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In the New Body: Simone Forti's Dance Constructions (1960-61) and their Acquisition by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)

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**Author**

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**Publication Date**

2018

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

In the New Body:

Simone Forti's Dance Constructions (1960-61)

and their Acquisition by

the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Art History

by

Megan Gwen Metcalf

2018

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2018

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

In the New Body:

Simone Forti's Dance Constructions (1960-61)

and their Acquisition by

the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)

by

Megan Gwen Metcalf

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Miwon Kwon, Chair

This study, focusing on the 2015 acquisition of Simone Forti's Dance Constructions, a suite of performance works first shown in New York in 1960 and 1961, by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), details the museum's first acquisition of historical dance works and an important model for collecting live performance and time-based artworks. Most commentators agree that because it is a living, temporal, and embodied experience, dance cannot be held in a repository such as an archive, library, or museum. But without a consensus on what constitutes dance "preservation," and as the museum deals with the changes brought by non-object-based ephemeral art, it may offer another avenue for thinking about dance's continuation into the future, which is reflected in Forti's arrangements with MoMA. My treatment tracks the changes:



the transfer, translation, and (re)invention of Forti's artworks as well as the museum at the moment of their encounter, which newly defined the works as well as the institution. The case study offers insight into transformations of the art object, evolutions of the institutions that care for them, and changes in values for both visual art and dance over the last half-century. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the dissertation brings together art history, dance history, performance studies, and conservation and museum studies to build upon the mostly monographic studies of Forti to date that treat the historical and contemporary conditions of the artist's work separately. The co-articulation of Forti's Dance Constructions with MoMA represents a convergence of dance and art as well as the past and the present, shedding critical light on the artworks as well as the processes of making history.

A theoretical introduction identifies the key conceptual problematics underlying art, dance, and institutions that are generated by considering Forti's dances and the museum together, laying out the terms for the discussion that follows. Part I looks back to the emergence of the Dance Constructions from Forti's nascent practice, produced within an interdisciplinary landscape of experimentation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The performances proposed new models of movement and composition for dance, while also examining sculptural questions and the nature of artworks more generally. Posing very basic questions about bodies and objects—even turning bodies *into* objects—they made radical propositions that shaped future work in dance and art. Part II of the dissertation details the materials and procedures developed by the artist and the museum for MoMA's 2015 acquisition of the Dance Constructions. Using models from both dance and visual art, protocols were developed that challenge, revise, and offer alternative definitions for issues central to the art museum: the art object, authenticity and provenance, and

continuation/conservation. The process gave the Dance Constructions new resources and definition, bringing to light aspects of the works that were unconscious, unknown, or otherwise unspecified prior to that point while at the same time providing for their future. Tracking the Dance Constructions through time from inception to institutional acquisition reveals shifts in the core functions of the museum since the 1960s, as well as changes in dance and evolutions of Forti's practice. This raises legal, ethical, and practical issues in addition to aesthetic ones, which implicate all postwar art as potential objects of museum acquisition, and contains lessons for historians, practitioners, and institutions alike.

The dissertation of Megan Gwen Metcalf is approved.

Julia Bryan-Wilson

Saloni Mathur

Steven D. Nelson

Miwon Kwon, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was made possible by many people but above all two extraordinary women, Miwon Kwon and Simone Forti. I am grateful to Miwon for chairing my dissertation committee, shepherding the writing process, and encouraging my passion and curiosity with sensitivity, patience, and a sure hand. In addition to Simone's treasured role as a teacher, the artist opened her personal archive to me, politely and often humorously entertained many, many questions, and offered me important access as a performer-slash-researcher into the process of preparing her works for exhibition and eventually acquisition. My dissertation committee, Julia Bryan-Wilson, Saloni Mathur, and Steven Nelson readily offered expertise and encouragement over the course of the research and writing process, truly a "dream team" for my project. Similarly, George Baker served a critical role at key moments in my thinking and writing, beginning with his 1960s-70s course in which I was first able to follow my hunches about Forti's early work, which evolved into my MA thesis and later the dissertation.

Rena Kosnett and Jason Underhill of Simone Forti's archive and studio were also essential to my undertaking, generously answering questions, providing research materials, pointing me toward important sources—and offering their friendship, for which I remain grateful. Everyone at The Box gallery in Los Angeles has shown great enthusiasm and crucial support for my research, especially Mara McCarthy and Jackie Tarquinio Kennedy, but also Christine Varney, LeRoy Stevens, and Catherine Vu. The team at MoMA: Ana Janevski, Martha Joseph, and Athena Christa Holbrook likewise gave me valuable time and resources, setting up screenings and talking through questions, support that was crucial to the development of my project and the dissertation. In the same vein, Sarah Swenson's interest in my research and shared love of dance

and the Dance Constructions provided important insights into Forti's works as well as inspiration when I felt stuck. Conversations with Jackie, Athena, and Sarah deeply influenced my thinking about the issues in art, dance, and museum practice with which this study is concerned, and I am so thankful for their expertise and willingness to debate, wonder, and speculate with me.

Sabine Breitweiser of the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg gave me the chance to research Forti's entire body of work for a major museum retrospective, just as I was getting going on my dissertation, an important opportunity for this project and my work more generally. My scholarship was also supported by grants and fellowships from a number of sources, foremost UCLA's Department of Art History and UCLA's Graduate Division; the Edward A. Dickson Fellowships, Dissertation Year Fellowship, Research Mentorships, and travel grants I received all made possible the conception and execution of my research. A UCLA-LACMA Art History Practicum Initiative Summer Fellowship funded by the Mellon Foundation provided important institutional research experience, and I was a Short-Term Research Fellow at the New York Public Library in 2015, which dramatically advanced my project. Participating in the Mellon Summer Seminar in Dance Studies in 2015 likewise had a big impact on my work. No less substantial was the travel support (warm beds and hot meals) provided by Alyssa Alpine, Hilke Schellmann, Natalia Zubko, Johanna Linsley and Jan Mertens, and the Bleyer family.

UCLA scholars in several different fields have been cherished interlocutors and fundamental to my thinking: in the Art History Department, Natilee Harren, Kavior Moon, Joanna Fiduccia, Nicholas Machida, Jamin An, and Zach Rottman all contributed significantly to my own scholarship. I am also grateful to James Fishburne, Megan Driscoll, Lauren Taylor, and Dan

Abbe for their collegiality. From the Art Department, Ragen Moss, Ryan Kelly, and Brennan Gerard provided essential perspectives on my material and the world more generally. From the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, Alison D'Amato and Doran George treaded joyfully with me over our shared ground, warmly welcoming me into dance studies and providing essential theorizations for my own project. Outside of UCLA, I am thrilled to know and learn from Amanda Jane Graham, Megan Hoetger, Abigail Sebaly, and Hanna Hölling. My conversations (and friendships!) with Claudia La Rocco, Rebecca Davis, Silas Reiner, Rashaun Mitchell, Will Rawls, and Brian House prompted me to undertake this endeavor and have been deepened because of it. I regard my opportunities to study scores, dances, and practices with Anna Halprin, Deborah Hay, and Yvonne Rainer as similarly foundational to this project.

A number of people simply make things work at UCLA and made my research easier in ways big and small: thank you to Verlena Johnson, Paul Gass, Samantha Turpel, Erika Santoyo, and Danielle Carreon. Robert Gore and Diana King at the Arts Library made miracles happen with difficult book and video acquisitions, and then delivered them with encouragement and helpful suggestions. In the course of my time at UCLA, a series of Directors of Graduate Studies: Saloni Mathur, Steven Nelson, and Meredith Cohen managed many logistics and non-standard requests.

During the course of my studies, a tight circle closed in to support me through an incredibly difficult stretch, for which I will always be grateful. Many of these people have been mentioned here, but it bears saying again. Thank you to Miwon, Saloni, Meredith, Steven, George, Verlena, and Paul. Also to Alyssa, Hilke, Natalia, Natilee, Kavior, Ragen, Alison, and Rebecca. Paul-Henri Cesar, Soma Sahai-Srivastava, Ashley Uyeshiro Simon, Charles McDaniel, Tina Pedone,

Aggie Postman Kuchta, Shana Ekin, and LoMa Familiar provided me exceptional care and even laughs when I needed them most. The rotating crew of Kathleen, Whitney, Sacha, Russ, Caroline, Joe, Amber, Lisa, Ruth, Michael, Dani, Ian, Michael, Ana, and Sam consistently offered up laser insight and even more laughs. Friends Eli Schleifer and Jessica Fechter (and then Mia and Freddie) helped carry me through from the idea of graduate school until the final words, and Katrina and Jonah Goldsaito (and then Taiga) offered much-needed shelter and warmth at critical moments. Susan and Michael Metcalf provided all manner of support throughout.

My friends Edgar Landa, Zach Winnick, and Claire Winters were rooting for me the whole way, and Kelly and David Gold were especially supportive in the last mile. To Tamar Weber, Tim McLynch, and Sarah Awad: I'll always want you at the other end of my rope. Christian Boullon, Ben Callaway, Lennon Flowers, Fatinah Judeh, Grace Kim, Katharina Rosenberger, Jessica Ross, Matthew Dane Torbenson, and Josh Weiss—each in their own way and together as a miraculous group—gave me exactly what I needed in the final weeks and months. Onward!

## VITA

### Education

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Master of Arts, Art History, 2011

Thesis: *Not Yet Minimalism: Simone Forti's Huddle (1961) and its Propositions for 1960s Sculpture and Dance*

Columbia University, New York

Bachelor of Arts, Department of English, 2003 – *summa cum laude* and departmental honors

### Publications

“Future Formers, Former Futures,” *Open Space*, SF MOMA (February 13, 2018). Respondent for “Limited Edition,” by SF MOMA Performance, CounterPulse, The Lab, ODC Theater, and Z Space, San Francisco, CA. <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2018/02/future-formers-former-futures/>.

“Re-tracing our Steps: Present Negotiations with the Past(s)” in Claudia La Rocco, ed. *PLATFORM 2015: Dancers, Buildings, and People in the Streets*. New York: Danspace Project, 2015. 176-185.

“Biography,” “Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures” and “Bibliography” in Sabine Breitweiser, ed. *Simone Forti, Thinking with the Body: A Retrospective in Motion*. Salzburg, Austria: The Museum der Moderne, 2014. 276-309.

### Guest Lectures and Teaching (selections)

Teaching Fellow, Art History 132, UCLA Summer Session C 2018. “Performance in Los Angeles, Then and Now (1960-present).”

“Up for Anything: Robert Rauschenberg and Dance,” in “Robert Rauschenberg and His Legacy” SF MOMA 101 museum education series. SF MOMA, San Francisco, CA (February 2018).

“Dancing in the Museum” guest seminar, University of Houston. In combined graduate and undergraduate “The Provisional Work of Art: Problems in Contemporary Conservation” (November 2017).

Teaching Fellow, Art History 132, UCLA Summer Session C 2016. “Art in Action: Contemporary Art and Performance, 1950s-Present.”

Teaching Associate/Assistant, UCLA Art History Department: Modern Art, George Baker (Fall 2012); Medieval Art, Sharon Gerstel (Winter 2013); Contemporary Art 1980s-90s (upper division), Miwon Kwon (Spring 2013); Ancient Art, Susan Downey (Fall 2010); Renaissance and Baroque Art, Charlene Villaseñor-Black (Winter 2011); Pre-Columbian Art, Cecelia Klein (Spring 2011)



### **Conferences and Invited Seminars (selections)**

“Sometimes An Onion: Performative Models of Curating and Conserving the Work of Artist-Choreographer Simone Forti” on panel “Object - Event - Performance: Art, Materiality, and Continuity since the 1960s,” College Art Association (CAA) annual conference 2018, Los Angeles, CA

“Dance Report: Sometimes an Onion,” on panel “Between Dance and Object: The Productivity of Disciplinary Confusion and Convergence,” Congress on Research in Dance (CORD) + Society of Dance Historians (SDHS) conference, Pomona College, CA (November 2016)

Invited participant, Mellon Summer Seminar in Dance Studies at Northwestern University, June 2015. Organized by Susan Manning (Northwestern University), Rebecca Schneider (Brown University), and Janice Ross (Stanford University)

Panel Co-chair, College Art Association (CAA) annual conference 2013, New York, NY: “Uneasy Guardians: Ensuring the Future of Intractable Art Forms” (with Holly Harrison, Contemporary Art Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art - LACMA)

### **Grants, Fellowships, and Awards (Selections)**

Edward A. Dickson Fellowship, UCLA Dept. of Art History – 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017

Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division – 2016

Short-Term Research Fellowship, New York Public Library, New York, NY – 2015

UCLA Graduate Division Summer Research Mentorship (GSRM) – Summer 2012 and 2010

UCLA Graduate Division Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division – 2011

Artist grants and residencies for the development of choreographic works and performance installations from New Dance Alliance, Chashama, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The Kitchen, Fractured Atlas (all New York, NY); The Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM, Amsterdam) – 2003-2008

### **Distinctions**

Research Assistant for “Simone Forti, Thinking With the Body: A Retrospective in Motion,” curated by Sabine Breitweiser at Museum der Moderne in Salzburg, Austria, 2013-2014

Participant in Deborah Hay’s final Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP) in Findhorn, Scotland, August-September 2012; practiced and performed an original Deborah Hay solo dance score; featured in Becky Edmunds’ documentary about the project, *Turn Your F^\*cking Head* (Routledge Performance Archive, 2014)

Performer in Simone Forti’s “First Complete Presentation of Dance Constructions, 1961” at The Box gallery, Los Angeles, CA, August 2011; video in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Selected Dance Training and Workshops: Deborah Hay, repertory development workshop for *Figure a Sea* (Findhorn, Scotland, 2015); Anna Halprin Winter Workshop (Kentfield, CA, December 2013); Simone Forti, “Advanced Improvisation” (UCLA, Spring 2010, 2011, 2012); Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A* (UC Irvine, Winter 2011)

## PROLOGUE

Two performers walk out into a clearing in a room, one helping the other lie beneath a personalized wooden box before settling under his own. After a quiet moment, the sounds of whistling emerge: a clear, thin tone riding on the out-breath, and then silence again while they cycle through an inhale. As they repeat this simple duet, sometimes the sounds alternate, and sometimes they overlap, in and out of sync. Reduced to a simple stream of sound and air, the tones are distinguished by their minute variations, breaks and flaws. One must be very, very quiet to hear the whistling at all, and the breath made audible slows everyone in the room to the same pace. The static position of the people inside the boxes, as well as the tentative sounds, keep everyone compelled in their listening. The delicate, magnetic suspension created by the situation overall might, in fact, constitute the artwork's work, its magic. It produces a listening as well as a listening-for, the belief that a sound is forthcoming, a response to your expectation. (The listening-for, of course, always containing the risk that the response won't come.) It is not mysterious why the boxes are making sounds: the performers walked to the boxes and lay down in full view of the people around them. What is mysterious—heartbreaking, and a little ridiculous—is why they can't bridge their divide, what keeps them immobilized and separate in such a way that goes on and on. The gentle duet continues for about ten minutes, never speeding up or resolving into a melody. Then, it just stops. The last performer under is the first performer out, lifting up his companion's box so she can get to her feet, too.

Casually, the two young people who had just finished whistling melted back into the crowd of spectators gathered around Simone Forti's *Platforms* (1961) at the Museum of Modern Art in

New York (MoMA) in March 2009. Part of a suite of five works together called the “Dance Constructions,” the performance appeared in a small show in a second-floor gallery that also featured Forti’s *Huddle* (1961), a little mountain of people climbing over each other, and *Accompaniment for La Monte’s “2 Sounds” and La Monte’s “2 Sounds”* (1961), a work for recorded music, performer, and a loop of rope (which Forti performed herself), as well as videos the artist made in the 1970s [Figures 1.1, 1.2].<sup>1</sup> On the same day, in a different gallery, fellow Judson Dance Theater progenitor Yvonne Rainer’s *Trio A* (1966) was performed by Rainer’s longtime collaborator and two younger artists in front of a projection of a 1978 film (since transferred to video) of Rainer doing the dance as a solo [Figures 1.3, 1.4].<sup>2</sup> The appearances of these historical works of dance were part of MoMA’s new performance series, produced by the recently renamed “Department of Media and Performance Art” (MPA), formerly the Department of Media.<sup>3</sup> This department name change foregrounded the museum’s holdings in performance-

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<sup>1</sup> This was “Performance 2: Simone Forti” on March 7 and 8, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> This was “Performance 3: Yvonne Rainer” on March 7 and 8, 2009. The video, produced in 1978 by Sally Banes, was shown as part of the exhibition “Here Is Every. Four Decades of Contemporary Art,” September 10, 2008–March 23, 2009.” MoMA acquired the video in 2012. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/119867?locale=en> (Accessed February 9, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Media was established in 2006 and evolved out of the museum’s Department of Film (est. 1935), which had over the years come to include video (1994); “media” was added to cover digital images and emergent technologies (2001). The Department of Media and Performance Art (MPA) is contemporary art-focused and dedicated to the presentation and collection of sound- and time-based art expressly created for gallery spaces and thus distinct from other film or video. The Museum of Modern Art, “The Museum of Modern Art Creates New Curatorial Department,” Press Release, Oct 2, 2006, [http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_ARCHIVE/Media.pdf](http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS_RELEASE_ARCHIVE/Media.pdf); and, The Museum of Modern Art, “MoMA Deepens Commitment to Collecting, Preserving, and Exhibiting Performance Art through a Range of Pioneering Initiatives,” Press Release, February 27, 2009, [http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_ARCHIVE/PerformanceRelease.FINAL.pdf](http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS_RELEASE_ARCHIVE/PerformanceRelease.FINAL.pdf) (Accessed September 1, 2016).

MoMA, insofar as it is organized into departments by medium, periodically requires the creation of new departments. The museum’s latest mission statement, from October 2010, states that MoMA recognizes “that modern and contemporary art [...] involve all forms of visual expression, including painting and sculpture, drawings, prints, and illustrated books, photography, architecture and design, and film and video, as well as new forms yet to be developed or understood, that reflect and explore the artistic issues of the era,” Museum of Modern Art, “Mission Statement,” Collections Management Policy, Approved by the Board of Trustees October 5, 2010 [hereafter “CMP”], 1. Available online:

related art, coincident with the recent surge of interest in live art by commercial fairs, galleries, and institutions. As part of MoMA's effort to increase research and exhibitions in this area (in which the museum claimed to have had an investment since in the 1970s), it offered public presentations of performance and convened private "workshops" with museum curators and performance practitioners to examine performance's transition into museums and translation for institutional collections.<sup>4</sup> Asserting "in recent years performance art has increasingly become an integral part of artistic practice and therefore has been shown more and more in international biennials and galleries," MoMA's MPA department head Klaus Biesenbach declared, "the acquisition and conservation of performance art by MoMA is vitally important to current and future generations of museum-goers," making the case for the museum to step in as a leading steward for performance practices.<sup>5</sup>

This dissertation closely examines the implications of such a claim by way of Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions* (1960-61), which were acquired by MoMA in 2015. My treatment provides a detailed case study tracking the changes, i.e.: the transfer, translation, and (re)invention of

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[https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/explore/CollectionsMgmtPolicyMoMA\\_Oct10.pdf](https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/explore/CollectionsMgmtPolicyMoMA_Oct10.pdf) (Accessed September 1, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Glenn D. Lowry, the museum's director, is quoted as saying: "MoMA's history of engagement with time-based art extends back to the 1970s, when the Museum presented live performances by Laurie Anderson, Simone Forti, Stuart Sherman, and others," which does not distinguish the different programs at MoMA in which they were presented, or their disciplinary sources: dance, music, theater, etc. (The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment"). In fact, the collection of materials related to performance dates to the museum's earliest years: the Dance Archives was first a division of the library devoted to dance materials, which was promoted to its own curatorial department, the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, and produced exhibitions of dance memorabilia and theater scenography in the 1940s. Later in the decade the department was disbanded and the materials mostly deaccessioned. See Michelle Elligott, "From the Archives: Dance and Theater," *Inside Out* MoMA Blog (October 23, 2015), [https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2015/10/23/from-the-archives-dance-and-theater/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2015/10/23/from-the-archives-dance-and-theater/) (Accessed February 1, 2017); this episode in MoMA's history is discussed in more detail in Part II of this study.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment."

Forti's artworks as well as the museum at the moment of their encounter, MoMA's first acquisition of historical dance works. This intersection newly defined the Dance Constructions and the institution, with my study detailing how the artworks and MoMA arrived at this juncture.

Around 2000, curators and art historians began to take a special interest in Forti and her dance works from the early 1960s. Ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov's retrospective look at the work by choreographers from New York's Judson Dance Theater featured Forti's most famous work *Huddle* (1961) on a national tour in 2000-2001, bringing it to audiences all over the country.<sup>6</sup> In the same period, Forti presented early and current performance pieces in museums in conjunction with a touring exhibition "Into the Light," which included one of the holograms she made in the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> These appearances in art museums were far from Forti's first: she reprised the Dance Constructions in 1971 at the Pasadena Art Museum in California, along with an example of her collaborative improvisation practice with musicians, which she brought to museums across the US and Europe in the 1970s and 80s, including the San Francisco Art Museum (today SFMOMA), the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, MoMA, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (the Whitney).<sup>8</sup> Also around 2000, Forti started to appear as a footnote in art historical accounts of the early work of sculptor Robert Morris, as well as in studies reconsidering Minimalism and the art of the 1960s through the lens of performance,

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<sup>6</sup> This was the White Oak Dance Project's program "Past Forward," which was presented at venues including Princeton University, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM).

<sup>7</sup> Some of these performances are listed in Megan Metcalf, "Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures," in Sabine Breitweiser, ed. *Simone Forti: Thinking With the Body* (Salzburg, Austria: The Museum der Moderne, 2014), 288-289. See also Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> "Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures," in Breitweiser, 286-287.

especially dance.<sup>9</sup> The retrieval of key choreographers as significant figures in the period sought to articulate dance as part of art history, making it visible for new audiences and scholars. The critical attention to Forti has increased in substance and frequency ever since, in large part due to her works' renewed exposure. These mostly monographic studies have built on the detailed primary source research of dance scholar Sally Banes to relate Forti's work in the 1960s and beyond to that of other artists, especially Morris but also John Cage, Robert Whitman, and figures in Italy's *arte povera* movement, to name just a few.<sup>10</sup>

But this valuable scholarship, which provides a foundation for my study, has not yet fully accounted for some of the very basic ways that dance and choreography informed the artwork of the period, nor the theoretical and practical questions brought to light by their encounter with art historical frameworks, especially museums. In general, existing treatments of Forti address historical and contemporary conditions separately, casting Forti's dance works as securely in the past. However, the life of the Dance Constructions in the present provides critical insight into

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<sup>9</sup> Specifically, Anna C. Chave's "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 149-163 and Carrie Lambert's "More or Less Minimalism: Six Notes on Performance and Visual Art in the 1960s" in Ann Goldstein, *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-68* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 102-109. Lambert-Beatty's later book focused on the early work of Yvonne Rainer but included other figures in dance: *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008). Here I cite Lambert's article with the name under which it was published, and in the text refer to the writer's current name, Lambert-Beatty, which identifies most of her published work to date.

<sup>10</sup> Banes conducted her research in the 1970 and 80s, which included organizing reconstructions of works by Forti and other members of the Judson Dance Theater. See Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater 1962-1964* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983) and *Terpsichore in Sneakers* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987). Virginia Spivey's "Minimal Presence of Simone Forti," (*Woman's Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 11-18) treats Forti with Morris, while Liz Kotz's 2014 "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture c.1961: Reconsidering Simone Forti's Dance Constructions" relates Forti and the Dance Constructions to composer La Monte Young and sculptor Robert Morris (in Maren Butte, Kirsten Maar, Fiona McGovern, Marie-France Rafael, Jörn Schafaff, eds., *Assign & Arrange: Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 32-51). Julia Bryan-Wilson's 2015 article, "Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo" positions Forti's work in the 1960s within the political and cultural landscape of Rome in 1968-1969 (*October* 152 (Spring 2015): 26-52), while Meredith Morse's recent monograph *Soft is Fast* treats Forti's work over several decades (*Soft is Fast: Simone Forti in the 1960s and After* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016)).

both the artworks and the apparatus surrounding it: assessing these conditions illuminates the process of making history in addition to its objects, the dances. For the most part, recent art historical reports on performance in museums include only a brief mention of Forti and do not distinguish between dance and performance, which I argue is crucial to understanding the impact of the interdisciplinary environment of the 1960s and is only just now becoming clear.<sup>11</sup> For their part, as dance theorists consider dance in the art museum, they have thus far mostly excluded Forti and downplayed the significance of the museum as a historical, discursive, and practical frame for the choreography taking place there, both in the past and today.<sup>12</sup>

My dissertation, with its focus on Forti's Dance Constructions and their acquisition by MoMA in 2015, is centrally concerned with this convergence of the past and the present and history's processes and objects—in addition to the convergence of dance with art. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to evaluating the episode and the events leading up to it, drawing from the history, theory, and practice of dance, art, and museums. The paragraphs that follow

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas Crimp's 2008 "Dancers, Artworks, and People in the Galleries" provides a refreshing exception, although the format of the piece, a commission from *Artforum* responding to a series of Merce Cunningham "Events" at Dia: Beacon tightly focused the assignment on dance (*Artforum* 47 no. 2 (October 2008): 347-355, 407). Art historian Claire Bishop's overview of dance in the museum (in select museums), is likewise focused on dance specifically but does not address the close proximity of performance and dance historically and in the contemporary moment, nor distinguish them from one another, only claiming that critical attention to dance has superseded discussions of performance re-enactments in the museum, starting around 2010 ("The Perils and Possibilities of Dance in the Museum: Tate, MoMA and Whitney" *Dance Research Journal* (DRJ) 46, no. 3 (December 2014): 63-76). Hal Foster's *Bad New Days* (London and New York: Verso, 2015) diagnoses a symptom of this conflation, a new "zombie time" in the museum, but does not identify its source (127-140).

<sup>12</sup> Dancer-choreographer-theorist Abigail Levine helpfully contextualized her experience performing at MoMA within other contemporary performance projects in museums: "Being a thing: the work of performing in the museum," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 23 no. 2 (2013): 291-303. The "Editor's Note" by dance scholars Mark Franko and André Lepecki for the *Dance Research Journal* issue in which Bishop's article appeared in 2014 provocatively posed questions about what the museum offers as a framework, but the contributions within the volume largely generalize about "the museum" or ignore it altogether in favor of discussing the dancing, however (DRJ 46 no. 3, December 2014). Lepecki's mentions of dance projects in museums in his recent book *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* contend with the museum only in its most abstract theoretical aspects, if at all (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

introduce the dance of the 1960s as well as the art world's recent fascination with it, and identify some of the practical and theoretical questions (and concerns) raised by a museum "collecting" a dance. This lays out the central objectives of my study and how it will proceed.

At mid-century, American concert dance went through an intensive process of self-inquiry, largely outside of traditional dance company structures, radically reordering and reconceiving its forms in order to investigate some of the basic terms of dance and choreography. These developments in dance, for which Forti was a crucial innovator, overlapped with other artistic practices in the late 1950s and 1960s that were similarly concerned with real space, time, and objects from the world, and their size and scale reflected this engagement. Artists associated with this line of inquiry came to be identified with movements such as Happenings, Fluxus, Minimalism, Pop, and Performance Art, among others. The new dance as well as the new art, which was more lively, unpredictable, and expansive than the modern art of the past, soon found a home in museums around the country, newly built or renovated in the optimism and economic prosperity of the post-war period in order to accommodate these emerging forms and practices.<sup>13</sup> Now, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, dance as a field is recovering its earlier moments of self-reflection, both in order to highlight and review the importance of a generation of artists passing into history, and to think critically about how their legacies have endured in dance's social, economic, and aesthetic structures.<sup>14</sup> This reflection includes very practical

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<sup>13</sup> There was a surge in building and refurbishing museums and multi-arts centers around the country in the late 1950s and early 1960s, particularly in regional cities. The growing interest in the arts as well as the building projects were detailed in a report by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1965, *The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects* (New York: The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 1965). For a selected list of performances in institutions in this era, see Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> The New York dance organization Danspace Project's "Judson Now" project of 2012, for example, included performances, screenings, panel discussions, and a publication. See Judy Hussie-Taylor and Jenn Joy, eds. *Judson Now* (New York: Danspace Project, 2012). A series of events in 2014 commemorated the fiftieth



concerns about how the dances of the 1960s may (or may not) be performed for future audiences, a task that until now has remained far outside the museum's purview.

Most commentators agree that because it is a living, temporal, and embodied experience, dance cannot be held in a repository such as an archive, library, or museum. Its manifestation via the specific bodies of individual subjects has made even its most prominent practitioners uneasy about its "museumification" and status as property, and historians and theorists have likewise demonstrated resistance to these ideas. Ballet choreographer George Balanchine, possibly the twentieth century's most famous choreographer, declared vehemently as he considered the future of his works, "I don't want my ballets preserved as museum pieces for people to go and laugh at what used to be. *Absolutely not*. I'm staging ballets for today's bodies. Ballet is NOW."<sup>15</sup> For Balanchine, the museum was antithetical to dance's nature and operations, stopping time and making it irrelevant to contemporary audiences, an inevitable result of the attempt to "preserve"

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anniversary of dancer Fred Herko's untimely death with a symposium, exhibitions, performances, and screenings, accompanied by written responses by dancers, choreographers and dance writers. See "Fred Herko, 1936-1964," <http://freddieherko.com> (Accessed June 15, 2017), "Fred Herko: A Crash Course," sponsored by Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, <http://fredherko.tumblr.com> (Accessed June 15, 2017), "The Herko Dialogues," *Movement Research Critical Correspondence*, <https://movementresearch.org/publications/critical-correspondence> (Accessed June 15, 2017).

Contemporary choreographer Trajal Harrell has challenged the ways the Judson Dance Theater's so-called "democratic" structures were exclusive and largely segregated by race, for example, in a series of works imagining the collision of the downtown "postmodern" dance aesthetic with Harlem "ball" culture, which include *Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem (Made-to-Measure)/Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at Judson Church (M2M)* and *Antigone Sr.* (2009-present). *Artforum* produced a series of interviews in 2012 with some of the Judson Dance Theater participants, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, a few of whom raised critical questions about their experiences then. For example, artist Robert Morris noted, "I do not recall having seen at Judson any performers who were obese, lame, or old, and there were few nonwhite performers. Was there a slight sheen of forgivable narcissism glowing on those young, white, energetic types? Did the self-critical have much weight among the enthusiastic participants? Has a certain mythical ethos come to color those innocent evenings?" Robert Morris, as told to Lauren O'Neal Butler, "A Judson P.S." *Artforum* (December 31, 2012), <https://www.artforum.com/words/id=38415> (Accessed August 17, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> George Balanchine in Richard Buckle (in collaboration with John Taras), *George Balanchine, Ballet Master* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), 327 (emphases in original); quoted in Francis Yeoh, "The Choreographic Trust: Preserving Dance Legacies," *Dance Chronicle* 35, no. 2 (2012), 224.

dance. While Balanchine was living, a large and well-financed company ensured the proper training of dancers for his choreography as well as the maintenance of his repertory, fostering the illusion that the dances existed exclusively in the present with him personally overseeing every aspect. Despite his stated reservations, however, the choreographer eventually made arrangements for his ballets to continue to be performed once he passed away, relying on copyright, documentation, and experts in his choreography and technique to transfer the works to new performers.<sup>16</sup> The executor of Balanchine's (very complex) estate used a metaphor similar to Balanchine's to describe her own work, contrasting paintings and dance: "you can't hang ballets on a wall. Ballets are meant to be performed."<sup>17</sup> Her rhetoric emphasized how the continuation of the dance of the past depends on its ongoing life in the present, facilitated by the passage of choreography from one body to another, which is a project typically performed by choreographers and dance companies, teachers, and schools. The executor stressed the active nature of such an effort, with her commentary casting it as of a different order than safeguarding another type of art for the future.

Art historians, such as Carrie Lambert-Beatty and Amelia Jones, have tended to favor positions like Balanchine's that the museum is no place for dance. In their writing on performance in the art context, both historians downplayed the need for in-person experience with live performance, emphasizing instead archival materials as the site of meaning and authenticity, which heightens

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<sup>16</sup> Balanchine famously left certain of his dances to favorite ballerinas, a poetic gesture that complicated their continued performance after his death. The plans he made for his works and subsequent efforts to consolidate the rights to them are described in Yeoh, 234-237.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Horgan in Sheryl Flatow, "The Balanchine Trust: Guardian of the Legacy," *Dance Magazine* (December 1990): 58-59; quoted in Yeoh, 236.

the drama of particular historical moments and nostalgia for their having passed.<sup>18</sup> Concluding a brief article about a 1960 performance by painter Jim Dine, Lambert-Beatty asserted, “performances of the 1960s *were* ephemeral. To reconstitute them, however lovingly, serves neither their aesthetic aims nor their historical specificity.”<sup>19</sup> This position retains fidelity to certain recorded facts while at the same time emphasizing irretrievable loss and disappearance, a popular position in art history and performance studies that does not take into account dance’s returns and reappearances over time.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Lambert-Beatty addressed the phenomenon of performance in museums, locating problems in the type and quality of “presence” live art professes to provide, and in how institutions acquire and manage the rights to

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<sup>18</sup> In particular Carrie Lambert, “Documentary Dialectics: Performance Lost and Found,” *Visual Resources* 16, no. 3 (2000): 275-285, and Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia,” *Art Journal* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 11-18. Each has more recently refined her position, reflecting the increasing presence of performance in museums, art fairs, and galleries. Jones pressed hers even further, drawing on MoMA’s 2010 retrospective of performance artist Marina Abramović’s to bolster her earlier skepticism about the relative value of co-presence and liveness in visual art in “The Artist is Present: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 17-45.

<sup>19</sup> Lambert, “Documentary Dialectics,” 285. Lambert-Beatty’s use of the term “reconstitute” to refer to works from the past performed in the present also anticipated how Forti has characterized recent performances of her early works. The artist has increasingly used “reconstitute” in her artist statements for *Huddle*, including those produced for MoMA, and highlighted it in a public talk in 2013, starting out with describing how the work is “reconstructed” and then correcting herself with “reconstituted.” See for example, Forti, “Huddle Artist’s Statement” in Breitweiser, 96. The talk was “Modern Monday: An Evening with Boris Charmatz, Simone Forti, and Ralph Lemon,” Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2, Museum of Modern Art, October 21, 2013. Video recording at the Museum of Modern Art, MPA curatorial department offices.

<sup>20</sup> Performance theorist Peggy Phelan’s famous text on the subject begins: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, documented, or otherwise participate in the representation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.” Performance’s ontology of disappearance, according to Phelan, makes performance automatically resistant to capitalist reproduction and circulation, and forces the reconfiguration of its institutions, which includes museums. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 146. According to theater scholar Rebecca Schneider, highlighting the ephemeral aspects of performance has been a “cornerstone” of performance studies since the field’s articulation in the 1960s by Richard Schechner; in addition to Phelan, Schneider cited the work of Herbert Blau, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, Jose Muñoz, and Jane Blocker as following in this vein, which provoked her own study of performance’s persistence (Schneider, “Performance Remains,” *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (2001): 100 and 106 n. 1-2). Schneider has also noted even longer-standing biases in theater studies that have favored text over performance and the present over the past (*Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 89-93.

performances.<sup>21</sup> In fact a number of commentators object to the exclusivity inherent in a museum's ownership of the rights to a performance, attributing it to the museum's entanglement with the art market and incessant drive toward objects and objecthood.<sup>22</sup> But these narratives do not take into account the ways that dance itself negotiates exclusivity by way of training and skill, and how choreographers may desire and seek out such ownership arrangements for the stewardship and protection of their work so that it might continue once they have passed on.

Performance studies scholars Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider have theorized how performance persists through time rather than disappears, working against trends in their field, and include dance in their respective theorizations. But, like Lambert-Beatty, they are circumspect about whether it can or should take place in a museum. Taylor's influential model of the "archive and the repertoire" contrasts the physical materials of the archive, i.e.: "texts, documents, buildings, bones," with the "ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice (i.e. spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)."<sup>23</sup> Theater scholar Schneider further elaborated the category of

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<sup>21</sup> See Lambert-Beatty, "Against Performance Art," *Artforum* 48, no. 9 (May 2010): 209-213, and "Performance Police," an unpublished paper given in the Guggenheim Museum's conference "Thinking Performance," June 18, 2010 (Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 219 n. 52). It is quoted at length in Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 129-130.

<sup>22</sup> As an example, Walker Arts Center curator Philip Bither reflected on museums acquiring performance in his recent article "Collecting," which appeared in a glossary of performance terminology. He speculated about an arrangement with his museum in which "'ownership' would not consist of exclusive rights to show, reperform, or buy or sell these rights but would instead relate to the Walker acquiring its own experience of the work it 'owned,' its own documentation, its own collective and individual memories, recorded and not. While admittedly a somewhat subversive (or anti-market) gesture, it also serves as an effort to raise the value of the performance moment, the temporal performed experience, perhaps through oral histories of participants, collaborators, and viewers; it would chart process beyond the norms of standard documentation, for example, undertaking the intellectual and emotional mapping of the performance creation and experience by artists and viewers alike. Can an institution divorce the notion of "ownership" from exclusivity?" Bither, "Collecting," *In Terms of Performance* (intermsofperformance.site, 2016), <http://intermsofperformance.site/keywords/collecting/philip-bither> (Accessed July 15, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural History in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 19. Taylor does not entirely rule out museums as a site for the

the archive, which includes the museum, to argue how it absents the bodies and practices it appears to preserve or represent.<sup>24</sup> According to Schneider, the archive *produces* the repertoire's disappearance, suppressing the ways performance "remains" through time via the "body-to-body transmission" that takes place in dance, theater, and other embodied practices.<sup>25</sup> This transmission defies patriarchal models for knowledge and even death but complicates or precludes the museum as a proper home for dance. Schneider demonstrated how certain terms have been privileged for authenticity in performance: live over recorded, singular over reproduced, and ephemeral over material—even alive over dead—and negotiating the tensions between these is central to dance's longevity but challenges historical models for art institutions. Schneider and Taylor only briefly mentioned dance as part of their respective theorizations and have only just started to contend with the museum's role in its display but help clarify issues surrounding the "preservation" of dance and offer important terms for evaluating the museum and what appears in it.

Although art museums helped Balanchine and other twentieth century dance pioneers such as modern dance giant Martha Graham and "postmodern" innovator Merce Cunningham affirm

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"embodied memory" of the repertoire but is deeply suspicious of its encounter with preservation and ownership paradigms (20 and 24).

<sup>24</sup> In general, Schneider's theorization configures the museum as a specific kind of archive, designed for housing objects, which nonetheless participates in archival logic and functions. She wrote, "the definition of performance as that which disappears, which is continually lost in time, is a definition well suited to the concerns of art history and the curatorial pressure to understand performance in the museal context where performance appeared to challenge object status and seemed to refuse the archive its privileged 'savable' original" (*Performing Remains*, 98). Schneider's comments point out how arguments like Lambert-Beatty's work alongside and through the museum's frameworks to make sure performance is lost.

<sup>25</sup> "Body-to-body transmission" is foregrounded in Schneider's important *Performing Remains* and discussed in more detail in this study's introduction. Schneider first identified it in the article preceding the book, attributing the term to archivists Mary Edsall and Catherine Johnson on a conference panel in 1997 ("Performance Remains," 101).

their high art aspirations (especially at the beginning of their careers), these institutions were not ultimately cast as capable of maintaining the embodied knowledge necessary for performing their dances in the future.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Merce Cunningham’s comprehensive “Legacy Plan” for his work after his lifetime, which built upon a model like Balanchine’s (and Graham’s) and was announced just before Cunningham’s death in 2009, contrasted the museum’s record-keeping function with the living expertise of his dancers. While the Legacy Plan charged a museum (the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis) and an archive (the New York Public Library) with retaining the physical remnants of Cunningham’s school, company, and choreographic productions, former company dancers were entrusted with the choreography.<sup>27</sup> The dancers could teach the

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<sup>26</sup> Dance’s relationship with/as entertainment has long been one of its structuring conditions and museums have leant legitimacy to concert dance choreographers throughout the twentieth century. Graham and other modern dance choreographers, in particular Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, banded together to rent full Broadway houses in the 1930s and 40s, seeking respectability for their work and themselves as expressive artists—and to distance themselves from crass commerciality. Engagements in art museums and the theaters associated with them furthered these aims, and set precedents for the next generation, which included Cunningham and the Judson Dance Theater, among others. These (pre-)tensions and economic conditions in modern dance are discussed in Don McDonagh’s *Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1970), 10-32. Anthea Kraut’s *Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016) explores the tensions between “high” and “low” art in dance throughout the text but especially in Chapter 3, 165-218. See also Appendix A.

There is significant debate about what constitutes “postmodern” dance and to which artists and works the term extends. I am using in my study the more general term “concert dance” to encompass the choreography of artists such as Graham, Cunningham, Rainer, and Forti, as distinct from the commercial dance of Broadway shows, films, and television, and collectively authored traditional and improvisational practices—although none of the three groups was/is entirely free of the other two. “Concert dance” allows for heterogeneous aesthetics and can include ballet, in particular Balanchine’s New York City Ballet, which had an important relationship with museums in its earliest years; it also subsumes the tricky questions of whether the dance that emerged in the 1950s and 60s was “modern” or “postmodern.” See also note 78.

