photograph © Jan van Raay)

meeting of the AWC in 1969, Lee Lozano, foreshadowing the language of the Art Strike, launched her “General Strike Piece” by declaring her withdrawal from all art world functions in order to undergo total “personal revolution.”¹²⁰

Those taking part in the strike went under the assumption that aesthetic practices are *productive* and that their stoppage will interrupt the functions of economic life in some crucial way. As much as the strike was a rhetorical gesture, it was also meant to signal alliances with the conventional strikes as well as the student strikes that were energizing the antiwar movement. The Art Strike raised significant questions about the viability of the “art worker” identity, given that with art there is no consolidated employer, nor is there a factory line to halt. These questions had serious implications as artists sought the most effective means to enact reforms within their “work sites”—museums and galleries. Because it sought to dissuade visitors from entering art institutions, the Art Strike might more accurately be termed a boycott. Still, it drew on the tropes of the general strike and the moratorium, which in their most radical forms went beyond protests of working conditions to gestures that sought nothing less than revolution.



29 van Raay, May 22, 1970, *Art Strike at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, 1970*, silver gelatin print. Collection of the artist (photograph © Jan van Raay)

It might be tempting to read the Art Strike as the culmination of a conceptual strategy—the logical conclusion of Morris’s “dematerialization.” Such a reading ignores the political context—the labor revolt—within which the Art Strike and the closure of the Whitney show occurred. As part of the rising tide of strikes engulfing the nation, the Art Strike used the motif of work stoppage as a galvanizing practice to embrace a range of issues. If, in this sense, the Art Strike could be described as a conceptual performance, it was at the same time a performative act aimed at political intervention.

Morris’s tactic of withholding his artistic labor by shutting down his Whitney show early could also be read as a form of aesthetic refusal much influenced by Marcuse’s theory of a “Great Refusal”—“the negation of the entire Establishment.”¹²¹ The Great Refusal, about the possibility of imagining alternatives to the “massive exploitative power of corporate capitalism,”¹²² was most expansively outlined in Marcuse’s 1969 *An Essay on Liberation*, a highly influential book for the New York art Left.¹²³ In the late 1960s, Marcuse saw hopeful indications that this refusal was undermining mainstream society, especially in the widespread “collapse of work discipline, slowdown, spread of disobedience to rules and regulations, wildcat strikes, boycotts, sabotage, gratuitous

acts of noncompliance.”¹²⁴ Morris took his theory of artistic negation directly from Marcuse’s theories, as seen in the following statement made by Morris about 1970: “My first principle for political action, as well as art action, is denial and negation. One says no. It is enough at this point to begin by saying no.”¹²⁵

In 1970, posters and antiwar art struck artists as less and less relevant, and withdrawal—a refusal to let things proceed as normal—took over as a popular protest strategy. As Lucy Lippard put it, “it’s how you give and withhold your art that is political.”¹²⁶ But some criticized the Art Strike as flawed in design and motive and dismissed its calls for the withdrawal of art as ineffectual.¹²⁷ Others saw it as a profound threat. Said John Hightower, then-director of the Museum of Modern Art, “The irony of conducting a strike against arts institutions is that it puts you in the same position of Hitler in the 30s and 40s, Stalin in the 50s.”¹²⁸ Hardly: the Art Strike did not advocate the complete closing of all museums but, along with the AWC, pushed to make museums more widely accessible. (One of the lasting legacies of the AWC is the concept of the museum free day.) Instead, as a letter back to Hightower emphasized, “You fail to understand the meaning of symbolic denial (closing the museum for ONE DAY!) which speaks to the actual denial of life by forces of violence.”¹²⁹

The conditions for an art strike lasted only a few months, as they were embedded in the specific historical coincidence of the Vietnam War, the large-scale strikes around the country, and the activities of the AWC. As early as September 1970, postmortems for the Art Strike appeared in print: “feelings among Strike activists range from apathy to suspicion to disgust. The protest, if not destroyed, is dormant. What happened?”¹³⁰ By November 1970, the Art Strike splintered into several organizations; one of them, the Emergency Cultural Government Committee, an ad hoc group (including Morris), lobbied artists to withdraw from the American Pavilion at the 1970 Venice Biennale to protest American military action in Vietnam and Cambodia.¹³¹

What *had* happened? The answer lies, in part, with the growing feminist movement and the defection of most women involved in the Art Strike to a group called Women Artists in Revolution. “The women became politicized and the men went back to their careers,” recounts Lippard.¹³² Some white women and artists of color felt that the narrow focus on art institutions inadequately addressed the issues that they believed to be at the heart of the war, chief among them racism and economic injustice.¹³³ The Art Strike eventually was folded back into the AWC and threw its weight behind the strike of the Museum of Modern Art workers when they formed the Professional and Administrative Staff Association (PASTA) in August 1971. In fact, the energy of the Art Strike helped to mobilize the museum staff as workers, and the AWC gave them organizational tips when they decided to go on strike.¹³⁴

Every standard account of the closure of Morris’s Whitney show puts it, rightly, within the context of the Art Strike. Was there, perhaps, another reason that Morris was so eager to shut down his Whitney show on May 15? I think that in the aftermath of the hard-hat riots, construction was no longer a viable metaphor for the new relations between work, labor, and politics that Morris sought in 1970. The intense ideolog-

ical contradictions that accompanied the yoking together of “art” and “workers” were made starkly, and uncomfortably, visible. The driving ideas behind the Whitney exhibition, with its ambitious, even wishful assertions of collaborative production, workers and artist working side by side, had soured. One writer described the following pervasive feeling in the wake of the hard-hat riots: “the masses, those cabdrivers, beauticians, steel-workers, ironworkers, and construction men so beautifully romanticized by generations of dreamy socialists, are really an ugly bunch of people.”¹³⁵

After the hard-hat riots in May 1970, Morris commented in the *New York Post* that “museums are our campuses.”¹³⁶ This assertion draws a parallel between student strikes and the art strike, solidifying the artists’ affinity with *students* rather than with blue-collar workers.¹³⁷ It reflects a broader move within the New Left away from solidarity with laborers and toward students and youth.