<sup>27</sup> The Merce Cunningham Trust administers the rights to Cunningham’s dances, overseeing a licensing process that sends former company members to dance schools and companies to stage new productions of Cunningham’s work. The Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation’s archival records were transferred to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library, and the costumes and sets from the company’s past productions were acquired by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2011. Significantly, the Legacy Plan permanently disbanded the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, a departure from previous models for the continuation of a choreographer’s work that eliminated it as a custodian for Cunningham’s output. The plan’s official narrative can be found in *The Legacy Plan: A Case Study* (Cunningham Dance Foundation, Inc.: December 31, 2012)

<https://www.mercecunningham.org/mct/assets/File/The%20Legacy%20Plan%20-%20A%20Case%20Study%20FINAL.pdf> (Accessed April 1, 2013). Dancer and former Cunningham Dance Foundation employee Lizzie Feidelson provided a poetic narrative of the plan that highlighted the importance

works to new performers as well as guarantee the identity and legitimacy of future performances of Cunningham's works, drawing on extensive documentation and their own history with Cunningham's technique and creative process. Without this embodied knowledge, the museum and the archive were configured by the Legacy Plan as mere repositories for inert material.

The generation of concert dance choreographers that followed Cunningham, which includes Forti and peers such as Rainer, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, and Rudy Perez, created dance using a much less formal approach and appearance, mostly rejecting existing dance techniques and dance company structures. This has left the question about who could carry their works forward—and how—much more open. The systems devised by Balanchine, Graham, and Cunningham, which drew in part from models for classical and vernacular dance, are themselves rather new and still evolving, yet some of the next generation of choreographers have adopted or adapted these methods for retaining or “preserving” their own work. Trisha Brown, like Graham, chose younger dancers to inhabit her roles once she was no longer dancing with her company, the Trisha Brown Dance Company (TBDC), which was founded after her early, experimental work with the Judson Dance Theater in the 1960s and the collective Grand Union in the 1970s. Brown's authority was passed to TBDC's subsequent artistic directors, who oversee the repertory and have taken an interpretive approach to contemporary performances of Brown's early works from the 1960-70s.<sup>28</sup> Yvonne Rainer, meanwhile, has designated five “transmitters”

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of the company dancers, calling them “members of a dying breed,” but her article disregarded the roles of the library and the museum. “The Merce Cunningham Archives,” *n+1* 16 (Spring 2013): <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-16/essays/the-merce-cunningham-archives/> (Accessed November 6, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> The TBDC program “In Plain Site,” for example, has re-imagined and re-worked Brown's site-specific and proscenium works for museums, galleries, and other spaces, staging the iconic *Roof Piece* (1971/73), in a number of locations that are not roofs, such as New York City's High Line park and the walkways and stairwells of the Getty Center in Los Angeles. “In the New Body” used Brown's work as a jumping-off point for

to teach her iconic *Trio A* (1966), akin to the designated staggers of Cunningham's repertory.<sup>29</sup> But unlike Cunningham's Legacy Plan, which recognized dance's capacity to change over time as it passes from performer to performer, Rainer is especially concerned with the "paradoxical project" of the "exact preservation" of a single dance, her most famous work.<sup>30</sup> The difficulties and even impossibilities of this project, according to Rainer, extend to "all enterprises that attempt to preserve performance, especially the products of the 'adversarial culture' (Susan Sontag's term) of that period [the 1960s]."<sup>31</sup> Although Rainer expressed skepticism about both her endeavor with *Trio A* and the applicability of "preservation" to dance and performance as a whole, she also expressed a commitment to keep trying via her selected teachers.<sup>32</sup> Other choreographers such as Laura Dean, an associate of Brown, Rainer, and the Judson Dance Theater, stopped producing or permitting revivals and reconstructions of her dances from the 1960s and 70s, preventing their contemporary appearance and firmly assigning them to the past.<sup>33</sup>

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a number of educational initiatives at Bryn Mawr College in 2015-2016, including performances and an exhibition. <http://trishabrown.brynmawr.edu> (Accessed February 1, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> "Transmitters" is the term promoted by Sara Wookey, one of the five teachers Rainer has extensively trained and chosen to oversee new productions of *Trio A* (<http://sarawookey.com/trio-a/>, accessed July 1, 2017). The other four are Pat Catterson, Linda K. Johnson, Shelley Senter, and Emily Coates. Rainer described her process of teaching teachers as well as her changing attitudes toward the work's continued performance in "*Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation*," *Dance Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 12-18, later updated in an unpublished version provided by the artist in 2011. Subsequent citations refer to the later version.

<sup>30</sup> Rainer, "*Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation*," 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> Rainer continued: "Influenced in one way or another by John Cage's polemics against notions of "genius," and the eternal masterpiece, we gave little thought to documentation other than photography, with the result that much of the time-based work from that decade has disappeared" (7).

<sup>32</sup> "Oh, well," Rainer wrote, "when I am gone...Pat and Linda and Shelley and Emily will carry on. I have no doubt their students' *Trio A*'s will not make me roll over in my grave" (9).

<sup>33</sup> The evidence for this refusal is largely apocryphal, the subject of speculation among dancers and scholars at conferences. In May 2018, Dean's web page stated, "Laura Dean stopped choreographing and creating music scores in 2001. She stopped arranging reconstruction/restaging projects of her works in 2009 with the last performances of these projects taking place in 2012," while her Wikipedia page (updated March 3, 2018), stated "Dean does not allow the teaching of her choreography or music in classes, lectures, panels or in any



The diversity of viewpoints, approaches, and methods for continuing dance works past an artist's lifetime, especially those by the experimental group including Forti, reflects how the project is contested and still very much in development. The best materials and techniques for "preserving" dance, what constitutes its success, and even if it is possible at all are questions that remain far from resolved, in part due to the very nature of dance and choreography and pressured in particular by the dance of the twentieth century. This is telegraphed by the attitude of many of its practitioners towards museums: devoted as they have been to collecting static objects and preventing them from change, museums seemed to Cunningham, Balanchine, and other commentators wholly incompatible with dance. But without a consensus on what constitutes dance "preservation," and as the museum deals with the changes brought by contemporary art, it may offer another avenue for thinking about dance's continuation into the future, which is reflected in Forti's arrangements with MoMA for the Dance Constructions.

Like dance, visual art is similarly interested in looking back at the multidisciplinary artists of the 1950s-70s, including dancers and choreographers, which intersects with new demands for audience development and broader public engagement in art museums. In recent years, not only have exhibitions at institutions such as MoMA featured performances of historical works of dance alongside archival materials, museums have *produced* works by contemporary choreographers within the same experimental lineage as Forti, Rainer, and their colleagues.<sup>34</sup>

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way whatsoever." "Laura Dean History," <http://lauradean.com/history.html> (Accessed May 1, 2018) and "Laura Dean (choreographer)" [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura\\_Dean\\_\(choreographer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Dean_(choreographer)) (Accessed May 1, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Prominent museum exhibitions include "MOVE: Choreographing YOU" (multiple venues, 2010-2011), "On Line" (MoMA, 2010-2011), and "Dance/Draw" (multiple venues, 2011-2012). MoMA has produced large-scale dance productions in projects such as "Some Sweet Day," a series of six performances by high-profile

Institutions have also commissioned new artworks that exhibit dialogue with historical dance, all nods to the past that are firmly rooted in present-tense experience.<sup>35</sup> Owing to the nature of the dance and artworks of the 1960s, the early history of this group of choreographers in the art world, and changes in the museum over the last several decades, the art institution has thus emerged as a site for presenting, historicizing, and maintaining dance.

Using a concrete example, the convergence of Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions* with MoMA's institutional apparatus, my dissertation details the challenges and opportunities of this encounter, a co-articulation of dance and the museum. This has implications for art, dance, and museum history, while setting a precedent for institutions and practitioners alike. First, an extended theoretical introduction provides a foundation for a full discussion of Forti's works, the acquisition process, and its consequences, indicating the issues at stake and definitions up for re-evaluation as dance and the museum intersect and inform each other. Considering Forti's dances and the museum together generates a set of key conceptual problematics underlying art, dance, and institutions in general, which I lay out in detail. The section begins with the distinctions between dance and performance, which are concerned with their "allographic" versus autographic qualities, the ability of one to be reproduced but not the other. Then, the discussion outlines the properties of dance that make it uniquely unruly as a museum "object." It is both durable and ephemeral and material and immaterial, which make it difficult to define for a

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choreographers in 2012, choreographer Boris Charmatz's "Musée de la danse," which included three different dance events in 2013, and Jérôme Bel's *MoMA Dance Company* (2016), which used the museum's staff members as performers. Bishop's "Perils and Possibilities" describes several of these events and provides examples in other museums (London's Tate Modern and New York's Whitney Museum of American Art).

<sup>35</sup> Contemporary artists such as Tacita Dean and Sharon Lockhart, who work in film and photography, have turned to dance as content, while artists such as Ryan McNamara and Kelly Nipper have incorporated live performance by dancers for art fairs and galleries, despite not being dancers or choreographers themselves. Foster's *Bad New Days* provides several other related examples, 127-140.

collection. These dual properties also trouble dance's historicity as well as its orientation to change. A historical dance performed in the present is both of the present and the past, the same and always different from what came before. This significantly disrupts ideas about preservation and conservation, which are central to a museum's operations. Because of dance's existence through living people, it also complicates efforts to establish choreography as property, lessons that are critical for the acquisition of performance, which aims to secure it for an institutional owner. The final section of the introduction explores dance's complex property status, exposing the intersection of the individual and the institution as well as the possessive subject and possessed object with which this study is centrally concerned.

Then, in Part I, the dissertation returns to the first performances of the Dance Constructions, detailing the artworks and the interdisciplinary landscape of artistic experimentation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. My narrative highlights the close social and artistic ties of Forti's milieu, as well as the artist's uncertain relationship with dance as she had experienced it with her mentor Anna Halprin and as it was then understood in New York. Examining Forti's five works from 1961 through the lens of dance technique and choreography demonstrates how the Dance Constructions helped set in motion a drastic revision of the look and feel of dance in the 1960s, reorienting notions of dance composition, skill and the passage of time to make them appear much more casual, available to unskilled performers, and open to their audience. The pieces in Forti's first concert prepared the ground for "postmodern" dance as exemplified in later works by Rainer, Forti's friend and interlocutor, and other members of the Judson Dance Theater, but pursued more fully some of the claims made for their innovations.

Part I also examines the engagement of Forti's 1961 works with sculptural questions. The Dance Constructions probed constants such as gravity and shape, and suggested the relational and durational qualities of objects. As such, they anticipated and were in dialogue with key examples and theories of Minimalist sculpture, especially those by Forti's then-husband Robert Morris and the art critic Michael Fried. Yet Forti's Dance Constructions exceeded these nascent categories in dance and sculpture with wilder proposals about art and its relation to an audience, its environment, and even the artist making it, reorganizing or eliminating these hierarchies altogether. The end of Part I recounts episodes after 1961 that realized some of the more disruptive possibilities inherent in the first performances of the Dance Constructions, particularly their ability to be communicated and shared widely. These are important instances of Forti's works that threaten to be forgotten or repressed in the wake of MoMA's acquisition. Part I overall demonstrates the qualities of the works that enabled them to be considered for a museum's collection—and which may be the most transformed in the acquisition process.

Part II of the dissertation turns to the materials and procedures prepared for the acquisition of the Dance Constructions in 2015. Acquiring Forti's *Huddle* (1961), a cluster of people climbing over one another, was first proposed in 2009, around the time it appeared on the museum's second floor with *Platforms* and *Accompaniment* (both also 1961). The extended process of developing parameters and protocols for the acquisition reflected the artist's effort to carefully consider the nature and history of her work as well as its documentation and transmission. At the same time, the museum's existing objects, artifacts, and procedures set precedents for how Forti's work could be recognized within this frame. Part II provides a timeline of the process after 2009, introduces the mechanisms devised to identify seven works (not five) *as* Dance Constructions,

and situates these within the immediate context of other works in the Department of Media and Performance Art (MPA) at MoMA.

The discussion is divided into three main sections. The first one, “Dance as Art Object,” critically examines how dance operates as an object in the museum context, by way of the physical materials produced and gathered for the Dance Constructions and transferred to MoMA. Some of them were singular artifacts, acquired directly from Forti’s archive. Others were plans devised for reproducing the built and performed components of the works. Together, they drew upon precedents at the museum and in dance practice to define what the museum acquired, which determines the identity of the Dance Constructions going forward. With the characteristics of both intellectual and physical property, the Dance Constructions reflected larger shifts in the museum from collecting objects to collecting rights, exposing some of the instabilities attending this transition.

Next, “Authenticity and Provenance” details how the acquisition established the authenticity of the Dance Constructions and traced their performance histories, downplaying the significance of a comprehensive provenance tracking every movement and appearance of an artwork over the years. Narrating the process makes explicit certain authorizing mechanisms in the art context, some of which are taken for granted in other artworks, and demonstrates tools used to establish legitimacy in dance. As such this section of Part II reveals how the terms “authenticity” and “provenance” are substantially challenged by Forti’s works and reoriented by works of dance and performance in general, and situates these challenges within arguments by art historians and performance theorists.

The final section of Part II, “Continuation/Conservation,” describes three models Forti devised for how performances of the Dance Constructions are to be managed now that they are in the museum’s collection. The first, which applies to two works, does not require any special training or instruction, but rather supplies curators and performers with brief instructions and an example of a performance. The second applies to a work from 1960 and uses a model from theater, identifying a score or script that is interpreted by a new director. The third, which provides for the continuation of most of the Dance Constructions, relies on precedents in dance, along the lines of how Graham, Cunningham, and Rainer programmed the future of their choreography by identifying experts to teach the dances to new performers. Together Forti’s models supply a new route for the “preservation” of dance while proposing the “conservation” of art as something quite distinct from how it has been conceived to date.

A detailed examination of the acquisition process asks whether and how the museum can provide for Forti’s works in the long term, an opportunity and a responsibility that pressures its very structure. By taking on the Dance Constructions, the museum had to recognize qualities of the artworks that did not conform to the institution’s existing structure and methods, both because of their unique qualities as artworks and their relationships with dance. Does establishing a repository for the Dance Constructions and facilitating the production of these works in the future require modifying or re-imagining MoMA’s protocols and standards in general? Or perhaps the arrival of the Dance Constructions at MoMA in 2015 indicates this has happened already vis-à-vis post-war art more broadly? Moreover, how does MoMA’s acquisition of Forti’s Dance Constructions shed light on the museum’s entire collection? On the activities that take

place there, both behind the scenes and on view for visitors? What does it say about contemporary art production and cultural priorities more generally?

Even further, what translations and transformations happen to the artworks themselves in the process of their institutionalization? Forti had to formalize works that had at first appeared very casual, defining them so that they could be communicated to the museum and its acquisition committee. Revisiting them in the years leading up to the acquisition, Forti identified details and stated preferences that had remained unconscious, unknown, or otherwise unspecified prior to that point. The documents and materials conveying this information converted the physical facts and bodily knowledge in the Dance Constructions into other mediums, almost fifty years after the works debuted. This process begs the question of whether these works are, in fact, the Dance Constructions Forti first presented in 1960-61, as the museum claims. What do the works gain and lose by going through the process of acquisition? Can they remain the same works in MoMA's collection? Can the "real" Dance Constructions ever actually be acquired?

The final section of my study, the epilogue, addresses some of these questions by way of *Huddle*, Forti's most famous work, which has recurred the most often and in the most places since its debut in the 1960s. Forti defined *Huddle* as a Dance Construction and part of the MoMA acquisition but also something all on its own, with its continuation entrusted to the dancers who have performed it over the years, who are free to do it any time. The arrangement appears to test the capabilities and limitations of the institutional body against those of the community in which *Huddle* was born and lived most of its life. *Huddle* is highlighted throughout my narrative, with the epilogue providing as much information as possible about how Forti expressed her wishes in

the acquisition and how they might be realized. As will become clear, some things about *Huddle* can never be completely incorporated or assimilated at MoMA, but the work also cannot live outside of the museum completely as this exposure risks that it will not be remembered or performed at all in the future.

All together, the dissertation lays out the collisions and absorptions—and points toward some incommensurability—in the encounter of the Dance Constructions and MoMA. The case study interrogates some of the defining characteristics and operations of dance and choreography in order to accurately understand the effects of their appearance in visual art settings in recent years. In doing so, it contains lessons for a much broader scope of artworks, dances, and institutions, revealing a full range of implications of the intersection of the visual and performing arts in the middle of the twentieth century. For dance history, the episode highlights the role of the museum in providing a venue for and articulating certain possibilities for concert dance, in the past and especially today. As the museum offers dance a permanent home and new models for preservation, it has the potential to re-define dance in very practical ways. For art history, Forti's encounter with MoMA not only restores an important figure to histories of Minimalism, post-Minimalism, Performance Art and other movements in a high-profile setting, it helps expose a choreographic logic that underlies many other artworks that exist only in exhibition. This logic extends to artworks and practices throughout MoMA and many other museums. A choreographic model for art also supplies conservation studies with terms that conflict with its investment in stabilizing and preserving material artifacts, but at the same time Forti's example provides lessons and tools for the handling of such artworks by conservators and curators. These may be broadly applicable to other artworks and curatorial/conservation problems. Furthermore,



dance in the museum makes it perform in very literal ways, and my narrative enriches those from museum studies that endeavor to explain how the institution performs its discursive functions. Similarly, the case study's particulars feed back into interdisciplinary studies of the museum by performance theorists, providing more information about how the institution operates and how performances operate within it, and refining existing formulations. Grounded in the details of the artworks and their transfer, my study extends through and beyond these interrelated disciplines to examine not just the making of art, dance, and performance, but the making of histories and institutions as well.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Forti's arrangements with MoMA for the future of the Dance Constructions test the institution's ability to manage embodied knowledge and maintain a long-term relationship with dance's slippery object status, memory devices, and reproductive logic. The following section provides an overview of some of the practical and discursive characteristics of performance, Performance Art, dance, and choreography, in order to demonstrate some of the challenges of performance and dance as an "object" for collection and for the museum as collector. I introduce how dance complicates objecthood, subjectivity, and linear time, because its very existence depends on human bodies and the passage of knowledge between them. These conditions produce an orientation to change and longevity as well as expectations for preservation and conservation quite different from most visual art. Dance also demands distinct mechanisms to establish it as property, containing complications that destabilize its ownership altogether. The conceptual problematics outlined here are fundamental to my examination of how the Dance Constructions articulated dance, choreography, art objects, and the art context in 1960-61, and how the acquisition of the works by MoMA articulates them today, preparing us to recognize how these evolutions represent changes in the dance, art, and museum landscapes more broadly. Theorists are newly wrestling with how to accommodate performance in art historical narratives, and this introduction brings together some of the practical and discursive terms with which the encounter of dance and the museum can begin to be theorized.

### **Dance versus performance**

One of the questions prompted by the recent appearance of dance in museums is its relation to performance, even “Performance Art.” The general notions of “performance” and “the performative” have been applied to a broad array of activities, some of them far removed from art, including acts of language, expression of identity in an everyday context, carrying out behaviors of regular life, among other things. In the art context, these terms seem to cover almost as many different activities. For example, in the pedagogical handbook *Critical Terms for Art History*, one of performance’s key art historians Kristine Stiles noted that “performance” applies to an artist enacting a situation for an audience, often a commentary about the process of making art, as well as to how materials behave, relevant to the Conceptual Art, Process Art, installation, and environments created in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>36</sup> Such a capacious definition accounts for the liberal use and understanding of “performance” to describe an artwork in which a person, an artist or a spectator, is at the center of its operations and experience. In art history in general and in Stiles’s brief article in particular, dance and choreography are largely left out of the genealogy, its terms understood as the same as “performance” in the art context or irrelevant to it.<sup>37</sup>

Stiles related developments in the visual arts to the performing arts by way of philosopher Nelson Goodman, who categorized works deriving from a score or script, such as music or theater, as “allographic,” contrasting them with “autographic” forms, which include mainly

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<sup>36</sup> Kristine Stiles, “Performance,” in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 75-97; in particular 75-76 and 84-85.

<sup>37</sup> RoseLee Goldberg’s survey of performance, considered a definitive resource, includes dance (largely American and European) in the history of visual art performance, but does not differentiate its concerns or methods from the other movements it describes. Goldberg, *Performance Art from Futurism to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988). Foster’s more recent *Bad New Days* identifies dance as simply a subset of the performance taking place in museums in recent years (127, also 178 n.1).

painting and carved sculpture.<sup>38</sup> Critically, Goodman's distinction rested on the notions of originals and copies: an art such as painting is autographic because "the distinction between the original and a forgery of it is significant."<sup>39</sup> Music, on the other hand, he argued, can be repeated many times over without the status, identity, or originality of that work coming into crisis. "Performance Art," first identified as such in print by *Rolling Stone* writer Thomas Albright in 1970, refers to an artist executing an action for an audience (like shooting a blank from a gun or urinating into a basin), often relying heavily on the gallery, museum, or discursive context, such as the news media, to be legible as art.<sup>40</sup> This art, using Goodman's classifications, might be seen as autographic, insofar as it originates in and needs the body of the artist, the singular site and occasion for the artwork, and the unique capture by the camera to create meaning. The same action performed by someone else, somewhere else, at some other time, would be a fake or forgery.

By contrast, dance, while tied to an individual person's body like painting and sculpture, is repeatable like music. That is, dance has both autographic and allographic aspects, resistant to identification as one or the other, and unsettling the terms of "original" and "copy" altogether.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Stiles, 84.

<sup>39</sup> Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), 113.

<sup>40</sup> For Albright, Performance Art was a subset of "Process art," dealing with physical forces and change: it was "an extension of art into theater, often involving more or less set programs performed at specified times and places before an audience." Thomas Albright, "Media Art: Can a Hot Dog Ever be More Than Just a Hot Dog?" *Rolling Stone* (June 24, 1971), accessed online: <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/art-19710624> (Accessed March 1, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Goodman struggled with dance's essential features: this section of his book is confusing and inconclusive, identifying dance's "visual" (like painting) yet "temporal" (like music) qualities, and testing them against forms of dance notation (211-218). The authors of "The Identity Crisis in Dance" similarly struggled to apply Goodman's terms while registering that they could be significantly altered by the developments in dance in the middle of the twentieth century initiated by Forti's immediate precursors and peers. Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge, "The Identity Crisis in Dance," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 129-139.

Is, for example, the 2009 performance of Rainer's 1966 *Trio A* at MoMA a copy of its original performance? Or is it the original dance? These are complications many models for modern art museums are not prepared to accommodate. The discourse of the original and the copy, as art historian Rosalind put it, remains pervasive in discussions of artistic quality, authenticity, and even genius, forming the basis for much dance and art criticism as well as the museum and its collections—but dance and choreography ultimately exceed or circumvent evaluation by these criteria.<sup>42</sup> A study of dance in the museum allows for an investigation of the combination of the autographic and the allographic in the choreographic, and a valuable set of terms for the museum's evolving collection and practices.

### **Object status of dance and choreography**

With the qualities of a thing and an action, “dance” is both a noun and a verb, with a specific materiality that is not constantly present yet retains coherence, integrity, and consistency through time. Choreography organizes activity, often very skilled activity, outside of regular quotidian behavior, providing it some stability or fixity. As choreography is rehearsed and performed, both the dancing it permits/dictates and the choreography itself become more like an object: defined, circumscribed, and solidified.<sup>43</sup> However, because the dancing and the choreography take place

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<sup>42</sup> Krauss argued that “the theme of originality, encompassing as it does notions of authenticity, originals, and origins, is the shared discursive practice of the museum, the historian, and the maker of art.” This “discourse of the original” represses its opposite, repetition, and the related negative terms, “multiple” and “fraudulent,” and is central to claims for modern art and the avant-garde. “The Originality of the Avant-Garde” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 162.

<sup>43</sup> Several important dance theorists configure dance/dancing as directed or constrained by choreography, drawing from Michel Foucault's disciplinary framework(s). Starting from the “graphy” in the word, dance historian and theorist Susan Foster's foundational text *Reading Dancing* used a literary model to characterize choreography as a type of bodily writing, which offers conventions including syntax and vocabulary that organize meaning. Foster's theorization, fundamental to the field of dance studies, has some limitations, particularly in the ways it can elide dance's specific material conditions and operations, which my study of Forti aims to redress. Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986).

as fleeting events, neither ever fully arrives or resolves into a final form. Moving in and out of material existence, by way of and through the bodies of individual performers, each performance of choreography is its own manifestation of (a) dance. This intermittent, cyclical operation—which also constitutes dance’s ontology—troubles notions of permanence and ephemerality in addition to the original and the copy. Choreography can be executed many times without losing its identity or uniqueness (or lack thereof). In fact, rather than compromise originality, repetition helps to secure choreography’s identity insofar as the work becomes more firmly lodged in dancers’ memories and muscle memories as it is rehearsed. The bodies of specific dancers, the vehicle through which a dance or choreography is expressed, do not necessarily determine the identity of that dance, unlike the “medium” or material of other art objects. If one dancer becomes injured, for example, in many cases another can learn the part and replace her. As dance travels from person to person and lasts through time, it refuses the singular, stable materiality historically prized by museums and evaluated by art history. Uniting the seemingly irreconcilable opposites of material and immaterial, single and multiple, ephemeral and durable in the bodies of living people, dance also complicates efforts to determine the full scope of its form and composition, heretofore a requirement for an art object entering a market or an institutional collection. Defining the objecthood of the Dance Constructions was thus a central project of the acquisition by MoMA.

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Foster’s model is not as totalizing as some others, such as that offered by dance theorist André Lepecki in “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” a brief article that defines choreography as “a mechanism that simultaneously distributes and organizes dance’s relationship to perception and signification,” drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s reading of Foucault in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Lepecki’s scheme redeems deeply negative readings of choreography in which dance can only be “liberated” through improvisational dance forms (movement without set choreography), which is a recurrent theme in dance studies. But Lepecki’s framework has its own limitations, especially insofar as it opens the door to describing almost anything as “choreography.” Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 51 no. 2 (T194) Summer 2007: 119-123.

## **Historical status of choreography and dance**

As choreography unites an ephemeral experience with a durable set of operations, dance destabilizes distinctions between the past and the present, and even between individual subjects, which are crucial identifiers for traditional models of the art museum. Dance's live address prioritizes the encounter between performer and audience, seeming to exist wholly in the present moment. But choreography, in addition to organizing the body and setting it in motion, is a technology for memory, retaining and activating traces of past performances. Every previous performance of a dance informs the new one, which is both a unique encounter and site for all its previous iterations, an expression of its own history. A dance happening now is a contemporary instance of that dance and a window into what the dance looked like and felt like previously: last week, last year, fifty years ago. This history might not even belong to the personal experience of the individual performer, if she has learned the dance from another dancer—who may have herself learned it from someone else, handing choreography down through a long chain.

In this way, choreography organizes people as well as the body, synchronizing subjects so that knowledge and memories can be shared between them. Within the structure of “body-to-body transmission,” as theater scholar Rebecca Schneider termed it, movement and affect pass from one body to another through discipline, skill, and in-person contact. This connects multiple dancers, sometimes several generations of them, to the preferences and physical idiosyncrasies of a single person, such as the charismatic concert dance pioneers Graham, Cunningham, or Rainer. Choreography expands knowledge beyond a creator and retains it beyond her individual memory, giving it more places to reside and multiple opportunities to be recalled. This disrupts chronological narratives focused on the discrete, independent creations of an individual: a single

person's dance may properly belong to the bodies of many different people, over long periods of time. It can return by way of many different people, distinct from but also the same as the dance that came before (because it is embodied differently but its movements are the same). An art institution's spatio-temporal ordering and physical sequencing generally curtail the reappearances of artworks, with dates fixed to a single year or range, and attributions limited to specific named subjects. With dance pressuring the status of the artwork as a strictly historical thing, and as choreography is designed to pass a work from person to person, dance in the museum threatens to scramble the institution's temporal and social order.

### **Dance's orientation to change and methods of preservation**

The "body-to-body transmission" at the heart of dance produces a stronger relationship between something and its prior instantiations than the framework of original and copy, rattling models of modern art and the art museum that rely on these measures of quality and authenticity. The passage of dance between people makes change one of dance's fundamental properties, rendering impossible the retrieval or restoration of a secure original *as well as* its forgery or reproduction. Because it is fleeting, a dance's initial performances cannot be recovered, and its returns are never exact: as it passes from body to body, a dance is altered by the person doing it. The intersection of the singular subject with choreography's bodily instructions in a specific context at a specific moment in time both gives it special interest, and enables the continued performance of a dance over time, even long periods of time. A dancer can take up and incorporate a role years after it first debuted, thanks to her training and the transmission of the choreography from someone else who inhabited it. But in the course of remembering and executing choreography on her own body, the dancer inevitably changes the work itself. The



changes that make the continuation of the dance possible also make arguments about the superiority of an “original” dance and the insufficiency of subsequent “copies” inconsistent and difficult to sustain, although many have tried. A latter-day realization of a historical dance, for example, may be taken as a reliable production, a glorious example of a company and a choreographer in their prime, or fall somewhere in between a poor imitation and a different work altogether, depending on the adjudicator.<sup>44</sup> The stable, unchanging original and the derivative, secondary copy are terms that simply do not apply as they do to autographic forms. Similarly, dance is never duplicated or replicated but rather created anew in each performance, and Forti’s *Dance Constructions* emphasized this choreographic feature.

The vagaries of the individual subject (including the choreographer as she revisits her own work) cause a dance to “drift” and change over time, sometimes altering it beyond recognition.<sup>45</sup>

Practitioners and scholars have variously resisted these changes, acknowledged them as a part of the natural course of things, and encouraged them—particularly as they approach the thorny

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<sup>44</sup> In 1975 *New York Times* critic Anna Kisselgoff went so far as to suggest that four international ballet stars had not only transformed José Limón’s *Moor’s Pavane* (1949), a canonical modern dance work, when they revisited it after his death—but had also cheapened the work’s ideals. Kisselgoff’s review held tight to how the critic understood Limón’s intentions, calling the version she saw a “travesty” and asking “whether ballet stars with no previous training in any modern dance technique and no apparent conviction in the ideology that sparked the revolution of modern dance against ballet should perform (perhaps destroy) such works as *The Moor’s Pavane*.” Not just a bad rendition of the work, these performers were attacking and eliminating the legacy Limón had left behind. Anna Kisselgoff, “When Ballet Dancers Stumble into Modern Dance,” *New York Times* (August 24, 1975), 91, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Ann Hutchinson Guest, one of the developers of dance notation in the US, was alarmed to find out that custodians of Balanchine’s choreography were changing it: “working from their own notes, [they] admit—so we hear—there are passages they don’t remember and have to make up, thus small changes are occurring [...] *But in time the drift inevitably sets in* [...] What then? Will the label ‘Choreography by Balanchine’ still be accurate?” Guest, “And the Choreography is By....” *Dance Now* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2002/03): 43, emphasis mine. Yvonne Rainer has reported that immediately following the creation of *Trio A*, she did not keep track of who was learning it and who was teaching it, but eventually, “I finally met a *Trio A* I didn’t like. It was fourth or fifth generation, and I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was all but unrecognizable” (Rainer, “*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” 6).

questions of “preserving” dance. Stopping time is simply impossible for dance, unless it becomes something else, such as a recording or photograph. So is exact repetition: from one performance to the next modifications and adjustments will always be made, and these continue as dances are passed down from one dancer to another.<sup>46</sup> But as twentieth-century concert dance proposed new definitions for “genius,” “quality,” and “authenticity” in dance (partially in relation to models for the twentieth-century visual artist), it is now struggling with questions of if and how to try to hang on to it, as presented in the prologue to the dissertation.<sup>47</sup> The desire for repeat performances conflicts with dance’s evanescence and inherent resistance to repetition as such, heightening the drama around questions of its long-term conservation. Initial experiments in continuing the dances of the past rely primarily on documenting a dance and then re-staging it from that documentation, which almost always takes place in consultation with a dancer involved in the dance’s earlier performances. Although the most effective methods and the utility of the project of dance preservation are issues that remain unresolved, this model for sustaining dance was a key resource as Forti prepared her works for the acquisition by MoMA.

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<sup>46</sup> Dance’s repetitions and orientation to change undermines the “re-” terms used to characterize recent reappearances of historical performances in the art context: reconstructions, re-performances, reenactments, and re-dos, among others. These performance re-visitations tend to highlight the problem of or even contain the aspiration for exactitude in repetition, precision that is both a tacit goal and always foreclosed in dance, a problematic it works through as a baseline condition. Martha Buskirk, Amelia Jones, and Caroline A. Jones, “The Year in ‘Re-,” *Artforum* 52, no. 4 (December 2013). <https://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201310&id=44068> (accessed January 15, 2014). See also Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 29; also 3 and 187 n. 1.

In most dance scholarship “reconstruction” or “reenactment” emphasizes the act of revisiting a work, foregrounding the passage of time and the transfer of knowledge between subjects—and the dance’s evolution in the process. In fact, dance theorists typically do not apply these “re-” terms *unless* a significant transformation of the production, choreography, and/or performance has taken place. See, for example, Mark Franko, “Repeatability, Reconstruction, and Beyond,” *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 1989): 56-74, and André Lepecki, “The Body as Archive: Will to Reenact and the Afterlives of Dances,” in *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 115-142.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Copeland’s polemic “Death of the Choreographer” posited that the disappearance of the single choreographer-as-genius in dance criticism and scholarship was finalized with the actual deaths of dance giants Pina Bauch and Merce Cunningham in 2009, marking for Copeland the end of an era. In Alexandra Kolb, ed. *Dance and Politics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 39-65.

Methods of documenting dance vary, and each has its relative merits and drawbacks, which Forti also considered as she made plans for the Dance Constructions. Professional guidelines directed at movement practitioners as well as dance company directors, historians, and other stakeholders all stress the importance of film and video for documenting dance.<sup>48</sup> In fact, a librarian assessing the field in 1999 emphasized how video recording is frequently understood *as* preservation of dance or its primary component: “people in the dance world speak of the need to preserve *dance, the dance, or a choreographic work*. Frequently, this means recording a performance in some fashion.”<sup>49</sup> Less commonly, dances are recorded in one of a few systems of dance notation, in which symbols convey the movement of the limbs, head, and torso as they coordinate with music. The primary system used in the United States is Labanotation, which requires specialists to translate a dance into notation and then to stage it again from the score, both laborious and costly.<sup>50</sup> Video recordings and dance notation complement choreography’s own devices for recall and repetition, termed “unrecorded evidence” by one dance preservation handbook, “the

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<sup>48</sup> The Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC), comprised of the major repositories for dance materials in the US, has produced guides for practitioners, including dance company administrators: “Beyond Memory: Preserving the Documents of Our Dance Heritage” (1994, rev. 2000), and “Documenting Dance: A Practical Guide” (2006). These seek to persuade dancers and dance companies to make efforts toward preserving their work, while providing basic definitions, best practices, and practical resources <http://danceheritage.org/publications.html> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Catherine J. Johnson, “Preservation,” in Catherine J. Johnson and Allegra Fuller Snyder, *Securing Our Dance Heritage: Issues in the Documentation and Preservation of Dance* (Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), July 1999), 28 (emphasis in original). Johnson aimed to differentiate between recording the dance and preserving the physical medium in which it was recorded: “educational efforts have tried to make it clear that preserving a work on videotape requires an ongoing commitment to the physical preservation of the tape,” with the tendency of celluloid, magnetic tape, and digital formats to degrade over time presenting additional challenges to maintaining dance over the long term.

<sup>50</sup> Benesh Movement Notation is used primarily in Great Britain in the Royal Academy of Dance ballet system, and Eshkol-Wachmann Movement Notation (EWMN) was developed and used by Noa Eshkol, an Israeli dance artist and theorist (1924-2007). See Snyder, “Documentation,” *Securing Our Dance Heritage*, 10, Yeoh 241-242, and Alison D’Amato, “Mobilizing the Score: Generative Choreographic Structures, 1960-Present” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), 32-33.

body memory that participants carry with them after rehearsals and performances.”<sup>51</sup> Held by specific subjects with specific skills, this knowledge is “less stable, is dependent upon live interactive sessions, and is harder to disseminate” than written accounts, notation systems, photographs, and videotapes, but generally has more authority than other sources.<sup>52</sup>

This embodied knowledge allows dance to be performed many times over and remain the same work, and makes subjects interchangeable, with one taking on the role of another if needed. Such surrogation can extend to the “original” artist if she is not available, after she is no longer dancing, and/or once she has passed on.<sup>53</sup> It is common practice for a choreographer, under certain circumstances, to deputize a rehearsal director or *repétiteur*, usually an assistant or senior company member, to teach dances, supervise practice runs, and even make decisions about blocking and staging in the choreographer’s absence.<sup>54</sup> This proxy ensures the performance of the choreographer’s repertory to certain standards and guarantees the production. Dance produced under these circumstances, without the direction of the choreographer herself, is nonetheless considered the artist’s work, and its genuine qualities are not in question. With this arrangement, the body-to-body transmission that enables a dance to circulate from person to person also enables the circulation of a singular subject, the choreographer. The plans for the future of Balanchine’s, Graham’s, Cunningham’s, Rainer’s—and now Forti’s—work deploy proxies in this way to manage their choreography’s ongoing integrity after their deaths. The task

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<sup>51</sup> DHC, “Documenting Dance,” 17-19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Martha Graham famously wrote, “a dancer, more than any other human being, dies two deaths.” The first takes place when her body will no longer perform what she demands of it, and the second when she actually dies. *Blood Memory: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 238.

<sup>54</sup> The French term is primarily used for opera and ballet, and occasionally theater.

of the proxy is different than prohibiting the dances from change (as a dance will necessarily change in each performance), but the precise standards of its success have been difficult to define. Without official best practices or professional guidelines (and outside of the paradigm of the original and the copy), the artist's surrogates, performers, audiences, and critics evaluate the efficacy and quality of a work from the past by drawing variously on their memories of performances, the details provided by the choreographer in a dance's documentation, and their present-day experience in the theater, which is different in each new manifestation for an audience.<sup>55</sup>

### **Art's orientation to change and methods of conservation**

In the art museum, on the other hand, conservators are trained and professionalized to ensure that an object remains essentially unchanged over time, using increasingly sophisticated technologies and metrics. Conservation is at the core of a museum's functions: as a keeper of cultural heritage, the museum maintains artworks and other artifacts from the past in order to be able to continue their presence for a public in the present and the future. Conservation presumes that each museum object is uniquely expressive of an artist's intention and/or is culturally or historically representative, and that these qualities reside in its unique materiality. Maintaining this materiality via conservation enables it to continue to be a vehicle for these meanings in the

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<sup>55</sup> The commentary about these efforts often distinguishes interpretations in the "spirit" of a choreographer rather than the "letter" of what was left behind, or remarks on how "alive" a production or company appears to be. Occasionally some chafe against nostalgia for an "original": considering the fate of Merce Cunningham's soon-to-be disbanded dance company in 2011, dance critic Claudia La Rocco asked, "We don't last. Why do we think art has to?" She continued, "Why do we even want it to last? What is that all about? So we can engage in the same endless, awful, predictable debate about whether such-and-such a dance was better 30 years ago, how so-and-so dancers just don't get what the work should be? (Like who the hell are we to say that shit and think it means *anything?*)" "A Merce Cunningham Dance Company Quickie (with an extended Trisha Brown Parenthetical)," *The Brooklyn Rail*, April 5, 2011.

future.<sup>56</sup> For example, if a painting becomes damaged, it must be restored to retain its original character and suppress the effect of time. Conservators concede that an artwork's original appearance can be difficult to identify if the object is very old or has passed through many hands, but conservation as a field generally configures the original as knowable and achievable under the best circumstances. To this end, sensitive instruments in complex laboratories are devoted to understanding art (and other) materials in every way possible. By definition *conservative*, this approach prioritizes the notion of a work of art as a physical fact produced by skilled and/or creative artisans and modern artists but has been significantly challenged or reoriented by the artworks and practices of contemporary art since the 1950s—and is reoriented altogether by dance in the museum.

With their enlarged scale, ephemeral materials, and orientation to ideas over objects, works in categories such as Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Land Art, Media Art, Process Art, and Performance Art, have introduced different requirements for conservation, challenging the field's core ethics. Glenn Wharton, former MoMA conservator, noted in a brief article how the “zeal to preserve conflicts with artists who want their work to deteriorate or who assign greater value to a concept than its material manifestation.”<sup>57</sup> Giovanni Anselmo's *Untitled (Sculpture that Eats)* from 1968, for example, consists of lettuce tied between two granite blocks, an assembly that must be “fed” as the lettuce dries out and threatens to send a block crashing to the floor. The *Arte*

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<sup>56</sup> Contemporary art conservator Glenn Wharton summarized the “preservation ethic” and other conservation principles as follows: “the cultural significance of fine arts most typically resides in the conceptual intention of the artist. Thus an aim of fine arts conservation is to preserve the artist's intent by inhibiting physical change.” Glenn Wharton, “The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art,” in Bruce Altshuler, ed. *Collecting the New* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 163-164.

<sup>57</sup> Wharton, 164.