In Morris’s Whitney show, the art is deeply invested in a formal association with the building trades, as are the myriad photographs that picture it as an active “construction site.” Underscoring his identity as an art worker, Morris performed the position of the blue-collar forklift driver; such an identity proved drastically less alluring after blue-collar workers stormed down lower Manhattan waving flags and beating up students. Morris’s sudden involvement with the Art Strike struck some as careerist or opportunistic; stickers appeared in downtown New York that read “Robert Morris: Prince of Peace.” Critic Nemser scoffed, “greater sacrifice hath no man than to shut down his art show for his fellow man.”¹³⁸ Although Morris was at the periphery of the AWC before the Art Strike, his involvement in the Art Strike and the Emergency Cultural Government Committee constituted genuine efforts to come to terms with the ethics of art making and art display in the museum system. It also represented, I believe, an attempt to find a new kind of political viability after his formal process exercise at the Whitney turned into such a critical (and ideological) disappointment.

Morris’s disillusionment with the possibility for cross-class affiliation paralleled that of the New Left’s in general, as the Left embraced Marcuse’s belief that the working class was “counterrevolutionary.”¹³⁹ The Whitney show, which was the residue of collaborative production with a team of dozens of workers, suddenly betrayed sympathies with the worst kind of politics, and Morris sought to hastily remove it from view. Certainly, the art projects he proposed in the months after the end of the Whitney show, with their focus on precisely his uncertainties revolving around labor, the value of art, and questions of collectivity, articulate a rejection of his previous models of art making.

Morris on and off the Clock

Where could Morris go after striking at the Whitney? Morris seemed to sense that the way he had been working was insufficient to address the turmoil of these six weeks in 1970. He pondered the question in a notebook a month after his show closed: “Feel I have to re-invent an art viable for myself and consonant with the conditions of change that have occurred over these last two months. Something either more public or more private? No clear idea at this point.”¹⁴⁰ In the process of reevaluating his earlier work, Morris became in-

creasingly concerned with immediacy and responsiveness: “The more I work the more I want to respond to the particular and concrete situation at hand. . . . To do otherwise, to haul out what I have done in the past, is to parade responses to situations that no longer exist.”¹⁴¹

Morris remained serious about his commitment to deflating overvalued artistic labor, as his next project demonstrated. This was the Peripatetic Artists Guild (PAG), a series of proposed projects based on a “saleless wage commission” (Fig. 30). Starting in November 1970, Morris placed a series of ads in art magazines announcing that the guild (consisting only of Morris and, briefly, Craig Kauffman) was available for projects such as “explosions—events for the quarter horse—chemical swamps—monuments—speeches—outdoor sounds for the varying seasons—alternate political systems.” Ranging from the prosaic (speeches) to the toxic (chemical swamps) to the utopian (alternative political systems), these proposals were to be executed for a twenty-five-dollar-an-hour wage “plus all travel, materials, construction and other costs to be paid by the owner-sponsor.”

Morris’s list included both art and nonart activities; some of them, such as “theatrical projects for the masses,” had vaguely political overtones. Many of them reflect work he had already been engaged in. The owner-sponsor, as he termed it, could call on the artist to execute any number of works, all for the same pay, negating the hierarchy that assigns more prestige to art pieces than to, say, construction projects or populist spectacles. The use of the term *guild* recalls a skilled artisanal association, and this language was perhaps used in concert with the AWC; both assert art’s legitimacy as a profession rather than a calling. Although Morris placed the ads hoping to solicit proposals, resulting in queries from twenty-one interested parties, no commissioned projects came out of the PAG (in retrospect it appears to offer a remarkably good deal).

Morris did not mean the PAG as a joke; he saw it as the future of progressive art practices. As he wrote, “working wages for art effort in an interacting situation with the outside world must replace [the museum/gallery system].”¹⁴² The art world, apparently, was not ready to embrace this replacement, and disapproval came even from such seemingly sympathetic quarters as the fledgling *Artworkers News*, a broadsheet published in New York between 1971 and 1982.¹⁴³ Sandwiched between items on laws affecting artists and getting health insurance and listed under the heading “Rip-Offs and Cop-Outs: Tales of Horror from the Art World!” was an article appalled by the “fake” business of the Peripatetic Artists Guild. “We are somewhat concerned by a few aspects of this affair . . . we would be happy to hear exactly how things were dealt with in this ‘guild.’”¹⁴⁴

If Marx considered wage labor the heart of alienation and exploitation, and often explicitly contrasted it to the relatively free, fulfilling labor of artistic creation, why would artists wish to mime the pay structure of hourly wages?¹⁴⁵ Morris’s resort to wage labor in the PAG had implications beyond the financial. The PAG would secure his place within a class system in which artists were on some level equivalent to wage workers—the epic performance of work was no longer the best way to critique the system. At this point, the display of construction in the Whitney exhibit appeared showy, false,

THE PERIPATETIC ARTISTS GUILD ANNOUNCES
ROBERT MORRIS

Available for Commissions Anywhere in the World

EXPLOSIONS—EVENTS FOR THE QUARTER HORSE—CHEMICAL SWAMPS—MONUMENTS—SPEECHES—OUTDOOR SOUNDS FOR THE VARYING SEASONS—ALTERNATE POLITICAL SYSTEMS—DELUGES—DESIGN AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF MUTATED FORMS OF LIFE AND OTHER VAGUELY AGRICULTURAL PHENOMENA, SUCH AS DISCIPLINED TREES—EARTHWORKS—DEMONSTRATIONS—PRESTIGIOUS OBJECTS FOR HOME, ESTATE, OR MUSEUM—THEATRICAL PROJECTS FOR THE MASSES—EPIC AND STATIC FILMS—FOUNTAINS IN LIQUID METALS—ENSEMBLES OF CURIOUS OBJECTS TO BE SEEN WHILE TRAVELING AT HIGH SPEEDS—NATIONAL PARKS AND HANGING GARDENS—ARTISTIC DIVERSIONS OF RIVERS—SCULPTURAL PROJECTS—

Collaborative Projects with Other Artists Invited

The above is but a partial listing of projects in which the artist is qualified to engage. No project is too small or too large. The artist will respond to all inquiries regarding commissions of whatever nature

Terms of Commissions

Sales or fees for any projects are not acceptable. A \$25.00 per working hour wage plus all travel, materials, construction and other costs to be paid by the owner-sponsor. Subsequent sales of any project by the owner-sponsor will require a 50% return of funds to the Peripatetic Artists Guild (PAG) to be held in trust for the furtherance of saleless wage commissions between other artists and owner-sponsors. A contract will be issued for every commission.

Address all Inquiries to PAG, 186 Grand St.
NYC 10013

30 Morris, "The Peripatetic Artists Guild Announces Robert Morris," 1970, printed advertisement, *Artforum* 9, no. 3 (November 1970): 23 (artwork © Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

even regressive. His project proposals in the summer of 1970 after the closure of the Whitney show even go so far as to mock his previously straightforward attempts to forge a collective model of working. Instead, his rehearsals of the pro-

cedures of construction turned into farce. One proposal, called "Work at Pier 45," is a kind of ironic coda to the Whitney show, envisioned at an incredibly grand scale.

This pageant-type event was to include a nude woman leading a team of horses, which are themselves dragging enormous American flags covered in flyers that picture the atrocities of the Vietnam War, as well as jugglers, acrobats, firefighters playing poker, and a National Guard drill team. The proposal continues: "The Timber Piece I did at the Whitney will be redone. The forty 26 foot timbers will be brought up on the moving luggage ramps, assembled and spilled. The process should take several hours and require a crew of five."¹⁴⁶ Thirty white rabbits would be released, a dozen televisions would be scattered throughout the scene, and the audience members—wearing placards around their necks with the names of casualties from the Vietnam War—would watch the scene perched on bales of hay. This proposal is notable for its reimagination of the Whitney timber piece and because Morris inserted pictures of war horrors and the names of the war dead into this circuslike atmosphere.

A different proposal from the same period envisages a choreographed scene of mass toil: "100 men in a field dragging a steel plate . . . 100 men and women planting, 20 men carrying timber, 20 men rolling large boulder, 10 horses." *Untitled [Timbers]*, originally conceived as an earnest attempt to forge a method of transparent production, has metamorphosed into an element within a fantastical scene of a campy, Busby Berkeley-type spectacle, as if conceding that that was its place, perhaps, all along. Morris spun out visions of vast work with a pluralized and mixed gender cast, yet he recognized the hollowness of its forced collectivity. He added: "Make a political text for these differentiating any false Marxist notions about togetherness, the workers, etc. Some of text from Marx himself—i.e. demonstrate by words that its political content merely apparent—i.e. the 'collectivism' of the working people useless, non-productive, art."¹⁴⁷ From the Whitney exhibition to the Art Strike, to the wage labor of the PAG, to this sorry scene of "useless art": the trajectory here is toward cynicism.

Morris's transition also records a widely shared cultural sense that work, war, and resistance might all be subsumed, and diffused, under the category of the spectacle. He moved from an old-fashioned (even, Old Left) idea of the arm-in-arm linkage of work and politics to an absurd parade of war photographs, nude women, and onlookers. (Is this also the afterimage of Schneemann's *Olympia* in *Site*, with the naked female as a vehicle for scandal or the ridiculous?) This is not Abbie Hoffman's strategic, even ecstatic acceptance of an image culture and media intervention; rather, it is akin to Todd Gitlin's bitter contention that the embrace of spectacle—that moment when protesters address the cameras to proclaim "the whole world is watching"—was the very death of the New Left.¹⁴⁸

Challenge and Risk

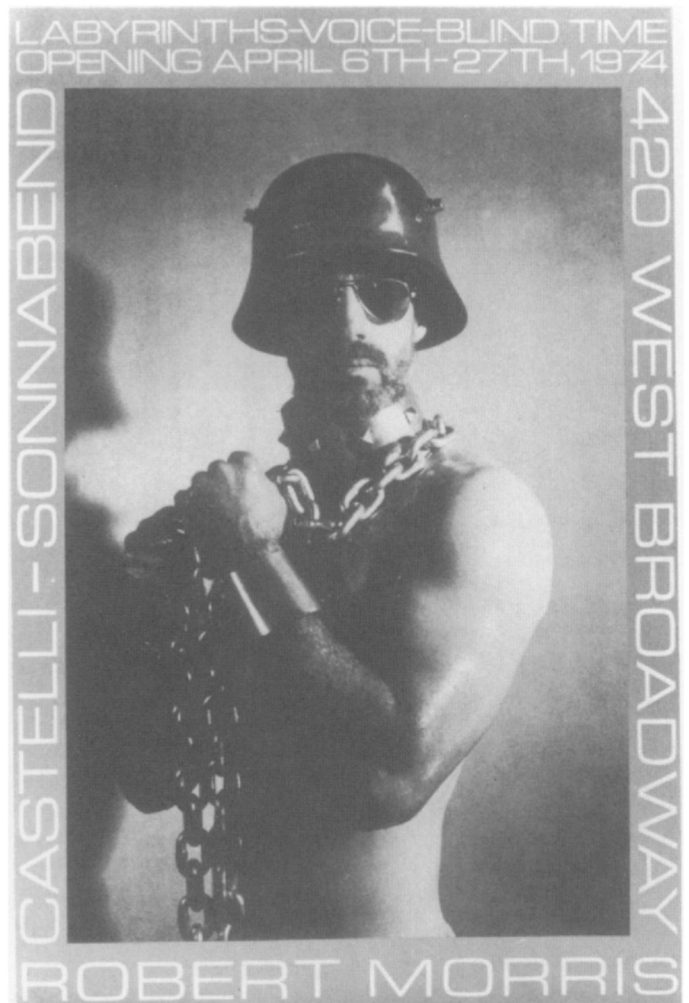
If the Whitney show was a failure, it is because the elements Morris wished to bring together are irreconcilable. Morris's re-presentation of industrial objects and his desire to shift them from the realm of art to work led not only to a romanticized personal identification with working class labor but also to cul-