*Povera* sculpture system derives its meaning from its changing states rather than an essential and stable identity, and the conservator facilitates instead of inhibits this change.<sup>58</sup> Letting artworks transform, disintegrate, or disappear undermines the traditional conservation goal of stopping or slowing down time, while re-making elements blurs the distinction between the role of the artist and the museum. Dance always contains transformation, disintegration, and disappearance, and arresting these operations transforms dance into something else, such as a document. Likewise it is re-made every time it is performed: without an original object, it cannot be preserved or conserved, nor even reproduced. But if dance is not “reproduced,” is it simply *produced*? Is this something the museum is familiar with and equipped to do?

Indeed, lessons from dance—and from the Dance Constructions at MoMA—may prove useful to the museum as it adapts conservation’s central mandates to the evolving demands of contemporary art. In recent years conservation practice has become a more collaborative effort between artists, curators, researchers, and other specialists, sometimes from far outside art and institutions. In general the museum has retrenched its commitment to an artist as the original source, relying on ever more detailed questionnaires, interviews, recordings, and databases to determine “intent” and secure the legitimacy of whether and how a work is preserved.<sup>59</sup> These

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<sup>58</sup> This artwork is in the collection of the Centre Pompidou: <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/id/c79nbL/rpEgrx/en> (Accessed March 1, 2017). Notes on this web page suggest that the object is a reproduction: as such, not only is the lettuce ephemeral but the “original” granite is too.

<sup>59</sup> Hanna B. Hölling’s recent book details many of these procedures and synthesizes much of the literature dedicated to the conservation of contemporary art in unconventional or “variable” media: *Paik’s Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). Notable sources include: Alain Depocas, John Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones, eds. *The Variable Media Approach: Permanence through Change* (New York and Montreal: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, Technology, 2003); Ijesbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, eds. *Modern Art: Who Cares?* (London: Archetype Publications, 2005, orig. 1999); and, Matthew Gale, ed. *Tate Papers No. 8, Inherent Vice: The Replica and its Implications in Modern Sculpture* (Autumn 2007), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/08> (Accessed July 22, 2011).

devices reassure the museum of an artwork's authorship and singular value, its autographic qualities, in the face of its evolution, ephemerality, and iterability, conditions uniquely negotiated by dance. As contemporary art welcomes change, embodiment, and other fleeting conditions, dance's strategies for maintaining quality and legitimacy over time could provide essential tools for the "conservation" of additional works in the museum's collection. In fact, MoMA's willingness to collect works of contemporary art—and Forti's works in particular—may indicate that some of dance's techniques are already in use at the museum, in conservation and beyond.

### **Dance as property**

Finally, dance's embodiment and manifestation by living human subjects might seem to disqualify its status as property, but efforts have been made to secure its ownership via a few different arrangements, with MoMA's acquisition of the Dance Constructions providing yet another alternative. Introducing her study of choreographic copyright, one of the mechanisms used to assert ownership over dance, historian and scholar Anthea Kraut explained, "because it is an embodied form, the commodification of dance can feel unseemly, not so far afield from practices like prostitution, surrogacy, and the sale of human organs."<sup>60</sup> In part this is because the question of who "owns" a dance seems obvious: if a dancer made up her dance, and dances her dance, it is inseparable from her—it is part of her body and she owns it. Even if she works with other people, such as in a dance company, the dancers witness her inventing the dance, and receive it from her directly, reinforcing the dance as hers. Still, a number of conditions can keep a choreographer from full ownership of her work, including its commission by a corporate entity or collaborative authorship with dancers and other contributors. More fundamentally, Kraut has

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<sup>60</sup> Kraut, 24.



shown how ownership is based on the seventeenth-century Lockean idea of “possessive individualism,” autonomy and self-possession that rely on the ability to “abstract or transcend” the body, which dance cannot.<sup>61</sup> Dance is too tightly attached to a specific body to make a subject into a theoretical, legal body; or, to make a dance’s specific corporeal materiality into alienable property.<sup>62</sup> Property is by definition alienable, separate from the person who owns it, an object distinct from a subject. Dance’s very nature prevents it from being fully possessed by an individual or fully alienated as an independent thing, generally a pre-requisite for an artwork ready for museum acquisition.<sup>63</sup>

In the face of these conditions, licensing dance through contracts and establishing copyright for choreography have emerged as ways to assert ownership over dance as property, although they each have limitations. Most commonly, choreographers make arrangements for the performance of their works through short-term contracts, a model like the licensing of music. The contract will outline very specific circumstances under which a dance can be performed, once the choreographer has agreed that a company or group has the ability to learn the work. Usually the choreographer or a trusted representative teaches the choreography, and it is performed during a select period of time, such as two years or during a specific engagement at a specific venue. The

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<sup>61</sup> Of course this autonomy and self-possession that transcends the body—at the base of Western thought and society—were the rights of white, male bodies, at stake in any discussion of the contemporary subject but particularly at issue in Kraut’s study of choreographic copyright. Her case studies are focused on how race and gender made securing property rights for dance especially challenging. Kraut, 16-20.

<sup>62</sup> I.e.: the legal body of the “bourgeois political sphere” (Jürgen Habermas) is distinct from an actual body: “the bodiliness of dance has unquestionably complicated dance-makers’ legal claims to possessive individualism, which simultaneously hinges on and disavows the subject’s corporeality” (Kraut, 20).

<sup>63</sup> The Museum of Modern Art’s Collections Management Policy (CMP) states that MoMA will consider “only works for which legal title can be firmly established” for acquisition (“Acquisitions,” 2). It also declares the museum’s commitment to track the provenance of proposed acquisitions and check them against an international database of stolen property, identifying a policy of collecting artworks than can be legally relinquished and lawfully owned (“Acquisitions,” 3 and “Provenance,” 4).

contract allows the artist to retain a great deal of artistic control, giving her broad rights to supervise, change, and disallow productions of the work if certain standards are not met—but these require the active participation of the choreographer, limiting the utility of the contract for a long-term arrangement.<sup>64</sup> As an alternative, since the 1950s copyright law has been used to alienate dance as possessable property and to secure additional rights for its author. Copyright is designed for property that is specifically not tangible, applying the terms of real (tangible) property to intellectual property, which requires that it be “fixed” in some kind of medium: a book, a score, or a recording, for example.<sup>65</sup> Under this system of ownership, which was firmly in place in 1978, a dance is securely defined and can be transferred to another owner or caretaker, giving it greater parity with other arts at least in theory.<sup>66</sup> Most importantly, according to Kraut, copyright for dance protects the authoring subject, who is at risk of dispersal through the unregulated spread of her choreography, and at risk of objectification once her embodied labor enters into a market.<sup>67</sup> Copyright’s protection consolidates the dance as an artwork and the choreographer as an author, a separation of subject and object that dance cannot achieve on its own. A similar separation was achieved in MoMA’s acquisition of the Dance Constructions,

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<sup>64</sup> Barbara A. Singer’s article “In Search of Adequate Protection for Choreographic Works: Legislative and Judicial Alternatives vs. The Custom of the Dance Community,” compares how contracts, copyright, and the dance world’s conventions establish and enforce ownership in dance, concluding that “customary law” provided superior protection for choreography at the time of the article’s writing. *University of Miami Law Review* 38, No. 2 (1984): 287-319.

<sup>65</sup> The growing acceptance of dance notation systems such as Labanotation, discussed in greater detail in Part II of this study, contributed to the success of Hanya Holm’s copyright for the Broadway choreography of *Kiss Me Kate* (1948) in 1952, the first successful registration of copyright for dance in the United States; dance achieved recognition as its own copyright category in 1976 (Kraut, xi-xiii).

<sup>66</sup> According to dance librarian Allegra Fuller Snyder, “the importance of [copyright] went far beyond the copyright process. It marked the first time that dance was acknowledged as a separate phenomenon that could be described in its own terms, with its own symbol system.” “Documentation,” *Securing our Dance Heritage*, 7.

<sup>67</sup> “Copyright’s value for choreographers,” as Kraut put it, “lay in the way it enabled them to position themselves as possessive individuals and rights-bearing subjects rather than as commodities and objects of exchange” (xiii).

with the museum serving as another mechanism for establishing the objecthood of Forti's works and their ownership. Moreover, both the museum and copyright extend an artwork's legal status as property past an artist's lifetime: the 1976 Copyright Act not only gave dance its own category under copyright law, it also extended copyright in general past an artist's life for fifty years (later amended to seventy).<sup>68</sup> The museum, with its traditions as a custodian for physical (real) property, might even be able to provide a home for dance that is permanent.

But at the same time that a museum acquisition supplies another route for an artist and a dance to achieve the protections that property allows, copyright's limitations for dance may also extend to Forti's arrangements with MoMA, and even to other works in the museum's collection. The translation of a dance for the purposes of securing its copyright permits the passage of the rights to a work from one owner to another, e.g. an individual or trust, but the process raises questions about whether the new rights holder actually owns the work. A film, dance notation, or other record/representation of a dance may relay it for posterity and be itself especially precious historically or materially, but it is not ultimately the dance, which is a live experience.<sup>69</sup> In dance the material *is* the dancer, even when choreography (itself a technology for the circulation and control of bodily ideas, and theoretically immaterial) is shared between people, it is still

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<sup>68</sup> Kraut, 221. This development in copyright has been characterized by some legal scholars as both ghostly and "undead"—a condition actualized by dance, in which a subject already lingers in other bodies. Kraut quoted Paul K. Saint-Amour's *The Copyrights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 230-231.

<sup>69</sup> As Kraut explained, "copyright law's requirement that a work 'be fixed in any tangible medium of expression' before it can be eligible for protection [...] insists on something other than embodiment" (12, quoting the US Copyright Code). She continued, "the discrepancies between the medium of creation and the medium of fixity generate ambiguity about what exactly is being protected. Does a copyright on a choreographic score grant exclusive rights to performances of the choreography or only to publications of the score? Do photographs of a protected choreographic work constitute reproductions of the choreography or are they separate works? [...] Such problems exist more acutely for choreography than they do for forms that are (more or less) fixed and tangible in the first instance" (12).

manifested by individual subjects via their bodies.<sup>70</sup> Dance is not not-material: choreography doesn't have an existence *except* on or through individual bodies until it becomes something else, such as a record of a performance on video. As such, copyright demonstrates how converting dance into something that can be "owned" may transform its essential nature, also a risk of MoMA's acquisition of the Dance Constructions.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, guaranteeing that a rights-holder actually owns a dance has at times been difficult. Its ephemeral and embodied nature can create stark divides between those who possess the rights to a dance and those who physically possess it in their bodies. In the most famous contestation of choreographic copyright, the long battle over modern dance giant Martha Graham's estate in the early 2000s, "world-class dancers at the peak of their ability had no legal right to perform work they could not help but know," as dance writer Lizzie Feidelson described the situation after the choreographer's death.<sup>72</sup> The Graham company dancers, trained to embody Graham's dances,

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<sup>70</sup> Using the terms of another dance theorist, Kraut wrote: "from a certain angle, 'choreographic copyright' is little more than choreography writ large." She continued, "[choreography] serves as a bridge between the body and the law, whose relationship is always one of friction. Even choreography that varies with each performance functions as a 'quasi-legal agreement,' a set of 'rules' and 'limitations' that governs how dancers interact with one another and with audience members and that creates a 'communal togetherness' for the duration of a performance" (13).

<sup>71</sup> Copyright itself reformats dance to fit original-copy terms, striking at the heart of dance's ontology: inherent in the term "copyright" is the ability and the right to make a copy of an original work. Developed for allographic forms such as literary texts, musical scores, and theater scripts, the application of copyright to dance, which has autographic elements, raises the specter of forgery and fraud in the absence of a secure original and invents duplicates for something that cannot be copied exactly.

Early modern dance choreographer Loïe Fuller unsuccessfully applied for copyright in 1892 for her famous (and widely copied) "Serpentine Dance." About the application, which used words to describe the dance, Kraut wrote, "that this description reads like instructions for re-creating the solo dance, complete with directions for stage lighting, indicates the paradoxes of copyright; the very act of protecting the work could be a vehicle for its reproduction" (55). Kraut's argument, invested in Fuller's difficulties, does not press this point further to explain how the achievement or even assertion of copyright at the same time makes an "original" out of something that otherwise resists the status of an original.

<sup>72</sup> Lizzie Feidelson, "The Merce Cunningham Archives," *n+1* 16 (Spring 2013): <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-16/essays/the-merce-cunningham-archives/> (Accessed November 6, 2013).

did not hold the rights for the choreography and therefore could not officially perform the dances. Simultaneously, the rights holder who owned the dances did not have the skills to perform them or train new dancers to perform them. Without both parties working together, the dances could not appear for audiences and threatened to disappear altogether. Ideally an heir or trust owns the rights to a dance and works harmoniously with a dance company or foundation that can see to the dance's quality over time; both parts are necessary for the continuation of the work.<sup>73</sup> In dance, the individuals bringing the artwork to life are as much a part of that work's integrity and continued life as its property status, creating complications that are even more urgent once the originating artist dies and can no longer oversee the dancers and the production herself. If the Dance Constructions reveal that choreographic works are pervasive throughout the museum, similar conflicts may also become increasingly apparent, shedding light on limits to a museum's ownership.

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<sup>73</sup> Legal scholar Francis Yeoh recently reviewed several major arrangements for choreographic legacy in the twentieth century, including Graham's, and concluded, "qualifying for copyright status is crucial to the management of a dance legacy" (230). Yet the examples in the brief study, as well as Kraut's work on the shortcomings of copyright for a number of examples in dance, i.e.: its *lack* of security, indicate how this mechanism is not foolproof.

Feidelson's article provided an example of the system's failure in the lower-profile case of Erick Hawkins: "Hawkins, who died in 1994, famous in his lifetime but largely unknown now, left his works to his wife, a composer and frequent collaborator. When she died, there was no infrastructure in place to preserve Hawkins's works. Today his dances are virtually unseen." She concluded, "you cannot order someone not to know what they know, but neither does owning rights to a dance mean anything if no one can be paid—or allowed—to perform it." Feidelson, "The Merce Cunningham Archives."

A fair number of practitioners skeptical of ownership and legislation in dance actively choose not to protect their work with copyright, or never get around to it. Yeoh attributed this to the limited financial resources of most dance-makers, and explained the "paucity of litigation" over the rights to perform a work as due to "a culture of sharing" in the field more generally (233). In a 1998 article, dance historian Sally Banes reported finding that "choreographers question whether copyright and other legal intellectual property protections are necessary, artistically sound, or even morally just, given long-standing custom and standard practices and ethos of the dance world," similarly noting a culture not based on ownership that, at times, has celebrated copying and quotation. Sally Banes, "Homage, Plagiarism, Allusion, Comment, Quotation: Negotiating Choreographic Appropriation," in *Before, Between, and Beyond: Three Decades of Dance Writing* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 199.

Dance works through—in real time and space, on and through the bodies of real people—distinctions (or the lack thereof) between the present and the past, an artist and her creation, the living and the dead, to reveal paradoxes of ownership, authorship, subjectivity, and even life itself, that copyright law can only describe.<sup>74</sup> In their very form as artworks, Forti's Dance Constructions of 1960 and 1961 were engaged with the translation of subjects into objects, and tracking them through time to their museum acquisition in 2015-2016 reveals legal, ethical, and practical implications of this transformation in addition to its aesthetic implications. MoMA offered Forti, who never maintained a company of dancers or group of protégés for an extended period, and whose work did not adhere to an established dance technique, an apparatus for retaining, historicizing, and continuing the Dance Constructions past her lifetime. Closely observing her artworks and the process and protocols devised for the acquisition of the Dance Constructions demonstrates both how, as dances, the works pressured the museum's existing procedures, and how the museum had already developed in relation to choreographic and performative works of contemporary art so the acquisition could be considered at all. The museum helped secure the works' property status, objecthood, and even Forti's historical standing as an artist, in the face of dance's disruptions to the authoring subject, reproduction and repetition, and the original-copy framework more generally. Introducing these paradoxes to MoMA provides a new lens through which to re-evaluate a great number of the museum's artworks and activities.

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<sup>74</sup> Legal scholars are fittingly fascinated by this convergence: Banes noted at the beginning of her study, "indeed, it has been remarked that the number of law review articles on choreography and copyright by far exceeds the number of court cases" (Banes, "Homage, Plagiarism, Allusion, Comment, Quotation," 198); this was also registered by Kraut, who offered a brief literature review, 36-37. Only two major cases have gone to trial since copyright for dance was secured in 1976, one concerning Martha Graham, and the other the estate of George Balanchine.

At the same time that it proposes performance as pervasive throughout the institution, my study of MoMA's acquisition of Forti's Dance Constructions in 2015 acknowledges the persistent presence of dance in museums in the twentieth century, a history that has been largely repressed, invisible, and theorized only in the most general terms to date. Many practitioners and theorists invested in dance's economy of means and methods, the sovereignty of the body and the subject, and the thinking body's integrity and independence have preferred to minimize or ignore the ways dance extends, benefits from, and colludes with the moneyed economies of the visual arts, which includes the museum.<sup>75</sup> Although the explicit translation of dance into property or something that acts like property, as in copyright, has met with resistance by practitioners and scholars, the museum's power to define and secure property for what seems like forever could be a valuable resource as concert choreographers of the twentieth century design their legacies.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> A striking example is the 2016 volume edited by the art magazine Triple Canopy and Ralph Lemon, part of the choreographer's involvement with MoMA over the past decade: titled *On Value* and ostensibly about the economics of ephemeral art, it contained almost no reference to the museum framework facilitating and financing Lemon's project, serving instead as a poetic exercise. *On Value* (Brooklyn: Triple Canopy), 2016.

A 2014 survey of artists and writers conducted by New York dance organization Movement Research, "Critical Correspondence: Dance and the Museum" likewise mostly skirted these questions, with the exception of Yvonne Rainer, "Dance and the Museum: Yvonne Rainer Responds" (December 8, 2013), <https://movementresearch.org/publications/critical-correspondence/dance-and-the-museum-yvonne-rainer-responds> (Accessed March 1, 2015). Dancer-choreographer Sara Wookey participated in the Movement Research survey but wrote explicitly about the financial aspects of performing in the museum elsewhere: "Disappearing Acts & Resurfacing Subjects: Concerns of (a) Dance Artist(s)" in Guy Cools, ed. *Ethics of Art: Ecological Turns in the Performing Arts* (Amsterdam: Valiz Publications, 2014); and, "Open Letter to Artists," *Performance Club*, November 23, 2011, <http://theperformanceclub.org/2011/11/open-letter-to-artists/> (Accessed July 1, 2017).

Dancer-scholar Levine addressed labor and payment in an academic publication, in her "Being a thing: the work of performing in the museum." As other scholars are starting to write about dance in the museum, they largely characterize it as either capitulating to or resisting the structures of neoliberal capitalism (or some combination of both), reflecting trends in theorizing dance more broadly. In general, these accounts do not investigate the actual economic conditions in which dance is produced and experienced. See, for example, Lepecki, *Singularities*.

<sup>76</sup> Demonstrating this resistance is a major objective of Banes's 1998 study, which was conducted before most of the figures I discuss in my study made or finalized the plans for their dances. The dance historian wrote, "despite the often hierarchical nature of dance companies, the communal process of making dances contributes to the widely shared attitude that the dance world is a family (or at least that dance companies are families), and that to assert property rights is to [...] violate a treasured system of shared trust and

An in-depth look at the acquisition of Forti's Dance Constructions by MoMA provides an examination of the museum's functions as they intersect with dance's operations, demonstrating how Forti's works specifically disrupted certain expectations for dance in 1960-61 but carried others forward. Almost sixty years after their first performance, their acquisition tests how dance's logic and longevity operate within the museum's frame, providing lessons for dance, institutions, and artworks of many kinds. The institution provides another way for dance to assert objecthood and attain status as property, but what is the cost? How can the museum supply dance authenticity and what does it do to take it away? Does authenticity come from within an artwork or is it conferred on an artwork from without? Are the conservation tools in museums, the spectrophotometers, radiographs, and chemical analyses, more effective for saving artworks than the embodied knowledge provided by practitioners? Are these experts working towards the same goal? Could dance's body-to-body transmission enable an artwork—and even an artist—to live forever? How far can a chain of bodily knowledge extend, and to whom? Can a museum make the creative decisions necessary to produce an artwork? Can it make the creative decisions necessary to produce an experience? Is a museum a storehouse for things or a facilitator for encounters? Is the museum a place where things go to live or to die?

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intimacy gained through personalistic but closely connected informal networks in favor of individualistic but bureaucratic, selfish business interests. To assert these rights is sometimes even seen as sacrificing one's noble dedication to art for base financial motives" (204-205). Banes's work more broadly has focused in large part on a few figures related to the Judson Dance Theater of the 1960s (including Forti), and located the group's significance in its "democratic" elements. This perspective may account for the strong moralistic language about copyright, and the puzzling generalization that "the American dance world is dominated by women who in the past have preferred to negotiate within informal frameworks, rather than formal bureaucratic institutional structures," which reduces "the American dance world" to a very small subset of actors (Banes, "Homage, Plagiarism, Allusion, Comment, Quotation," 206).



## PART I: Simone Forti and the Dance Constructions, 1960-1961

In order to more fully understand the works that MoMA sought and eventually acquired in 2015-2016, as well as the complexities of the acquisition process, Part I returns to the Dance Constructions' first performances in 1961, to the extent that they can be recovered.<sup>77</sup> As is well known, Forti's works emerged alongside and in dialogue with the burgeoning art movements of Happenings, Minimalism, Process, Performance, and Conceptual Art, categories that are well

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<sup>77</sup> My reconstruction relies heavily on Simone Forti's descriptions of the works in her 1974 *Handbook in Motion* (Halifax, Canada: The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), 56-67; I have abbreviated Forti's retrospective text as *Handbook* in the dissertation's notes, and the descriptions are reproduced in Appendix B. I consulted the limited extant archival material about the 1961 evenings: a few photographs of another concert at Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft, copies of which are held in the Jackson Mac Low papers (MSS 180) at the UC San Diego Library and Special Collections, and reprinted in Klaus Biesenbach and Christophe Cherix, eds. *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 50-51. The full schedule and examples of the flyers for the concert series are reprinted in Biesenbach and Cherix, 49, 52-53. A copy of the flyer for "five dance constructions and some other things" is in the Simone Forti clippings file, \*MGZR. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library (New York, NY), and a full set is held by the Getty Research Institute. Art historian Liz Kotz uncovered valuable details about the performing space and series overall, which she noted in "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture c.1961: Reconsidering Simone Forti's Dance Constructions," in Maren Butte, Kirsten Maar, Fiona McGovern, Marie-France Rafael, Jörn Schaffaff, eds. *Assign & Arrange: Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 49 n. 12.

My account also draws from the descriptions offered by people who were present in 1961. Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer remarked on the influence of Forti's concert in the 1960s and 70s but did not describe it in detail, although later they later offered more remarks, as did poet and audience member Jackson Mac Low and dancer Steve Paxton. Morris, "Notes on Dance," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (1965): 179-186, and "Notes on Simone Forti," in Breitweiser, 45-58. Rainer, *Work 1961-73* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Design, 1974), 7, and "On Simone Forti" in Breitweiser, 70-72. Mac Low, "Postscript by Jackson Mac Low, in Simone Forti, *Oh Tongue* (Los Angeles: Beyond Baroque, 2003), 7. Paxton, "Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson," *Contact Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3/4 (Spring/Summer 1982): 56-58, and "The Emergence of Simone Forti," in Breitweiser, 59-61.

Sally Banes recounted Forti's 1961 Chambers Street concerts in the two main books to date about the Judson Dance Theater, although she was not an eyewitness: *Democracy's Body*, 17-18, and *Terpsichore in Sneakers* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 46-48. Banes, who had been a performer in one of Forti's group pieces in the 1970s, conducted interviews with Judson participants and organized performances of the Dance Constructions in New York in the 1980s as part of her research on Judson. Banes also drew on the oral histories captured in the early 1980s as part of the Bennington College Judson Project (BJCP), which I also viewed. The Judson Project: Simone Forti. Interviewed by Meg Cottam, 1981. Video recording, \*MGZIC 9-662, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library.

Finally, my narrative is deeply informed by witnessing the works in person, starting in 2009 at MoMA. I performed in reconstructions of the works in August 2011, and observed Forti teaching the works to new performers on that occasion and in 2014 for a retrospective exhibition of Forti's work in Salzburg, Austria, "Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body," at the Museum der Moderne (July-November 2014).

established in post-war art history and entrenched in museums today, but at the time were not yet in place. Additionally, Forti's early work from the 1960s needs to be seen in relation to the Judson Dance Theater, which Forti's friends and collaborators went on to establish in downtown New York City in 1962, dramatically changing concert dance to something much less polished, idealized, and spectacular than earlier traditions of dance. In recent years, historians of dance and contemporary art have begun to recognize the influence of Forti's early works on "postmodern" dance and Minimal sculpture in particular, especially as exemplified in the work of her two closest colleagues, Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris.<sup>78</sup> But a more scrupulous understanding of Forti's practice and the Dance Constructions reveals a far broader and richer field of inquiry laid out for dance and several art movements, among them Fluxus, Minimalism, and Post-Minimalism.<sup>79</sup> Forti's works made radical propositions about the porousness of the boundaries between subjects and objects, between an object and its surroundings, and between making and viewing art, which were both taken up by and threatened to undermine or undo the new forms and practices of the era.

Taking its cues from the works, this section of the dissertation attends to Forti's Dance Constructions in deliberate detail: what they looked like, felt like, and sounded like, in order to

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<sup>78</sup> Carrie Lambert-Beatty has noted the "vexed" question of whether the dance that emerged in the 1960s was "modern" or "postmodern." Championed largely by Banes, "postmodern" is an ill-fitting term according to Lambert-Beatty, Rainer, and dance theorist Mark Franko, but generally preferred over art critic Annette Michelson's term "New Dance," and the "Judson Dance" that excludes Forti (*Being Watched*, 304-305 n. 7). My category "concert dance" recognizes commonalities between figures such as Anna Halprin, Merce Cunningham, the artists associated with the Judson Dance Theater, and Forti, who did not join the Judson Dance Workshop, while my discussion overall aims to be specific about which choreographic work or group of works is under discussion.

<sup>79</sup> Calling the works "Dance Constructions" or "the Dance Constructions" in my text follows examples in Forti's *Handbook* (56-67), and the materials she developed for the works' acquisition by MoMA in 2015, the subject of Part II. Meredith Morse, in her recent monograph, opted to use "dance constructions," which demonstrates some of the openness of the identifier and the category, and the earliest effects of the museum on (my) art history. Morse, *Soft is Fast*, 11. See also note 242.

obtain as complete a picture as possible of their first manifestations for and with a live audience. Recreating what it might have been like to experience the Dance Constructions in their legendary initial appearances demonstrates the relative freedom and intimacy of their originating moment, a low-key and interdisciplinary environment testing the limits of artistic mediums and traditions as well as the divisions between art and life. The Dance Constructions introduced five modest works in a non-theatrical setting that used equipment made of plywood and ropes to generate simple actions such as climbing or walking. Some of the pieces experimented with sound, and all of them with slowness or stillness, bringing attention to the basic qualities of the body and movement as well as the temporal and embodied nature of art and the viewing situation.

Combining features of sculpture and performance, the Dance Constructions tested the basic properties of each, while demonstrating ideas that exceeded both and even art altogether. Focusing on how the Dance Constructions engaged dance and sculpture—and at the same time threatened their basic definitions—positions Forti's works in relation to the conventions in dance outlined in the previous section, in particular how choreography orders movement in dance. The Dance Constructions used simple instructions and physical structures to produce action in the moment instead of the choreographed and rehearsed steps that had refined skilled movement into most of the concert dance that came before Forti. Forti's structures made the Dance Constructions more like their surrounding environment and more open to it, proposing the possibility of audience participation if not directly inviting it. At the same time, the resemblance of the Dance Constructions to sculptural objects eventually contributed to their recognition as art "objects" for a museum's collection, but as performances they retained many of dance's challenges to objecthood, even exacerbated them. They were particularly fleeting, with their

chance-derived movements impossible to reproduce or emulate, while their “material,” the dancers, were particularly replaceable because of how the works reduced requirements around skill and training. Moreover, as the Dance Constructions supplied inanimate objects with affect, interpersonal relations, and even mortality, they proposed more agency and subjectivity for sculpture, and gave art in general alternative theories of authorship, intention, and change over time. Fully understanding these aspects of Forti’s works and their significance in the context of the artistic discourse of the time demonstrates how they uniquely engaged the questions generated by dance about objecthood, preservation, change, and property status set out in the introduction. This is necessary preparation for an assessment of the process of translation of the Dance Constructions in and for the institutional context of the art museum fifty years later, a process covered in Part II of this dissertation.

## **26 May 1961, Friday night**

The loft is littered with props: from the ceiling, a clump of looped ropes hangs down; at one end, a rickety wooden see saw; against the wall, a plywood ramp with five knotted ropes attached to its surface. Friends and friends of friends mill around the dark space with a tin ceiling, their friendly laughter and chatter quieting as three figures step up onto the plywood at an angle between the wall and the floor. They use the ropes and the knots to get from the bottom to the top of the slant, walking up the board and hauling themselves with their arms. They creep up and down and across the plywood panels for what seems like a long time, passing the ropes from hand to hand and to one another as they cross paths. Pausing from time to time, the figures are framed by the board’s rectangular surface. The room is hushed but not silent: the audience shifts

and whispers, and the dropped knots and rope ends against the board provide percussive but irregular accompaniment for the strenuous exercise [*Slant Board*, Figures 2.1, 2.2].<sup>80</sup>

Without any fanfare or finish, the climbers step away from the board and the ropes to join a few more performers in an open area in another part of the loft. The audience moves to encircle the performers as they lean in, grasping waists and backs and ducking their heads to make a little hill of people. They shuffle and whisper until they find a sturdy shape. A figure underneath climbs slowly up and through the clustered people. Her feet find leverage on a thigh and back and she pushes herself up; her hands bear down on the topmost shoulders to emerge at the top. The performer lays over the others, transferring her weight so she can slide carefully down to the other side. As soon as she lands, someone else has started his own ascent, his knee on a performer crouched below, his arms pulling at a waist on the other side. He gets his weight up and swings himself slowly over, his feet folding over to seek the ground beneath. He moves calmly and slowly and stays close to the group, his climb following a similar path as the first climber's but looking nothing like hers.

The performers all take turns climbing and coming back down one at a time, constantly reorganizing themselves to maintain the rounded structure [*Huddle*, Figures 1.1, 2.3]. Not fast nor especially slow, they continue the odd Sisyphean dance for the same pace throughout, a climber appearing at regular intervals, never rushed. The huddle drifts slightly from its first spot

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<sup>80</sup> No program identifying the individual works by title in 1961 has been found to date, if one was ever made. The titles for the works in my text are taken from *Handbook*, which are how the works are known today (although some of them have been known by other names over the years, discussed later in this section and in Part II). Forti, *Handbook*, 56-67.

on the floor as climbers descend to one side and then the other, and the viewers around the shape shift to accommodate it. As the climbing and the reorganizing goes on, details emerge: a dancer's toes search for the floor below, another rolls slowly off the side of the mound rather than sliding over it, one figure is folded up very small underneath all the others. The climbing has the same directness and simplicity as the first activity with the ropes on the ramp, but here the performers resist each other rather than a solid surface. Each of the climber's movements causes a ripple in the rest: feet angle in a new direction, a leg braces wider for greater stability, an arm clasps a new shoulder. After a while, incidentals seem to have meaning: clothes of different textures bunch and wrinkle, muscles strain underneath, hair gets caught and then works its way free. The viewers start to rustle and drift, looking at each other and around the loft. A few of them are intensely absorbed in the huddle's tiny, complicated variations. As unceremoniously as it began, the exercise ends. The group melts a little; each person straightens up and walks away, on to the next thing.

The audience and performers have to negotiate the intimate space together again to create a clearing around a cluster of ropes hanging from the ceiling. Half of the performers hold on to the ropes and step up into a loop about a foot off the ground, while the other half walks among them. The people walking gently bump into the people hanging and cause them to swing and turn a little. The only actions are the casual steps and weaving of the people on the ground, and the gentle movement of the people suspended from the ceiling [*Hangers*, Figure 2.4]. When it ends (likewise after a good while), everyone steps down out of the ropes, as if stepping off a curb, or down from a bus, no big deal. Next, a man brings out into the space and arranges rough rectangular plywood boxes, similar to each other but not exactly the same. He helps a woman lie

down underneath one before climbing under his own. Once the room has gone really quiet, the sound of whistling emerges, low and long, a single note carried on an exhale. Hers is higher-pitched, calling back to his, also in sync with her breath; they continue this duet, sounding to each other and overlapping sometimes. They never speed up or get slower, just proceed in the same manner until they stop, and the whole room listens intently, some with eyes closed. He emerges first from under his box and then lifts hers; she gets to her feet, and they move off [*Platforms*, Figure 2.5]. Afterwards, a single performer steps up into a loop of rope off to the side of the room. A recording of high-pitched screeching sounds issues out of a set of speakers as the performer grasps the rope with both hands, and an assistant winds her up as far as he can. He lets go, and she whips out in a wild spin, untwisting first one way and then another, gradually slowing to a stop—long before the music is over. For the remaining ten minutes, she stands and softly sways, listening to the difficult sounds while the audience looks on [*Accompaniment for La Monte's "2 Sounds" and La Monte's "2 Sounds"* (hereafter *Accompaniment*), Figures 1.2, 2.6].

Thus Simone Forti's "five dance constructions and some other things," came together in her first solo show in May 1961 in Yoko Ono's New York City loft, part of a concert series featuring new music, poetry, plays, and sculptural environments.<sup>81</sup> Forti's five "constructions" were arguably more like sculptures than theatrical performances, investigating materials and movements with the barest of transformations. Forti and her friends used wooden structures and rope to execute

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<sup>81</sup> The flyer for the 1961 performances, in Appendix C, gives the title for the two evenings as "FIVE DANCE CONSTRUCTIONS & SOME OTHER THINGS by Simone Morris," but I will use "five dance constructions and some other things" for readability, how Forti treated it in *Handbook*. Forti was then using the last name of her first husband, Robert Morris. Simone Forti clippings file, \*MGZR. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

quotidian tasks such as climbing, walking, standing, hanging, and whistling.<sup>82</sup> Forti's "some other things" in the program's title were shorter, louder, and more energetic than the Dance Constructions, contrasting with the straightforward actions and deliberate pace of the five main works. *From Instructions* was a muscular wrestling match, while *Paper Demon* featured a performer adorned with balls of newspaper, shouting and jumping. *Censor* consisted of a singing contest for voice and a cooking pot full of nails, and in *Herding*, the performers asked the audience repeatedly to move to a new location in the loft space.<sup>83</sup> This last "other thing" put the audience in place to watch *See Saw* (1960), which had premiered a few months earlier at the Reuben Gallery in downtown New York [Figure 2.7]. It was a playful and sometimes contentious duet for a man and a woman on a homemade version of the playground equipment, lasting longer than the other works and with a little more variation in its activity. Taken together, the performances ranged from the static *Platforms*, consisting mostly of listening and looking at the two plywood boxes (occupied by bodies inside), to the pure movement through space in *Herding*.

At the center of the 1961 show—and at the center of this dissertation—was *Huddle*, something in between an object and a dance. It economically epitomized the conjunction of body and thing found in all five of the Dance Constructions, and enacted an easy transit between artwork and

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<sup>82</sup> The flyer identified "participants: Ruth Allphin, Carl Lehmann-Haupt, Marnie Mahafey, Bob Morris, Simone Morris, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer," although others may have participated. Simone Forti clippings file, NYPL, and conversation with Yvonne Rainer, February 22, 2011 (Irvine, CA).

<sup>83</sup> Forti described these pieces in *Handbook*, except for *Paper Demon* (66-67). Her ordering of the texts suggests that they may have appeared in a cluster towards the end of the evening, although it is not fully clear. Forti also discussed "some other things" in "The Dance Constructions" in Breitweiser (80), including *Paper Demon*, which was reprised at the Sonnabend Gallery in 1974, and was included in Forti's "retrospective" piece *Jackdaw Songs* of 1981. It was also described in Simone Forti, "A Chamber Dance Concert," *The Drama Review: TDR* 19, no. 1 (March 1975), 37-39, and pictured in Breitweiser, 189-190, 192. See also Appendix B.



audience, performer and spectator, and figure and ground, suggested by but not fully realized in the other four pieces. *Huddle* employed no props and consisted of approximately seven performers tightly packed together, with a climber emerging at semi-regular intervals, ascending over the others, and melting back down into the group. For the duration of the work, moving bodies came together and stayed in one place, and, like a sculpture, viewers could walk around and observe the shape and its evolution through time. When it was over, the climbers dissolved back into their surroundings, leaving nothing behind. *Huddle* is a critical work for my discussion because of its status as *both* a sculpture and a performance, and its movement *between* these terms and the surrounding environment. Its active shape demonstrated the coherence of a group as well as its eventual dispersal into a landscape that was both physical and social. *Huddle* operated just at the boundary between life and art, and exceeded dance and other disciplines: it offered a temporary site for cooperation, teamwork, and intimacy, with lessons about relating that were applicable to all kinds of endeavors. Both within my discussion and within Forti's larger body of work, *Huddle* best manifests proposals suggested by all of the Dance Constructions.

*Huddle* also offers a model for the art world setting in which it first appeared. Art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty asked, noting *Huddle*'s conjoined sculptural and choreographic properties, "what verb should we use for Forti's *Huddle*? Do we say it was first 'performed' at Yoko Ono's Manhattan loft in 1961, or first 'displayed' there?"<sup>84</sup> For Lambert-Beatty, Forti's most well known work was an exemplar for the ways "art at this watershed moment [the early 1960s] was defined not so much by sculpture becoming like performance but by a curious

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<sup>84</sup> Lambert, "More or Less Minimalism," 105.

convergence of actions and things.”<sup>85</sup> However, Lambert-Beatty, one of the primary theorists of the relationship between dance and the visual art of the period, has argued that attention to the *dis*-continuities between dance and other art activities taking place in downtown New York at that time sheds the most critical light on the period and the artworks that emerged then.<sup>86</sup> This position takes into account the differing histories and futures of various disciplines, but such a position emphasizing their discontinuities can retrench the divisions between media that the artists themselves were dismantling. In its continuity with viewers and reorientation of figure and ground, *Huddle* exemplified the collaborative atmosphere of Forti’s immediate environment, which included artists with backgrounds in dance, theater, sculpture, music, poetry, and painting.<sup>87</sup> In classes, studio sessions, exhibitions, and performances, Forti and her peers self-consciously pursued questions about the relationships between an artwork and its surroundings, an artist and her creation, the creative process and its product, to the extent that none of these were entirely distinct. Like Lambert-Beatty, I view *Huddle* (and indeed all of the Dance Constructions) as a metonym or a metaphor for Forti’s early position with respect to the “postmodern” dance and Minimal sculpture developing in the early 1960s. However, my treatment of Forti’s suite of works and the period out of which they emerged seeks to reach beyond these art historical categories, demonstrating dialogue between disciplines while also identifying how deeply Forti’s experiments disoriented them.<sup>88</sup> This approach illustrates ground

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Lambert, “More or Less Minimalism,” 102-109. Lambert-Beatty’s 2008 book *Being Watched* tempers this viewpoint somewhat.

<sup>87</sup> Kotz characterized it as an “amorphous interdisciplinary field” in “Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture c. 1961,” 38.

<sup>88</sup> My approach extends a suggestion made by Kotz when she wrote, “a crucial nexus can be found in the convergence of music, dance, and sculpture that occurred in 1960-61,” yet, relying on these disciplinary categories to characterize the early works of composer La Monte Young, Forti, and Morris “obscures the specificity of these works and their strangeness. It occludes the qualities that they share and the important ways they diverge.” Kotz’s brief article made important assertions about Forti’s works in relation to the

shared by artists and mediums but more importantly how choreographic principles pervaded the artistic landscape, with lasting effects on a great deal of contemporary art.

One of the key features of dance at that time, enacted by the simple activity and unusual structure of *Huddle*, was its deliberate rearrangement of what qualified as dance, keeping it from easy consideration as a self-evident or unified practice. In fact, all of Forti's Dance Constructions transformed dance in 1961 in such a way that threatened its most basic principles. As she entered the New York dance and art communities circa 1960, Forti brought with her a unique formation in dance, which set the stage for her earliest works and culminated in the May 1961 performances. The artist's ambivalence toward dance and choreography per se, awareness of space as both physical and social, and approach to creating and structuring movement, created the conditions for the Dance Constructions, choreographic situations that were much more experimental and unfinished than the dance and choreography that had come before them.