turally incoherent objects. While Morris wanted a show that would be sensitive to populist visions of artists and workers collectively forging new relationships, the version of labor he performed was fast obsolescing. The crude pulleys and weights do not necessarily speak to their moment—a moment that was rapidly undergoing major shifts—but in fact hark back to a previous time. Morris's Whitney show does not even demonstrate a last gasp of industrial manufacture just as that version of construction becomes moot. As Michelson notes, these basics of construction date from Stonehenge and the pyramids. She quotes a crew worker's astonished utterance on witnessing the installation of *Untitled [Concrete, Timbers, Steel]*: "My God! This is like 2000 BC!"¹⁴⁹ In his effort to forge an art from raw materials and construction crews, Morris displayed a profound nostalgia for the industrial (rather than postindustrial) mechanics of hard manual work.

This sentiment includes nostalgia for the lost masculinity of working-class manhood. In this, Morris is not alone; anxieties attendant to shifts in the conditions of production—and in times of war—are often displaced or refigured in sexualized terms. A further swerve away from his identification with blue-collar labor—or a recognition that such an identification was untenable—is made evident just three years later, in Morris's 1974 advertisement for a show at Castelli-Sonnabend (Fig. 31) depicting the artist clad in chains and a helmet. From hard hat to (macho/queer) Nazi helmet, Morris tried on and discarded various models of masculinity in his move from the sincere to the parodic; to refer back to "Size Matters," the ironic hyperbole of the advertisement put a "sag" in his own "erect heroism." Susan Sontag discussed Morris's ad in her article "Fascinating Fascism," but it could fit just as well into her well-known discussion of camp. As she claimed in 1964, "one is drawn to Camp when one realizes that 'sincerity' is not enough."¹⁵⁰ Morris disavowed his process-piece constructions by closing down his show, going on strike, and later revising the pieces as spectacularly excessive camp performances. In this, we witness a move from a prefigurative, utopian vision of art as work to a recognition of that collaborative labor as a grotesque impossibility.

The collapse of artists' identification with workers after the hard-hat riots points to the misrecognitions inherent in trying to eradicate distinctions between art and labor.¹⁵¹ Morris's 1970 Whitney exhibition—and its photographs of strong-armed workers hauling heavy loads, their faces grimacing, their muscles straining—crystallized apprehensions facing the leftist American art world about how to make art viable as a form of labor. Why, in so many of the shots of Morris in which he is supposedly one of the workers, is he puffing on a *cigar*, the very symbol of "bossness" (Fig. 32)? The fictive identification with labor that these works insist on vacillates between the artist as foreman and the artist as "construction man." It is critical that there are no photographs of Morris actually wearing a hard hat during the installation of the 1970 Whitney show; it sits on his head spectrally, in the realm of psychic projection and fantasy.

Despite a flurry of major press attention given the Whitney show in 1970, it has largely disappeared from Morris's historical record. It is increasingly absent from his ever-consolidating reputation; images of this exhibit have not been included in any of his recent retrospectives.¹⁵² This erasure is striking.



31 Morris, poster for *Labyrinths—Voice—Blind Time*, 1974, edition of 250, offset lithograph on paper, 36¾ × 23⅞ in. Collection of the artist (artwork © Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

Besides discounting Morris's most important (if problematic) effort to merge political purpose and artistic form, it overlooks the pivotal role the exhibition took in Morris's own development. After the Whitney and Tate shows, Morris abandoned post-Minimalism as he shifted away from nonfigurative Process art. Thus, Morris's Whitney show produced a critical rupture within his practice; as Alex Potts has astutely theorized, the Whitney show constituted a "crisis . . . ending in a bleak rejection of almost everything [Morris] had seemed to stand for."¹⁵³ There may be something embarrassing about Morris's failed idealization of working-class alliances—embarrassing to him and, perhaps, to contemporary art historians as we look back at this volatile period. Has a melancholic recognition that this fantasy was inappropriate all along contributed to the show's fading from view?

The events of 1970 signaled a major shift in American artists' ideas about the relation between art and labor; the AWC itself limped along for only about a year after the Art Strike. The AWC is now often referred to as a triumphant moment of artistic activism, but investigating the contradictions attendant to its most fervent period—May 1970—reveals the fractured and unsettled nature of the identity "art worker."¹⁵⁴



32 Morris consulting his floor-plan drawing for the Whitney exhibition, 1970 (photograph © Lippincott Inc., provided by the Lippincott Inc. photograph collection, 1968–77, and undated, in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

The ongoing exclusion of the 1970 Whitney show from accounts of the 1960s and 1970s also tells us something about the contradictions attendant on our reception of this historical moment. Art history still does not know how to treat the art of this decade, teetering as it does on the brink between the historical and the contemporary. This leaves its archives, historiographies, and structuring narratives very much in flux. Further, an abiding discomfort lingers toward the fraught utopianism of both the art and politics of the 1960s and 1970s—perhaps especially toward those moments, such as Morris's 1970 Whitney show, that tried, if abortively, to merge the two.

The stakes of returning to this moment are high, both methodologically and politically. We must acknowledge the strangeness and the naïveté, the risks and the disappointments, of works such as Morris's if we are to do justice to a time in art history, as well as in American history—that complex decade from 1965 to 1975 in which 1970 serves as the pivotal crux—that is both mythologized and unevenly remembered. This includes being forthright about the challenges and difficulties of cross-class identifications as well as about the longing for, and limits of, collectivity.