The loft setting for "five dance constructions and some other things" situated the spectators and performers of the Dance Constructions at the same level, positioning them to interact in a small space together and eliminating the physical and psychological divide produced by the theatrical custom of seats and a stage. This effect was heightened by the performers' costumes of plain, ordinary clothes, which resembled those worn by the audience. As the Dance Constructions stayed in one place for an extended duration, with the performers pulling on a slanted board, stuck together in a huddle, hanging in swaying ropes, or lying underneath boxes, each piece

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contributions of Young and Morris to the Chambers Street Series in 1961, drawing on the scanty remaining ephemera and documentation, especially Forti's early journals, but limited its attention on Forti's artworks themselves. Kotz, "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture c.1961," 36.

reduced movement to basic, ordinary movements, some of them very small. There were no explicit narratives, emotions, or characters, or even development of the movements within each piece, but just the presentation of something remaining the same for a good long while. Forti's works did away with the organized and synchronized gestures and locomotion of most concert dance to that point, using physical structures, laws of gravity, mass, and momentum, and basic instructions rather than set choreography to sustain the action. The climbing in *Huddle* and *Slant Board*, while somewhat strenuous, was not carried out using dance technique or training: it was direct, unrefined, and occasionally awkward, with its effort plainly apparent—which had heretofore been disguised in dance. Even more extreme, the performers standing in the ropes in *Hangers* and *Accompaniment*, and lying underneath the boxes in *Platforms*, were barely moving at all. This dance was not spirited, lofty, buoyant, or even particularly strange, but rather very, very ordinary (and rather slow). Its modest, understated qualities challenged all the things that concert dance held dear: athletic bodies, idealized characters, romantic or dramatic narratives—and especially the theatrical transformations of time and space that made the theater and the stage into an alternate reality. Forti's works blended in with their surroundings and everyday life in such a way that undermined the category of dance altogether.

It is tempting—indeed necessary—to characterize Forti's Dance Constructions in relation to dance, particularly insofar as they appeared to negate so much of what dance had been until 1960-61, and initiated some of the strategies used in the wholesale transformation of concert dance in the 1960s. But the artist's interests and the works' peculiar forms and operations extended to sculpture and other practices like "Performance Art," "Process Art," and "installation," which had yet to be named at that point. Although as performances the Dance

Constructions did not qualify as sculpture strictly speaking, they were at the same time engaged in the properties of objects via their stationary positions in space and static, sustained action. Some of the discoveries they made about objects in this regard threatened to undermine sculpture as a category. The performers literalized the forces at work in simple shapes like the pyramid of the slanted board, the rounded cluster of the huddle, the columns of ropes hanging from the ceiling, and the low-lying horizontal orientation of the paired pedestals. This gave the forms dynamism and complexity that is sometimes implied by sculpture but seldom expressed. The performers of the Dance Constructions negotiated mass and gravity, energy and momentum, friction and inertia, slowing things down to suggest how such negotiations are always at work within objects at some level. Sculpture usually stills these relationships to a complete stop, but Forti's 1961 works kept them in play. As Forti's performers encountered the surfaces supplied by plywood, rope, the floor, and each other, they demonstrated how the body is acted upon and shaped by its immediate surroundings. The surface of *Slant Board* pressed back upon the performers as well as the room and its spectators, and the swaying figure in the rope in *Accompaniment* disturbed the room's atmosphere ever so slightly. By bringing body and prop so closely together, the fixed materials were given subtle energy and motion, and revealed these in an artwork's surroundings. The slow, deliberate repetition of actions like walking, climbing, standing, and breathing in the Dance Constructions proposed how shapes and situations are always evolving, even if at the minutest levels. As objects made out of people, Forti's earliest works introduced a radical contingency to sculpture, attributing to them even some humanity. At a modest, human scale and made out of everyday materials, with explicit relationships, duration, and a lifetime, the Dance Constructions challenged the symbolism, permanence, and idealization monumental sculpture performed and stood for.

Sparked in part by Forti and the influence of the Dance Constructions on her husband at that time, the artist Robert Morris, sculpture as a category underwent a major revision by practitioners, theorists, and critics in the 1960s. Morris's proposals for Minimalism, however, sometimes struggled to repress the full implications of the Dance Constructions, implications which Morris's biggest critic, Michael Fried, seemed to pick up on as he developed his own theory of the sculpture of the period as "theatrical."<sup>89</sup> Fried identified how the objects he saw in the early-mid 1960s destabilized hierarchies between the audience and the artwork as well as between the artwork and its surroundings, and was uncomfortable with the way it interacted with him as a viewer. He appeared to perceive the way these hierarchies could be reoriented altogether—and had been toyed with by the Dance Constructions—which undermined the status of art in addition to his position as an art critic and authority. Understanding the Dance Constructions as a dynamic critical node—a flash point, compressor, or motor—for Minimalism and beyond reveals how sculpture in the 1960s did not aspire to (nor descend into) theater: it must be understood *as* theater, with the people, relationships, affect, and choreography that performance implies. Moreover, viewing the Dance Constructions, with their liveliness and bodiliness, as anterior to and implicit within Minimalism illuminates its elision with the "Post-Minimal" practices identified later in the decade, helping account for the full range of mediums and procedures in Process Art, Conceptual Art, Performance Art, and installation.<sup>90</sup> The subtle,

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<sup>89</sup> Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1968), 116-147.

<sup>90</sup> Including how these movements seemed to mature at the same time in the middle of the 1960s. They include the "eccentric abstraction" that represented "an expressive alternative to the sculptural language of Minimalism," as Hal Foster put it, with the erotics and bodiliness attributed to female artists such as Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois but that also characterized contemporaneous work by Bruce Nauman and Ken Price, as well as the color, illusions, narratives, and emotions that could not be repressed fully in Minimalism. Lucy Lippard, "Eccentric Abstraction," in *Changing: Essays in Art History* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1971),

barely-there transformations of time, material, and activity in Forti's 1961 works clearly shared aesthetic concerns with the Minimal sculpture in simple shapes made of industrial materials that emerged later in the decade, by Morris but also other artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Walter de Maria, and anticipated a great deal of the art practices that took hold in the 1960s. Morris in particular struggled to hold sculpture together as a stable term as the decade progressed, articulating in his writing and performing with his sculpture paradoxes that Forti's works had handily worked out as the decade started. Forti's *Dance Constructions* and especially *Huddle*, an object formed by the activity necessary for making it, united a number of contradictions about event and object, process and product, singularity and repetition, acting out the contingent, relational, and temporary qualities of all artworks.

But if the *Dance Constructions* could answer the question of whether Forti was first, or whether Morris or Fried more astutely observed the sculpture of his own moment, they also introduced questions that were more difficult, even impossible to answer definitively. Is an artwork ever finished? Fully alienated from the artist or from the viewer? Absolutely permanent? Even more broadly, they seemed to ask, what did it mean when objects were like subjects—and subjects were like objects? At once ephemeral and immortal? Alienated and inalienable? These questions applied to art and to life in general, achieving even more poignancy with the passage of time.

While the significance of Forti and the *Dance Constructions* is beginning to be recognized by scholars, curators, and practitioners today, it may have been that in the moment of their creation

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98-111, and Foster, "1966b" in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, and David Joselit, eds. *Art Since 1900* vol. 2 (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 544-548.

the Dance Constructions' disciplinary ambiguity, unconventional (active) forms, and continuity between "the work" and viewers, posed too much of a challenge or even shock to be claimed for or visible within any art or dance tradition. In the early 1970s, Yvonne Rainer, who had performed in Forti's works in 1960-61, wrote, "it was as though a vacuum sealed that event. Nothing was written about it and dancers went on dancing and painters and ex-painters went on making painterly happenings and theater pieces. It would be another two and a half years before the idea of a 'construction' to generate movement or a situation would take hold."<sup>91</sup> Rainer reported on experimenting with task-generating movement in dance in the early 1960s without crediting Forti, but Morris referred to Forti's early influence on current trends in dance in his "Notes on Dance" (in the same 1965 issue of *Tulane Drama Review* as Rainer's text).<sup>92</sup> Beyond brief mentions, the Dance Constructions were largely left out of narratives of concert dance, however, until Sally Banes's work in the 1980s that restored Forti to the prehistory of the Judson Dance Theater, which has done the most to establish continuity between the Dance Constructions and what followed them in dance.<sup>93</sup> In the 2000s, scholars claimed Forti and the Dance Constructions as important for art history, mostly by way of Minimalism in sculpture, with

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<sup>91</sup> Rainer, *Work*, 7. Kotz's "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture c.1961" is centrally concerned with Forti's and the Dance Constructions' "curiously liminal" status (40). The historian jumped off from Rainer's "vacuum" comment and her own difficulty tracking Forti in archival records and the scholarly literature to construct an argument that the Dance Constructions have always been invisible or about to disappear, beginning in 1962 with debates about whether Forti's concert was dance or part of the Happenings; these took place in a series of letters in a local publication about downtown performances, *The Floating Bear* (41).

<sup>92</sup> Rainer, "Some retrospective notes on a dance for 10 people and 12 mattresses called *Parts of Some Sextets*, performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March 1965," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (1965), reprinted in *Work*, 44-51, and Morris, "Notes on Dance."

<sup>93</sup> Forti's early work was mentioned but not elaborated in the first chronicles of Judson and post-Judson dance: "Judson Judson," *Ballet Review* 1, no. 6 (1967): 7-73, and Don McDonagh's *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1970), 190-192, both under the name of her second husband, Robert Whitman. More recently, dance scholar Ramsay Burt discussed Forti's early work in *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2006). In the 1970s, 80s, and afterwards, Forti contributed to dance publications, largely narrating her development of improvisatory methods of movement performance and dance composition, and was primarily written about in those terms by a handful of journalists and scholars. See "Bibliography," Breitweiser, 279-284.



Virginia Spivey registering “scholarly bias in art history [that] has ignored many women like Forti,” and counteracting “attitudes in the academy that viewed dance as an uncritical (often feminized) art form, more rooted in bodily expression than intellectual activity.”<sup>94</sup> In one of the first art-historical treatments of Forti, art historian Anna C. Chave recognized how the Dance Constructions eluded and/or strained against classification as Minimalism and even dance, proposing that creating divisions between dance and sculpture “traduce the category-shaking radicality of Forti’s and Morris’s early efforts [...] and unjustifiably narrow the parameters of Minimalism as a movement.”<sup>95</sup> Art historian Meredith Morse’s recent monograph has also sought to broaden the field in which to consider Forti’s work, making connections between the artist and a number of different movements, including painting, music composition, other score-based performances in the early 1960s, as well as Post-Minimal sculpture and Process Art, although at moments in Morse’s valuable narrative the effort to identify and label each art historical movement with which Forti was in dialogue strains against the ways Forti’s art—including and especially the Dance Constructions—moved between mediums and created categories of its own.

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<sup>94</sup> Spivey, “The Minimal Presence of Simone Forti,” *Woman’s Art Journal* (Spring/Summer 2009): 11. Art historian Anna C. Chave similarly remarked upon the “gendered division of labor whereby dance is coded as a marginal and feminine (or effeminate) province while sculpture is central and masculine.” Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 156. A comparative study was the approach of my own “Not Yet Minimalism: Simone Forti’s *Huddle* (1960) and its Propositions for 1960s Sculpture and Dance” (masters thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2011), which triangulated works by Forti, Rainer, and Morris.

<sup>95</sup> Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” 156. The historian also noted the “folly of isolating any one site” as the source of Minimalism, suggesting it might continue the “critical asymmetry that allows [Morris’s] production to figure as an impersonal, towering cultural force while Forti’s pathbreaking experiments are eclipsed to little more than footnotes,” and pointed out the collaborative, contingent, and constantly evolving nature of “origins” more generally (“Minimalism and Biography,” 156, 162 n. 48).

Picking up some of these cues, my study demonstrates how the Dance Constructions offered insights into movement, choreography, bodies, and objects that were transformative for dance, sculpture, and related fields, but reverberated over an even longer timeline than that identified by Rainer in 1974, and even broader territory, despite the initial “vacuum.” First, I discuss Forti’s formation in dance- and art-making, via a dense period of activity in New York in 1960-61 leading up to the Dance Constructions, which reveals an agenda for the artist somewhat apart from an avant-garde aesthetic program, both more humble and more ambitious. Then, I review Forti’s contributions to dance and sculpture, in order to demonstrate how they unsettled or even eradicated certain fundamentals while retaining others. Finally, I present examples of the Dance Constructions after 1961 that carried out some of their more radical propositions, which may be the most transformed or even lost in preparation for the acquisition of Forti’s works by a museum, the subject of Part II of the dissertation.

### **Something Else: Simone Forti and Dance**

From her earliest years, Forti was involved in dance yet identified variously with its traditions and practitioners. Forti had been born in Italy in 1935, but grew up in Los Angeles, California, where she encountered a high school teacher who sparked her interest in dance and dance composition.<sup>96</sup> After she graduated, Forti pursued a liberal arts education at Reed College in Portland, and met Robert Morris; they married in San Francisco in 1955.<sup>97</sup> In their new city, Forti discovered the work of choreographer Anna (then Ann) Halprin, who combined a theatrical

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<sup>96</sup> Forti provided the most information about her early dance training in a 1994 interview, in which she described children’s lessons in ballet and other forms such as tap, and credited this high school teacher of modern dance. Louise Sunshine, *Oral History Project: Interview with Simone Forti*, New York: New York Public Library Dance Collection, May 1994, 6-17.

<sup>97</sup> “Biography,” in Breitweiser, 276.

aesthetic with improvisational methods for generating movement. Halprin's ways of working were unique in dance-making at the time, based on a kinesthetic understanding of the body rather than classical technique: her students did not attempt to mimic a teacher but rather generated their own responses to prompts.<sup>98</sup> Despite—indeed, likely because of—Forti's limited formal dance training, she flourished in this setting, becoming a core member of Halprin's dance company (1955-59) as well as a teacher for Halprin's dance co-ops for children (1959-60) [Figures 2.8-2.11].<sup>99</sup> Eventually Forti tired of the work, remembering in 1974, "improvisation was really beginning to pain me. I can remember saying that my inner ear could no longer take those limitless seas. There just seemed to be all this turmoil and turning of image upon image."<sup>100</sup> Forti has described the struggle to move beyond Halprin's influence as if she were a

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<sup>98</sup> For example, students would experiment with the movement of the shoulder blade for hours and then share their discoveries with the group. Forti has recounted how she first encountered the pedagogical method of giving students an idea to explore on their own in visual art classes in high school and college, but had never before seen it applied in a movement/dance context, noting this innovation of Halprin's as having had the greatest impact on her own work. See Sabine Breitweiser with Simone Forti, "The Workshop Process" in Breitweiser, 22; and, "Simone Forti in Conversation with Jennie Goldstein," July 10, 2014, *Movement Research Critical Correspondence*, <https://movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Simone-Forti-in-Conversation-with-Jennie-Goldstein.pdf> (Accessed September 1, 2014), 9. Halprin's working processes are described in "Yvonne Rainer Interviews Anna Halprin," in Mariellen R. Sandford, ed., *Happenings and Other Acts* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 137-159, and in Ninotchka Bennahum and Bruce Robertson, "Introduction," Ninotchka Bennahum, Wendy Perron, and Bruce Robertson, eds., *Radical Bodies* (Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017), 16-29. Halprin's methods were informed by her participation in her husband's architecture projects: an illustration of their depth of their collaboration can be found in Lawrence Halprin, *RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (New York: George Brazillier, Inc., 1969). Morse has also introduced Halprin's college dance teacher, Margaret H'Doubler, as a possible source for Halprin's and therefore Forti's approaches to movement and composition (Morse, "The Natural and the Neutral," in *Soft is Fast*, 15-35). My text will use "Halprin" to refer to Anna Halprin.

<sup>99</sup> As such, Forti helped create the material that would go into Halprin's productions and performed in works such as *Branch Dance* (also called *The Branch*, 1957), *Hangar* (1957), and *Trunk Dance* (1959). Halprin's works are detailed in Janice Ross, "Chronology of Performances, Videos, and Films," in *Anna Halprin: Experience As Dance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007), 405-420, based on scrapbooks and files in the Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design (San Francisco, CA). Footage of Halprin's work appears in *Breath Made Visible*, directed by Ruedi Gerber, Festival Screening 2010 (ZAS Productions/Argot Pictures, 2009). In addition to creating her own work and teaching her own classes, Halprin helped organize and provided instructors for dance co-ops around Marin County, also detailed in scrapbooks and files in the Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design.

<sup>100</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 32.

parental figure, simultaneously attached to and rejecting her mentor's working methods.<sup>101</sup>

Ultimately Forti and Morris moved to New York around 1960, a transition that signaled a psychological and aesthetic shift for Forti, but was not without its ambivalences. The couple made at least one trip back to California for Halprin's summer workshop in August 1960, persuading their new friend the dancer Yvonne Rainer to join them.<sup>102</sup>

Once settled in New York in the fall of 1960, Forti sought formal training in dance but found herself more interested in integrated, holistic movement and conducting her own movement experiments. She took classes in modern dance technique at Merce Cunningham's studio and the Martha Graham School, and was frustrated by both. Cunningham's work departed from

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<sup>101</sup> Forti wrote Halprin a series of letters in late 1960 and early 1961, recalling in one of them an earlier encounter: "Ann, all the things I said I meant. But I didn't say the positive things that I also mean. You've given me a whole orientation and a whole way of working. And I am very thankful and respectful. If my behavior was sort of adolescent-like, it probably means that my needs were adolescent-like. But nevertheless very strong." Correspondence in the Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design, reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 150. Similarly, in a 1991 interview, Forti said, "I went through a reaction against the whole thing. I was twenty-three, twenty-four, and I guess it was kind of an adolescent thing. Anna had sort of been my Mum and maybe I had to find a way to push off, find a way that this was all wrong." "Transcript of Simone Forti in discussion with Anne Kilcoyne," November 23, 1991, *The CNDO Transcripts* (Arnhem, Netherlands: 1993), 4.

<sup>102</sup> Forti and Morris may have moved to New York as early as 1959: there are several contradictory sources on these dates, details that seem impossible to recover for certain. Forti and Morris made the summer 1960 trip (and possibly more) back to San Francisco from New York, and were firmly established in New York by the fall of 1960.

Clippings in Anna Halprin's archive (Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design) indicate that Forti was teaching for Halprin's Marin County Dance Co-ops in September 1959 and possibly through the winter of 1960, but Forti herself dated the move to the spring of 1959 (Forti, *Handbook*, 34). The latest date Ross supplied for Forti's appearances in Halprin's work was a premiere on May 15, 1959. Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience As Dance*, 410.

Morse's book claimed 1959 as the date Morris and Forti moved to New York, arguing that since Forti did not appear in all of Halprin's works in 1959, she would have moved by April 1959 (Morse, *Soft is Fast*, 210 n. 53). Art historian Branden Joseph asserted that Forti and Morris moved to New York from San Francisco in 1960, based on Morris's recollections in an interview in 1968. Robert Morris, "Letters to John Cage," in *October 81* (Summer 1997): 70 n. 2. Rainer's *Feelings are Facts* indicates that Rainer and Forti met in the summer of 1960, just before Rainer attended Halprin's workshop in August 1960, although Forti and Morris might have been in New York for some time before the dancers met. Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 183, 190-195, 216-217. The August 1960 summer workshop with Halprin is described in Janice Ross, "Atomizing Cause and Effect: Ann Halprin's 1960s Summer Dance Workshops," *Art Journal* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 62-75.

conventional ballet narratives, using chance procedures to create and order movement, but employed a streamlined ballet-based technique that pushed the body to extremes of speed and extension, which was challenging to learn and reproduce. Many of Forti's later colleagues and collaborators, such as Rainer, Deborah Hay, and Steve Paxton continued to study and perform with Cunningham, but Forti described "watching my teachers and feeling I couldn't even perceive what they were doing, let alone do it. A teacher would demonstrate a movement, I'd see only this flashing blur of feet, and I wouldn't know what had happened. I just couldn't do it."<sup>103</sup> Wanting to be able to see and feel the movement, Forti declared: "Merce Cunningham was a master of adult, isolated articulation [...] the thing I had to offer was still very close to the holistic and generalized response of infants."<sup>104</sup> Perhaps interpreting the artist's words, Banes's history of Forti (until recently the most comprehensive) likened the artist and her work to that of a child, drawing a strong correlation between Forti's frustration with dance technique, her employment in a nursery school during the early years in New York, and the playful qualities of Forti's early performance works.<sup>105</sup> But Forti's comment about the "holistic and generalized response of infants" is less a self-description and more indicative of an interest in full-bodied and relaxed movements, or more precisely the "infancy" of movement before it is carefully modulated and organized—even rationalized—in dance technique and performance. That is,

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<sup>103</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 34. Although Forti's account in 1974 in *Handbook* focused on her difficulty with the Cunningham technique, her letters to Halprin in 1960-61 demonstrate her dedication to dance classes: in one of them she wrote, "I'm taking some classes at Cunningham's studio...and am enjoying them a lot. That kind of leg work is a new challenge to me as is on the spot learning of 'combinations.'" Reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 149.

<sup>104</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 34. Forti wrote something similar in a letter to Halprin in late 1960: "in any free movement, I use a very 'primitive' stance." Reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 151-152.

<sup>105</sup> Banes, *Terpsichore*, 24-29.

before movement becomes socially coded as communicative gestures and/or aesthetically refined into dance.

With her artistic practice also in its “infancy,” Forti worked in the studio by herself and with friends such as Rainer and composer La Monte Young, exploring the basic factuality of the body in space and the body in relation to other things. Forti has described, for example, working alone in a loft with a stool and a roll of toilet paper, periodically shifting the position of her body and the props, and noticing the result.<sup>106</sup> Rainer wrote about a similar study she witnessed in the fall of 1960:

I saw Simone do an improvisation that affected me deeply. She scattered bits and pieces of rags and wood around the floor, landscape-like. Then she simply sat in one place for awhile, occasionally changed her position or moved to another place. I don’t know what her intent was, but for me what she did brought the god-like image of the “dancer” down to earth more effectively than anything I had ever seen. It was a beautiful alternative to the heroic posture.<sup>107</sup>

What Rainer recognized in this exercise is how Forti juxtaposed the rags and wood pieces, literally “material,” with other elements to demonstrate the body as also material, and only one of the “figures” within a landscape. Rainer used dance terms for Forti’s experiment choreographing herself along with the objects and the space, but Forti’s exploration was also

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<sup>106</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 34.

<sup>107</sup> Rainer, *Work*, 5; it is similarly recalled in *Feelings are Facts*, 195-196. Rainer and Forti worked together with dancer Nancy Meehan starting in May 1960, according to Rainer’s diaries (Yvonne Rainer papers, 1871-2013, bulk 1959-2013, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 2006.M.24). A description and photographs by Forti of Rainer and Meehan improvising in July 1960 appear in *Feelings are Facts*, 190-191.

sculptural, examining the mere presence and position of a human body in a temporal and spatial field. By performing almost no movement at all, Forti established equivalence between each of the terms: the rags, the wood, the body, and the space, and reduced the “dancing” to a minimum. Young, who directed music for Halprin in 1959-1960 and moved to New York shortly after the summer workshop in California, described Forti as turning away from dance and choreography during this period, registering her ambivalence toward the movement, technique, and theatricality that characterized her previous experience and distinguished dance as a form. Young wrote Halprin after an improvisation session Forti and Young did together, frustrated with their ongoing debate about the role of dance in Forti’s creative practice: “I like the things she does though but *she thinks she should sort of dance and I don’t* (this argument is getting old).”<sup>108</sup>

The ambiguity between dancing and not dancing—as well as Forti’s burgeoning interests in the sculptural and the spatial—remained in Forti’s developing work, both contributing to and a byproduct of intense inquiry into the baseline requirements for dance and choreography taking place in New York right then. The primary locus of this activity was musician Robert Dunn’s composition class, held at the Cunningham studio starting in the fall of 1960. Open to all, Dunn’s class favored no particular dance or theatrical style: the exercises focused on the internal integrity of rule sets rather than adherence to a dance technique or the dominant models for

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<sup>108</sup> La Monte Young to Ann Halprin, undated letter ca. late 1960 or early 196, Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design (emphasis mine). Young described his contribution to one of their sessions: “it ended up with me dumping a sack of coal on her newly scrubbed (on hands and knees which I did realize [*sic?*]) floor and then we argued about what we were supposed to be doing anyway.” Young wrote that he “thought the idea was to do whatever we each wanted to [...] and she thought there should be some limitations and so we argued and it all ended up all right,” concluding, “we may or may not try some more.” Young’s involvement with Halprin is detailed on Young’s website: <http://melafoundation.org/lmyresum.htm#exp> (Accessed February 1, 2017), and in Ross’s chronology in *Anna Halprin* as well as “Atomizing Cause and Effect.”

dance composition at the time, in particular that of Martha Graham's collaborator Louis Horst.<sup>109</sup> Composer John Cage's chance-derived musical scores offered readymade ways of generating choreographic ideas and tight constraints around movement invention, and the students were encouraged to work quickly and decisively within an exploratory pedagogical atmosphere.<sup>110</sup> Rolling dice, making random marks on a piece of paper, and selecting an arbitrary amount of time to apply to one activity, for example, created new ways of ordering events and expanded the vocabulary for dance. Within the time set out by the score, the dance "material" could be anything, which dancer Steve Paxton famously interpreted once by eating a sandwich.<sup>111</sup> At one point, Forti read aloud a written "dance report" about movement she had observed or imagined: an onion slowly shifted its weight on a bottle as it sprouted and then toppled from the lip.<sup>112</sup> The students used each other as performers in their experiments, with their varying levels of training and experience informing the type of movement generated within the guidelines set out by each exercise. The guidelines themselves also generated awkward and unexpected movements, as when Forti used the length of the measures in a piece of music by Erik Satie to determine whether her head, hands, or feet would touch the floor as she performed.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Horst characterized dances as "primitive," "archaic," or "medieval" and insisted on their performance to music, pedagogy that produced—according to some critics—mediocre dances for an entire generation. Horst's methods and legacy are described in Don McDonagh's *Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance*, 2.

<sup>110</sup> Dunn had been exposed to Cage and his ideas in classes at the New School for Social Research, 1956-ca.1960. Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 1-7; Forti, *Handbook*, 36.

<sup>111</sup> Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 9.

<sup>112</sup> Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 17. This "report" was reprinted in *An Anthology of Chance Operations, Concept Art, Anti-Art, Indeterminacy, Plans of Action, Diagrams, Music, Dance Constructions, Improvisation, Meaningless Work, Natural Disasters, Compositions, Mathematics, Essays, Poetry* [hereafter *An Anthology*] edited by Young and Jackson Mac Low (Bronx, NY, 1963), n.p.

<sup>113</sup> Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 12.



Dunn's mapping of Cage's innovations in music composition over on to dance had the effect of interrogating dance's essential requirements: What qualifies as dance movement? What constitutes dance composition? Who is qualified to perform dance? What is choreography? These questions defined the context of the dance studio and drove the early dancer participants in the Dunn workshop (guests such as Morris and Robert Rauschenberg would later stop in), setting up its explorations as oppositional to conventions in dance.<sup>114</sup> Within this context, Forti's experiments in 1960 and 1961 engaged with the body, movement, and performance in ways that highlighted their immediate action and presence. Not symbolic, not representational, not theatrical. Furthermore, Forti's studies in the studio and performances for an audience drew not on dance movement or patterning but more basic physical forces such as gravity and inertia, and retained a provisional, unfinished quality. In one of a series of letters from Forti to Halprin during this period, Forti wrote, "I'm still on that raft between two continents, but I'm beginning to get signs of land," indicating that she was moving away from dance that strives toward image-making and narrative by way of refining movement and affect—and on to something else.<sup>115</sup> This something, which reached an apex with the Dance Constructions, was much less dramatic and conventionally organized by dance steps or a script, closer to an experimental music

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<sup>114</sup> These meta-choreographic and meta-dance inquiries were given endless permutations by the members of the Judson Dance Workshop (which evolved out of the Dunn class), whose experiments between 1962 and 1966 radically revised dance's compositional procedures and technique, and established a whole new look for dance that was no longer virtuosic or polished.

<sup>115</sup> Reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 150. Later in the same letter, she wondered, "how do I integrate [dance] technique with the rest? I guess what I've done is make a split" (150). She described how "in any performance, I use very little movement at all," and used as an example her contribution to another artist's piece, which consisted of her tying ropes or string all through the performance space and audience (this was likely in Toshi Ichianagi's concert in January 1961). Forti concluded her description with, "well, as you see, leg extensions don't have much to do with this" (150-152). Paradoxically, she found "the more I lose faith in technique classes as a tool towards art, the more they put me into an ecstasy" (157).

performance or a sculpture than existing definitions of dance or theater. It was also closer to the activities in which it was situated, the movements and postures of the everyday.

In the fall of 1960, Forti was also rehearsing with Robert Whitman for his event *American Moon* at the Reuben Gallery in downtown New York, a process that provided her a number of important realizations about movement and materials, as well as an invitation to show her developing work at an art gallery.<sup>116</sup> The gallery was known for colorful, energetic Happenings, and Forti shared the December program with early innovators of the form, Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg.<sup>117</sup> Forti's duets *Rollers* and *See Saw*, which had performers yelling as they careened around in boxes on wheels and played on handmade playground equipment, continued the ludic exploration of time and presence introduced in the Happenings in the late 1950s. But Forti's contributions also displayed a turn towards the strategies of repetition and anti-composition that would come to the fore in the Dance Constructions, and were taken up later by Minimalist sculpture and the task-oriented movement associated with the Judson Dance Theater. In between the Happenings and Minimalism, and moving away from previous models of dance, Forti's two

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<sup>116</sup> Forti wrote Halprin that her participation in Whitman's project "changed me more than any dancing I've experienced here," and sent a detailed description and drawing of the material-rich production (letter reprinted in Bannahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155, and in the Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design). Whitman's Happening-like event used rags, balloons, ladders, and scaffolding that Forti had to move around and operate. She noticed, "most of my actions were done not in order that the movement be seen, but so that the particular task could be accomplished. And it struck me too that the movement had its own presence" (Forti, *Handbook*, 35). Kotz and Morse have both emphasized the impact of Whitman's work on Forti, with Kotz arguing, "in our historical desire to align Forti with Minimalism, art historians have almost systematically neglected Forti's entanglement with the emotive, imagistic, and even animistic aspects of Whitman's work," which Morse's book begins to redress (Kotz, "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture, 42; Morse, *Soft is Fast*, 51-58).

<sup>117</sup> Rainer's memoir generalized that the visual artists working with movement wanted "to escape the constraints of a static gallery installation and explore a time-based medium" (Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, 196). See also Mildred L. Glimcher and Robert McElroy, *Happenings: New York, 1958-1963* (New York: Pace Gallery, 2012) and Lynn Cooke and Karen Kelly, eds., *Robert Whitman: Playback* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2003).

works at the Reuben Gallery took an exploratory, experiential approach to movement and demonstrated the force of a single organizing structure. In *Rollers*, two performers bundled in many layers of clothes sat in open wooden cubes with swivel wheels, pulled around with ropes handled by audience members [Figure 2.12]. This produced, according to Forti, “an excitement bordering on fear,” on the part of the once singing, now shrieking performers, and the audience, which was pressed to the perimeter of the small room.<sup>118</sup> Forti received positive feedback on the Reuben show, but she felt she “wasn’t able to see clearly to [*Rollers*],” presenting it instead as a work-in-progress (even an idea-in-progress), sketched out and executed with the help of the audience.<sup>119</sup> This experimental, participatory approach to the artwork and the spectator-performer relationship was continued in the first performances of the Dance Constructions the following May, opening the pieces to their surroundings and giving them an unfinished feel.

*See Saw* was somewhat less raucous than *Rollers* and stayed mostly in one place, highlighting the physical and emotional relationships of its two performers. The work consisted of Morris and Rainer going up and down on a homemade, wooden see saw for a long time. Then they “did several combinations of movements which shifted the balance,” as Forti later wrote about it: “the possibilities are endless [...] any change in the arrangement of body parts, the slightest change of position by either performer, affects the balance of the entire set-up.”<sup>120</sup> For example, they stood on it, close together, rocking near the center while holding hands; at another point, they lay down

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<sup>118</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 44; letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 154.

<sup>119</sup> Forti’s letter to Halprin describing *Rollers* suggested her mentor “try the box idea” in a more spacious setting, maybe even a situation where the piece could be seen from above. Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 154-155.

<sup>120</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 39.

on the board, Morris on his belly and Rainer on her back [Figure 2.7].<sup>121</sup> In a different section, Morris rotated around on his seat, dangling his legs over the end of the board, and read a magazine. Rainer at first tolerated his self-absorption but eventually screamed and yelled, jumping on her end to shift the situation.<sup>122</sup> The work's simple scenario showcased the body's struggle to maintain balance and verticality under changing conditions, as well as the affective currents between the two performers. The see saw forced the body and the prop to respond to one another, the movements of each demanding a response in the other. Forti's reflections on the work, however, suggest that she found it still too refined and elaborated for her evolving interests: she wrote, "I don't think I'll ever know what to make of the see-saw. I sort of love it [...] But at the moment I keep wanting to strip things down to the bare structural essentials and I think I got scared with the see-saw and sort of decorated it up."<sup>123</sup> With the evolution of the action over *See Saw*'s fifteen or so minutes, and the explicit emotions in the piece, Forti had not yet reduced the movement and drama in a dance quite in the way she desired (and in the way she would later in the Dance Constructions). The work had internal variations and something like a narrative, with embellishments such as lighting cues, props, and a third character (Forti) singing a song, introduced right at the end.<sup>124</sup> These "decorated" the basic ingredients of the see saw and the movement it engendered. This conjunction of body and prop, although Forti loved it, contained more than the "essentials," an ideal demanding the artist's courage that would be a significant departure from her experience of dance thus far.

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<sup>121</sup> Pictures in *Handbook*, 41, 43.

<sup>122</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 39.

<sup>123</sup> Letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155.

<sup>124</sup> Forti's complete description is in *Handbook*, 39-42.

Still, later in the same letter to Halprin, Forti celebrated *See Saw*'s position *between* one thing and another as a critical dimension of her artistic practice—and her life—at that moment. She wrote, “I am changing. That’s one thing I like about the see-saw. It has the awkwardness of something that’s no longer what it used to be but not yet what it’s going to be.”<sup>125</sup> Forti, like the artwork, was moving away from what she had seen and participated in and was heading toward her own alternatives, as yet to be fully defined. Informal and in-between, Forti’s works at this stage did not commit to being dance, Happenings, theater, or sculpture. They reflected the performance-becoming-sculpture and life-becoming-art nature of the experiments the artist was undertaking, as well as Forti’s position within the interdisciplinary artistic landscape. In art historical terms, the Reuben “Christmas Program of Happenings” in December 1960 was late if positioned within Happenings, but very early with respect to Minimalism and the practices now associated with it: the Judson Dance Theater, Process Art, Conceptual Art, and Performance Art, with Forti functioning as a transition or ferry point. In any case, the unpretentiousness and transitional “awkwardness” of Forti’s earliest pieces, which made them hard to categorize as artworks, were their essential and most appealing features, according to some measures. Forti used *See Saw* as a self-description, and Young identified Forti’s pieces in the Reuben evening as among the most interesting artworks he had seen since moving to New York.<sup>126</sup> Young invited Forti to participate in the series of concerts he was organizing to take place at Yoko Ono’s loft on Chambers Street, and as he advertised the program of music, poetry, plays, “machinery,” and

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<sup>125</sup> Letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155. Forti continued, “in other words, poorly understood by whoever made it.”

<sup>126</sup> Young wrote Halprin, “Simone’s thing at the Reuben Gallery (See Saw and one unlisted with boxes and people pulling) have been the best things I’ve seen there so far, but the Reuben Gallery people didn’t dig it so much (they’re so dramatic and corny!).” La Monte Young to Ann Halprin, undated letter (ca. late December 1960), Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design.

events, Young put Forti in the last grouping, events, which he later revised to “somethingelse.”<sup>127</sup> In this position of “something else,” Forti conducted basic explorations of the body, movement, materials, and spaces. These bore relations to the visual and performing arts (were deeply informed by them) but were also more elementary or “innocent,” about the forces binding people together and the relationships between people, things, and their environment, essential questions with a broad reach.<sup>128</sup>

### **The Dance Constructions: Setting the Agenda**

Forti settled on calling the works she showed in May 1961 “the Dance Constructions,” a category that preserved their roots in dance but communicated other dimensions as well: sculptural, conceptual, architectural. The five performances were brief, simple, and self-contained, with almost no narrative, interpersonal relations, and limited movement through space. They were more focused in their activity than the two pieces shown at the Reuben Gallery, using more economical means to generate movement and orienting their relationships almost entirely between subject and object, with some of them transforming subjects *into* objects. The encounter between the climbers and the board in *Slant Board* demanded that they

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<sup>127</sup> On the flyers for Terry Jennings (December 18 and 19), and for Toshi Ichiyanagi (January 7 and 8), Bob Morris, Simone Morris, and La Monte Young were listed as contributing “events” later in the series. As the series progressed, Young put himself in the “music” category and categorized the other two as “somethingelse” on the flyers for Henry Flynt (February 25 and 26), Joseph Byrd (March 4 and 5), and Jackson Mac Low (April 8 and 9). Announcements at the Getty Research Institute.

<sup>128</sup> About her position in the downtown New York art landscape, Forti observed, “I’m pretty innocent. N.Y. is full of little ‘movements’ who hate each other and who consider each other’s work worthless. As for that positive audience response (we even got some bravos [at the Reuben Gallery]) I’m a little leery of it too.” Forti guessed her positive response was from “friends of La Monte’s or that is to say in the Cage movement and their clapping gets turned on by anything that’s dealing with a static dynamic. It’s kind of corrupt.” She concluded, “once the see-saw was classified it got its pre-ordained cheers and disgusted silences. Yet the whole business is seductive. All one can do is pray for a little personal maturity.” Letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155.

face the flat surface for most of the piece, and Forti's instruction to stay on the plywood kept the performers and the underlying structure adhered together in one complex unit for the work's duration [Figures 2.1, 2.13].<sup>129</sup> The people hanging in the ropes in *Hangers* [Figure 2.4] and lying under the boxes in *Platforms* [Figure 2.5] moved so little that their bodies became sculptural, while *Huddle* enacted the transubstantiation of a group of bodies into an object and back again [Figures 1.1, 2.3]. The extended repetition of certain movements like climbing made these movements object-like, especially legible and visible to spectators. The pieces' general rules, such as the direction to climb over the huddle and stay close to the group (rather than set positions or steps), and physical structures such as the slanted board, eliminated choreography as conventionally understood, and proposed other ways the body, movement, and people become organized, relate to each other, and take up space together. Presenting alternatives to skill and training, theatrical time and performance quality, and conventions of staging, costuming, and lighting, the Dance Constructions introduced new strategies for defining and ordering a dance while at the same time undermining some of its basic requirements to that point.

With the benefit of hindsight and in acknowledgment of Forti's long career in dance, dance historians have primarily related the Dance Constructions to the experiments of New York's Judson Dance Theater, which, at its height between 1962-1964, exemplified how post-war concert dance moved away from representation or idealization to emphasize choreographic structures and the body itself. Forti did not show work in the first concert at Judson Memorial Church in July 1962, or join the associated workshop, but her experiments in 1960-61 have been

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<sup>129</sup> See Appendix B, *Slant Board*.

cited as key influences for such work that followed.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, as Morris put it, “Forti set the agenda for most of what was developed at the Judson Dance Theater: contact, improvisation, games with rules, voice as text and as sound in dance, task-generating movement.”<sup>131</sup> “In short,” he concluded, “those strategies aimed at crushing the narcissistic ‘dancer’ and her bag of tricks based on professional training.”<sup>132</sup> Forti’s “strategies” in the Dance Constructions included the presentation of everyday movement as compelling (and aesthetic) in itself, elicited through simple, transparent means such as the plywood structures. They demanded little in the way of classical training, reducing the requirements for skill in dance. The works eliminated the coordination and rhythms of technical dance, transforming performance time. All together, these created a viewing situation for dance in which performers and spectators were physically much closer together and more similar to one another, giving the experience of watching dance a new texture and ethic. Many of these transformations in the field of dance in the 1960s have been recognized already in the work of Forti’s peers, especially Yvonne Rainer. My treatment will detail how the Dance Constructions uniquely initiated them, by way of some comparisons with Rainer’s work and its theorizations, but challenged the fundamentals of dance in such a way that undermined the Dance Constructions’ status as dances. Indeed, as Forti stripped dance down in the Dance Constructions, she eliminated certain values for concert dance that threatened to render it into something else altogether.

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<sup>130</sup> Lambert-Beatty noted that Forti’s relationship with her second husband Robert Whitman (1962-1968) prevented her from joining the Judson Dance Theater, although Forti performed in and provided music for a number of works by members of the group in the 1960s. *Being Watched*, 277 n. 14, and “Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures” in Breitweiser, 285.

<sup>131</sup> Morris named Forti as Judson’s most influential figure in the catalogue for his 1994 retrospective exhibition: see Kimberly Paice, “Catalogue” in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York, NY: Guggenheim Museum, 1994), 90. Morris sporadically attended Robert Dunn’s dance composition class and the Judson workshop that evolved out of it, and presented his first dance at Judson Memorial Church in 1963. Paice, 158; see also “Judson: A Dance Chronology” in *Ballet Review* 1, no. 6 (1967): 54-72, and Banes, 19.

<sup>132</sup> “All of these things Forti developed singlehandedly,” Morris claimed. Quoted in Paice, 90.