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Notes

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1. Curator Marcia Tucker recalled that the show required "more machinery" to install than she had ever used: "it was an absolutely phenomenal amount of work." See her interview with Sean H. Elwood, December 10, 1979, quoted in Elwood, "The New York Art Strike (A History, Assessment, and Speculation)" (master's thesis, City University of New York, 1982), 52.
2. "Maximizing the Minimal," *Time*, April 20, 1970, 54.
3. Although the worker, Ed Giza, an employee of the art fabrication firm Lippincott Inc., was rushed to the hospital, he suffered nothing more serious than bruising (interview with the author, November 2003).
4. Helen Molesworth, "Work Ethic," in *Work Ethic* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2003), 27.
5. Caroline Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
6. Just before it opened, Jack Burnham laid out the expectations for the upcoming Whitney show: "The Washington and Detroit shows have presented aspects of Morris's work during the past ten years; most probably the Whitney will touch on all periods of the sculptor's development in a more complete way." Clearly, Morris thwarted these expectations. Burnham, "A Robert Morris Retrospective in Detroit," *Artforum* 8, no. 7 (March 1970): 67.
7. Morris to Marcia Tucker, December 14, 1969, Robert Morris archive, Gardiner, N.Y. (hereafter RMA).
8. Morris to Tucker, December 28, 1969, RMA.
9. The catalog—Marcia Tucker, *Robert Morris* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970)—presents an overview of Morris's earlier work and mentions only briefly the process pieces that actually constituted the show.
10. Dore Ashton, "New York Commentary," *Studio International* 179, no. 903 (June 1970): 274.
11. While the literature on performance has dealt with the methodological problem of historicizing the ephemeral, writing on Minimalist sculpture has undertheorized this problem. For two helpful models, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Pamela Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).
12. Grégoire Müller and Gianfranco Gorgoni, *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972).
13. E. C. Goossen, "The Artist Speaks: Robert Morris," *Art in America* 58, no. 5 (May–June 1970): 108.
14. Christopher Andraea, "Portrait of the Artist as a Construction Man," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 6, 1970, 12.
15. For the sake of clarification, I have subtitled these untitled pieces after their materials.
16. Peter Plagens, capsule review, *Artforum* 8, no. 8 (April 1970): 86.
17. For an overview of the historical context of how the "hard hat" came to be an emblem of masculinity, see Joshua B. Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26 (Summer 1993): 725–39.
18. See, for example, the discussion of the gendering of Minimalism in Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 5 (January 1990): 44–63.
19. Robert Morris, "Size Matters," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 474–87.
20. The racializing of the working class is discussed in Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness*, rev. ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).
21. Maurice Berger, "Morris Dancing: The Aesthetics of Production," in *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 81–105.
22. Simultaneous with the planning of the Whitney show were Morris's ongoing series of industrial felt works, whose swooping curves led some writers to see them as overtly feminine, even "unmistakably vagi-

- nal." Pepe Karmel, "The Evolution of the Felt Works," in *Robert Morris: The Felt Works* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, 1989), 57.
23. Richard Meyer, "Pin-Ups: Robert Morris, Lynda Benglis, and the Erotics of Artistic Identity" (seminar paper, University of California, Berkeley, 1991).
 24. Not that the Whitney space was always filled by male artists; in fact, Annette Michelson noted that Morris's 1970 Whitney show followed directly on the heels of Yvonne Rainer's dance *Continuous Project—Altered Daily* (which took its title from a 1969 Morris process piece) in that same location. Michelson posited that the Morris exhibit could be read as a subtle response to Rainer's piece. Michelson, "Three Notes on an Exhibition as a Work," *Artforum* 8, no. 10 (June 1970): 64. For more on Rainer's work, especially its political nature, see Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *The Seeing Difficulty: Yvonne Rainer and U.S. Art in the 1960s* (forthcoming).
 25. At Morris's insistence, the wall text included the following caveat: "The limitations of the building—floor loads, entrances and elevator capacity—forced modifications to be made on all works shown. The timber stack was to have been longer. The work with concrete blocks was to have been considerably wider and rough quarried, irregular granite blocks of larger sizes were to be used instead of concrete. . . . Thickness on all steel was to have been greater. My objections to the design of many aspects of the building are strong." Typed draft of Morris's wall text, RMA. The blocks, fabricated by Lippincott Inc., had cores of plywood and were therefore much lighter than the planned quarried stone.
 26. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," pt. 3, *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 24–29, reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 33.
 27. Morris, "Anti-Form," *Artforum* 6, no. 8 (April 1968): 33–35, reprinted in Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 46. Morris later distanced himself from this term, which was given to his article by *Artforum* editor Phil Leider.
 28. Morris, "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," *Artforum* 8, no. 8 (April 1970): 62–66, reprinted in Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 87.
 29. See Herbert Marcuse, "Art in the One-Dimensional Society," *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 8 (May 1967): 29–31. In *Labyrinths*, Berger focuses on desublimation and libidinal repression; I expand on his account but make labor and class more central. I am also indebted to James Meyer's book, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), which touches on the American reception of Marcuse in the late 1960s.
 30. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 38. Marcuse is not entirely of one mind about the possibilities of art to create new modes of thinking and living. Charles Reitz labels the two major periods of Marcuse's thinking on these matters as "Art-against-Alienation" (1932–72) and "Art-as-Alienation," which started with the publication of *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) and was consolidated in *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978). Reitz, *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities: A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).
 31. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 91.
 32. In a telephone conversation with the author on June 23, 2003, Donald Lippincott remembered that the timber was sold back to the mill in Connecticut; he thought they might have kept the steel for future projects.
 33. Morris to Michael Sylvester, January 19, 1971, Robert Morris file, Tate Gallery Archive, London (hereafter TGA).
 34. Morris himself was paid a flat fee (the exact amount is not available in any records). The installers, many of them employees of Lippincott Inc., worked for hourly wages that were, according to the recollections of owners Donald and Alfred, quite desirable and competitive. The Lippincotts did not keep detailed records of the pay schedules of the workers, but they vaguely remembered their wages and benefits; telephone conversation with Donald Lippincott, June 2003, and with Alfred Lippincott, March 2006. These terms were negotiated by Morris in a series of letters to Tucker and included the provision that "the funds ordinarily spent on booze, guards, other expenses of the opening" be used on materials and the cost of the installation. Morris to Tucker, February 2, 1970, RMA. Morris's insistence that there not be an exclusive opening was part and parcel of his determination to refuse the "elite" trappings of the art world.
 35. Gregory Battcock, one of the most avid followers of Marcuse's theories as well as an influential art critic, wrote that the heart of "antiart" (which he renames "outlaw art" so as to maintain its status as art) was the denial of "art as a marketable item." Battcock, "Marcuse and Anti-Art," *Arts Magazine* 43, no. 8 (Summer 1969): 17–19.
 36. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 49.
 37. For a distinction between use value and exchange value, see Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (1867; New York: Vintage Books, 1976).
 38. See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).
 39. Michelson, "Three Notes," 61.
 40. Morris, quoted in Goossen, "The Artist Speaks," 110–11.
 41. Michelson, "Three Notes," 63–64.
 42. Cindy Nemser, "Artists and the System: Far from Cambodia," *Village Voice*, May 28, 1970, 20–21. This is echoed by Tucker, who remembers it as "the most expensive show" she curated; quoted in Elwood, "The New York Art Strike," 52.
 43. Ashton, "New York Commentary," 274.
 44. "Reviews and Previews," *Art News* 69, no. 4 (Summer 1970): 65–66.
 45. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 12–23. In contrast, Morris lauded the "situational" aspect of Minimalist art, which was a function of its scale within the particular gallery space. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," pt. 1, *Artforum* 4, no. 6 (February 1966): 42–44.
 46. Goossen, "The Artist Speaks," 108.
 47. Michelson, "Three Notes," 64.
 48. Statement on poster insert, Michael Compton and David Sylvester, *Robert Morris* (London: Tate Gallery, 1971).
 49. For more on the AWC, see Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1999); Beth Handler, "The Art of Activism: Artists and Writers Protest, the Art Workers' Coalition, and the New York Art Strike Protest the Vietnam War" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2001); Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History," in *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 10–19; and Bradford Martin, *The Theater Is in the Streets! Politics and Public Performance in Sixties America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).
 50. Grace Glueck, "Artists Vote for Union and Big Demonstration," *New York Times*, September 23, 1970, 39.
 51. See the demand listed on the "Demonstration May 26" flyer, AWC file, Museum of Modern Art archives (hereafter MoMA archive).
 52. "The Modern! Free!" flyer, 1970, AWC file, MoMA archive.
 53. Several flyers refer to these unions as organizational models. See "Questionnaire," 1970, AWC file, MoMA archive.
 54. Morris himself produced numerous Conceptual pieces that involved no "actual" work, such as the 1969 *Money* project, also done for the Whitney.
 55. See Jeanne Siegal, "Carl Andre: Artworker," *Studio International* 180, no. 927 (November 1970): 175–79.
 56. As Kirk Varnedoe put it, Minimalism's insistence on hard labor represents "the nostalgia of the New Left for the Old Left." Varnedoe, quoted in Michael Kimmelman, "The Dia Generation," *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, 2003, 30–35.
 57. Robert Morris, "Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (or Interruptions)," *Art in America* 77, no. 11 (November 1989): 144.
 58. See, for example, John Perreault, "Union Made: Report on a Phenomenon," *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 5 (March 1967): 26–31.
 59. Union shops followed stringent protocols about who could operate machinery and handle materials; this was seen as a hindrance to those sculptors who wanted to step in and get their hands dirty during their art's manufacture. See Robert Murray's 1967 letter to Barbara Rose in her "Questions about Sculpture," Barbara Rose papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter AAA).
 60. On Milgo and its clients, see John Lobell, "Developing Technologies for Sculpture," *Arts Magazine* 45, no. 8 (June 1971): 27–29.
 61. Barbara Rose, "Blowup: The Problem of Scale in Sculpture," *Art in America* 56, no. 4 (July–August 1968): 87.
 62. *Ibid.*, 90.
 63. *Artist and Fabricator*, an exhibition held in 1975 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, celebrated the close cooperative relationship between Lippincott Inc. and artists, and repeatedly invoked the firm's investment in craftsmanship rather than manufacture; it was "more a communal studio than a factory." Donald Lippincott, interview by