Emerging quietly out of their surroundings, the Dance Constructions did not herald their arrival nor transform the loft into a stage. They simply started, stayed in one place, and then stopped. The props and situational constraints set up by Forti produced everyday-seeming movement and enabled its examination, while also authentically permitting chance and accident and the possibility that everyone might participate, a drastic departure for choreography and dance at the time (and even today). All five of the works slowed movement down to a speed that permitted its full perception, simply asking what people in general, or bodies in general, looked like performing certain tasks: walking, climbing, hanging, and standing. They fixed movement in space so that one could examine its properties and potentials, with the structures such as the ramp angled against the wall, the hanging ropes, and the huddle shape obviously organizing the activity rather than classical dance technique or choreographed steps. The tasks generated by these structures were interesting on their own, and looked like they could be investigated by anyone, with no dance training or leotards required. The performers' stationary positions, slow speeds, and lack of affect gave viewers a chance to observe tiny shifts of weight, subtle reorganizations of the group (performers and audience), and details like a fist closing over a rope and a foot straining to reach the floor. With the range of movements in the performances radically reduced by the singularity of Forti's directions: climb a slanted board, maintain a shape and get over it, walk among obstacles, whistle, and listen, the only "drama" that occurred was within these operations. Without locomotion through space, internal organization by set choreography, refinement of movement by dance technique, or explicit narrative and emotion, the Dance Constructions proposed a very simple set of movements as compelling in their particularity, and insisted on the intrinsic skill and beauty of a human figure.

Central to these propositions were the Dance Constructions' physical structures and simple instructions, which transformed the look of dance as well as its underlying principles. Forti sketched out the pieces as she conceived of them, signaling their directness, simplicity, and self-containment.<sup>133</sup> She sent a drawing of *Huddle* to Halprin sometime in 1960-61 [Figure 2.14], before the loft concert, and noted, "This is a form in itself and not part of a composition."<sup>134</sup> Forti's comment indicated how the cluster of climbing people constituted the whole dance, its interest simply in the shape coming together, the people climbing, and it ending. The work created its own internal system, with Forti's instructions to climb and support and the huddle form determining the action, rather than subjective or arbitrary decisions about where an arm should go, or how it should move, or what a sequence of poses should look like. The performer's physical choices in the moment, driven by the functional demands of making a huddle and climbing over it, were strictly present tense and based on the immediate situation, and never exactly repeatable. The work's practical requirements and singular shape meant that the performer was not required to learn steps, sequences, positions, nor have to find a motivation for them. Thus the "choreography" was strictly limited to what was necessary for maintaining the unity and continuity of the huddle [Figure 2.15]. Each of the other four Dance Constructions similarly had one or two organizing principles (such as stand in the ropes or walk between them in *Hangers*, or stand in the rope and spin in *Accompaniment*), and their physical structures produced tight constraints around the chance-derived movements therein. The encounter they generated was real, not simulated, and a unique instance of the circumstances at hand. This gave

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<sup>133</sup> Forti wrote in *Handbook*, "I can still remember sitting on the bed one afternoon with a pad of paper and crayons in my lap, drawing up the dance constructions" (56).

<sup>134</sup> Letter and drawing reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 152.

the Dance Constructions both definition and transparency: their logic was internally consistent and easily readable, organizing movement so that it could be sustained and examined in detail.<sup>135</sup>

Although eliminating choreography was not the artist's primary objective in the Dance Constructions, her choreographic situations nonetheless removed steps to be learned and reproduced, introducing wholly new composition tools for dance.

The tasks generated in the Dance Constructions also proposed the suitability of quotidian movements as material for dance, a side effect taken up as a central strategy by Rainer and other participants in the Judson Dance Workshop. This strategy was initiated in part in the Dunn class, but elaborated especially by Rainer and choreographer-dancer Steve Paxton (who, like Rainer, performed in the Dance Constructions) into dances of eating and drinking, walking, and running, which rendered common activities into the aesthetic.<sup>136</sup> Rainer's *We Shall Run* (1963), for example, presented the running in its title as a dance movement [Figure 2.16]. A group of performers including artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Morris and dancers Trisha Brown,

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<sup>135</sup> Cued by Rainer, Lambert-Beatty has theorized dance's "seeing difficulty," its resistance to a spectator's vision, as one of the central interests of Forti and the Judson dancers in the early- to mid-1960s. Making dance into an "object," primarily by way of repeating it and slowing it down, was one way to combat the problem of its evanescence, as seen in Forti's pieces (as well as the dances of Rainer and others). I am adding to this that a transparent structure for movement, such as Forti's, also increased its legibility for an audience, an idea pursued throughout the 1960s and into the 70s by downtown New York choreographers.

Rainer's "follow the leader" pieces, in particular *Room Service* (1963), in which a dancer at the head of a line chose a movement for the others to repeat, made its own logic apparent to the people watching. Deborah Hay used similar structures for her own dances in the 1960s. Trisha Brown, an early collaborator with Forti, experimented later with physical structures to generate and constrain movement as well as iterative choreographic structures in her famous "equipment pieces" and "accumulations." The equipment pieces, such as *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), *Floor of the Forest* (1971), and *Walking on the Walls* (1971) used ropes to re-orient the body in relation to space and produce deliberate and sometimes awkward movements. The accumulation pieces, which started in the mid-1960s, introduced a movement and then another, repeating the first, and then another, repeating the first two, and so on, a structure that taught the viewer how to "read" the dance as it went along. It also, like Forti's works, appeared to reduce the requirements of choreography and the choreographer, setting up a situation and letting it play out for the spectator and performer alike.

<sup>136</sup> See in particular Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 9, 17, 21, 58-60, 90-91.

Deborah Hay, and Lucinda Childs, cantered around the stage in complex patterns of lines, loops, and spirals, while maintaining an “easy jog” throughout [Figures 2.17, 2.18].<sup>137</sup> Accompanied by a bombastic brass symphony, the understated and continuous motion ironized the drama in the music, and the drama that might attend a more conventional dance choreographed to such a score.<sup>138</sup> In Rainer’s signature “pedestrian” work that drew on the everyday, the runners’ pathways, the music, and the framing of the stage elevated the running into a dance. In the Dance Constructions, in contrast, truly ordinary movement like climbing, walking, and standing was presented as itself, without any transformations and minimal framing. Without such refinement and framing, Forti’s works were only just separate from the world, barely registering as dance at all.

Forti’s commitment in the Dance Constructions to investigating the actual conditions of the body performing actual tasks in actual time made her early works truly “task-based,” a label more

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<sup>137</sup> Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> This was Hector Berlioz’s *Requiem (Tuba Miram)* of 1837, according to Rainer’s *Work*, 290-292. Lambert-Beatty wrote, “Despite the simplicity of the jogging motion it deploys, *We Shall Run* is so complex as to perversely resemble the requiem’s interwoven melodies, repeating lines of text, and groupings of voices and instruments” (“More or Less Minimalism,” 109). In her memoir, Rainer claimed the piece as “adversarial,” using Susan Sontag’s phrase, and recalled feeling flattered when Jasper Johns “remarked that this dance had gone to the outer limits on a scale of possibilities,” and she related her “rebellion” in dance as analogous to those of Marcel Duchamp in art and John Cage in music (*Feelings are Facts*, 243).

Rainer’s memoir also used *We Shall Run* to illustrate the contrast between the personal lives of the artists in her sphere and the aesthetics of the work they were making. She observed, “ignored or denied in the work of my 1960s peers, the nuts and bolts of emotional life shaped the unseen (or should I say ‘unseemly’?) underbelly of high US Minimalism. While we aspired to the lofty and cerebral plane of a quotidian materiality, our unconscious lives unraveled with an intensity and melodrama that inversely matched their absence in the boxes, beams, jogging, and standing still of our austere sculptural and choreographic creations” (*Feelings are Facts*, 391). Lambert-Beatty drew upon Rainer’s “underbelly” metaphor to suggest “the personal was Minimalism’s soft spot,” co-constitutive of what appeared on the surface, and evidence of dance’s critical role in the movement (“More or Less Minimalism,” 108). Art historian James Meyer was also struck by Rainer’s commentary in his 2009 “Minimal Unconscious,” using it to launch a discussion of Minimalism’s “reduction” and “repression,” which accounted for surprising affect and associations in canonical works by male artists—but his treatment largely repressed the contributions of female artists and critics to the movement (*October* 130 (Fall 2009): 141-176, in particular 152 n. 51).

frequently and perhaps erroneously attributed to the later choreography of Rainer and other Judson Dance Theater members.<sup>139</sup> *We Shall Run* appeared to be a dance anyone could do, but the smooth running in Rainer's dance (while not exactly synchronized or stylized) was still highly organized and modulated, and as such, perhaps even more difficult to remember and execute than a conventional dance. Departing from technical dance movement in *We Shall Run* disrupted choreography's usual rhythms, but the coordination and memorization involved in learning and performing Rainer's dance were nonetheless quite specialized.<sup>140</sup> In Forti's Dance Constructions, dance's typical internal patterns of composition and energy were also disrupted, but the tasks of standing, walking, climbing, and whistling were performed and presented just as they were, making the movement especially legible for the intimate audience and accessible to new performers. Rather than simulating how people stood, walked, and climbed, Forti's works created conditions in which people actually stood, walked, and climbed—and nothing more. Forti's early pieces transformed choreography in addition to its appearance: they not only *looked* task-based, they *were* task-based, celebrating the naturally compelling qualities of movement and

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<sup>139</sup> Rainer herself was partly responsible for the "task-based" label, having written an article in 1966 relating the works of her contemporaries in dance to the sculptural objects of the 1960s, identifying "task or tasklike activity" as one of dance's newfound strategies to replace conventional phrasing, character, and virtuosity in performance. "A Quasi-Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora or an Analysis of *Trio A*," in Rainer, *Work*, 63. Robert Morris also invoked task in his 1965 "Notes on Dance," in order to explain the structuring mechanisms of the dances he made in the 1960s (reprinted in Sandford, 168-172). The term was used by Judson critic and promoter Jill Johnston, and picked up by its historians, in particular Sally Banes and Lambert-Beatty, who equated it with "ordinary movement" (Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 357 and 358).

<sup>140</sup> Describing her efforts to transform the conventional timing of dance in her later work, *Trio A* (1966), Rainer explained how "much of the western dancing we are familiar with can be characterized by a particular distribution of energy: maximal output or "attack" at the beginning of a phrase, recovery at the end, with energy often arrested in the middle." Rainer, "A Quasi-Survey," 65.

the instinctive creativity of the body.<sup>141</sup> Thus Forti's works introduced the magic of the real world to the alternate reality created by much of concert dance.

As they transformed skill in dance, Forti's Dance Constructions proposed values for movement and the body that diverged dramatically from those promoted by classical or modern dance techniques. If the dance of the past demanded extensive training for an articulate, elastic body, Forti's pieces did not, suggesting instead that ordinary movements performed by ordinary people had an interest of their own. They did not require that all of the performers develop the same ways of moving or appear alike: in fact, Forti's works proposed how the peculiarities of bodies that did not look exactly the same nor behave exactly the same *created* special interest—if one took the time to look at it. At low speeds and staying in one place, against the plywood and ropes the average able body appeared especially mobile and resourceful: able to stay balanced and upright in the loop of rope as it was knocked about in *Hangers* [Figure 2.4], and constantly responding to the assertive angle of *Slant Board's* wooden surface [Figures 2.1, 2.2]. Even without equipment, *Huddle's* simple shape and instructions to climb over it created a scenario that depended on focus and cooperation more than physical prowess, each figure organically emerging to climb over the others and then reorganizing to support the next climber [Figures 1.1,

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<sup>141</sup> Indeed Rainer, Morris, and other friends and associates did deploy actual tasks in some of their work in the early- to mid-1960s, but they were often framed within a larger composition and/or deployed for a specific outcome, like making sound. La Monte Young, for example, made a music composition called *Poem for Chairs, Tables, Benches etc.*, in which he and a collaborator dragged around furniture and the resulting noise constituted the composition. Rainer performed a similar experiment in 1964, hauling furniture out one door of a performing space and in another, which informed the organizing principles as well as the movement quality of her next dance piece. When she and some helpers carried a mattress in and around a performing space, she argued it was "so self-contained an act as to require no artistic tampering or justification" (Rainer, "Some retrospective notes," 45). Morris's *Site* (1964) most explicitly revealed these task-based experiments as having an end goal: as he dismantled a large plywood box, Carolee Schneeman appeared, posed in the manner of Manet's *Olympia*. Forti's 1961 works, on the other hand, presented tasks as just taking place and ending, with no larger goal or outcome.

2.3, 2.15]. These adjustments seemed to happen automatically, with the body responding to the situation without hesitation, thinking, or refinement, and each performer responding to the task and set-up in a slightly different way. Instead of pursuing the dancerly question of what an abstract body *can* do, the Dance Constructions thus inquired about what each individual body *does* do.<sup>142</sup> As the Dance Constructions emphasized the body's inherent skill, they underscored the commonalities between people and allowed for the appreciation of their differences, creating situations in which both could happen at once. The apparent reduction of skill in the works also enabled the audience to identify with the people performing, creating continuity between the artwork and the situation surrounding it.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, eliminating dance technique in the Dance Constructions allowed for the pursuit of more general questions beyond dance about the miraculous properties of the body and some basic qualities that people share.

The condition of continuity between the Dance Constructions and their viewers was heightened by the extended, uninflected treatment of time within each piece. Banes's account of Forti's 1961

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<sup>142</sup> Reflecting on the Dance Constructions fifty years later, Morris read them as effectively "de-skilling" dance, giving them a place within a modernist tradition in visual art. The term has been used in art history to describe the introduction of chance and pre-existing objects, compositions, or forms into artworks and the procedures for making art, which started at the beginning of the twentieth century and reached a high point in the work of Forti and her peers. Morris wrote, "a thread runs from Duchamp to Cage to Forti and is part of the larger story of modernism. All share a common strategy I can only name as 'agency reduction.' It has to do with finding methods and procedures that either eliminate previously assumed premises or automate the process of artmaking by reflexive systems found within the medium itself." Morris, "A Judson P.S." While this may be true, and a valuable characterization for dance and art as well as its discourse, Forti's works—rather than "de-skilling" dance—produced a vision of the body's innate skill.

<sup>143</sup> It is hard to say exactly how faithfully the performers in Forti's evenings reflected the full spectrum of individuals making up their audience. Morris later reminisced about the performances at Judson Church, "I do not recall having seen at Judson any performers who were obese, lame, or old, and there were few nonwhite performers. Was there a slight sheen of forgivable narcissism glowing on those young, white, energetic types? Did the self-critical have much weight among the enthusiastic participants? Has a certain mythical ethos come to color those innocent evenings? Well, it was before careers were made, dance companies formed, professions assumed, individual styles patented, iconic images fixed, histories sorted out and laid claim to." Morris, "A Judson P.S."

evening, based on interviews with performers and spectators, emphasized the simplicity of Forti's works (which the author likened to games) and how they dealt with time. She wrote,

Forti's game structures were presented simply, without special scene changes or costumes, without special backstage or secret transformations. They were dances without drama or illusion. Each dance consisted of a set of rules that generated an ongoing activity, without artistically arranged phrases, climaxes, or theatricality.<sup>144</sup>

In this description Banes contrasted Forti's constructions with the artfully arranged, action-packed, and narrative-driven dance that had preceded them. Conventional phrasing in dance typically consisted of a preparation-execution-recovery model, organizing the time of a dance as well as energy required of the dancer. Rainer characterized this as a pattern of "maximal output or 'attack' at the beginning of a phrase, recovery at the end, with energy often arrested somewhere in the middle."<sup>145</sup> Such an arrangement of the action gave a dance performance its predictable periods of momentum and drive and rest, but was eliminated in the Dance Constructions. Forti's pieces went on and on in the same manner within each piece, without the variations of dynamics that the preparation-execution-recovery model offers. And their onset and dissipation (beginning and end) were only just distinguishable from the lived time of their surroundings.<sup>146</sup>

Both Banes and Forti have noted how the internal timing and quality of the Dance Constructions resembled the "sustained tones" of Young's drone-like music, which Forti was listening to

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<sup>144</sup> Banes, *Democracy's Body*, 18.

<sup>145</sup> Rainer, "A Quasi-Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora or an Analysis of *Trio A*," in Rainer, *Work*, 65.

<sup>146</sup> The high energy and volume of the "some other things" in the Chambers Street performances would have emphasized the slow, mostly quiet pacing of the five Dance Constructions.



around the time she conceived of the works.<sup>147</sup> The artist described Young’s music as “sound that had a lot of distinguishable parts within it, yet the parts were present all at once, and the sound didn’t change very much in the course of its duration.”<sup>148</sup> As in an extended harmonic chord, quite a lot took place in the Dance Constructions, each of their parts “present all at once.” The figures emerging from the slowly churning shape in *Huddle*, for example, were still very much a part of that activity, and the similarity of climber after climber and their continuity with rest of the huddle did not break up or otherwise organize the work’s extended duration, but rather emphasized it [Figure 1.1, 2.3, 2.15]. Likewise, the walking and knocking figures in the ropes and on the ground in *Hangers* seemed like they could relate to each other in this way forever, bound by inertia to their swarming, swaying cluster [Figure 2.4]. The small variations in the movement in Forti’s pieces, combined with their transformation of time, invited viewers to pay close attention to the details but did not generate expectations for development or change within the works, reordering not just the timing of the dance but also the experience of the spectator.

In fact, Forti used sound in the Dance Constructions (and a recording by Young) to draw attention to the physical experience of time passing, that is, time as also material. In *Platforms*, for instance, a whistle issued out from under a box, and another called back, the simple tones attached to the exhales and inhales of each performer, who were hidden from view beneath plywood structures. With the visual dimension of the activity suppressed, the spectators were

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<sup>147</sup> Banes, 18 and Forti, *Handbook*, 34-35.

<sup>148</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 35. Forti here refers to La Monte Young’s famous “long-tone” compositions: a single note or harmony is sustained for as long as ten minutes, ten hours, or ten days; Young started composing these musical works in 1958. Detailed in Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 9-10 and Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2008).

transformed into listeners and oriented toward the soft sounds, the breaths that carried them, and the bodily time they (all) marked out together [Figure 2.5]. The extended time of the performance and the limited movement of *Platforms* produced continuity between the performers and their audience, whose members were made aware of their own bodies: attentive, restless, still, stiff. Both witnesses of and subjects to the work's suspended time, the audience felt *Platforms* in addition to watching and listening to it.

Likewise, *Accompaniment* directed the audience to a drawn-out experience of listening—at the opposite volume and intensity of *Platforms*. As Young's tape of two friction sounds started, a performer was wound up tightly in a single loop of rope; once let go, the rope reversed its course in a wild spin, winding up again partway and soon coming to a stop, which left the performer to stay and sway in the rope until the tape ended, about eleven additional minutes [Figure 1.2, 2.6]. Off to the side of the room, the performer just stood and listened to the music, a mallet rubbed on a gong and a tin can dragged across a window, sounds both difficult to distinguish and listen to, which was exacerbated by how loud they were played.<sup>149</sup> Rather than providing a pleasant danced diversion, the performer mirrored the audience's experience of staying still and listening to the harsh sounds over an extended duration, bringing attention to the physical nature of time passing. With barely any movement at all, *Platforms* and *Accompaniment* represented the most extreme ways the Dance Constructions reconfigured the time of dance and made it correspond

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<sup>149</sup> The two sounds were identified by Robert Morris, "Notes on Simone Forti," in Breitweiser, 47, and by Forti and Young in "Accompaniment for La Monte's 'Two Sounds' and La Monte's 'Two Sounds,'" artist statements appended to the standard questionnaire accompanying works acquired by the MPA at MoMA (September 16, 2016), 13 (hereafter "MPA artist questionnaire").

more faithfully to the experienced time of the audience.<sup>150</sup> The works suspended everyone together in a shared situation, performer and spectator living out the moment in a similar way.

The Dance Constructions' use of physical structures and simple rules to elicit basic movements, the availability of these movements to able bodies without extensive dance training, and the reconfiguration of time in a performance reduced the differences between spectators and performers in the Chambers Street loft. These attributes of the works made them continuous with their social as well as their physical surroundings, transforming the gap that divided an audience from a performance. Commenting on Rainer's and Forti's early work together, Lambert-Beatty wrote, "one sees by 1961 the need to emphasize the simultaneously spatial and temporal relationship between spectator and work; indeed, to define art in terms of this kind of embodied experience."<sup>151</sup> Taking this observation even further, I propose that witnessing Forti's works involved listening, feeling, and paying attention, in addition to just watching. Close, and in the round, Forti's works not only made the suggestion that a viewer could join in with a performance in progress, but they also proposed that she was *already* participating in the works by mere presence. In fact, Forti's instructions for the length of a few of the pieces articulated them in terms of the viewer, giving her "enough" time to walk around and take in the performance.<sup>152</sup>

Highlighting the corporeal, participatory aspects of viewing, the Dance Constructions reoriented

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<sup>150</sup> Referring to later works by Judson figures, Lambert-Beatty tied dance pieces using stillness to the silence of John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), likening the absence of movement in those dances to the absence of sound in Cage's famous work, which designated an amount of time as a musical composition, rather than a set of notes or musical events. For Lambert-Beatty, both acted as "a temporal exercise. Centering its auditors in their own living bodies, effectively amplifying the everyday sounds and sensations of the moment...[they] force the audience into a radical awareness of the present tense experience" (*Being Watched*, 48).

<sup>151</sup> Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 58-60.

<sup>152</sup> See Appendix B, *Slant Board* and *Huddle*.

the performance-audience relationship to something other than—or in addition to—gazing across a divide. The experience was collective, with a contemplative quality, both passive and participatory.

In contrast, according to Lambert-Beatty, the spectator's gaze and the divide between spectator and performer are key to understanding Rainer's performances in the period, and reflected the conditions for art-making in the 1960s more generally. The historian used as a primary piece of evidence Rainer's most famous work, *Trio A*, a five-minute section of the evening-length dance *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968), which both resisted and facilitated being watched. It consisted primarily of actions that looked quotidian but were actually complex idiosyncratic inventions, performed at a continuous pace: three performers moved continuously in straight lines and simple arcs, executing without emphasis actions such as a foot tapping in a circle while slouching and straightening, half of a handstand, and an awkward descent to the floor on one leg while both arms swayed in a figure eight [Figures 2.19, 2.20]. Their gazes never met the audience's, highlighting the separation of spectator and performer, each doing its own inscrutable thing.<sup>153</sup> In Lambert-Beatty's account, *Trio A* emphasized distinctions between the body performing and the body watching, a gap Rainer explored and insisted upon as her work in dance and film developed in the 1960s and into the 70s. The theorist highlighted the separation of viewer and performer in her influential reading of Rainer's dance and its significance, which

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<sup>153</sup> This is one of the most commented-upon aspects of Rainer's piece: the only time the performers face directly front, they stand with their eyes closed. Curator Catherine Wood contextualized this feature within Rainer's longer work in *Yvonne Rainer, The Mind is a Muscle* (London: Afterall, 2007), Lambert-Beatty in the work's simultaneous availability and resistance to vision—particularly mediated vision—in *Being Watched*, and Julia Bryan-Wilson as she experienced learning and performing the work and related it to the making of art, politics, and art history in "Practicing *Trio A*," *October* 140 (Spring 2012): 54-74.

proposed witnessing as a type of political participation, a strategy that evolved in response to media representations of the Vietnam War.

A little earlier in the decade, Forti's Dance Constructions created situations in which seeing, feeling, and participating were intertwined, complicating the relay between here and there and then and now. Like Rainer's works, they negotiated between spectatorship and participation, but brought the two terms much closer together, highlighting their instability while providing insight on how to witness when there is (seemingly) nothing to watch.<sup>154</sup> This operation took place at the expense of many of the conventions of concert dance, their politics both in their challenges to dance as a form and extending past it. Forti's pieces used novel mechanisms for organizing movement, simple rules, and physical structures that were highly visible and intelligible to both performers and spectators. And these mechanisms drew attention to the basic properties and shape of a human body, as well as the intrinsic skill it possessed for staying upright, balancing, supporting itself, and engaging with its surroundings as well as other people. Each of the Dance Constructions drew out the experience of time for both audience and performer, heightening their collective experience as a group. And as Forti's pieces took into account the experience of the audience, they proposed that anyone could join in, opening the artworks up to their surroundings.<sup>155</sup> With their unique approaches to composition, movement, time, and the

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<sup>154</sup> This suggests that Forti elicited in live performance in 1961 an equivalence between audience and work identified by Lambert-Beatty in Rainer's film work of the early 1970s. The last line of her book is about the relation of the people watching to the figures on screen: "We feel for them." Over a decade earlier, Forti's concert had pointed out, "we *are* them," which contains even more ethical imperatives.

<sup>155</sup> It is difficult to know for certain if this potential suggested by the pieces was actually realized in the first 1961 performances. Kotz has claimed that the audience in Yoko Ono's loft participated in *Hangers* and *Huddle*, but does not cite the source. If all the people who were listed on Forti's flyer for the evenings appeared in the show, they would not have had to recruit "participants" from the audience. See Appendix C and Kotz, "Convergence of Music, Dance, and Sculpture," 34.

spectator-performer relationship, the Dance Constructions repositioned choreography, the choreographer, the dancer, and the audience, inviting a wholesale reconsideration of dance's operations, innovations choreographers like Rainer and others would build upon in works such as *We Shall Run* and *Trio A*, presented in the context of the Judson Dance Theater and beyond.<sup>156</sup>

But the Dance Constructions also contained the potential to eradicate much of the foundation upon which concert dance rested. A dance that almost everyone could engage in, right now, without rehearsal or extensive dance training, resembled vernacular or social dance more than concert dance, allowing broad participation. A dance based on chance and spontaneity instead of set choreography disrupted or eliminated the carefully honed skill of both the dancer and the choreographer. And a dance of the things we do every day, carried out in the style of what we do every day, on the ground instead of on a stage, was more like life than art. In fact, a dance that was truly endless, that everyone could do, in which chance and spontaneity were authentic, and all bodies were celebrated, was maybe not a “dance” at all.

Later in the 1960s and into the 70s, Forti and her friends and colleagues (and others) elaborated some of these radical possibilities introduced by the Dance Constructions in extended improvisations, collective and community practices, and other experiments.<sup>157</sup> In 1961, however, the Dance Constructions marked out the dances we all do together on a very modest scale. They

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<sup>156</sup> Paxton reflected later that Forti's “insistence on clearing ground was very important. It produced a shock to my system.” “Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson,” 58.

<sup>157</sup> Yvonne Rainer's *Continuous Project – Altered Daily* (1970), for example, put extemporaneous decision-making alongside set choreography on display for spectators, a juxtaposition elaborated further in the improvisatory events of *Grand Union* (1970-1976). The development of contact improvisation by Paxton and others that began in 1972, and Deborah Hay's “Circle Dances” of the later 1970s invited broad participation, eschewed specific outcomes, and were not performed for audiences, carrying further these early questions about the requirements for dance.

pointed out ways to work together that are not arbitrary but based on collective action and purpose. They demonstrated that we are all participating, even if we just want to watch. They proposed how to witness things that are hard to see, by showing up, listening, and staying curious. They bound people together in a way that retained their individual experiences, and generated intimacy that preserved some distance. Moreover, creating near-equivalence or continuity between audience and artwork, performer and spectator, the work and the world, the Dance Constructions created a situation in which one was an extension of the other. What could happen in the world could happen in the dance, they seemed to say, and vice-versa—what could happen in the dance could happen in the world. What world can we make, they asked, and what can we do for each other?

### **The Dance Constructions: The Object is Alive**

Just as the Dance Constructions' stationary positions, lack of choreography or virtuosity, and uneventful activities kept *Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment* from conventional consideration as dances, their performative dimension prevented them from classification as sculptures. But in fact the Dance Constructions were as engaged with sculptural terms as choreographic ones, even conflating them. Not only did they probe the properties of the body and its mechanics, the Dance Constructions also probed the object and its relationship to the space surrounding it. As *Huddle* came together on the floor in front of its first viewers, they witnessed the creation of an object, with its attendant material, mass, gravity, and shape. Forti's earliest descriptions of the work highlighted its sculptural characteristics: she called the group of people "a strong structure," "the huddle," and "the mass," directing the audience to "observe it,

walk around it, get a feel for it in its behavior.”<sup>158</sup> The specificity of *Huddle*’s form and instructions and the equipment in the other Dance Constructions produced constraints around motion and locomotion, resulting in sustained forms that asserted the sculptural qualities of the works over their dancerly qualities. As an illustration, when Forti recollected the pieces of the 1961 evenings, she communicated them in part by the shapes they made and how they occupied space. The map she drew in 1974 for her retrospective *Handbook in Motion* emphasized each Dance Construction as an independent physical thing with a distinct graphic identity and a circumscribed location in Ono’s loft [Figure 2.21]. A pyramid with three wavy lines symbolized the ropes in *Slant Board*, a rounded form like a haystack depicted *Huddle*, a cluster of dots with long walking legs represented *Hangers*, two rectangles drawn at an angle to one another were *Platforms*, and an extended spiral symbolized *Accompaniment*.<sup>159</sup> Each was a self-contained unit, yet because Forti’s works were performances and *not* objects, they set into motion certain givens of sculpture in order to examine them in more detail. This unsettled some of sculpture’s basic assumptions—even some fundamentals of the material world more generally.

Forti has been linked to sculpture primarily through Robert Morris’s Minimal works, which he began around the same time as the Dance Constructions in 1961 but mostly exhibited a few years later, closely followed by his theorizations of the emerging Minimalist movement. Art historian Virginia Spivey concluded that Morris’s sculpture of simple plywood forms, shown at New York’s Green Gallery in 1964, “clearly implies a bodily presence that was explicit in Forti’s

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<sup>158</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 59. Also see Appendix B.

<sup>159</sup> Forti used similar graphic icons for the “program” for performances of the Dance Constructions at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1971, instead of a listing of the works in sequential order of presentation, as in a conventional dance or theater program. Reproduced in Breitweiser, 126.



choreography,” pointing out how the early works by Forti and Morris had a similar scale and appearance [Figure 2.22].<sup>160</sup> Kimberly Paice, in the catalogue for Morris’s 1994 Guggenheim Museum retrospective exhibition *The Mind/Body Problem*, went a little further, noting some of the ways performance and choreography offered tools to radicalize the sculptural object. She wrote, “Forti’s and the Judson Dance Theater’s task oriented dance vocabulary [...] reverberate[d] within Morris’s evolving sculpture, with its body-related scale and its emphasis on real time in which perception unfolds.”<sup>161</sup> Although Paice went beyond characterizing the two artists’ influence on one another as one of mere proximity or resemblance, the historian did not linger over how participating in the Dance Constructions gave Morris embodied knowledge of their underlying logic.<sup>162</sup> Forti’s Dance Constructions established relations—indeed, equivalencies—between bodies and objects, and introduced duration, process, and evolution as keys to an object’s operations. Morris incorporated these lessons into his nascent works, which did not just look like the plywood objects he built for Forti but also reflected an intimate understanding of the Dance Constructions’ core concerns.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Spivey, 15.

<sup>161</sup> Paice, 90.

<sup>162</sup> In the 1960s and 70s, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson made connections between Morris’s work and Forti’s as well as that of the Judson Dance Theater, but generally suggested that dance became a substantial influence on Morris only after Morris started participating in the Judson Workshop (1963). Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1977), 233-240 and Michelson, *Robert Morris* (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), 55-57. Later, Maurice Berger (and Paice) characterized Forti’s and Morris’s practices as nascent and intertwined during their marriage (1955-1962), marking the period as a pre-history for Minimalism proper. Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1989), 26-27.

<sup>163</sup> In the 1980s Morris discussed building the structures for Forti’s Dance Constructions, calling them “objects that had to be negotiated,” and their role in his developing sculptural practice. He said, “I built some of these [objects] for her. Some of these boxes I used as sculpture.” Morris in Benjamin Buchloh, “A Conversation with Robert Morris in 1985,” in Julia Bryan-Wilson, ed. *Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 56.

Morris's bodily knowledge also informed his evolving theory of sculpture, a new definition for the medium that is now considered to mark a crucial paradigm shift in contemporary art history.<sup>164</sup> He articulated the sculptural object as an interdependent set of elements in his now-canonic series of essays, "Notes on Sculpture," writing, "the better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the newer esthetic [...] one is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context."<sup>165</sup> With this transition from a single, autonomous form to an interactive set of conditions Morris offered a vision of the artwork, specifically the sculptural object, as relational, evolving, and inclusive of the viewer, much like the Dance Constructions had done. However, while Morris and his Minimalist thinking have been positioned as nurtured by Forti and her early works, his proposals are fundamentally at odds with Forti's propositions. For the Dance Constructions foregrounded ways *the object itself* was relational: as a theory for sculpture, they insisted on its dynamic, collaborative, and transitory qualities, pointing out how an object is not just a thing but also an event, going so far as to suggest ways it is alive.

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<sup>164</sup> Building on Krauss (and Michelson), Hal Foster, one of the most prominent theoreticians of Minimalism, articulated the movement as a "crux between the still-powerful modernist model of medium-specific thinking about art, and the context-contingent, interdisciplinary" model for post-modernity, as Lambert-Beatty summarized his view in *Being Watched*, 38. For Lambert-Beatty (and others), the Judson Dance Theater functioned similarly for dance. Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism" in *Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 35-69. Viewing Forti's Dance Constructions as essential to this transition brings the two frameworks together and exposes how the choreographic extends through a number of different mediums in the art context.

<sup>165</sup> Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 15. This originally appeared in *Artforum* in October 1966 (Part 1 appeared in February 1966).

My treatment details how the Dance Constructions, with their conjunction of body and object—and especially *Huddle*'s conglomeration of bodies *as* an object—complicated inert materials and forms, the space in which they were sited, and the relationship between viewers and things. They proposed sculpture as both a discrete thing and a set of effects, an intricate relational system between the artwork, the audience, and the environment. As the performers in Forti's works encountered solid constraints, they gave simple materials additional complexity and each shape additional dimensions. They brought internal forces up to the surface, and demonstrated how sculpture can operate at a number of levels and in a number of different directions in space. Held together in a variety of shapes, the performers proposed that shape is a process, always becoming. Indeed, as *Huddle* enacted the making of an object, it kept explicit the effort and labor that goes into creating things, and provided an example of an object that is inalienable from a subject. It further proposed a model of space that was elastic, making the object also inalienable from its surroundings. Finally, *Huddle* especially, but in fact the entire suite of the Dance Constructions, underscored sculpture's ephemerality: everything, they seemed to say, would go away eventually. Morris's insistence on sculpture as an object fixed in space and time minimized, repressed, or eliminated many of these possibilities. But Morris's major critic, Michael Fried, seemed to detect Forti's ideas latent within Morris's work, which he labeled too "theatrical" for his taste. One of Morris's very first sculptural experiments in New York took place at a theater, yet Forti's Dance Constructions offered theater with a different scope and aim than that announced by Morris—and it is likely that *this* theater is what Fried saw as having the potential to destroy art, or at least sculpture as it was then understood. The Dance Constructions, while engaged with sculptural questions, undermined its most basic qualities, i.e.: its fixity, autonomy, and permanence. They reoriented sculpture's relations to the viewer and the space

surrounding it, subverting the hierarchy of the relations between art object, viewer, and context altogether. Like Forti's engagement with the terms of concert dance, the full implications opened up by the Dance Constructions destabilized sculpture as a category, reverberating through Minimalism and far beyond it.

To begin with, each of the Dance Constructions stated simple material facts while giving them added complexity. *Platforms*, for example, both established and questioned the properties of bodies, wood, shapes, and sound, especially how the limits of each were defined. The paired forms appeared to be plain wooden boxes [Figure 2.5]. But their occupants, who moved them out into the room and arranged them, gave the boxes motion, a beating heart, and a vibrant breath. The wood made the performers' whistles resonate, creating additional dimensionality, even making the interior of the box bigger than the exterior. Together, the person and the plywood demonstrated how something that looked solid could contain additional texture and an interior, and how something that looked hollow could have life within it. Even further, the sound issuing from the boxes was both part of the work and extended beyond it, the waves literally touching the people gathered in the room; this sound had no mass but was still part of the piece's volume. With limited means, *Platforms* created illusions in plain sight and disturbed the notion of a fixed and fully knowable form. Morris, in one of the inaugurating moments of Minimalism, developed a related experiment, *Column* (ca. 1961), a rectangular plywood box in which he would stand on stage at the Living Theatre for three and a half minutes and then push over from the inside, lying on the floor for another three and a half minutes.<sup>166</sup> An injury in rehearsal due to Morris's

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<sup>166</sup> This event has been described by Krauss and Paice, who provide different dates for the performance. Dating it to 1961, Krauss used it as the opening episode for a chapter on the kinetic and mobile aspects of sculpture in her survey of twentieth century sculpture, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, circling back to it at the end of the chapter as a paragon of Minimalist values, in which the perception of the object was of primary

“unbuffered fall” led him to pull the column with a string from offstage rather than motivate the box from inside in the work’s eventual performance.<sup>167</sup> The experiment has nonetheless been used, in particular by critic and historian Rosalind Krauss, to relate the performance and dance of the 1960s to the durational and bodily qualities sculpture started to exhibit around the same time.<sup>168</sup> For Krauss (and, Morris, as his sculpture and theories evolved), motion and duration were largely implied by sculpture, and relocated to how a viewer’s body encountered and experienced it. Although person-sized, Morris evacuated his actual body from *Column* and limited its motion to a single, dramatic fall, a performance later registered by pairing identical columnar forms in a gallery space, one vertical and one horizontal [Figure 2.23]. Forti’s staging of paired boxes in *Platforms*, by contrast, gave them explicit embodiment, movement, and evolution through time. It proposed how the two wooden forms related to each other in a few different ways, and alluded to a narrative between them. Forti’s theater had perhaps less drama

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importance (Krauss, *Passages* 201-203, 233-240, 295 n. 1 - Chapter 6). Paice related the performance to Morris’s rejection of painting and a series of experiments in sculpture that began in 1960 and resulted in static, paired forms (90). More recent scholarship indicates that Morris presented the column as a performance in February 1962, in a benefit concert organized by La Monte Young for the printing and publication of *An Anthology*, a book to which both Forti and Morris had contributed. There may have been an earlier performance of it, but it is likely this was the first performance. Discussed in Bruce Robertson, “Dance is Hard to See: Yvonne Rainer and the Visual Arts,” in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 125; and, Gerard Forde, “Plus or Minus 1961 – A Chronology 1959-1963,” in Julia Robinson and Christian Xartrec, eds. *+/- 1961 Founding the Expanded Arts* (Madrid, Museum Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2013), 259.

It is less clear whether Morris used one of the boxes from Forti’s *Platforms* for the performance. The Living Theatre was in the same building as Dunn’s dance composition class and provided a stage for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and a number of other events, including a concert in July 1961, in which Yvonne Rainer presented *The Bells* (1961). This dance had a columnar prop made by the sculptor George Sugarman and painted bright yellow. Rainer and Morris have claimed Morris took the column to his studio (he was subletting the Chambers Street loft) in late 1961 and painted it grey, and later used it for the performance. See Robertson, 126-131.

<sup>167</sup> Paice, 90.

<sup>168</sup> Krauss linked Morris’s performance to a longer modernist tradition in sculpture, in order to recuperate as a positive term Fried’s criticism of the sculpture of the 1960s as too “theatrical.” Although Krauss provided examples of dance and performance that range from Dadaist performances in Europe to Martha Graham to Merce Cunningham and the Judson Dance Theater, her discussion of sculpture is concerned with inanimate sets, props, and anthropomorphic objects, with only a few mentions of ways theater and dance engage with sculptural values.

than Morris's, but a lot more going on, complicating the plain boxes and the situation surrounding it, and pointing out aspects of the artwork that the viewer cannot directly know. This sculpture had a story, one that moved the viewer physically and emotionally but at the same time retained elements of mystery, insisting on something beneath the surface.<sup>169</sup>

Whereas *Platforms* hid its mostly-stationary performers from view, Forti's *Hangers* dangled them in front of the audience [Figure 2.4]. The hanging ropes were given volume by the people standing within them, and put on display the mass of the "hangers" as they related to gravity, each other, and the "walkers" moving between them. The cluster of human forms swirled, swayed, and breathed, not entirely under control but not entirely out of it, either. The mass had a lightness and freedom that both defied and was obedient to the downward pull of gravity bringing the hangers back to center and stillness. The overall shape was earthbound and floating, packed and loose, while the performers in the ropes were both hanging down and standing up, completely still but also always moving. At once both static and alive, *Hangers* produced seemingly contradictory sculptural proposals with a minimum of means.<sup>170</sup> All together the Dance Constructions revealed simultaneous registers within singular things and the complexity of common materials and shapes, demonstrating the difficulty of defining something by medium,

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<sup>169</sup> Rosalind Krauss's "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," investigated shifts in sculpture that brought its interior up to the surface, but her narrative does not include Morris's performance or the dance that may have helped inspire it. In *Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum Magazine* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 149-156.

<sup>170</sup> In 1969-1970, sculptor Richard Serra described difficulties with working with steel, suggesting some of the ideal qualities of the solutions Forti had found: "The problem: to avoid architectonic structure, i.e., to allow the work to be both dense, loose, and balanced. Work that both tended upward and collapsed downward toward the ground simultaneously was o.k." Serra arrived at using human bodies as a material only later and in conjunction with cement and steel in his large-scale installations. Serra, "Play it Again, Sam," in *Richard Serra: Interviews 1970-1980* (Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum, 1980), 18. Forti included a photograph of Serra attending a concert she gave in 1968 in *Handbook in Motion*, 77.

shape, or dimensions. Things that seemed unified, they proposed, might actually have a lot of disparate parts, while something self-contained could be both expansive and have unexpected depth, aspects revealed only through the passage of time. Moreover, the Dance Constructions revealed that sculpture was both what you see and not what you see (but maybe feel or hear), at once resolutely literal and a kind of magic.<sup>171</sup> This sculpture's involvement with its viewers was affective, embodied, *and* spatial, and took time. Work and spectator both had something to *do*, rather than simply something to be, an energized set of relations.