- Hugh Marlais Davis, in *Artist and Fabricator* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1975), 40. Since young artists often work or apprentice in shops, the lines between artist and worker might not have always been clear with many large-scale fabricators, but the Lippincotts, maintaining a stricter division, had a policy against hiring artists.
64. Dore Ashton, "The Language of Technics," *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 7 (May 1967): 11.
 65. Barbara Rose, "Shall We Have a Renaissance?" *Art in America* 55, no. 2 (March–April 1967): 35.
 66. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," pt. 3, in *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 27.
 67. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review, 1974).
 68. See, for instance, Daniel Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Alain Touraine's *The Post-Industrial Society, Tomorrow's Social History* (1969; New York: Random House, 1971); and Ernst Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978).
 69. John I. Snyder Jr., "Automation: Threat and Promise," *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, March 22, 1964, 16, 62–64.
 70. Morris, "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making," 92.
 71. Joseph Kosuth, "1975," *Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 95 (emphasis in the original).
 72. Willoughby Sharp, *Place and Process*, review of *Artforum* 8, no. 3 (November 1969): 46–49.
 73. Grace Glueck, "Process Art and the New Disorder: Robert Morris Exhibits Works at Whitney," *New York Times*, April 11, 1970, 26.
 74. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 71.
 75. Carter Ratcliff, "New York Letter," *Art International* 14, no. 6 (Summer 1970): 136.
 76. Capsule review, *Art News* 69, no. 4 (Summer 1970): 66.
 77. Morris to Michael Compton, January 19, 1971, Robert Morris file, TGA.
 78. For more on questions of physical violence, active viewership, and the Vietnam War, see Frazer Ward's "Grey Zone: Watching Shoot," *October*, no. 95 (Winter 2001): 115–30.
 79. Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
 80. Jon Bird compellingly claims that the 1971 Tate show was Morris's effort to come to terms with questions of play. Moreover, he suggests that in retreating from "work" to leisure, Morris reintroduced the figure of the female within his art, as *Neo-Classic*, the film made of the Tate show, demonstrates the different activities as performed by a naked woman. Bird, "Minding the Body: Robert Morris's 1971 Tate Gallery Retrospective," in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Michael Newman and Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 106.
 81. These multiple accidents led the show to be closed early; see curator Michael Compton's letter to Morris, May 13, 1971, Robert Morris file, TGA. See also Robert Adam, "Wrecked Tate Sculpture Show Closed," *Daily Telegraph*, May 4, 1971; Richard Cork, "Assault Course at Tate Gallery," *Evening Standard*, April 30, 1971; and Dennis Barker, "Tate—Where the Action Was," *Guardian*, May 4, 1971, all in the Robert Morris file, TGA.
 82. Glueck, "Process Art," 26. Berger, *Labyrinths*, 116, also erroneously calls the Whitney show "participatory."
 83. Joseph Kaye, "Museum Agog over a Morris Exhibit," *Kansas City Star*, April 22, 1970, 8B.
 84. Morris, interview with the author, May 26, 2006. He elaborated, "In retrospect my employment of process and chance seems quite circumscribed in that Whitney show." E-mail message to author, December 12, 2006.
 85. Ashton, "New York Commentary," 274.
 86. Morris to Tucker, February 2, 1970, RMA.
 87. See, for example, Goossen, "The Artist Speaks," 105. See also a more recent interview in which he summarizes his biography: "Up from the working class. Maniac for work. Work ethic. Workmanlike in the beginning. . . ."; quoted in W. J. T. Mitchell, "Golden Memories: W. J. T. Mitchell Talks with Robert Morris," *Artforum* 32, no. 8 (April 1994): 89.
 88. Glueck, "Process Art," 26.
 89. Al Blanchard, "Bridge to the Art World," *Detroit Free Press*, January 15, 1970, 8A, Detroit Institute of the Arts papers, AAA.
 90. Morris, "Size Matters," 478.
 91. Burnham, "A Robert Morris Retrospective in Detroit," 71.
 92. Morris to Sam Wagstaff, October 19, 1970, Samuel Wagstaff papers, AAA.
 93. Daniel Berg to Sam Wagstaff, March 21, 1971, Samuel Wagstaff papers, AAA.
 94. Freeman, "Hardhats," 725.
 95. Molly Martin, ed., *Hard-Hatted Women: Stories of Struggle and Success in the Trades* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988).
 96. Homer Bigart, "War Foes Here Attacked by Construction Workers," *New York Times*, May 9, 1970, 1.
 97. This is maintained by Peter Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the Sixties* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
 98. Richard Rogin, "Why the Construction Workers Holler, 'U.S.A. All the Way!' Joe Kelly Has Reached His Boiling Point," *New York Times Magazine*, June 28, 1970, 179.
 99. For the classed nature of the draft, see Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). The building trades were facing one of their slowest periods in the early 1970s, a factor that may have contributed to their anger. See Mike Lamsey, "Blue Collar Workers May Be Next to Strike," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1970, 30. As one proclamation speculated in 1971: "the link between declining jobs in the construction industry—as a result of Nixon's high interest-rate policies that make construction money scarce—and the hard-hat demonstrations should be obvious." Patricia Cayo Sexton and Brendon Sexton, *Blue Collars and Hard-Hats: The Working Class and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Random House, 1971), 5.
 100. See Rhodri Jefferey-Jones's chapter on labor in *Peace Now! American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
 101. H. R. Haldeman, memorandum to Charles Colson, the White House, May 1970, quoted in Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 447.
 102. Aide to President Richard Nixon, quoted in James M. Naughton, "U. S. to Tighten Surveillance of Radicals," *New York Times*, April 12, 1970, 1.
 103. P. K. Edwards, *Strikes in the United States, 1881–1974* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 180.
 104. Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 249.
 105. "Scorecard on Labor Trouble," *New York Times*, April 5, 1970, 159.
 106. Nicholas von Hoffman, "A Real Bummer," *Washington Post*, May 6, 1970, C1.
 107. Wells, *The War Within*, 429.
 108. Artists participating in *Using Walls* included Richard Artschwager, Mel Bochner, Daniel Buren, Craig Kauffman, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Lawrence Wiener.
 109. Robert Morris, unpublished press release, May 15, 1970, Protest file, Whitney Museum of American Art Archive, New York (hereafter WMA).
 110. The WPA-era Artists Union deployed this term as well in its 1937 strike. In that case, however, the artists were in fact employed; see Gerald M. Monroe, "Artists on the Barricades: The Militant Artists Union Treats with the New Deal," *Archives of American Art Journal* 18, no. 3 (1978): 20–23.
 111. Nemser, "Far from Cambodia," 64.
 112. For a blow-by-blow account of the New York Art Strike, see Elwood, "The New York Art Strike"; Grace Glueck, "Art Community Here Agrees on Plan to Fight War, Racism, and Oppression," *New York Times*, May 19, 1970, 30; and Therese Schwartz and Bill Amidon, "On the Steps of the Met," *New York Element* 2, no. 2 (June–July 1970): 3–4, 19–20.
 113. Elizabeth C. Baker, "Pickets on Parnassus," *Art News* 69, no. 5 (September 1970): 32. Morris made his *War Memorials* lithographs that same year, some of which were widely distributed as protest posters.
 114. Corinne Robins, "The N.Y. Art Strike," *Arts Magazine* 45, no. 1 (September–October 1970): 27–28.
 115. Nemser, "Far from Cambodia," 21.
 116. *Ibid.*, 64.
 117. Lil Picard, "Teach Art Action," *East Village Other* 5, no. 29 (June 16, 1970): 11.
 118. Flyer for the International Cultural Revolutionary Forces, May 31, 1970, Lucy Lippard papers, AAA.
 119. Irving Pedlin, quoted in "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium," *Artforum* 9, no. 1 (September 1970): 35.

120. For a persuasive reading of Lozano's strike, see Helen Molesworth, "Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out: The Rejection of Lee Lozano," *Art Journal* 61, no. 4 (December 2002): 64–73.
121. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 25.
122. *Ibid.*, vii.
123. See, for instance, Gregory Battcock's "Marcuse and Anti-Art II," *Arts Magazine* 44, no. 2 (November 1969): 20–22.
124. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 83.
125. Robert Morris, notebook, ca. 1970, RMA.
126. Lippard, "The Art Worker's Coalition," 16.
127. In June 1970, a small group of art strikers, including Morris, met with Senators Jacob Javits and Claiborne Pell of the Senate Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities in Washington, D.C., to discuss the ramifications of removing art from state-sponsored exhibitions; the senators were unmoved. See Baker, "Pickets on Parnassus," 32; and Barbara Rose, "The Lively Arts: Out of the Studios, On to the Barricades," *New York Magazine* 3, no. 32 (August 10, 1970): 54–57.
128. John B. Hightower, typewritten statement, May 22, 1970, Art Strike file, MoMA archive.
129. Art Strike committee to Hightower, May 25, 1970, Art Strike file, MoMA archive.
130. Baker, "Pickets on Parnassus," 31–42, 64–65.
131. Grace Glueck, "Artists to Withdraw Work at the Biennale," *New York Times*, June 6, 1970, 27.
132. Lucy Lippard, telephone conversation with the author, November 2001.
133. Michele Wallace wrote a scathing letter claiming that the Art Strike was a racist action that had nothing to do with real battles for inclusion and diversity within the art world. She formed a splinter group, Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation, to address these issues. Wallace, "Reading 1968: The Great American Whitewash," in *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (London: Verso, 1990), 195.
134. See Therese Schwartz, "AWC Sauces Up MoMA's PASTA," *New York Element* 2, no. 6 (November–December 1971): 2–3, 16. The strike by PASTA MoMA, which lasted from August 20 to September 3, 1971, focused on a wage increase, job security, and a greater voice for staff in policy decisions. PASTA MoMA became officially affiliated with Distributive Workers of America, Local 1, Museum Division, in May 1971. Still active, it most recently went on strike in the summer of 2000.
135. Pete Hamill, quoted in Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 14.
136. Robert Morris, quoted in Ralph Blumenfeld, "Daily Closeup: Show Mustn't Go On," *New York Post*, June 4, 1970, 37.
137. One of the most influential interventions in Marxist thought that Marcuse made was his assertion that there is a shifted class basis for the Great Refusal: in the new economy, the educated intelligentsia is the new working class. Marcuse posited (*An Essay on Liberation*, 16) that while the working class still has seeds of revolutionary promise, for the most part it had bought into the capitalist system and become counterrevolutionary.
138. Nemser, "Far from Cambodia," 20–21.
139. Marcuse, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, 8.
140. Robert Morris notebook, June 19, 1970, RMA.
141. Robert Morris, typed statement, ca. summer 1970, RMA.
142. Robert Morris, handwritten addendum to his unpublished statement "Politics," ca. 1970, RMA.
143. The *Artworkers News* was affiliated not with the AWC but rather the National Art Workers Community, a reformist organization that had less revolutionary fervor than the AWC and published information on practical issues, such as environmental hazards and listing grant agencies. See Alex Gross, "The National Art Workers Community," *Art in America* 59, no. 5 (September–October 1971): 23.
144. "Two-Man Guild?" *Artworkers News* 2, nos. 1–2 (Spring 1972): 2, 7.
145. Ed Kienholz also proposed an artistic wage labor system in his *Concept Tableaux*, 1963–67. In these works, he wrote descriptions of the pieces he would make, provided a collector paid him up front for materials and his time.
146. Robert Morris, typewritten proposal, ca. summer 1970, RMA.
147. Robert Morris, typewritten proposal, September 22, 1970, RMA.
148. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
149. Michelson, "Three Notes," 64.
150. Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, February 6, 1975, 23–30; and "Notes on 'Camp'" (1964), in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (1966; New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 288. My gratitude to Ann Pellegrini for her incisive thoughts on these points.
151. The accident that hurt the worker and hence ended the public component of the Whitney show is telling. The specter of bodily harm summoned by this injury—as well as those that have occurred during the installation of Serra's pieces—raises troubling questions about artists inhabiting the position of the "worker," as they themselves are most often removed or distanced from the danger posed by the manipulation of equipment and heavy materials.
152. These include *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1994, and *Inability to Endure or Deny the World: Representation and Text in the Work of Robert Morris*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1990. Pepe Karmel discussed the absence of the 1970 process works from the 1994 Guggenheim retrospective and catalog in "Robert Morris: Formal Disclosures," *Art in America* 83, no. 6 (June 1995): 88–95, 117, 119.
153. Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 251.
154. Recently, artists have also engaged in recovering the complexities of the AWC; see Andrea Fraser's writing on the subject in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005). And on June 16, 2006, artist Kristen Forkert asked audience members at New York's alternative art space 16Beaver to read aloud transcripts from a 1969 AWC meeting as "an act of solidarity" and to "reflect on what has changed and what hasn't" since that moment; see the press release for the 16Beaver Monday night series, www.16beavergroup.org/monday/archives/001919.php#more (accessed November 20, 2006).