Later in the 1960s, Rainer noted how Morris's low-lying plywood shapes toyed with the notion of gravity as a passive relationship between things, a relationship the Dance Constructions enacted in real time. Morris's "stolid, intrepid entities that keep the floor down" created the illusion of activating the floor against the object on top of it, while Forti's works directly displayed the effort of bodies, shapes, and materials to stand against gravity's downward pull.<sup>172</sup> This was multidimensional and multifaceted, and contrasted with monumental sculpture's upright, vertical position. Morris's *Column* had acted out the distinction between erect verticality and a low, horizontal orientation (and his subsequent sculptures mostly stayed there), but the Dance Constructions expanded this to a number of different directions. Forti's *Slant Board* was neither completely horizontal nor completely vertical, and its climbers carried out a complex negotiation of gravity on the surface of the board [Figure 2.1, 2.2, 2.13]. The slant literally rose up from the floor, and its performers literally pushed back down, the piece reorienting the object

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<sup>171</sup> Later, in 1966, Krauss discussed at length the "beauty" and "illusions" of Donald Judd's sculpture, trying to square its mysterious qualities with its literal appearance. "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* 4 (May 1966): 24-26.

<sup>172</sup> Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away," *Arts Magazine* (April 1967): 47.

as well as the relationship between an object and its surroundings.<sup>173</sup> As the climbers turned to face away from the plywood, they seemed to pull at an edge of the earth that would not budge. At the same time, the flat surface pushed up against them, threatening to send them off. The “movers” managed to keep going in this reconfigured world, the ropes with knots tied at regular intervals supplying awkward assistance for climbing the steep angle.<sup>174</sup> The energy required to keep climbing and hauling—to keep fighting gravity—was traced by the movement and the tension in the ropes attached to the top of the structure. The pathways of the climbers demonstrated a multiplicity of possibilities between body and object, object and environment, and within the object. As their trajectories went up, down, and across, crouched close to the board and standing taut against it, their varied amplitude, speed, and direction undermined the notion of an intrinsically static form. Upending a conventional relationship between figure and ground, *Slant Board* put on its face additional complexities of the forces within shapes.

The active, multi-dimensional operations of gravity were given even more visibility in *Huddle*, in which the bodies resisted one another rather than wood and rope. Like *Slant Board*, the piece both celebrated and disrupted the body’s inherent ability to negotiate mass and gravity, and the group of bodies set these terms in relation to each other. The climbing figures alternately resisted and succumbed to gravity, pushing up against it on the climb and using friction with the other bodies to mitigate it on the way back down. The supporting bodies underneath did the opposite:

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<sup>173</sup> Leo Steinberg’s 1972 essay “Other Criteria,” discusses twentieth century painting in terms of the “flatbed picture plane,” writing, “the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal [is] expressive of the most radical shift of the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture.” In *Other Criteria* (London: Oxford University Press), 84. Krauss primarily acknowledged Steinberg’s treatment of Rodin in her evolving conception of sculpture in her book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, but applied a similar formulation to her evolving theories of sculpture, which was also invested in the move from the “high” to the “low.”

<sup>174</sup> This is how Forti termed the performers in *An Anthology* [Figure 2.26].



they worked against the gravity of the climber to support the moving body as it ascended, and made way for gravity so that the climber could descend back into the group. *Huddle* discombobulated the horizontal and the vertical, proposing that getting up involved coming back down again, and that the distinctions between these states were perhaps not as clear as they might first seem [Figure 1.1, 2.3]. The group of people working together demonstrated the effort involved in achieving verticality, and the struggle necessary to sustain it, which was concealed or latent within sculpture made of materials that were more fixed. Suspended above the floor, the figure that first spun and then swayed in Forti's *Accompaniment* demonstrated the micro-movements necessary to keep standing upright. The slight movements of the rope revealed that remaining both vertical and completely motionless is impossible: a negotiation of mass and gravity is always taking place. As *Accompaniment* made a standing position particularly precarious, it pointed out the subtle suspension and distribution of forces going on in objects throughout the environment. All together, the Dance Constructions juxtaposed forces and forms in order to reveal an active, interdependent landscape. They challenged the uniformity and solidity of materials, the strict measurement of dimensions, and fixity of a shape. They exposed the constant presence of forces like gravity, inertia, and friction, and the effort of people and things to deal with them, in the moment and through time. This sculpture necessarily had constituent parts, and in fact could not operate without them.

Morris's Minimalism, on the other hand, needed especially stable and consistent shapes, which he argued were necessary for producing the viewer's recognition of her relationship to a sculpture and the space surrounding it. He began his theorization of "the better new work" by noting that it took "relationships out of the work out of the work and makes them a function of

space, light, and the viewer's field of vision."<sup>175</sup> According to this theory, only simple, singular shapes projected this effect, focusing attention on the position of the object and the conditions of the room, rather than the work's internal relationships. Morris insisted that ideal forms in this system would "create strong gestalt sensations. Their parts are bound together in such a way that they offer a maximum resistance to perceptual separation. In terms of solids, or forms applicable to sculpture, these gestalts are the simpler polyhedrons."<sup>176</sup> In other words, a simpler polyhedron like a cube or pyramid suppressed relationships within the sculpture in order to emphasize a relationship *with* the sculpture.<sup>177</sup> His works and theorization of "the better new work" attempted to fuse collaborative elements and erase difference to insist on a sculpture's integrity and autonomy in dynamic opposition to the viewer. As Morris's Minimalism redefined sculpture as a field of relations, it eliminated the possibility of active, contingent properties in objects and insisted on the separation between subject and object.<sup>178</sup>

Forti's Dance Constructions, before Minimalism had even begun, demonstrated such stability of forms and separation of elements as achievable only in theory. Forti's works revealed how even the simplest things have inherently multivalent aspects—that "perceptual separation" is always

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<sup>175</sup> Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," reprinted in *Continuous Project*, 15.

<sup>176</sup> "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," reprinted in *Continuous Project*, 6.

<sup>177</sup> A little later in his explanation, Morris wrote, "structural divisions in work of any size are another form of detail [...] the term 'detail' is used in a special and negative sense and should be understood to refer to all factors in a work that pull it toward intimacy by allowing specific elements to separate from the whole, thus setting up relationships in the work." For Morris, internal relationships in a work would complicate the interaction of the viewer with the form, creating an uneven tension due to things not being "equivalent" within it. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," reprinted in *Continuous Project*, 14.

<sup>178</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this study, Forti's early work also interacts valuably with sculptor-critic Donald Judd's theorization of Minimalism (a term he refused and a category he resisted), potentially another facet of his intimate involvement with dance via his marriage to dancer Julie Finch and later collaboration with choreographer Trisha Brown. See in particular "Specific Objects," reprinted in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax and New York: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Press, 1975), 181-189.

possible, perhaps even necessary. *Huddle*, for instance, as it asserted and re-asserted the same shape, claimed that a single or ideal shape, a fixed gestalt, is a fiction, and that its full realization and comprehension is forever elusive, ultimately impossible. *Huddle*'s tight configuration and the performers' buried heads made the grouping into a larger body, not strictly geometric but a simple, recognizable shape. Forti's instructions for the piece were so specific, and the dynamics and space were reduced in such a way that the range of possibilities for the work's shape was remarkably limited. But because *Huddle* was a performance, the shape evolved over the course of the work's duration, shifting and changing, approximating or approaching an ideal or consistent shape but never fully achieving it. Instead of *seeming* to shift as viewers moved around it, *Huddle actually* shifted while viewed, literalizing the work of shape that Morris's sculptures and writings had proposed. However, the tension produced between the shape's static and dynamic qualities, the "more or less" of it, due to its actual motion and evolution, undermined the notion of an ideal shape or shape as a stable, lasting entity. Even further, *Huddle* provided an example of a situation that existed *because* of its parts, the separation of elements giving the artwork its structural integrity rather than undermining its efficacy. This vision of sculpture insisted on parts working together, each dependent upon one another and constantly evolving.

*Huddle* also provided an example of an object inseparable from the activity that went into making it—indeed, inseparable from the subjects making it. *Huddle*'s bodies *worked* together to produce and sustain a shape: the artwork was a huddle, not a heap, as dependent upon labor, process, and energy, as on material. It was made by, for, and out of the people constructing it, who physically enacted the continuity between subjects and the things they make. Morris

invented a work illustrating a similar idea around the same time, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), which consisted of a small wooden box with an audio recording of the process of making it (which had taken about three hours), hidden inside it [Figure 2.24].<sup>179</sup> Paice described Morris's work as "a collapse of inside and outside, of past and present, the making and the made," which were "conflated in the experience of the object."<sup>180</sup> Like Forti's *Huddle*, the little box brought together means and ends. But its exposure of the labor that went into it was only partial, and in the past: the source of the sound was underneath a surface that was opaque, and the work—the physical work and the artwork—was finished and sealed off from the artist who made it and the viewer beholding it. That is, Morris's effort had been recorded and externalized for an unknown audience in some unknown future, permanently separated from one another. By contrast, *Huddle* performed the act of making in real time, with real people, right in front of spectators. There was no doubt about who or what went into the work, and no need for an explanatory title.<sup>181</sup> *Huddle*, in fact, was all process and no product: its "form" resided in its activity. As it kept the artist and her work visible, it eliminated, or at least complicated, the alienation of the object from the subject. The maker's body would always remain in the work, right there for viewers to see. As a theory for sculpture, it proposed how artworks are entangled with the people who make them, never fully free from their conditions of production or reception.

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<sup>179</sup> Paice, 104.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> *Huddle* has had imagistic or associative titles over the years, however, including *Mountain*. Arguably "*Huddle*" has these elements—more so than than *Climb*, which it has also been called from time to time—revealing lingering tension between the between the representative and the non-representative, persistent throughout both the Dance Constructions and Minimalism. Artist interview in *Simone Forti: From Dance Construction to Logomotion* (Los Angeles: UCLA Dance/Media project, 1999), and McDonagh, "Audience Enlisted in Whitman Recital," *New York Times*, May 5, 1969, 54.

In her important study of Morris's work, Julia Bryan-Wilson located Morris's persistent interest in process as originating in *Box With the Sound of Its Own Making*. He arrived at performing work (quite literally labor) for an audience later, first in the dance *Site* (1964), in which he moved sheets of plywood around a stage, and then in a monumental exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970, initially conceived as a retrospective but which came to consist of giant piles of raw building materials, loosely arranged or stacked by Morris directing a crew of equipment operators and construction workers. About these pieces Bryan-Wilson wrote, "Morris exploded the little box, 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 [...] *Box*'s simple record of making was transformed into a stage set with elaborately orchestrated demonstrations of physical work."<sup>182</sup> Bryan-Wilson's narrative was focused on manual labor (both Morris's fantasy of it and the specific politics of workers in Vietnam-era New York City), identifying how the project participated in a broader reorientation of values around making artworks using traditional crafts such as carving or casting while at the same time eliminating a permanent, precious product. The activity of Morris and his workers, who lifted, jimmied, hauled, and pushed untreated timbers, beams, pipes, and concrete blocks into configurations roughly sketched in advance, touched on all facets of Post-Minimal practice: Process Art, Performance Art, Conceptual Art, and installation. Bryan-Wilson argued how Morris's *sculptural* task united the art-historical concepts of "deskilling" artistic labor and the "dematerialization" of the art object around the artist's body, its work the generator of both the artwork's politics and meaning. "Only by materializing the labor of the artist, Morris seemed to

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<sup>182</sup> Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Robert Morris's Art Strike" in *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 90.

say, can the object be properly dematerialized,” the art historian wrote—what *Huddle* had proposed and made literal in 1961, and what choreography has as its fundamental condition.<sup>183</sup>

In fact, *Huddle*'s performers brought together social and physical space, emphasizing the degree to which object, viewer, and context depend on one another, each creating, orienting, and sustaining each other. The work reflected the people watching: the dynamic opposition of the circle that threatened to collapse in on the performance, and the performance that threatened to include everyone, created an unstable, interactive relationship between the work and its surrounds. It seemed that at any given moment a new group could separate from the others and cluster together into a new huddle, even that a new trio could step up on to the ramp of *Slant Board* or into the ropes for *Hangers*. In their continuity with viewers and interdependent parts, the Dance Constructions exposed the illusion that anything is fully separate from anything else: dance and sculpture, artist and work, performer and spectator, and art and life. Bringing the shuffles and shifts of the audience into the works themselves, Forti's Dance Constructions collapsed the special spaces of the gallery and the artwork with the prosaic space of everyday life, pointing out the tenuous nature of the distinctions between them and the contingent nature of hierarchies more generally.

Along similar lines, the Dance Constructions also pointed out how everything is evolving and temporary. Each of Forti's pieces was a set of relations, weathering time, natural laws, and little accidents until it was over, invoking the ephemeral nature of all things, even those that seemed the most immobile and invariable, like monumental sculptures and everyday objects. Made up of

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<sup>183</sup> Bryan-Wilson, "Robert Morris's Art Strike," 94.

idiosyncratic incidents—the imperfections in a tuneless whistle, a shift of weight and tightened grip on a loop of rope, the squeak of a shoe against the floor—the events in the Dance Constructions included the way the end of a rope was fraying, the knotting and swirling of plywood, and the particular character of a pile of shoes, details that revealed themselves the longer one looked [Figure 2.1, 2.3]. Staged for an intimate audience, these minute revelations highlighted the complex minor mysteries and micro-dramas to be found everywhere, in the most static of things. They suggested that “perceptual separation” would happen despite all evidence of pure repetition or a unified form. Conversely, Forti’s works also highlighted the provisional qualities of objects and events that appeared like they might go on forever: even though *Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment* extended and suspended time, eventually the performers stepped down, straightened up, stood, and walked away, moving on to something else. Owing to the nature of their materials and the real, physical costs of labor on their performers, these works existed only *because* they were temporary. Indeed, the Dance Constructions insisted on the uniqueness of a moment in time, and the impossibility of its repetition. For sculpture, this posed the artwork as not a thing but rather an event.

Idealist art critic Michael Fried’s attendance at the early performances by Forti or the Judson group has never been confirmed, yet his identification of “theatricality” in the sculpture of Robert Morris and Donald Judd in his impassioned article “Art and Objecthood” suggests that Fried could sense ideas from dance “contaminating” art, even if they were repressed in Minimal sculpture.<sup>184</sup> This infuriating new work, according to Fried, did not attempt to picture anything

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<sup>184</sup> Fried, 125. After its first appearance in *Artforum* in 1967, Fried’s essay appeared in Gregory Battcock’s 1968 anthology *Minimal Art*. The volume included Barbara Rose’s 1965 “ABC Art,” which was previously published in *Art in America* and discussed dance in some detail; it also included Yvonne Rainer’s “A Quasi Survey,” written in 1966 and previously unpublished (Battcock, 274-297 and 263-273).

nor relate its component parts, but simply existed in the same time and space as the spectator.<sup>185</sup> He explained, “It is as though objecthood alone can, in the present circumstances, secure something’s identity,” and continued, “[this] espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art.”<sup>186</sup> At a human scale, hinting at an interior life, Minimal objects were too much like people for the critic’s comfort, and their “theatricality” threatened the autonomous modernist artwork that transcended earthbound concerns. It is unknown whether Fried knew about Forti, the Dance Constructions, or the other dancers in her milieu, but Fried’s identification of theater as a new (negative) term in relation to art in general and sculpture in particular directly resonates with one of the primary ways to signal the time and embodiment that seemed to enter into visual art around that time.<sup>187</sup> Viewing the Dance Constructions in relation to theatricality helps clarify the anxiety of future critics such as Fried, while shedding light on the bodily and affective aspects of the expansion of the art object at mid-century—as well as their implications for art over the long term.

Morris’s Minimalism underscored time and embodiment (mostly the spectator’s) as he explored the effects of a simple, static object on a mobile viewer within a gallery context. But the Dance Constructions worked through the entirety of the range between subject and object, the

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<sup>185</sup> Fried preferred the term “literalist art,” which he contrasted with “Pop or Op Art.”

<sup>186</sup> Fried, 125.

<sup>187</sup> Fried’s text mentioned evolutions in theater in the period, citing the influences of director-theorists Bertold Brecht and Antonin Artaud; it also referred (critically) to Susan Sontag’s collection of writings on theater, Happenings, and film, which reveals that Fried had some knowledge about these related spheres (139-140, 141 n. 17).

Krauss turned Fried’s negative assessment back on itself, characterizing Minimalism’s great achievement in how it destabilized the precious, unique art object via techniques of mass production while at the same time requiring an embodied encounter. With choreography at the heart of this encounter, even Krauss’s terms of reproduction and repetition as well as surface and interiority must be reoriented. In particular in Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 201-242 and “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October* 54 (Autumn 1990): 3-17.



performative elements of the pieces emphasizing the continuity between these terms as well as the subtleties of their relations, disrupting the entire sculptural situation and introducing to it additional potential. Forti's conjunctions of body and surface displayed the easy slide from person to thing and back again, and barely distinguished creative from prosaic activity. Their proposals challenged sculpture's permanence, its autonomy from the viewer and its context, and even its full apprehension in space and time, thus exposing its inherent contingency, evolution, and ephemerality. With the Dance Constructions as part of the "infancy" of Minimalist sculpture, Fried's complaint that Minimalism's "espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre" could be considered a prescient assessment of its operations.<sup>188</sup> Fried seemed to pick up on the more outrageous propositions Forti made with the Dance Constructions that resonated in Minimalism's fixed forms. Her works offered a softer, stranger version of sculpture, proposing the complexity and interiority of objects, and insisting on the intricacies of their relationships with viewers and each other. Indeed, when Fried found "a kind of latent or hidden naturalism [...] at the core of literalist theory and practice," he (not unlike Forti) wondered what happened when the object is alive.<sup>189</sup> He wrote, "the apparent hollowness of most literalist work—the quality of having an *inside*—is almost blatantly anthropomorphic."<sup>190</sup> As he identified as problematic this new sculpture's "inner, even secret life," Fried appeared to detect the very real bodies that had worked through terms basic to sculpture and the sculptural situation as the 1960s started: Forti and Morris whistling to each other from inside wooden boxes in *Platforms*, the climbing pile of people enacting form and

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<sup>188</sup> Fried, 125.

<sup>189</sup> Fried, 129.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

structure in *Huddle*.<sup>191</sup> Eventually Fried and Morris were threatened by what was lurking beneath the surface of sculpture, even finding in it the potential end of art.<sup>192</sup> Yet as Forti's Dance Constructions probed these dimensions with curiosity and a light touch, staging the theater and choreography of the everyday, they may have also acted as a dynamic center for the practices of the ensuing decade.

For Forti, the five 1961 works provided the artist access to something more personal and elemental. Giving abstractions such as gravity and inertia physical form revealed them as not at all abstract and reassuringly consistent. Forti has described how, when she moved to New York City, she was overwhelmed and “depressed” by its “maze of concrete mirrors.”<sup>193</sup> She remembered “how refreshing and consoling it was to know that gravity was still gravity. I tuned into my own weight and bulk as a kind of prayer.”<sup>194</sup> A steep slope posed “weight,” “bulk,” and “gravity” as both steadfast givens and as a set of relationships, up for negotiation. Standing in a rope, the mass of the body pressed down into the feet, gravity faithfully pulling against the knocks and turns of the people rushing by. But as the Dance Constructions provided Forti the performer an answer to a personal call, for sculpture they seemed to ask: what if a sculpture could show you the work going on within it, to stand up and hold itself together? What if it gets tired and lonely? What if it gets old and dies? This vision of sculpture was more human, with

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> In three main points summarizing his position, Fried wrote: “1. The success, even the survival, of the arts depends on its ability to defeat theatre....2. Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theater...and 3. The concepts of quality and value...are meaningful, or wholly meaningful *within* the individual arts. What lies *between* the arts is theatre” (139-142, emphasis in original). Modern art defeated theater, according to Fried, in its instantaneous presence and “presentness,” concluding that “we are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace” (147).

<sup>193</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 34.

<sup>194</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 34.

everything it entailed. Drawing attention to an object's singularity and mortality, and emphasizing its performances for an audience, Forti's experiments undermined sculpture's very ontology.

## **We make things**

In the years following the first performances of the Dance Constructions, new manifestations of the works reiterated their initial challenges to existing models for dance and sculpture, with some of these instances disrupting choreography and the art object even further. In these early examples of how the Dance Constructions lived through time, Forti made explicit a number of possibilities initially only implied by the works when they were first performed. Right away, Forti contributed verbal descriptions for two of the pieces to a book of scores, highlighting how the pieces could be communicated and transmitted without the body-to-body transmission typically found in dance. The works traveled without the artist (and sometimes with the artist) to distant places, where they were enacted by different groups of people. Reconstituting the works in these settings emphasized how the Dance Constructions differed from traditional models for dance: each of Forti's situations could be set up and run like an experiment, generating a new outcome every time. Yet each situation was tightly circumscribed, giving the pieces consistent identities despite a fluctuating materiality, an inherent condition of the choreographic Forti achieved without set choreography. This had the potential to make the Dance Constructions more durable than other works of dance. In addition, some performances of the works after 1961 offered opportunities for the audience to participate in the Dance Constructions, especially *Huddle*, thereby carrying out the continuity the works established between performer and viewer. These examples of how the Dance Constructions were manifested after 1961 represent possible

paths for the works' continuation into the future, the primary project of a museum considering them for acquisition. A brief examination of these past manifestations reveals attributes of the Dance Constructions that made them particularly distinctive and appealing (to MoMA)—and that may end up the most changed in the process of translating them for an institutional collection, the subject of this study's Part II.

Around the time the Dance Constructions first appeared, Forti was invited to contribute to a publication-in-progress edited by La Monte Young with poet Jackson Mac Low.<sup>195</sup> Eventually published in 1963 as *An Anthology of Chance Operations, Concept Art, Anti-Art, Indeterminacy, Plans of Action, Diagrams, Music, Dance Constructions, Improvisation, Meaningless Work, Natural Disasters, Compositions, Mathematics, Essays, Poetry [An Anthology]*, the colorful, square volume with over one hundred pages illustrated the deeply interdisciplinary nature of the context for the Dance Constructions, and commonalities between the contributing artists, who included George Brecht, John Cage, Walter De Maria, and Yoko Ono, among others [Figure 2.25]. The book format also established the relation of diagrams, texts, and musical scores, which communicated the repeatable, “allographic” dimension of the performing arts, to several different disciplines including poetry, dance, and visual art, which were new to these structuring devices. Forti's single page in *An Anthology* provided brief descriptions of five different dance scenarios, examples of “choreographic thinking,” as dance historian Alison D'Amato recently put it, in which dance was carried out through language and in the imagination instead of the

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<sup>195</sup> Liz Kotz noted that the compiled contributions were described by Young to George Maciunas, the book's eventual publisher, in June 1961. According to Mac Low's recollections in 1980, they had been solicited for “an abandoned issue of *Beatitude East*,” which would have been a continuation of the San Francisco poetry publication that ceased in October-November 1960. Liz Kotz, “Poetry Machines,” in Robinson and Xartrec, 51.

body [Figure 2.26].<sup>196</sup> The five short texts included the “dance report” Forti read aloud in Dunn’s class about the onion that sprouted and fell off a bottle, as well as another involving boys pushing a snowball up a hill and letting it roll back down.<sup>197</sup> These reported on movement Forti had observed or imagined, her language framing real world events as dance. The *Anthology* texts also included versions of the instructions for *Huddle* and *Slant Board*, each under the heading “Dance Construction.” The instructions for one of the “other things” from May 1961, in which two performers followed contradictory directives and ended up in a struggle, appeared under the heading “Instructions for a Dance.”

The texts for the Dance Constructions in *An Anthology* were somewhere in between a score and a description, gesturing toward both their previous enactments and possible enactments in the future, and proposing that the words alone could supply the necessary ingredients for producing (reproducing?) the two works. The text for *Huddle*, for example, read in full:

DANCE CONSTRUCTION:

A group of seven or eight people stand together in a very close huddle. One member of the group climbs up the mass of people and then down again becoming once more a part of the mass. Immediately another is climbing. The movement must be constant but not

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<sup>196</sup> Dance historians have mostly overlooked Forti’s *Anthology* contributions, but D’Amato’s project tracing the evolution of the score as a generative mechanism for dance theorized different sets of relations between language and movement and positioned Forti as a key innovator in the twentieth century (along with Mac Low). D’Amato, 44-76.

<sup>197</sup> Around December 1960, Forti wrote Halprin a longer description of the boys playing with the snowball, which she said she had seen in the park in New York, finding in it “something exactly along the dance lines I’ve been thinking of. But so much more direct and so much better.” Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 156.

hurried. Sometimes it happens that there are two climbing at once. That's all right. The dance construction should be continued "long enough", perhaps ten minutes.<sup>198</sup>

This passage describes the activity in the Dance Construction as well as its quality, the number of people required to execute it, and the work's duration, documenting the work and providing suggestions for reconstituting it. In fact, Forti's text performed some of the ways a document can act as a score for subsequent instances of an artwork, incorporating information from past realizations into its present and future manifestations. The exact timing of the composition and submission of Forti's contribution to *An Anthology* is unknown, but the details in the text reveal that Forti had already staged or tried out the Dance Constructions when she wrote them, either in the May 1961 loft concert or even a little earlier.<sup>199</sup> Remarking in the text for *Huddle*, "Sometimes it happens that there are two climbing at once," and concluding, "that's all right," Forti indicated that this complication had already happened and it worked out just fine. In the text for *Slant Board*, Forti wrote, "it is suggested that performers wear tennis shoes," implying that this solution had been found through trial and error.<sup>200</sup> With certain questions that could arise from the text already worked out in practice and communicated to the reader, the two descriptions established a relationship between the language on the page and the constructions in real life.<sup>201</sup> In fact, directives like "the movement *must be* constant," and it "*should be* continued

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<sup>198</sup> Simone Morris in Mac Low and Young, eds. *An Anthology*, n.p.

<sup>199</sup> Earlier in 1961 (appx. February), Forti wrote Halprin about showing *Huddle* "at a demonstration," maybe in Robert Dunn's class, and sent her a drawing of it with instructions very similar to the *Anthology* text. In Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 152; see also Figure 2.14. Steve Paxton has described rehearsing *Slant Board* before the May 1961 performances but no other evidence of its performance prior to the loft series has surfaced to date. In "Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson," 58.

<sup>200</sup> D'Amato explores Forti's use of ambiguous tenses in some detail, 63.

<sup>201</sup> D'Amato argued that each must be understood with the other: the works' "crystalline conceptual formulation and resolutely corporeal iterative history contribute vitally to the overall identity of the works" (71).

‘long enough’” went so far as to suggest that readers could—even should—carry out the Dance Constructions, and that the text contained sufficient information to do so. The final text in the series of five, with the title “Instructions for a Dance,” was still more explicit about using language to generate movement, relaying conflicting instructions that could result in a movement scenario.

Forti’s page in *An Anthology* offered evidence that the Dance Constructions could be translated into simple words and communicated to reader-performers via a textual transmission rather than an embodied one. The book enabled Forti’s works to pass to new “movers” (as Forti put them in the instructions for *Slant Board*) without the artist present, eliminating the need for body-to-body transmission between teacher and performers. The brevity and economy of the Dance Constructions lent themselves to the brevity and economy of these texts, and Forti’s communication of them in this way represented another departure from dance models and conventions. For the most part, concert dance to this point (and to a large extent still today) had been tightly tied to the body of the choreographer and her dancers, and dances were passed along in an intensive, in-person process of invention, teaching, and learning based on established dance techniques. By contrast, the Dance Constructions were generated by tightly delimited situations using physical structures, pedestrian movement, and barely-skilled activity. This reduced the visibility of the artist’s “hand” in the works and the scores in *An Anthology* carried the operation even further. Spelling out in a few terse sentences the physical structures and functional movements required for Forti’s pieces, the texts (like the dances themselves) removed references to dance terminology and technique. They also removed the specificity of Forti’s body—indeed the specificity of *any* body—for teaching and transmitting the Dance Constructions, leaving it to

the text alone. Moreover, as Forti's translation of movement into words made her works available to others without her oversight or presence, the book provided a vehicle for their circulation, giving the pieces lives Forti could not predict, possibly know, or monitor. Almost from their very conception, then, the Dance Constructions extended past Forti's full knowledge of their creation, delivery, and impact, with the publication of the texts in the anthology at such an early date in the life of the works signaling this dispersal as an essential value.<sup>202</sup> Even more broadly, Forti's presence in *An Anthology* underscores the importance of the body and choreography to a signal moment in post-war art history that resulted in an explosion of practices around 1960, which is how *An Anthology* has been narrated to date.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Likewise art history cannot fully grasp all of these occasions. There is a tantalizing clue that one of Forti's Dance Constructions appeared in Copenhagen in November 1962 without Forti present. A ruled card listing the contributors and works in the Fluxus Festival (Fluxus Festorum), one of the very first of such festivals in Europe, indicated "Simone Morris, Dance Construction" on the third night. No more information about which of Forti's works and whether it actually appeared has surfaced to date (Forti herself did not attend the festival). Reprinted in the online companion to "Charting Fluxus: George Maciunas's Ambitious Art History," MoMA, The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building (March 6–May 6, 2013), <http://fluxusfoundation.com/news/charting-fluxus-george-maciunass-ambitious-art-history-at-moma/> (Accessed January 31, 2018).

<sup>203</sup> Liz Kotz and Julia Robinson have identified how the experiments in poetry, theater, music, and visual art expressed in text and other graphics in *An Anthology* created new models for artworks that reoriented the notion of the artist/author and suggested that the reader/audience participate in the making of the work. Recognizing Forti's removal of her physical body in her texts both clarifies and heightens the urgency of their claims. Both in its minimal aesthetics and its format, the book exemplified the "death of the author" theorized by literary theorist Roland Barthes that downplayed the artist's individual or expressionistic imprint and emphasized the role of the reader, according to these theorists. Liz Kotz's book in particular, *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), illuminated the creative functions of the language and diagrams in *An Anthology*, arguing how its text-based artworks anticipated and/or initiated the diagrams, descriptions, letters, lists, and other documents of the Conceptual Art of the 1960s; also see Robinson and Xartrec. Barthes's signature post-structuralist/deconstructionist essay, "The Death of the Author" (1967), as many have noted, was first published in English in an art magazine: *Aspen* no. 5-6 (Fall-Winter 1967). This was itself a "magazine in a box" much like the Fluxus scores and multiples that were developed in the wake of *An Anthology*. The issue in which Barthes's essay appeared included audio recordings of an essay and interview by Merce Cunningham and compositions by John Cage and a super-8 film of a dance piece by Robert Rauschenberg. *Aspen*, "The Minimalism Issue," <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/index.html> (Accessed January 31, 2018).

Many of the pieces in the 1963 *Anthology* were nothing if not dances, setting bodies in motion: operating a car (George Brecht), performing a "ballet for woodwinds" (Joseph Byrd), crawling on a beach (Walter De Maria), even if they were not specific about who, how, when, and where. Organized alphabetically, Brecht came first in *An Anthology*, his *Motor Vehicle Sundown Event* (1960) detailed in a fold-out section after the title pages of the book. Joseph Byrd was the fourth artist, his *Ballet for Woodwinds* (1961) consisting of fragments of a musical score, to be drawn out of a hat by the performers, who both played them and moved



As Forti traveled around the country and the world in the 60s and 70s (and beyond), she brought the Dance Constructions with her, realizing them with new groups of people. These subsequent performances of the works demonstrated the unique relationship of the Dance Constructions to “repetition,” pressing dance’s capacity to resist the condition of the original and the copy even further. The physical structures and singularity of the action in works such as *Huddle* and *Slant Board* meant that Forti did not teach specific movements to new performers to emulate, but rather that they tackled each project in a new way, every time. Within the works, climbers emerging one after the other from the mass of people in *Huddle* did not follow exactly the same trajectory, for example, nor were the repeated whistles from under the boxes in *Platforms* identical through each cycle of breath. Similarly, each new instance of the Dance Constructions was its own manifestation, the performers newly navigating the structures and instructions. Yet, despite this—and indeed maybe because of it—Forti’s pieces had a remarkable consistency from iteration to iteration. In her return to producing her own work in 1967, Forti presented *Slant Board* and *Huddle* as “Two at Once” at the School of Visual Arts in New York (SVA) [Figure 2.1].<sup>204</sup> *Village Voice* critic Jill Johnston reported on the evening, describing Forti’s “tough and simple” pieces as “early pre-Judson examples of the exploration of movement not generated by

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around the stage. Nearly all of De Maria’s works in *An Anthology* describe performance and motion, but *Beach Crawl* (1960) includes a spatial pattern for the performer. Moreover, Forti was not the only dancer/choreographer in the book: James (Jimmy) Waring provided a collaborative poem, and Mac Low’s “Asymmetries” and “Simultaneities” were chance-derived poems for realization in dramatic performance (see also D’Amato for a discussion of Mac Low’s similar texts *The Pronouns*, 44-58). If, as theorists have argued, the book represents the juncture between “modernism” and “post-modernism” in art history, dance emerges as key to this development.

<sup>204</sup> Flyer/program for the series of “Fall Gallery Concerts,” November 10-12, 1967, in the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, Performance Series; on these occasions Forti used the name of her second husband, Robert Whitman. Described in Jill Johnston, “Dance Journal, Seated Forever,” *The Village Voice* (November 13, 1967): 20, and Richard Kostelanetz, “The Discovery of Alternative Theater: Notes on Art Performances in New York City in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 27 no. 1 (Winter 1989): 128–172.

‘performance’ values or studio technique.”<sup>205</sup> Johnston’s review communicates the dynamic unification of opposites that had characterized the works when they first appeared: she wrote, “the assignment, for eight to 10 people or so, was to maintain a massed huddle and for one person at a time to climb over the mass, head first, feet first or however, becoming a part of the mass again as they finish the climb, grappling to hold the aggregation. A kind of sculptured slithering compact muddle of aimless activity. Structured chaos. Organized confusion.”<sup>206</sup> In Johnston’s writing Forti’s wildest work is unmistakable, although Johnston had not seen *Huddle* herself in the 1961 performances.

Indeed, the compositional strategies Forti used for the Dance Constructions: task-based movement, pedestrian physicality—and especially the physical structures—articulated a new kind of objecthood for dance and oriented their (re)iterations as consistent yet especially resistant to repetition. Whereas much of concert dance used choreography to secure and solidify its identity, Forti’s works did not have choreography, strictly speaking. Without set steps, they relied on physical forces and the responses of the performers to the structures and to each other, which could not be exactly repeated in rehearsal or performance. At the same time, the self-containment of each shape, singularity of the action, and extemporaneous decision-making by the performers in each performance of Forti’s pieces resulted in works less susceptible to degrading, morphing, and “drifting,” over time than other choreographed dances, like Balanchine’s ballets.<sup>207</sup> Dance’s embodiment prevents subsequent performances from being

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<sup>205</sup> Johnston, “Seated Forever.”

<sup>206</sup> Johnston, “Seated Forever.”

<sup>207</sup> Recall dance notator Guest’s alarm: “working from their own notes, [the dancers] admit—so we hear—there are passages they don’t remember and have to make up, thus small changes are occurring [...] *But in*

mechanically exact replications of prior performances, but many of them aspire toward a model, which Forti's works could not. Paradoxically, this has made them more resistant to change. Steve Paxton, reflecting on 1980s reconstructions of works from the 1960s including Forti's *Slant Board*, which "rely on choices by performers," declared that such works were "not intended to remain the 'same' from one performance to the next, let alone for 20 years." But, he concluded, "because they are generalities and include change, they have a kind of structural immutability."<sup>208</sup> For Paxton, trying to keep something exactly the same would inevitably change it, and Forti's works were especially enduring, maintaining their integrity and identities as they traveled long distances and went years between showings.

After 1967, Forti presented the Dance Constructions in Rome when she arrived there in the fall of 1968, performing them herself along with Italian volunteers, and revisited them again in New York in 1968 and 1969.<sup>209</sup> On this last occasion, the works had the chance to expand into their audience, which learned them on the spot and performed without any rehearsal. The *New York Times* dance critic Don McDonagh reported on the concert at New York University (NYU)'s Loeb Student Center, in which spectators learned how to participate in *Huddle* and pull the rolling boxes in *Rollers*, one of the pieces from the 1960 evening at the Reuben Gallery.<sup>210</sup> He wrote, "Yesterday Mrs. Whitman [Forti] set audience members the playful tasks of forming

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*time the drift inevitably sets in [...]* What then? Will the label 'Choreography by Balanchine' still be accurate?" (Guest, 43).

<sup>208</sup> Paxton, "Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson," 56.

<sup>209</sup> Simone Forti, *Danza costruzioni*, (Rome: L'Attico; Piazza di Spagna, 1968) and Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo," *October* 152 (Spring 2015): 26-52.

<sup>210</sup> The occasion gave spectators the opportunity to look at *Rollers* from above, a suggestion Forti had made to Halprin in late 1960/early 1961 (letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 154-155). New York performance photographer Peter Moore took a photograph of *Platforms* from this perspective, high up in the gymnasium's balcony [Figure 2.5].

human igloos and clambering over the top, in ‘Climb,’ or pulling others around in wheeled carts, in ‘Rollers.’”<sup>211</sup> Using a different name for *Huddle* (and Forti), McDonagh nonetheless noted how easily the work could be reproduced—and how quickly an experience as a viewer of the work could turn into that of a performer. New York performance photographer Peter Moore isolated and framed one of these Huddles in an image that illustrated the work in Forti’s 1974 book *Handbook in Motion* [Figure 2.3], and Forti recalled in her accompanying description, “the piece has also been formed in such a way that, as it ended, each of the performers found six other people from the audience to get a second-generation huddle going, until six were happening simultaneously.”<sup>212</sup> A rhizomatic expansion similarly absorbed an audience in 1977 at Charlotte Moorman’s annual Avant Garde Festival in New York City, eliminating altogether the division between performer and audience, the artwork and its surrounds, thus realizing potential inscribed in the very first instance of the Dance Constructions in 1961.<sup>213</sup>

These instances in the lives of the Dance Constructions carried out some of their more radical propositions for dance and sculpture, extending their lessons beyond art to broader social and political concerns. Forti’s pieces demonstrated that dance did not require extensive training or particular skill, that it was just what it looked like, without any illusions or transformations, and was almost continuous with the world going on around it. Her dance took place in real time and real space, with real people, and slowed things down so they could be particularly seen, as well

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<sup>211</sup> McDonagh, “Audience Enlisted in Whitman Recital,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1969, 54. Although Forti used “Forti” in Italy in 1968-69, when she was briefly back in New York she continued to use the Whitman name.

<sup>212</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 58-59. Forti did not identify the performance context in this mention.

<sup>213</sup> Forti supplied this example in her statement for *Huddle* in the 2014 retrospective catalogue: “in 1977 *Huddle* was performed at the World Trade Center Plaza as part of Charlotte Moorman’s Avant Garde Festival. When the performers finished, each one gathered a group of onlookers to form a new *Huddle*” (Breitweiser, 96).

as felt and heard. Her pieces engaged both the certainty and the uncertainty of the physical world, welcoming chance and minor accidents and insisting on the interesting qualities of things that were small, slow, and unrefined. This insistence extended to the material world more generally: her works exposed the surprises of objects as well as the landscape. As a vision for sculpture, all parts of a field were significant, and had the potential for a relationship.

Everything, Forti's works seemed to say, is both a whole and part of something else: a box is part of a pair, a sculpture is part of a narrative, an artwork is part of its context, the art context is part of a larger context. As systems and parts of a system, even when something appeared to be singular, fixed in space and time, a re-adjustment of its frame could expose its mobile and provisional dimensions.<sup>214</sup> These were aesthetic concerns but much more generalizable, too, about how subjects and objects come into contact, how the edges of each are defined, and when one thing becomes something else.

As temporary sites, the Dance Constructions further proposed how people can be together—even work together—in ways that preserved curiosity and difference and reduced hierarchy. They created situations in which participant and witness, individual and group, part and whole were mutually constitutive of one another. Consisting of relationships in motion, the Dance Constructions manifested single forms while differences between their parts were maintained. These differences gave the works structural integrity, providing examples in which a whole can only exist *because* of its parts, an aspect repressed in Minimalist models for sculpture but also in models for relating to one another. In its vision of sociality, *Huddle* in particular established the

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<sup>214</sup> According to Hal Foster (and others), this is one of Minimalism's most important legacies, visible in the work of artists who applied this idea to the art context to produce institutional critique. Extending this mobility to social systems disrupts art's special class status and extends far beyond the art world. Foster, *The Return of the Real*.

interdependence of each person on the other, making things both special and ordinary, and maintaining distance but allowing intimacy. The work succeeded through the simplification of a person's function *as well as* the endless differences between people, the complicated ways they shifted to maintain the shape and accommodate each other. Each had the opportunity to climb and was equally a part of the support. As the performers leaned into each other and started to share weight, *Huddle* declared singularity impossible. The performers literally depended on one another, distributing weight as well as tasks and risk: if one of them backed away suddenly, everyone would fall down. Their teamwork explored the temporary intimacy achieved through mutual vulnerability, a model for relating that mined the productive power of difference, enabled everyone to contribute, and suggested how everyone (for a few minutes) might feel the same. Indeed, *Huddle's* object made out of people, positioned among people in a room, directs performers and viewers alike to how *we* make things. Undermining arbitrary rules, steps, or the work of shape through gestalt, it points instead to people coming together by choice to negotiate a set of shared circumstances. This exploration takes a different course every time but can be repeated indefinitely.

Or can it? The prospect of a museum acquiring *Huddle*, or the Dance Constructions as a set group, and committing to taking responsibility for their future, required an in-depth assessment of all of their qualities, both real and imagined. Were these works objects or were they not? Dances or not? Did it matter? Could the works be separated from the circumstances of their production? From their long history? From the people who performed them? Or even from the fantasies that attended their origins? What of them properly persisted through time? And what was already lost? Part II of the dissertation attends to the practical and theoretical aspects of

these questions, focusing on MoMA's acquisition process and the procedures through which the Dance Constructions were translated for the institution.

## **PART II: Acquiring Simone Forti's Dance Constructions (2009-2015)**

Forti's Dance Constructions officially entered the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in 2015, after several years of deliberation and preparations by both the artist and the museum.<sup>215</sup> Curators from the Department of Media and Performance Art (MPA) first proposed to Forti the possibility of collecting *Huddle*, the little hill of climbing people, around the time of her 2009 performances at MoMA that open the prologue of this study [Figures 1.1, 1.2]. The idea, raised as the museum was evaluating its role as a steward for performance, represented a convergence of the institution's evolving vision of its collection and activities with the artist's concern for ensuring the continued performance of *Huddle*, the most famous of the Dance Constructions, after her lifetime. It was a novel proposition for both the artist and the museum that built upon MoMA's history as a repository for dance artifacts and venue for performances, and the artist's history with museums (especially over the previous decade). The proposal recognized *Huddle*'s historical significance and relation to a number of twentieth-century art movements, while the work's unusual conjunction of a dance with a sculptural object and its apparent simplicity as a performance made it conceivable for a museum to acquire and produce the work as a live performance. But the prospect of MoMA "owning" *Huddle*—which later

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<sup>215</sup> My timeline for the acquisition is drawn from several sources, starting with my attendance at the March 2009 performances at MoMA. An interview with Forti in April 2011 initiated regular conversation on the topic with both the artist and her gallery, The Box. I recorded interviews with Forti on June 19, 2014 and with Forti and Mara McCarthy, director of The Box, on January 21, 2016, both in Los Angeles, CA (Metcalf archive).

Forti also discussed the acquisition process in a public talk in 2013, in "Modern Monday: An Evening with Boris Charmatz, Simone Forti, and Ralph Lemon," Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2, Museum of Modern Art, October 21, 2013. A video recording is at the Museum of Modern Art in the MPA curatorial department offices. She also discussed it in "Simone Forti in conversation with Jennie Goldstein" (interview June 2, 2014) in *Movement Research Critical Correspondence*. MoMA's announcement about the acquisition in January 2016 includes some details about the process: Nancy Lim, "MoMA Collects: Simone Forti's *Dance Constructions*," [http://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2016/01/27/moma-collects-simone-fortis-dance-constructions](http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2016/01/27/moma-collects-simone-fortis-dance-constructions). (Accessed February 1, 2016).



expanded to include all five of the Dance Constructions and four related works from 1960-61—provoked a number of important questions, both theoretical and practical, about the nature of the museum and the nature of Forti’s works.<sup>216</sup>

As demonstrated in Part I, when the Dance Constructions first appeared, they upended conventions for dance and presuppositions about the art object or sculpture as well as art in general. And as the significance of their operations in the development of postwar art history was affirmed in subsequent years and the works were reprised by museums in the early 2000s, Forti’s pieces became highly attractive to MoMA, which was in the process of finding ways to integrate the histories of performance as well as time-based and embodied artworks into its collection. Yet, precisely for their radicality, the institutional acquisition of Dance Constructions would prove especially complex. On the one hand, the minimal, straightforward qualities of the Dance Constructions—technically, spatially, temporally—made their acquisition by a museum plausible in the first place: they did not require extensive preparations, take up a lot of storage or performance space, or make protracted demands on performers or spectators. They did not require (or seem to require) technical dance training or precious building materials. The physical structures and simple instructions generated movement without set choreography, and as such could be transmitted to new performers easily. For these reasons the Dance Constructions could appear at MoMA and readily travel to distant museums, where they would be reconstituted for exhibitions. But Forti’s works also strained the museum’s definition and purpose: could it sustain

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<sup>216</sup> The final group included *See Saw* and *Roller Boxes* (formerly *Rollers*) from the Reuben Gallery in December 1960; the five Dance Constructions presented in Yoko Ono’s loft in May 1961, *Huddle*, *Slant Board*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment* (all 1961); and, *Censor* and *From Instructions*, two of the “some other things” in “five dance constructions and some other things” (also 1961). The evolution and establishment of this group of artworks for the acquisition is discussed throughout Part II.

the works' live elements? Could it contain and/or reproduce some of the works' core aspects, which had erased distinctions between the spectators and the performance, and rearranged the hierarchies between objects and people, artwork and audience? Could a museum cultivate the intimacy required for audiences to experience the delicate effects of each of the pieces? How would they share space with museum visitors and artworks in other mediums? How might Forti's works change the museum, and how might the museum change the works?

The object-like nature of the Dance Constructions made them look more like sculptures at times, a category of artworks very familiar to the museum. They had disrupted models for composition, time, and skill in dance when Forti introduced them in New York in 1961, but the Dance Constructions retained a number of the challenges inherent to dance outlined in this study's introduction. Unlike in Performance Art, in which the singular instance and the singular artifact such as a photograph produce the exclusivity and value of the artwork (its autographic qualities), there were many manifestations of Forti's Dance Constructions and related works since they first appeared in 1960-61. These repetitions complicated the idea that the museum could collect the "original" Dance Constructions: not only were there no recordings or photographs of the Dance Constructions at Yoko Ono's loft, there had been many "originals" since then—each iteration of each piece being an original in principle. Although the pieces were consistent in their forms and course of action from performance to performance, they did not have any permanent materiality, which generated practical concerns about exactly what the museum might collect. And despite their consistency over the years, the lack of choreographed steps in the Dance Constructions made them even more ephemeral in certain respects than other dances. Dance in general resists the framework of original and copy, and the Dance Constructions in particular could not be

“reproduced.” Every outcome of the encounter of body and support would be different from the last: the literal structures of the works refused a model or ideal performance. Along the same lines, versions of Forti’s 1960-61 pieces produced in the 2000s were both the same artworks as the first performances and necessarily different, because different people embodied them, but it would be hard (if not impossible) to determine the exact ways in which they were different, and which differences altered the meaning of the works. Forti had not systematically documented the works nor her methods of performing and teaching them, and the potential of acquisition by an art museum inspired a review of existing documentary material and speculation about how the works might be communicated and realized in the future.

Dance in general and the Dance Constructions in particular resist the definitions of objecthood, authenticity, and ownership that attend material things—and which fundamentally organize and structure an art institution’s operations. Dance’s authenticity is typically secured through its execution by skilled and trained performers with a close relationship to a choreographer with a recognizable style. But Forti’s works removed style and skill, on purpose, for aesthetic effect, and had almost always been executed by “pick-up” (dance) companies, groups of people in her workshops or organized for the purpose of a performance rather than a stable group of performers.<sup>217</sup> In recent decades it had become clear that the straightforward nature of the Dance Constructions and other works from the same milieu was carefully considered and elicited from performers, but it was less clear how the “style” might continue to be produced over the long term. And finally, Forti’s practice of sharing the works—particularly *Huddle*—over many years

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<sup>217</sup> For a few years in the 1980s Forti produced projects with “Simone Forti and Troupe,” a mostly-consistent group of collaborators, but never maintained a company of dancers.

and with many students and performers embedded them deeply into the dance community, exacerbating questions about whether dance can be properly “owned,” and by what mechanisms. The cooperative appearance and ethos of the works (again, especially *Huddle*) proposed that they belonged to the performers who had done them. Could a museum secure these aspects of the Dance Constructions and definitively obtain and own the works? How could a museum then show the works—not reproductions, not exhibition copies—but the works themselves? And what would be involved in “conserving” the works, or could they be “conserved” at all? Are these even the right questions?

Coming into contact with MoMA’s conventional frameworks for acquiring, historicizing, and conserving works of art, Forti was pressured to consider such questions in relation to how the Dance Constructions would continue to exist under institutional stewardship. At the same time, her works pressured the museum’s foundational beliefs about its role as a repository for fine art and challenged existing protocols on institutional handling of the presentation and preservation of works of art. As Forti and the Dance Constructions offered MoMA a number of choreography’s tools and paradigms, the encounter exposed ways both the art object and museums have evolved over the past fifty years (and ways they have not). Making the transition from the legendary 1961 loft performances known primarily by dance practitioners through Forti’s teaching, word-of-mouth, and descriptions in old dance journals, to collectible art “objects” required a number of translations and transformations of both the Dance Constructions and the museum. Some of these changes happened over decades, others at the moment of the works’ acquisition by MoMA—and still others may only become clear through the passage of time as the Dance Constructions carry on into the future.

Part II of the dissertation details these changes through a close examination of the materials, definitions, procedures, and protocols developed to contend with the peculiarities of Forti's works and to accommodate them within the museum. In preparation for the discussion, this introductory section provides an overview of the documentation and "exhibition history" of the Dance Constructions as well as Forti's exposure to museums, including MoMA. It situates the acquisition of the Dance Constructions within the MPA's developing collection in 2009, which provided possible precedents for how Forti's works might be collected and telegraphed some of the issues at stake in considering the Dance Constructions within this framework. It recounts the events and activities that led up to the moment of acquisition in 2015, and introduces the objects and processes that made the transfer of the Dance Constructions to MoMA possible, which are explored in detail in the three sections of Part II.

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Documentation of the earliest performances of the Dance Constructions at the Chambers Street loft in 1961 does not exist: they were not filmed or photographed (as far as anyone knows) and archival material from those two evenings is limited to a mimeographed flyer [Appendix C].<sup>218</sup> Over the years, Forti accumulated in her personal archive ephemera related to subsequent instances of the works, but representation of the individual pieces was uneven, and her collection

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<sup>218</sup> The flyer for "five dance constructions and some other things" from the Simone Forti clippings file in New York Public Library has been shown a number of times in museum exhibitions, scrubbed of the NYPL's identifying stamp (although faint purple traces of it can be seen). For example, in "Yoko Ono: One Woman Show" at MoMA in New York, May-September 2015. Simone Forti clippings file, \*MGZR. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

was far from comprehensive when the idea of institutional acquisition was initiated. Some of the works, such as *Huddle*, were performed many times since 1961 in venues ranging from art classrooms and dance studios to major museums. Others, such as *Hangers*, with performers standing in loops of rope and people on the ground walking between them, were only revisited very recently, circa 2010 [Figure 2.4]. Forti reprised the Dance Constructions as a set when she brought them to L'Attico Gallery in Rome in 1968 and the Pasadena Art Museum in California in 1971, the first appearance of her work in a museum context. She also showed some of the pieces alongside new work in shows in the 1960s and 70s and incorporated them into other works, such as her "retrospective" piece *Jackdaw Songs* (1981).<sup>219</sup>

*Huddle*, as Forti characterized the piece in 2010, is "an object that doesn't exist in a solid sense, and yet it can be reconstituted at any time."<sup>220</sup> As such, it popped up in classes and performances all over the world since Forti had first experimented with it in New York in late 1960 or early 1961. It was not reconstructed or reworked in its appearances as if an original object were lost or broken, but rather re-formed, pulled together with new membership. Every manifestation of it was considered utterly unique and as legitimate as any other, always "original" and never "original." The piece recurred twice in Forti's MoMA debut, which took place in 1978, with one of them in the sculpture garden's fountain, titled on the occasion as "Fountain Huddle" [Figure 3.1].<sup>221</sup> Forti and her primary collaborator (and husband) at the time, musician Peter Van Riper,

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<sup>219</sup> "Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures" in Breitweiser, 286-287; *Jackdaw Songs* is represented on 188-193.

<sup>220</sup> "Huddle Artist's Statement" (2010), Simone Forti archive.

<sup>221</sup> Flyer/program: "Simone Forti and Peter Van Riper, Individual and collaborative pieces involving movement and sound," August 18 and 19, 1978, PROJECTS: PERFORMANCE in Summergarden, the Museum of Modern Art. Simone Forti archive.

returned to MoMA a year later in 1979 with a duet of their improvisatory music and movement practice, *Umi Aui Owe* [Figure 3.2].<sup>222</sup> This was one of their many appearances in contemporary art galleries and museums in the 1970s and early 1980s, and at MoMA they performed as part of the museum's ongoing "Summergarden" program, during a few years in which the initiators and inheritors of the Judson Dance Theater were invited to present dance in MoMA's sculpture garden alongside experimental music and other live events.<sup>223</sup> Although small and seemingly ancillary to the museum's primary mission, Summergarden reflected the relationships of independent dance-makers with art museums in general and MoMA specifically since the 1960s and even earlier, in particular the "experimental" New York group that included Merce Cunningham and members of the Judson Dance Theater.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Flyer and program: *Make More Room* by Yoshiko Chuma and *Umi Aui Owe* by Simone Forti, Peter Van Riper (August 3 and 4, 1979). Simone Forti archive and Simone Forti clippings file, \*MGZR. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

<sup>223</sup> Summergarden began in 1971, after a pilot program in 1970 that opened the museum's sculpture garden to the public free of charge on selected evenings in the summer. From the first official Summergarden evening in May 1971, which featured Indian classical dance, different kinds of performances took place through the 1970s, until Summergarden went on a brief hiatus. In 1978 MoMA's "Projects" initiative devoted to contemporary art (also established in 1971) organized the performances in which Forti appeared, and in 1979 the museum drew upon the new School for Movement Research in New York (today Movement Research) to program four weeks of dance, which also included Forti. In the 2010s, the Summergarden program is largely devoted to classical and jazz music. The Museum of Modern Art, "Museum Garden to Open Evenings Free of Charge," MoMA press release 88, 8/14/70, [https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press\\_archives/4508/releases/MOMA\\_1970\\_July-December\\_0027\\_88.pdf?2010](https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/4508/releases/MOMA_1970_July-December_0027_88.pdf?2010); The Museum of Modern Art, "Free Hindu Dance Performance at the Museum of Modern Art," MoMA press release 53H, May 14, 1971, [https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press\\_archives/4641/releases/MOMA\\_1971\\_0078\\_53H.pdf?2010](https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/4641/releases/MOMA_1971_0078_53H.pdf?2010); "Summergarden: New Music New York," MoMA Exhibitions and Events, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/programs/46> (Accessed September 1, 2017).

<sup>224</sup> Art historian Claire Bishop characterized the program as "basically event programming—a summer diversion rather than part of a historical narrative," downplaying the ways dance's role as entertainment was—and still is—a critical component of its relationship with museums ("Perils and Possibilities," 64).

Cunningham first performed at MoMA in John Cage's New York debut in 1943, and later that year he served as the dance director for a concert of new music, which included a ballet and other dances performed on the museum auditorium's small stage. Cunningham did not appear at MoMA again until 1971, when he presented a solo in the "Four Fridays" series put on by the museum's Junior Council. Described in David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years* (New York: Aperture, 1997), 29 and 182. See also Appendix A.

MoMA highlighted Forti's 1970s performances at the museum as it considered acquiring *Huddle* for its growing Media and Performance Art collection (MPA), emphasizing a lengthy relationship with the artist.<sup>225</sup> The dialogue initiated in 2009 by MPA curators Klaus Biesenbach and Jenny Schlenzka about obtaining Forti's best-known work for the collection continued for several years as the museum, Forti, and The Box (the gallery in Los Angeles that Forti engaged for this purpose) worked to determine how such an acquisition would take place. During these years, Sabine Breitweiser succeeded Biesenbach as MPA department head in 2010, and Stuart Comer succeeded her in 2013. Despite these personnel changes, the discussion about *Huddle* continued and even expanded to include other pieces from Forti's first public showings in 1960 and 1961.<sup>226</sup> In the end the acquisition proposal included nine works: *See Saw* and *Roller Boxes* (formerly *Rollers*) from the Reuben Gallery in December 1960; the five Dance Constructions presented in Yoko Ono's loft in May 1961, *Huddle*, *Slant Board*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment* (all 1961); and, *Censor* and *From Instructions*, two of the "some other things" in "five dance constructions and some other things" (also 1961).<sup>227</sup> Forti's pieces would join an extremely varied group of physical materials in the MPA's collection, which not only look dramatically different from one another, but hold various relationships to the commercial art

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<sup>225</sup> Forti's presence at the museum in the 1970s was noted in the 2009 press release about the MPA's new name and activities related to performance, and a brief, grainy video of Forti and Van Riper rehearsing in MoMA's sculpture garden in 1979 was played at the "Modern Monday" talk on October 21, 2013. The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment" and "Modern Monday" video recording, MPA curatorial department offices.

<sup>226</sup> Indeed, the dialogue also seemed falter at moments, keeping the acquisition in the theoretical rather than the practical realm. Right before the 2014 retrospective, Forti commented, "the more the conversation goes on, the more it's really a conversation. I don't know that it'll ever happen [...] it's been a very interesting conversation. I'm not holding my breath about it," "Simone Forti in conversation with Jennie Goldstein," 3.

<sup>227</sup> The title of the work at the Reuben Gallery in which Forti and a friend were pulled around in wheeled boxes has varied somewhat over the years but was standardized in the MoMA acquisition as *Roller Boxes*. (Forti still called it *Rollers* in 1974 in *Handbook*, 44).



market, and have very different requirements for acquisition, conservation, and display.<sup>228</sup> Forti's works had the potential to extend the precedents set by these artworks in each of these areas but also deviated from them in critical ways.

Chris Burden's *Deluxe Photo Book 1971-73* (1974), for example, is a compilation of photographs and texts describing the male performance artist's first bodily and durational pieces, some of which he executed while he was still a student. Although the binder with documentation was produced in an edition of fifty, MoMA's press release for the acquisition stated that these are "the sole records of these seminal early works," emphasizing the documents' scarcity and the already-legendary reputation of the performances in art history and even popular culture [Figure 3.3].<sup>229</sup> Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot* archives (2007), which was acquired around the same time as Burden's book, "comprises the complete material relics," 243 objects, from Chan's production of Samuel Becket's play in Hurricane Katrina-scarred New Orleans in 2007 [Figure 3.4].<sup>230</sup> Dara Friedman's 48-minute color video *Musical* (2007-2008) documented in a single video artifact live vocal performances that the artist orchestrated in different locations in Manhattan over three weeks in 2007 [Figure 3.5].<sup>231</sup> In each example, MoMA collected what

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<sup>228</sup> A 2010 description numbered the collection at 1700 items and detailed "moving image installations, single-channel video, performance and documentary evidence, motion- and sound-based works, and other works that represent time or duration." The Museum of Modern Art, "Sabine Breitweiser Appointed Chief Curator of Media and Performance Art at the Museum of Modern Art," Press Release, May 26, 2010, [http://press.moma.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/breitwieser\\_letter.pdf](http://press.moma.org/wp-content/files_mf/breitwieser_letter.pdf) (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>229</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment." Information on the edition from a 2012 Sotheby's auction: <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/s2-not-californian-n08954/lot.12.html> (Accessed July 1, 2017).

<sup>230</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment." The number of items in the *Waiting for Godot Archives* is from the object page on MoMA's website: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/122008?locale=en> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>231</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, "MoMA Deepens Commitment." Details on the performances are provided by the Public Art Fund of New York, which commissioned the project: [https://www.publicartfund.org/view/exhibitions/5733\\_musical](https://www.publicartfund.org/view/exhibitions/5733_musical) (Accessed July 1, 2017).

might once have been considered archival or supplementary to a work of art as works of art in their own right. Burden's book of documentation, by virtue of its age and the artist's involvement in it, achieved a place in the museum as an artwork even though his performances explicitly resisted object status in the early 1970s. Props that might have been boxed up and stored for another theater production or tossed out at the end of the show's run were, in Chan's case, given the special historical, discursive, and physical attention (via conservation) that typically accompanies the acquisition of an artwork by a major museum. And Friedman's video illustrated and/or transformed the spatially and temporally expansive performances the artist orchestrated in 2007: it is a slick product that could be considered an advertisement or another artwork altogether. The live, embodied, and ephemeral elements of these artists' respective performances necessitated the recovery and reconsideration of things that once might have gone in the trash, do not have much or any value on the basis of craftsmanship, materials, or originality, and/or have been considered un-salable in the past. The proximity of these materials to an individual artist and unique event generated criteria for them to be treated if not confirmed as works of art, and the institution's mechanisms carry forward this authority now that they are in its collection. Their assimilation reflects the growing recognition of Performance Art and other performance practices in modern and contemporary art history, but the materials also resemble works of art in other departments at MoMA: film, photography, even sculpture.

MoMA first ventured into collecting *live* performance in 2008 with Tino Sehgal's *Kiss* (2003), which had some characteristics of a dance and served in part as a rehearsal for the acquisition of Forti's *Dance Constructions*. Sehgal's work is, as MoMA described it, a "prescribed, choreographed situation": a couple moves through re-enactments of kisses in historical paintings

while tangled in an embrace on a gallery floor [Figure 3.6].<sup>232</sup> When it is not performed, the work consists solely of protocol for its continuation, lodged in the memory of a museum employee. No material thing resides in MoMA's collection, storage spaces, curatorial files, or even checkbook register. The ephemerality of the artwork and the conditions that bring it into being are central concerns of Sehgal's art practice, and the apparatus for acquiring *Kiss* constitutes part of the artwork's meaning. To transfer the work, the artist traveled to the museum in person, verbally delivered a score to two curators, with a notary witness, and received cash in return, generating no paperwork or other material trace of the transaction.<sup>233</sup> With no physical remains at all, Sehgal's mechanism emphasized the human labor and social dimensions of the museum's infrastructure. It also necessitated the museum's shift from collecting an object to producing an artwork on the basis of instructions, increasingly at issue in works of contemporary art in the wake of the 1960s. Indeed, Sehgal's piece, by making explicit the museum's stage-like qualities, may have revealed that executing choreography has been since then one of its primary functions.

These examples of other works in the MPA collection provided useful models for considering the acquisition of Forti's *Dance Constructions*, but the age, historical circumstances, and aesthetic qualities of the works meant that these precedents did not wholly apply to Forti's situation. Access to the first performances of Forti's works could not be achieved through photographs or other related materials, and later documentation and ephemera lacked the

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<sup>232</sup> Although Sehgal has resisted using dance terms to describe his work, this is the language the museum used to describe the piece in "MoMA Deepens Commitment."

<sup>233</sup> The process of transferring a Sehgal work to another owner is described in Lauren Collins, "The Question Artist," *The New Yorker* (August 6, 2012): 38.

comprehensiveness implied by Burden's book and explicit in Chan's *Waiting for Godot* "relics." The most complete set of documentation of the Dance Constructions to date was a DVD of performances in 2004, recorded at a museum in conjunction with an exhibition of Minimalist sculpture, but the occasion did not include *Hangers* from 1961.<sup>234</sup> Brand-new documentation might be consolidated into a single artifact akin to Friedman's video, but this did not exist when the dialogue with MoMA about acquisition began in 2009; it would have to be produced. Even more fundamentally, the historic nature of Forti's works, while critical to their identity and value for the institution, were not their only defining features. A single instance of them did not make them special, and a recording—even a complete set—would be a poor substitute for the pieces themselves, which generated their effects with a live audience through small, slow movements and minute disturbances of atmosphere. The precedent set by MoMA's 2008 acquisition of Sehgal's *Kiss* (2003) proposed that the museum could consider acquiring another live work, but it did not appear that Sehgal's method for transferring his works exclusively through the oral transmission of a score provided a model. About this arrangement, a curator at another contemporary art institution remarked that Sehgal had "opened and closed the door simultaneously" for the collection of performance, inventing a daring and controversial move that represented an individual solution for transferring performance rather than a blueprint for others like Forti to follow.<sup>235</sup> Sehgal's *Kiss* was a specialized product created for a singular market: the artwork's acquisition by MoMA for the permanent collection established the viability of the visual arts institution as repository and caretaker for choreographic works, but the

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<sup>234</sup> This was "A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968," at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles. *Simone Forti: An Evening of Dance Constructions* (Artpix Notebooks, 2009), DVD.

<sup>235</sup> Philip Bither in discussion with the author, November 5, 2015, the Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN. Journalist Carol Kino described the varying responses of other artists to Sehgal's "entrepreneurialism" in "A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Erupt." *New York Times* (March 14, 2010): AR25.

apparatus for acquisition provided an unsustainable, un-scalable prototype not applicable to other artworks—a closed loop. By contrast, Forti’s works had had an extensive life outside of the institution and ideally acquiring them could both secure the works for the museum and acknowledge (if not preserve) this legacy.

In 2009, Jenny Schlenzka, the curator who organized the performances and small exhibition at MoMA interviewed Forti for an art publication, first posing the question of “preserving” her work (in print). Referring to Forti’s early works, Schlenzka noted,

**JS:** *Your pieces are immaterial and ephemeral. Yet, they are based on scores and can be repeated. Do you ever think about preserving them?*

**SF:** No, but maybe I should. No one could own the *Huddle* though, or have exclusive rights to perform or teach it. It is part of its nature that everybody owns it, and that it spreads out. But still, it would be nice if it had some protection and definition.<sup>236</sup>

Schlenzka’s question identified both the durable and ephemeral qualities of the Dance Constructions, while Forti’s response laid out the benefits of preservation, “protection and definition,” and located as its major challenge *Huddle*’s collectivity and commitment to sharing, an ethic not typically associated with museums. Once negotiations with MoMA for this “preservation” were underway, the museum had doubts about its facility with embodied knowledge, perceiving the works’ transmission to new performers as outside of the institution’s expertise. In a public talk in 2013 MPA curator Ana Janevski asked Forti about *Huddle*, “how do you transmit it? Because institutions always think long-term [...] is the institution going to train

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<sup>236</sup> Jenny Schlenzka, “Simone Forti: Drunk With Movement.” *Flash Art*, no. 269 (Nov./Dec. 2009). <https://www.flashartonline.com/article/simone-forti/> (Accessed April 1, 2013).

the dancers to perform it?”<sup>237</sup> With her questions, Janevski stressed *Huddle*’s dance history and expressed uncertainty about MoMA taking on Forti’s role as a teacher for new performers. In order to acquire the Dance Constructions, the MPA had to persuade its collection committee that the works were “in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of conservation, unless the physical condition is integral to the meaning of the work.”<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, “the Museum must be able to house and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practices,” according to MoMA’s Collections Management Policy.<sup>239</sup> The Dance Constructions, by their very nature, did not exist in any permanent material state, their becoming, being, and disappearing constituting both their form and a large measure of their significance as artworks, and the museum would have to facilitate this cycle in Forti’s absence in the future. The MPA and MoMA were becoming increasingly familiar with acquiring and managing the rights to produce artworks in addition to its collection of more standard objects, but it was less clear that the long-term continuation of dance could be or become a “generally accepted museum practice.”

As the conversations with MoMA continued, the artist assessed her archive and worked with The Box in order to find tangible form for the Dance Constructions in the present, to trace their histories, and to anticipate their requirements in the future—a process not required of most acquisitions of painting and sculpture. Forti newly wrote descriptive statements, contextualizing the pieces within her burgeoning art practice in the late 1950s and early 1960s and providing an official history of the Dance Constructions and related works in her own words. She generated drawings of some of the works and their installation instructions, and her gallery began to

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<sup>237</sup> “Modern Monday,” MoMA, October 21, 2013.

<sup>238</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, “Acquisitions,” CMP, 2.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

produce plans for the built plywood and rope components. These had never been formalized until museums started to request them for performances and were only standardized in preparation for MoMA's acquisition. Similarly, engagements beginning in the early 2000s had enabled Forti to revisit her methods for transmitting her early works to new performers, and in fact they enabled her to *create* methods for transmitting some of the works such as *Hangers*, which had not been performed in decades.<sup>240</sup>

In 2011, Forti and the Box organized a week of workshops and two evenings of performances, which were critical for constructing and consolidating the identities of the Dance Constructions for MoMA. Forti invited former students from her Spring 2011 course at UCLA to learn the works over a series of days and then perform them for live audiences.<sup>241</sup> These were presented as “Simone Forti, First Complete Presentation of *Dance Constructions*, 1961” on August 18 and 19, 2011, a title that gave the works a coherent identity, newly classifying *as* Dance Constructions the two works from the Reuben Gallery in 1960, *Roller Boxes* and *See Saw*, that were not part of the historical set of five performed in May 1961.<sup>242</sup> Increasing the number of Dance Constructions from five to seven, the performances at The Box in Los Angeles provided an enhanced or corrected version of the group that debuted finally fifty years after their first

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<sup>240</sup> “Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures” in Breitweiser, 288-290.

<sup>241</sup> I was one of these students and participated in the rehearsals and performances.

<sup>242</sup> The title appeared on the invitation card and program, and although the program listed the titles of the works, it did not provide dates for the individual works (Metcalf personal archive). Forti has explained that she “hadn’t come up with the term ‘Dance Constructions’ yet” in 1960, although she considers *See Saw* and *Rollers* from the Reuben Gallery “as part of that series.” Forti quoted in Nancy Lim, “MoMA Collects,” and in “The Dance Constructions,” in Breitweiser, 80.

MoMA, like The Box, uses “*Dance Constructions*” to refer to the group, which functions like a title for the set. I am relying on “Dance Constructions,” which follows Forti’s precedents in *Handbook* and in the artist statements she wrote for the acquisition, and maintains the sense of a category of artworks. Occasionally Forti has referred to works by other artists as Dance Constructions, for example Saburo Murakami’s *Tsūka (Passage)* (1956). Forti in Breitweiser, 25.

performances in New York. The performances at The Box also established “definitive” performances of the Dance Constructions: they were recorded and incorporated into videos of Forti teaching the works to her UCLA students. These recordings of the artist herself passing along the works to new performers were at the heart of the acquisition material, creating a model for how to perpetuate specific movements, qualities, and moods in each of the works, which others could follow. Any details not captured in the teaching videos were elaborated in instructions written to accompany them. Forti also identified a process for training and selecting teachers of the Dance Constructions, with one of these serving as a consultant who would work with the museum to help stage the works at MoMA and as they were on loan elsewhere. The recordings, as well as the written teaching instructions, schematic plans for the built components of the works, and Forti’s narrative statements newly defined each work’s built and performed aspects, emphasizing their rigorous and consistent formal and aesthetic principles, which may not have been fully evident until this point of transfer. Designating teachers established a set of proxies for Forti as well as the need for body-to-body transmission in the continuation of the works, which also may not have been fully evident until this point of transfer.

A 2014 retrospective exhibition curated by Breitweiser at the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg, Austria, “Simone Forti: Thinking With the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,” unearthed a great deal of historical material from Forti’s personal archive and other sources, contributing to the creation of the most comprehensive biography, bibliography, and performance/exhibition history for the artist to date.<sup>243</sup> Newly discovered ephemera and documentation related to the Dance

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<sup>243</sup> I served as a research assistant to Breitweiser, the museum’s new director, from August 2013-April 2014 and was on-site with Forti in July 2014 as she conducted workshops with the local performers of the Dance Constructions. The exhibition continued from July to November 2014.



Constructions was presented in the Austrian museum's galleries alongside a rotation of performances on a regular schedule [Figures 3.7-3.10]. The exhibition not only displayed a range of artifacts related to the Dance Constructions, it also provided examples of how the performances might be "exhibited" elsewhere, and demonstrated the viability of the works' ongoing life and relevance to the museum's visitors, which included MoMA's curators. The appearance of Forti's works in the Salzburg museum in 2014 affirmed the status of the Dance Constructions as artworks, while the retrospective affirmed the artist as a figure deserving such a retrospective, constructing a narrative of Forti's development as a visual artist. In more practical terms, it helped identify collectible items and consolidated the artist's history into a legible chronicle for MoMA's curators and collection committee.

By December 2015, MoMA curators Comer and Janevski were ready to present the acquisition to the MPA's collection committee. They proposed for collection the two works from the Reuben Gallery in 1960, all five of the Dance Constructions from "five dance constructions and some other things" in 1961, and two of the "other things." Together with the artist and her gallery, they had finalized a "constellation of materials" that gave each of the nine works and the group as a whole a physical form.<sup>244</sup> Each of Forti's performances was represented by a photograph on an inventory, with a title and tombstone information. These appeared along with a selection of materials from Forti's archive: drawings from the 1970s, photographs from the 1980s, props used in some of the works, and more recent drawings from 2010 and 2011.<sup>245</sup> The

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<sup>244</sup> The "constellation of materials" is from MoMA's 2016 announcement: Lim, "MoMA Collects."

<sup>245</sup> A draft inventory had twenty entries, listing seven Dance Constructions, two "other things," five drawings, four photographic prints, a notebook, and a sample toy used for *See Saw*. Each had a representative photograph and "tombstone" information with dimensions and materials (The Box and Simone Forti archive). MoMA's online catalogue has twenty-three entries for the Dance Constructions, listing some materials – the drawings and two of the photographs, for example – as separate items, while grouping others under a single

recordings of Forti teaching and of the works performed in front of an audience, along with the statements the artist had written, were not on the inventory but nonetheless functioned as an important part of the “constellation of materials.” A performance history drawn from the catalogue for the Salzburg exhibition provided a preliminary “provenance” for the works. But the most critical piece of the package was the procedures Forti had devised for the transmission of the Dance Constructions to new performers, which would take place via Forti’s designation of trained teachers and draw upon established practices in concert dance. Comer and Janevski brought the documents and objects that had been gathered and produced to their committee meeting, and took the unusual step of inviting Forti to attend. The artist’s presence at the meeting gave the proposed acquisition additional urgency, and reassured the committee of the museum’s ability to maintain the Dance Constructions in the future using the protocol she had designed. Ultimately the MPA’s acquisition committee approved the acquisition of Forti’s nine works for MoMA’s collection.<sup>246</sup> The package or “constellation of materials” for these works was a combination of real and intellectual property, including the rights to produce Forti’s Dance Constructions.<sup>247</sup>

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title, as in “*Hangars* (1961-2010), Medium: Performance and Drawings, Dimensions: Variable. 10min.” [https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200105?artist\\_id=34908&locale=en&sov\\_referrer=artist](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200105?artist_id=34908&locale=en&sov_referrer=artist). (accessed June 1, 2017). Each entry includes the following language: “Research in progress; information about this work may be incomplete.”

<sup>246</sup> Former senior curator in MoMA’s Department of Painting and Sculpture Robert Storr provided some general information about the museum’s acquisition procedures in a brief article, “To Have and To Hold,” emphasizing the distribution of powers among the committee and curators and the overall integrity of the process. In Altschuler, 29-40.

<sup>247</sup> Recently Walker Arts Center curator Philip Bither generalized about the MPA’s strategies for collecting performance: “MoMA consciously prioritized work that could fit well in its museum galleries and it defined ownership as holding the rights to perform the work it has purchased, works that ideally came with a score or set of instructions that would facilitate reperformance.” Bither, “Collecting,” *In Terms of Performance* (intermsofperformance.site, 2016), <http://intermsofperformance.site/keywords/collecting/philip-bither> (Accessed July 15, 2017).

On the one hand, the committee's decision set in motion some standard procedures at MoMA: the works were given accession numbers and Janevski conducted an interview with the artist at the museum, video recording it for its archive.<sup>248</sup> In 2016, the acquisition was announced to the public and finalized by MoMA's legal department.<sup>249</sup> That fall, Forti's studio completed and returned the MPA's artist questionnaire about the ongoing maintenance of the works.<sup>250</sup> On the other hand, the acquisition produced subtle yet significant transformations of the works. By making them into "objects" for exchange, the Dance Constructions became more separate from the artist, more separate from the viewer, and more separate from their environment than they ever had been before. The acquisition process articulated new relations between author and work, institution and work, and spectator and work, hierarchies the Dance Constructions had radicalized in 1961, as detailed in Part I of the dissertation. The transfer to MoMA necessarily alienated the artworks from the artist and the performers who had done them over the years. The conventions of their new institutional home, i.e. identifying labels, display cases and plinths, and "safe" distances around the art (policed by security guards), established and reinforced their distance from viewers and expectations for passive spectatorship. These distinctions, instigated and necessitated by the encounter of Forti's art with the museum, may have also altered the essential nature of the Dance Constructions.

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<sup>248</sup> The CMP stipulates, "immediately after the Trustee committee meeting at which an acquisition is approved, the Registrar [...] will assign it an accession number. If the work is by a living artist, whenever possible the artist should be informed and, if appropriate, sent a questionnaire to obtain background and history about the artist and the work" ("Acquisitions," 3). Interview with Ana Janevski and Simone Forti, MoMA, New York, NY (December 2015). Video recording at the Museum of Modern Art, MPA curatorial department offices.

<sup>249</sup> Announcement: Lim, "MoMA Collects" (January 27, 2016).

<sup>250</sup> MPA artist questionnaire.

Indeed, as the acquisition made the Dance Constructions more into “objects” to exchange with the museum, it also made them more into “dances,” strictly speaking. The materials and protocol developed for continuing the works once the works were in the museum’s collection formalized and established requirements for skill, with a great deal of specificity about the details of the performances. Forti also made explicit the need for body-to-body transmission of the works for their future performance, identifying individuals who could bestow her authority on future versions much like a conventional piece of choreography. When the Dance Constructions first emerged in 1961, the works appeared not to require that the performers “learn” each piece but rather simply participate in it. The physical structures, singular shapes, and simple instructions created a unique engagement in every encounter, but Forti’s instructions for MoMA make clear that oversight of these encounters is required. With MoMA’s acquisition comes the designation of experts, “qualified teachers,” to succeed Forti in training performers of the works.<sup>251</sup> And the recordings produced for MoMA supply model versions of the works, to which future versions may aspire. All together this curtails some of the possibilities proposed by the transmission of the works via text in *An Anthology* in 1963 and the easy expansion of the pieces into their audiences on some occasions since 1961. Articulating the works in such a way made it possible for the museum to recognize them, and to guarantee their continued performance and quality after Forti can longer oversee them herself. But the process highlights some of the adjustments necessary to convey them to the institution.

Translating and transferring the Dance Constructions to MoMA in such a way provided Forti a means of alienating the works as property, claiming ownership over them, and providing for their

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<sup>251</sup> This is how they are termed in the MPA questionnaire: “Performers.”

long-term care—which may have been difficult to secure otherwise. As described in this study’s introduction, choreographers customarily use contracts and copyright to assert ownership and monitor the ongoing quality of performances of their works (if they choose to legally protect their works at all). Copyright and its associated documentation can overcome dance’s embodiment and ephemerality as well as define the identity and authorship of choreography past a choreographer’s lifetime, but it is not clear the Dance Constructions would have qualified for copyright as it applies to dance, if Forti had sought it out. The same brevity and simplicity that distinguishes the Dance Constructions as artworks disqualifies them, strictly speaking, as dances, and as Forti’s original work. When the Copyright Act of 1976 provided for choreography’s protection as property, it specified that “‘choreographic works’ do not include social dance steps and simple routines,” and a more recent update explains, “choreographic works are compositions intended to be performed by skilled dancers [...] Performing a social dance is often a participatory, social experience, while the performance of a choreographic work is an expressive act that is typically intended to be performed for the enjoyment of others. Whereas social dances are generally capable of being performed by members of the public, choreographic works typically cannot.”<sup>252</sup> All of the Dance Constructions are “simple routines,” so simple that they might not be “routines,” and appear as if they can be “performed by members of the public.” When they were first performed, the works drew some of their compositional force and integrity from their continuity with the public, *producing* a “participatory, social experience.” None of the

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<sup>252</sup> *Compendium of US Copyright Practices*, December 22, 2014, Chapter 800, “Works of the Performing Arts,” 81, <https://www.copyright.gov/comp3/> (Accessed August 1, 2017). Kraut’s account of the raced and gendered dimensions of this formation demonstrates how copyright has systematically excluded the vernacular dances of people of color, which were appropriated by white Broadway producers in the 1920s-30s—and arguably continues today in other forms of mass entertainment. See in particular Kraut, Chapter 3, “‘Stealing Steps’ and Signature Moves: Alternative Systems of Copyright,” 127-164; and, “Coda: Beyonce v. De Keersmaeker,” 263-280.

pieces are “expressive” in any emotional or dramatic sense, nor do they have set choreography. The copyright law’s coverage of choreography and not the performance of it is at the core of its ill fit with the form— insofar as the dancer is fundamentally inseparable from the dance—but it is especially incompatible with the Dance Constructions, choreographed works without choreography as such.<sup>253</sup>

The acquisition of the Dance Constructions by an art museum represented a mechanism through which Forti’s pieces could be transferred to another owner or caretaker, and how their intermittent embodiment might continue to be negotiated in the absence of the artist or a company of dancers. Giving the Dance Constructions physical form in the “constellation of materials,” developing procedures for their continuation, and transferring to MoMA the performance rights, one part of copyright, helped *establish* them as “expressive” works performed by “experts” for a passive audience, securing Forti’s authorship (and prior ownership) of her own artworks. Technically speaking, the acquisition of the Dance Constructions by MoMA made the works simultaneously more like “original” art objects, insofar as they were now owned by an art institution and protected by copyright.<sup>254</sup> They became more like dances, insofar as they were now copyrightable, more into real property, insofar as a museum could own

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<sup>253</sup> Banes’s treatment of copyright devoted a few sentences to “postmodern” dance, noting that its intentional “blurring of the line between idea and expression complicate the issue of copyright.” In this dance, she wrote, “sometimes the choreography itself may consist only of an idea: a dance generated from instructions, for instance, in which the look of the movement would not be central to the identity of the dance,” evading attempts to capture and represent a work as identifiable property on video or another recording apparatus (Banes, “Homage, Plagiarism, Allusion, Quotation,” 206-207).

<sup>254</sup> The museum’s traditions as an institution devoted to real property boosted the object status of the Dance Constructions to the extent they established copyright for the artworks. Visual artists customarily retain rights under the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA), and the MPA Collection Specialist confirmed, “copyright is almost always retained by the artist for any of their works in the MPA’s collection” (email message to the author, January 23, 2017).

MoMA’s arrangements for the performance rights of the Dance Constructions might best be viewed like a license, similar to one might obtain for showing a film. In the case of *Huddle*, this license is not exclusive.

them, and, more into intellectual property, insofar as Forti's authorship was firmly assigned to works with no permanent form and legally defensible. This combination underscores the ways dance and especially Forti's work uniquely resists conversion into property and how the museum offers an alternative set of arrangements, potentially with wider application.

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Although the Dance Constructions were the first historical dance works acquired by MoMA, MPA department head Comer has cautioned against using Forti's model as an exemplar, explaining, "there is no one model for collecting performance—it really is case-by-case."<sup>255</sup> Even still, Forti's Dance Constructions offer a case study that vividly illustrates the dynamic co-articulation of artwork and museum in contemporary art, as well as changes in art and institutions that have led to the possibility of their acquisition. MoMA already had systems for the collection, storage, conservation, and display of Minimal sculpture, Conceptual Art, and (as evidenced by the MPA) performance and Performance Art, forms of contemporary art with which the Dance Constructions have had a lively dialogue since their emergence in 1961, making the works' arrival at the museum quite natural in certain respects. But as both dances and not-quite, the Dance Constructions challenged the museum's core functions, exposing existing definitions and procedures while proposing new ones. Examining this intersection extends studies of contemporary art that treat the institutionalization of artworks that initially seemed at odds with the museum apparatus, and exposes additional ways the choreographic has entered in to and/or inflected art production since the middle of the last century. Art historian Martha

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<sup>255</sup> Quoted in Lim, "MoMA Collects."

Buskirk's important book *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* investigates how "art that incorporates a questioning of originality, uniqueness, artistic skill, touch, longevity, or even materiality can and has been enfolded into a system of collection and valuation founded on those very qualities."<sup>256</sup> The historian used as examples the works of many of Forti's contemporaries in the 1960s, such as Robert Morris and Richard Serra (who has credited Forti and Rainer as important influences on his work in sculpture), implicating not just Minimal and Post-Minimal sculpture but also Conceptual and Performance Art, among other practices.<sup>257</sup> These artists incorporated strategies such as industrial manufacturing and site-specificity into their artworks as a way to challenge the notion of the artwork as an expressive, autonomous object. Forti's Dance Constructions also effected challenges to this notion and viewing her works over time and with respect to these precedents expands and complicates such narratives.

Buskirk's research demonstrates that institutional acquisition puts artworks to the test, exposing the mechanisms involved in defining an artwork, attaining a certain appearance, and keeping it that way: she wrote, "the suspension of presumed contradictions takes place at many levels, with some only becoming significant in the transition from a work of art's initial appearance to its extended life as an object to be preserved, collected, and contextualized as part of a historical narrative."<sup>258</sup> Her examples reveal how methods of acquiring, displaying, and narrating an artwork can be at odds with one another, and how circumventing traditional models of the artwork can be difficult to sustain within the art market's or the museum's framework. Such

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<sup>256</sup> Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>257</sup> Kynaston McShine and Lynne Cooke, *Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 25.

<sup>258</sup> Buskirk, 12.



“suspensions” include the evolution of previously un-precious materials, such as a particular kind of light bulb, into precious materials as sculptor Dan Flavin’s fluorescent-tube sculptures were acquired by museums and collectors and the manufacturer of his preferred bulbs went out of business.<sup>259</sup> As another example, sculptor Donald Judd made and sold plans for his artworks, outsourcing them to a specific fabricator, but also wanted to oversee the resulting objects and their installation—removing his “hand” from the work but not entirely.<sup>260</sup> These contradictions came to light as issues were worked out on the ground, over time, and in response to the needs and desires of institutions and collectors.

In a similar vein, Part II of my study relates the Dance Constructions’ aesthetic and theoretical propositions to the practical and operational requirements of their acquisition, narration, and continuation by a major art museum. The terms and procedures of collecting typically remain invisible at major museums but analyzing MoMA’s acquisition of Forti’s Dance Constructions demonstrates how dance provides both discursive and practical tools for art history, while revealing ways art and institutions are already choreographic.<sup>261</sup> First, “Dance as Art Object”

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<sup>259</sup> The Guggenheim Museum in New York has done extensive research into the fixtures and bulbs in Flavin’s work, in some cases receiving permission to upgrade old fixtures to new technology and in others trying to re-create the correct colors by other means. See, for example, “Dan Flavin,” Panza Collection Initiative, <https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/the-panza-collection-initiative/dan-flavin> (Accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>260</sup> Buskirk, 40-41; Judd is discussed throughout Buskirk’s Introduction and Chapter 1.

<sup>261</sup> Storr’s article about acquisitions at MoMA drew attention to the apparent conflict between a large museum’s public mandate and mission, upon which its status as a nonprofit typically depends, and the exclusive “nature of art collecting.” In his view, “due both to its competitiveness and to the strictures that may be, and frequently are, imposed by the seller, buyer, or donor of a work [...] full disclosure before or even after a deal has been completed is impossible. Thus the issue of how much light can be shed on deliberations that are, in many respects, highly confidential has become a crucial one of trust between museums and the various communities they are intended to serve. Under these circumstances, the greater understanding that people have of the basic process [...] the more faith the public can have in the outcome, even though the specifics in most cases will, of necessity, remain unknown to them” (29-31). As such Storr identified the museum as a particular community of knowledge that is required to but also prohibited from making its knowledge widely available.

examines the methods through which Forti's Dance Constructions were articulated as artworks for the museum. Divided into sub-sections, it demonstrates how the acquisition combined materials from Forti's archive with newly created plans and documentation in a way that emphasized Forti's authorship and embodied knowledge, thus highlighting the "dance" aspect of the Dance Constructions. Through the lens of the materials developed for acquiring Forti's works, one sees the expansion of art to include new types of objects and plans for realizing artworks along with corresponding shifts in the institution's competencies. Next, "Authenticity and Provenance" investigates ways authenticity is established for performance and other contemporary art that does not have a stable or continuous materiality. Competing definitions for authenticity in performance generate uncertainty about whether authenticity is something that resides in the artwork itself or is bestowed upon it by a legitimizing body such as a museum. Ultimately Forti's plans for the future of her works required her oversight or the oversight of a proxy to authenticate the works. Solutions found for "provenance," which generally secures authenticity, demonstrate how performance re-orientates a linear, consistent model of history. Finally, Forti devised plans for her works' continuation under the museum's care, described in "Continuation/Conservation." Using three different models, the artist introduced to the museum theater and dance procedures for the "preservation" of performance, which provide strategies for managing the inevitable changes that result from producing it over the long term. The appearance and assimilation of Forti's works at MoMA configures the institution as an archive, a stage, and a producer, generating new questions about the kind of place it is and what kinds of things take place there. The 2015 acquisition of Forti's Dance Constructions charted new territory for Forti and the MPA, and my examination provides tools for speculating on which ends up the most transformed in the process.

## Dance as Art Object

When the MPA curator Ana Janevski publicly questioned the museum's ability to transmit *Huddle*—"how do you transmit it? Because institutions always think long-term...is the institution going to train the dancers to perform it?"—she did not just give voice to doubt about the institution's capacity to perpetuate dance. She also recognized how, at a fundamental level, dance operates more like an epistemology than a physical thing.<sup>262</sup> It is a way of knowing rather than a fixed object, and the curator expressed (maybe in spite of herself) that incorporating dance into the institution, by way of the Dance Constructions, could impact its operations and function and perhaps expose its own performances. The negotiation of process and product was central to negotiating the acquisition of the Dance Constructions between 2009 and 2015, and mimicked this negotiation within the works themselves, especially *Huddle*. As the group of people clustered together and climbed, articulating and defining the huddle shape, so did the acquisition by MoMA define the Dance Constructions and objectify knowledge held by Forti, making it into a more identifiable thing. Passing the works from the artist to the museum required articulating dance as an art object, drawing on precedents at the museum and adapting procedures used for the preservation and communication of dance, operations this section of Part II of the dissertation examines in detail.

The archival documents, textual definitions, drawings, photography, ephemera, and instructions gathered into a "constellation of materials" for the MoMA acquisition allowed Forti's pieces to function more like objects, while leaving room for the Dance Constructions' manifestation in

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<sup>262</sup> "Modern Monday," MoMA, October 21, 2013.

performance as outlined in Forti's protocol for continuation, the most critical aspect of their acquisition. Like a constellation of stars, some of the items, such as Forti's drawings, are more visible under the museum's ownership, listed in the searchable index of MoMA's collection on the museum's website as if they were artworks in their own right. But other materials are less visible, such as the building instructions and the video recordings, which gave Forti's works specificity as well as tangible form. *Hangers*, the Dance Construction in which performers stand in looped ropes hanging from the ceiling while people walking on the ground gently bump into them, for example, was configured in the acquisition by a photograph with tombstone information (title, dimensions, and materials) on an inventory; a brief (half-page) written statement by the artist; instructions for installing and hanging the ropes; a recording of Forti teaching the work to a group of students, with accompanying textual instructions; and, a recording of *Hangers* in performance at The Box gallery in Los Angeles in 2011. The materials defining *Hangers* also included three drawings of the rope installation that Forti made in 2010, a schematic sketch with figures (also 2010), and a sample of the correct type and weight of rope used to make the long loops in which people stand [Figures 3.11, 3.12].<sup>263</sup> The heterogeneous collection of materials articulating *Hangers* in the acquisition bear diverse relations to performances of the work and diverse relations to the artist: some of the items represent the work the past as well as Forti's authorship of it, while others assist in producing *Hangers* in the future.

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<sup>263</sup> Drawn from inventory draft, in-progress teaching videos, teaching instructions draft, Dance Construction Build Instructions (The Box and Simone Forti archive). Also "*Hangers*," artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 12; and, MoMA online catalogue entries *Hangers* (1961-2010) <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200105?locale=en>; *Hangers* (1961) <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200106?locale=en>; *Sketches from "Hangers" Performance* (2010) <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/197249?locale=en>; *Solo drawing from the "Hangers" Performance* (2010), <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/197250?locale=en> (Accessed June 1, 2017).

The following discussion contextualizes such items in the Dance Constructions’ “constellation of materials” within MoMA’s collection and precedents in dance, demonstrating how the museum has evolved to accommodate works with performative elements, and examines the changes to Forti’s works brought about by defining them in such a way for the institution. It is divided into sections using the categories for artworks proposed by Nelson Goodman and identified in the dissertation’s introduction, the autographic and the allographic.<sup>264</sup> I propose that the choreographic operates between the two, and is articulated by and through Forti’s materials. According to Goodman, an autographic model for art relies on the singularity of an original that derives its value from its unique materiality and singular gesture. Allographic works, by contrast, have the capacity for repetition via a score or script, as in a musical or theatrical performance. Choreography requires the unique materiality of individual performing bodies but is also repeatable, as it is rehearsed and via its passage from one body to another, which does not typically rely on a score or script but rather bodily knowledge. The acquisition foregrounded Forti’s embodied knowledge and its importance in the transmission of the works to new performers, thus highlighting the works’ qualities as dances. Theater scholar Rebecca Schneider has imagined how “in theatre and dance an ‘original’ (if there ever can be such a thing) can be realized only in and through the jump of bodies from one artist (such as the choreographer) to a second (such as dancer) and on from that artist (dancer) to yet another (dancer), and another and another.”<sup>265</sup> According to Schneider, the *act* of passage, which doubles and troubles the singular artist and the singular work, nonetheless constitutes the “original” in works of performance. Examining this act, of passing Forti’s works to the institution, demonstrates how the

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<sup>264</sup> Goodman, “Art and Authenticity” in *Languages of Art*, 99-123.

<sup>265</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 131.

transmission to MoMA created “original” Dance Constructions for the museum to acquire, both literally and figuratively.

As it tracks this passage, how the Dance Constructions were transferred to the museum (which potentially provides a prototype for other dances to be rendered as art objects), this section of Part II also tracks the museum’s shift away from collecting singular, autonomous artworks. At the same time, my discussion demonstrates how the museum *gives* artworks definition as “singular” and “autonomous.” Since the museum’s earliest years, items related to performance required MoMA to alter existing procedures and/or invent new ones for its fundamental operations such as collection building, conservation, storage, and display, and the organization of the Department of Media to include performance in 2009 newly emphasized the museum’s archival operations. With a collection of material such as Burden’s Performance Art documentation, and Chan’s theatrical relics, MoMA has made art out of the archival and has become itself more like an archive, a function also reflected by the “constellation of materials” developed for Forti’s Dance Constructions. However, acquiring materials such as uneditioned videos of historic performances as works of art—for example, a 1978 recording of Yvonne Rainer performing *Trio A*—signals a departure from collecting one-of-a-kind items, viewable only in one place at one time. These single-channel works are licensed for viewing rather than sold as objects, one of the ways to conceive of live performances (and the Dance Constructions) taking place in the museum setting. Collecting the rights to a performance, such as Sehgal’s *Kiss*, which was sold in an edition of four, enables MoMA to manifest the work according to a score for exhibitions without physically retaining anything in its collection. Although this novel transfer arrangement allowed Sehgal to adapt performance for the art market, works from

Minimal sculpture, such as Robert Morris's simple plywood shapes, and Conceptual Art, such as Sol LeWitt's wall drawings, have been produced via instructions and owned by way of the rights to future productions for some time. The acquisition of the Dance Constructions reflected these precedents as well. The "constellation of materials" formalized Forti's knowledge and the works' history into a tangible format, adding the supervision of a surrogate for the artist, which supplies an additional guarantee on the rights that MoMA acquired. Dance demonstrates instabilities in owning rights, which the acquisition brings to light while providing a mechanism to mitigate it.

### **Autographic Originals**

The Dance Constructions, with their lack of conventional theatricality, did not generate cast-offs such as a decorative backdrop, distinctive props and costumes, or preparatory drawings, which are how works of dance and theater are frequently represented in museum collections, including MoMA's. Documentation of many of the early performances of Forti's works does not exist, and documentation of other occasions of the works was not comprehensive until very recently.

Consequently, the "constellation of materials" consists of different types of unique physical items related to the works and to the artist within a specific time frame, in this case Forti's lifetime. These are treated as "originals" in the sense that their singular materiality offered the museum something it alone can claim. Copies of them are both significantly different and "less than," a key identifier for autographic works, according to Goodman, that positions the museum's collection as original.<sup>266</sup> In addition, the items in the "constellation of materials":

Forti's descriptions, the gallery's building instructions, the recordings of Forti teaching and the

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<sup>266</sup> Goodman defined a work as autographic if "the distinction between the original and a forgery of it is significant" (113).

related performances in 2011, seven drawings, four photographs, a notebook from re-staging *See Saw* in 2011, and an assortment of props, work together to identify Forti as the individual author of the Dance Constructions, with her drawings showcasing a signature style and the photographs singular occasions. Containing detail and information that reflect their function as archival documents, they at the same time—or more importantly—evinced proximity to the artist’s body, like holy relics.

An odd document, *Handwritten draft of "Huddle" Performance*, listed with the Dance Constructions on MoMA’s website but not on acquisition inventory drafts, is quite literally an autograph by the artist and exemplifies the relation of many of the items in the “constellation of materials” to Forti’s group of performances.<sup>267</sup> Sometime between 2009 and 2015, Forti wrote and signed a version of the *Huddle* artist statement in pencil on archival paper, translating the live experience both into words and into an irreplaceable artifact expressly for the acquisition. The *Handwritten draft*, which was not given a date by the museum once it was in the collection, was produced to give background and instructions for *Huddle* but also to stand in for the mountain of climbing people when it is not manifested by performers. The format of pencil on paper makes a direct connection between the artwork and the body of artist, relying on the visual art convention of the singular mark, with Forti asserting her authority over the work through its actualization in something that is both a signature and a drawing. In its new two-dimensionality, *Huddle*, Forti’s most famous work (and heretofore the most impermanent) can be traced directly to the artist as the origin, with the material object attesting to *Huddle*’s existence as well as its

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<sup>267</sup> This is the title in MoMA’s online catalogue: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200111?locale=en> (Accessed June 1, 2017).



value and originality. As a group, the items in the “constellation of materials” act similarly, translating and converting each of the Dance Constructions into new articulations as art objects.

In an autographic format more traditionally found at the museum, seven drawings by Forti in the “constellation of materials” can be readily recognized as works of art, expressing both the artist’s signature style and a long-term relationship with the Dance Constructions. Three of the drawings date to the 1970s, when Forti was in the process of recalling her early works for the retrospective *Handbook in Motion*, which she wrote and assembled at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1972-1973.<sup>268</sup> Four drawings made more recently in 2010 are all related to *Hangers*, a work for which there was little documentation when the dialogue about acquisition began. All of the drawings are recognizable representations of the Dance Constructions and related works, with some of the drawings displaying titles or other text. In pencil on aging paper, a title at the top of one of the drawings identifies *Censor*, the noisy duet for singer and a pan of nails that punctuated the first performances of the Dance Constructions in May 1961 [*Handbook in Motion: Original drawing from Censor* (1973), Figure 3.13].<sup>269</sup> Forti’s drawing is a bare-bones depiction of two figures and energetic lines, demonstrating the movement, mood, and volume of the brief piece, one of the “other things” from “five dance constructions and some other things” that was added to the acquisition as the process went along in 2009-2015. The drawing is one of the only representations of the piece in its early years. *See Saw*, one of the two works from the Reuben Gallery in 1960 that was identified as a Dance Construction in the MoMA acquisition, is

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<sup>268</sup> During this period Forti also performed, taught classes, and appeared in artworks by Dan Graham and Joan Jonas, among others. Breitweiser, 286-290.

<sup>269</sup> The titles and dates in brackets are from MoMA’s online index of Forti’s works, which appear to have been derived from a version of the acquisition inventory.

represented in another drawing from the same period on a large sheet of newsprint [*See Saw - hand drawn/written description of original performance (1961), with notes about Bob Morris* (ca. 1972), Figure 3.14]. In hand-written captions running above and below a diagram of the figures, space, set-up, and costumes in the performance, Forti detailed the dramatic action of the first performances of *See Saw*, and named the two initial performers, Rainer and Morris.

These two 1970s drawings in the MoMA acquisition did not ultimately appear in *Handbook in Motion*, but Forti's sketched recollection of Ono's loft and how her works were arranged in it in 1961 was included in the book [*Dance Constructions: Yoko Ono Chambers St. Loft Map (1974)*, Figure 3.15].<sup>270</sup> The map, which represents each of the Dance Constructions and *See Saw* as a shape with an identifying label, is tattered and contains the residue from being taped to something long ago. Yet its circulation over the years as a reproduction in Forti's small but important volume (*Handbook*) reinforced the preciousness of the piece of paper MoMA collected decades later as an original artwork [Figure 2.21]. All three 1970s drawings exhibit the individuality of Forti's drawing style and handwriting, while the visible age of the paper implies that they are historic artworks, in a medium the museum is familiar with collecting. Similarly, the recent drawings related to *Hangers* (all ca. 2010) represent a performative work in an autographic medium MoMA has collected since its earliest years as an institution [Figures 3.11, 3.12]. The four *Hangers* drawings range in appearance from a schematic rendering of figures and movement to production drawings, providing suggestions for installing the ropes and performing the work. Forti's drawings blur the line between artwork and supplementary instruction material, while demonstrating the consistency of her drawing style over a long period: Forti paired text

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<sup>270</sup> Forti, *Handbook*, 60.

with representations of the *Hangers* set-up in a manner similar to her large drawing of *See Saw*, while the more schematic rendering of the movement and bodies in *Hangers* recalls the energetic *Censor* drawing. All together, they create a tidy set that spans almost forty years yet retains cohesion, recognizably depicting performances while at the same time standing on their own as autonomous visual artifacts.

When the group of seven drawings entered the MPA's collection as part of the acquisition of the Dance Constructions in 2015, MoMA had already acquired some of Forti's drawings, selections from her "Illuminations" series made around the same time as the *Handbook* sketches [Figures 3.16, 3.17]. Collected in 2013 by the Department of Drawings and Prints, the Illuminations drawings also displayed the artist's economical pictorial style and penmanship, and were related to live performances, a connection suppressed by the Department of Drawings and Prints. The repeated shapes of Arabic numerals, circles, and spirals, in crayon and pencil on newsprint, reflected the movement Forti developed in an improvisatory practice with musician Charlemagne Palestine, also called "Illuminations." Their work together consisted of long, slow developments: Forti traced the shapes of numbers as she walked and leaned into the circular patterns, while Palestine performed slowly-changing tones/drones on the piano and with other instruments [Figure 3.18].<sup>271</sup> The entry of Forti's preparatory drawings for these performances into MoMA's Drawings and Prints collection rendered them into artworks but completely separated them from the collaborative, cross-disciplinary origins in dance and music. Their online catalogue listings, for instance, contain no mention of the movement practice for which they served as a type of

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<sup>271</sup> Forti began improvising with Palestine in late 1970 or early 1971 at the brand-new California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California (CalArts). The Illuminations practice is described in *Handbook*, although it does not appear under that name (129-139); it overlapped somewhat with the multimedia work sessions Forti called "Open Gardenia" and held on campus at CalArts, also described in *Handbook* (108-113).

score, an allographic device.<sup>272</sup> Most likely, Forti's stature as an artist whose autographic artwork was already part of MoMA's permanent collection gave support to the acquisition of the Dance Constructions, and the Dance Constructions drawings were a similar kind of material as the Illuminations drawings. But as Forti's earliest performance works were considered (and ultimately acquired) by the MPA, the department's priority on time-based media and live experience meant that the relationship of Forti's drawings to the performances they represented gave them special value, rather than needing to be downplayed or eliminated. In their acquisitions, both departments collected Forti's original drawings in place of ephemeral performances, but the "constellation of materials" for the Dance Constructions positioned the drawings in relation to live performances and gave the MPA the capacity to (re)produce the works they represent: *Censor*, *See Saw*, and *Hangers*. The example of Forti's Illumination drawings in the Department of Drawings and Prints demonstrates how MoMA conferred the status of an autonomous, autographic artwork on material that may have originated for other reasons. And together, the two departments provide an example of shifts in the interests and capacities of the museum in response to evolving artworks and emerging trends.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> For example: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/173880?locale=en> (accessed February 1, 2017).

In April 2014, the MPA sponsored a performance by Forti and Palestine related to the Illuminations history, with its announcement for the event referring to the drawings at MoMA as well as the historic nature of the artists' contemporary encounter at the museum. This was "illummminnnatttionnnsssss!!!!!!" April 13-14, 2014, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/performance/1438> (accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>273</sup> MoMA's mission statement recognizes the evolution of art to include new forms, which will necessarily impact its departments, which are divided by medium. It states, "modern and contemporary art [...] involve all forms of visual expression, including painting and sculpture, drawings, prints, and illustrated books, photography, architecture and design, and film and video, as well as new forms yet to be developed or understood, that reflect and explore the artistic issues of the era," Museum of Modern Art, "Mission Statement," CMP, 1.

In fact, collecting and exhibiting material related to dance, particularly drawings, was one of MoMA's early experiments, but as its departments shifted and acquisition priorities changed, the origins of this material in live performance were forgotten, repressed, or edited out. In late 1939, as MoMA was still developing its identity, ballet aficionado and Museum Advisory Committee member Lincoln Kirstein donated his collection of books, prints, photographs, slides, films and other ephemera related to dance to the museum.<sup>274</sup> The resulting "Dance Archives" opened to the public in 1940. It was initially a division of the museum's library and produced research exhibitions such as "Isadora Duncan: Drawings, Photographs, Memorabilia" (1941-42) [Figure 3.19].<sup>275</sup> In 1944, the Dance Archives was promoted to a separate curatorial department, the Department of Dance and Theatre Design (a name that was later changed to the Department of Theatre Arts). As a curatorial department, it produced exhibitions for the museum such as "Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibition: Dance and Theatre Design" (1944) and "World of Illusion: Elements of Stage Design" (1947-48), and some that traveled via MoMA's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.<sup>276</sup> The curatorial department also built on Kirstein's initial donation by acquiring material related to theater and dance, especially preparatory sketches and production designs, such as watercolors by modernist Marc Chagall for the 1942 Ballet Theater

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<sup>274</sup> Art historian Claire Bishop noted that Kirstein tried to persuade MoMA to host George Balanchine's new ballet company (eventually New York City Ballet) but does not cite the source. Bishop, "Perils and Possibilities," 74 n. 2.

<sup>275</sup> This history is summarized in the Dance Archives finding aid in the Museum of Modern Art Archives: <https://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/EAD/DanceArchivesf> (Accessed February 1, 2017); museum Chief of Archives Michelle Elligott included images and details about the department's changes in a recent article, "From the Archives: Dance and Theater," *Inside Out* MoMA Blog (October 23, 2015), [https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2015/10/23/from-the-archives-dance-and-theater/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2015/10/23/from-the-archives-dance-and-theater/) (Accessed February 1, 2017), and curated an exhibition of these materials in 2009, "Another Modern Art: Dance and Theater" <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/982?locale=en>. (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>276</sup> Elligott, "From the Archives."

of New York production *Aleko* [Figure 3.20].<sup>277</sup> However, the role of the Department of Dance and Theater Design within the institution's entire collection and overall structure was contested and never made fully clear, and after debates among administrators, the department was dissolved in 1948.<sup>278</sup> The dance and theater research materials such as books and ephemera were sent back to MoMA's library and the "artworks" were distributed to other museum departments, largely the Department of Drawings and Prints.<sup>279</sup>

Whereas the items in the Department of Dance and Theater Design had initially been collected for their relation to live performance, those retained by MoMA tended to be ones with formal similarity to other drawings and prints already in the collection with familiar authorship, such as Chagall or Pablo Picasso. The Dance Archives had explicitly communicated about relationships between visual art, theater, music, scenic design, costumes and textiles, and dance, which were repressed or even lost when the material was transferred to other museum departments. Such an

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<sup>277</sup> The acquisition numbers for Chagall's watercolors suggest they were collected in 1945 by the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, but more research is needed to be certain. For examples, see object records: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/85057?locale=en>, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/85030?locale=en> (Accessed June 15, 2017).

<sup>278</sup> Elligott wrote, "though the Museum issued a statement indicating that the department was disbanded due to the institution's rising operating costs, Amberg [the Dance Archives librarian], probably rightly, understood the underlying cause to be the lack of a clear realization of its function within the Museum's structure" (Elligott, "From the Archives").

<sup>279</sup> The research materials were eventually sent to the New York Public Library, in 1956. But the precise movements of the re-housed dance-related drawings, prints, and other objects at MoMA were not recorded, with the Dance Archives Finding Aid noting how much has been lost or remains vague about these objects and their history. <https://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/EAD/DanceArchivesf> (Accessed February 1, 2017). A press release for the 1974 exhibition "Painters for the Theatre" also mentioned the museum's history of collecting in this area but noted that the collection of 400 drawings "is largely uncatalogued and unresearched because of lack of funds." The document also indicated that MoMA's "Theatre Arts Collection" was founded by scenic designer Lee Simonson in 1934, incorporated into Kirstein's Dance Archive in 1941, and ultimately taken into the Department of Drawings and Prints in 1962 under curator William S. Lieberman, a narrative that diverges slightly from current archivist Elligott's and dates the museum's interest in dance and theater even earlier. The Museum of Modern Art, "Painters for the Theatre: The New Exhibition at The Modern," Press Release No. 95, 12/10/73.

instance exposes the malleability of the status of something like a sketch for a performance: it can be at once ephemera and artwork, a document and a drawing, an instruction and an autonomous aesthetic object. In fact, the mechanism behind the transformation of a dance-related drawing into an “autonomous” work of art is the museum’s rearrangement of its holdings. The material from the Department of Dance and Theater Design made the transit from archival material to artwork while essentially staying in one place, establishing (indeed *performing*) instability between the two, although this instability was not consciously acknowledged. Which is to say, the museum rather than the material determined the art status of these items, which corresponded to MoMA’s evolving capabilities and priorities at the time. Today, the MPA and its collecting strategies—as reflected in the “constellation of materials” for the Dance Constructions—could be signaling a return to an earlier model for MoMA when it had a more relational, interdisciplinary approach to artworks. Less ambiguously, it registers an increased recognition of the museum’s value as an archive, which has correspondingly expanded the defining limits of an artwork to its documentation and related material.

Four photographs of the Dance Constructions in the acquisition package, two of *Huddle* and two of *Slant Board*, all taken at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1982, reflect the interest of the museum in such documentary material facilitating the legibility of a performance as a discrete work of art. Collected as prints, they are particularly fine photographs and particularly fine examples of Forti’s works: in one photograph, *Huddle* was captured in one of the museum’s galleries, neatly crowned by a triangular canvas on the wall behind it and with a single spectator

observing closely from a bench [Figure 3.21].<sup>280</sup> Within this frame, a climber descends on to his/her hands, with his/her legs and grubby feet flicked up over the huddle. A second photo captured the work performed outside in the Stedelijk's sculpture garden, demonstrating relationships with both the man-made and natural landscapes: *Huddle* is a moving sculpture falling somewhere in between an abstract tower made of large steel plates and a bronze figure kneeling at the side of a reflecting pool [Figure 3.22]. The photographs of *Slant Board* show the work performed with and without an audience inside against a gallery wall, its movement and dynamism captured in a blurry figure and variously arranged performers [Figures 3.23, 3.24]. These photographs provide proof of *Huddle*'s and *Slant Board*'s existence in the past and make a case for their rightful place in a museum. They also convey information about the Stedelijk's spaces and grounds in 1982, with the performers' and audience's clothes, shoes, and haircuts underscoring this historicity. And, as black-and-white prints, they convey both facts and artiness.

As such, the four photographs in Forti's "constellation of materials" resemble the contents of Chris Burden's 1974 book of documentation in the MPA's collection, i.e., traces emphasizing the fleeting nature of performance. They also highlight, as in Burden's case, the autographic qualities of Forti's pieces, making them into singular actions by a singular artist—even giving them aura, the term used by theorist Walter Benjamin to distinguish art from other cultural production. Referring to Burden's photographs, performance theorist Philip Auslander described how his documents "provide both a record" of a performance and "evidence that it actually occurred."<sup>281</sup> In fact, after the fact, the photographs *create* the originality of the events depicted,

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<sup>280</sup> Very little else is known about the engagement at the museum: the photographs with the photographer's date stamp on the back are the only known documentation. Simone Forti archive.

<sup>281</sup> Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," 1.



which theater scholar Rebecca Schneider has taken further to suggest how they also *create* their disappearance and therefore their desirability for audiences and museums. She wrote,

“Performance art work of the 1960s and 70s, captured in grainy black and whites or flickering film stock could posit the event as having some priority over its documentation. The document would stand as record that the event ‘that was there’ was ‘no longer there.’ Photographs and film and, ultimately, video, could therefore come to serve (ironically) as testimony to the event’s disappearance, even positing the event as always essentially missed, fully dependent on the embodied in-time singularity of an auratic artist’s embodied act.”<sup>282</sup>

The documentation thus configures the performance and the artist as “auratic,” and as having passed.

Viewed this way, Forti’s black-and-white images follow precedents for and align the Dance Constructions with Performance Art, the photographs providing record and evidence of singular manifestations despite the works’ many recurrences over the years. They emphasize the unrepeatable nature of the moments depicted therein—and emphasize the unrepeatable nature of the individual living *artist*: Forti is negotiating the ropes of *Slant Board* and is likely one of the performers of *Huddle* in the museum’s sculpture garden.<sup>283</sup> Forti was not in these performances the focus of the action, but her presence at a particular time, in a particular (picturesque) place, add both facticity and authenticity to the performances captured in the photographs. Similarly, although the teaching videos for the Dance Constructions made at The Box in 2011 were not

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<sup>282</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 28.

<sup>283</sup> Forti may also be one of the performers in the *Huddle* indoors but it is too difficult to say for certain.

devised for a museum's general audience, they can be read in autographic terms. They captured the artist in her role as teacher of the works, a singular performance at a singular moment in time [Figure 3.25]. Filmed all at once, in a consistent location, the videos provide definitive examples of the Dance Constructions, executed under Forti's direct supervision. Not only will the videos be used by teachers and performers for performances of the Dance Constructions in museums, they also construct "original" artworks by way of their mediation. The performances depicted in the videos are unique occasions that cannot be repeated. Which is to say that, rather than destroying "aura" as feared by Benjamin in his famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," the videos and the 1982 photographs help to *supply* aura to the Dance Constructions.<sup>284</sup> Both the artist and her works achieve greater singularity and therefore significance in the museum for having been identified and defined in such a way, one of the functions of the "constellation of materials" and the acquisition overall.

All together, the items in the "constellation of materials" function as relics, mementos of the proximity of the Dance Constructions to Forti's physical person as she performed, supervised, and maintained the works and their history between 1961 and 2015. The items straight from Forti's archive: the drawings, the photographs, Forti's notebook, and a toy prop used in *See Saw* communicate direct contact with the artist. Their one-of-a-kind and historical features are visibly apparent: the sketched map's worn edges and tape residue, like the other traces of time, favorite pens and pencils, and assorted quirks (such as a fringed end from a spiral notebook) distinguish the individual items and assert their material singularity [Figures 3.11-3.15]. The singular

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<sup>284</sup> Second version in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trs. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and others. (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 19-55.

imprint of Forti's handwriting and drawing serve as an index of her physical presence. Again, collected as prints, the impact of the four photographs as unique physical objects is heightened, with their singular manifestations limiting their circulation and reproduction.<sup>285</sup> A notebook the artist used when she re-staged *See Saw* in 2011 is filled with Forti's sketches, observations, and reflections during rehearsals, with the intimate format providing a window into the artist's practice and her specific subjectivity: a name is crossed out and corrected, quotes selected from the day's rehearsal, and moments and movements represented by figures and repeated words [Figure 3.26]. Forti's artist statements define the pieces and their history in her own words, while the instructions for the performances and built components of the Dance Constructions communicate Forti's presence through her participation and approval. As a vehicle to transfer the works to the museum, the "constellation of materials" convey remnants of the action and of the artist herself. Insofar as performance depends on specific bodies and actions in time, its residue is perhaps the most autographic material of all, spirit and subjectivity transubstantiated into matter.<sup>286</sup> Without the alienation of an object from a subject, as in painting or sculpture, the artist is transferred to the museum by way of these fragments. "Collecting" performance in this way draws viewers and historians even closer to the artist and conditions of making.

When art historians have narrated performance in terms of their documents and relics, they typically use these fragments to demonstrate the fleeting nature of the originating event, the impossibility of recovering it, and the historical distance between past and present. Alex Potts is one of the few to register the instability between artifacts and art in contemporary art, with his

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<sup>285</sup> By contrast, Chris Burden's *Deluxe Photo Book 1971-73* (1974) was produced in an edition of fifty.

<sup>286</sup> This recalls one of the earliest sources for the modern-day museum, the reliquary.

theorization rendering the distinction between event and record negligible. He wrote, “the very fabric of the archival or documentary material becomes for us constitutive of the phenomenon being evoked, and hence too of its qualities as a work of art.”<sup>287</sup> This framework displaces a performance’s or an action’s significance from fleeting moments on to the physical materials that carry it through time, and therefore “the boundary between artwork and archive is blurred or even irrelevant, and the artwork is constituted primarily, or at least in significant part, through the traces or records of it that remain.”<sup>288</sup> However, although Potts refers to the presence of these materials in the museum, he does not acknowledge its role in elevating artifacts to art—which supplies relics with secular hagiography—nor the evolution of the museum into an archive. He provided an example, Joseph Beuys’s *Eurasia, Siberian Symphony 1963, 32<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Fluxus* (1966), which he described as an “awkward structure of dead hare and rods,” related to a “ritual” Beuys performed in Berlin in 1963, and urged readers to view it in the museum as “a provocation to think beyond the object on display to the actions in which it had been deployed, and further too to [the] ongoing artistic project of which both it and the actions formed part” [Figure 3.27].<sup>289</sup> In other words, the assembly of stuffed animal, blackboard, tented poles, and felt that MoMA’s

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<sup>287</sup> Alex Potts, “The Artwork, the Archive, and the Living Moment,” in Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith, eds. *What is Research in the Visual Arts?* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008), 120.

<sup>288</sup> Potts, 119. Potts’s position takes the opposite extreme of a theorist such as Peggy Phelan, who has insisted that the only or primary meaning of a performance is in its disappearance, and that it definitively resists collection and commodification on these grounds; with the event and its documentation collapsed, performance *can’t* disappear. Such a theorization even suggests that all artworks are performances, and all art is archival.

<sup>289</sup> Potts, 128. How exactly the “provocation” or relay works is unclear in Potts’s account: ostensibly the relationship is signaled by mysterious nature of the object, with the title and other details illuminated by didactic materials provided by the museum. A performance theorist such as Philip Auslander might suggest that the structure is a document, which is itself a kind of performance; see Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation.” To put an even finer point on it, Schneider has written about how past performances reverberate forward through and beyond material remnants—and especially in dialogue with audiences, viewers, and researchers. That Beuys’s 1966 performance recalled one from 1963 reflects the “relentlessly citational” nature of performance more generally (Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 102).

Department of Painting and Sculpture acquired in 2000 should be regarded as a relay to the 1966 occasion upon which Beuys made or used these things, which was itself a relay to an earlier set of actions in 1963 [Figure 3.28].<sup>290</sup> For Potts, the artwork included all of these elements, even if they were not happening before the viewer in that moment. The documentary material is thus performative and the drama of the originating event, the performance, as well as its passage, play only a part in the artwork.

This framework provides a way of thinking about the objects in the “constellation of materials” for Forti’s Dance Constructions as constituting the artworks alone, without the performances, which could someday be how the materials are regarded, but downplays the loss involved in such a transition. The items from Forti’s archive align the Dance Constructions with historic examples of Performance Art and position Forti as an autographic artist. The MPA’s interest in these materials follows patterns of collecting previous works by Forti as well as Performance art, but also MoMA’s earliest days of collecting theater and dance materials—and reflects movements in the museum to confer value in each of these areas. Potts’s narrative helps explain the place of relics and documentation in the museum without detailing the shifts within the museum itself, such as the creation and dispersal of the Dance Archive and more recently the creation of the MPA. This movement, brought to light by Forti’s case study, facilitates or inhibits the art status and visibility of certain materials, one of several ways the institution performs. As it classifies and re-classifies materials, it also produces (or takes away) artworks while at the same time pointing out the archival function of every item in the institution.

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<sup>290</sup> Information on the department and when it was collected on the object’s page in MoMA’s online catalogue: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81154?locale=en> (Accessed June 1, 2017).

## **Allographic Plans, Scripts, and Scores**

The drawings, photographs, and other relics served as autographic originals in the “constellation of materials” for the Dance Constructions, highlighting the historical nature of the works as well as Forti’s authorship. However, a key component of the acquisition was the ability for the works to be produced again, and a number of the items in the “constellation of materials” acted as plans, scripts, and scores, allographic devices for generating new performances of the works. Allographic art forms such as music and theater have the capacity to repeat but each manifestation is different from the last, resisting the terms of original and copy that are fundamental to autographic forms and to traditional models of the art museum. Examining the instructions in the “constellation of materials” in relation to precedents in contemporary art demonstrates how executing scores and plans is not entirely new to the museum. Nor is it new to dance, although experiments with removing body-to-body transmission and translating dance’s embodied knowledge to a retainable and communicable form have had variable success in “preserving” dance. On the one hand Forti’s Dance Constructions especially lent themselves to these models—particularly in light of Forti’s early experiments with transmitting her pieces textually—but resisted to other allographic strategies, especially choreographic notation.<sup>291</sup> This section reviews the allographic features of the “constellation of materials” to both shed light on Forti’s works and the solutions that reassured the artist and the museum the Dance Constructions could be generated in the present and the future. In the end, the “constellation of materials” made clear that the Dance Constructions, despite their dissemination through text on some occasions

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<sup>291</sup> A symbolic language that would make dance fully allographic has presented an ideal for some theorists (including Goodman as he tried to theorize dance using the “allographic” framework) but generally has been rejected by practitioners, particularly the generation just before and surrounding Forti, who have ultimately found its translations insufficient for transmitting dance’s bodily knowledge.

since 1961, contain a good deal more information than that conveyed through words or symbols alone.

In the years leading up to the acquisition, The Box's head preparator developed "Dance Constructions Build Instructions" (Build Instructions) outlining the construction and installation of the ropes and plywood structures for each of the Dance Constructions. Although produced in response to performance and exhibition needs as the works were presented at distant museums, festivals, and galleries, they eventually transferred to MoMA as an integral part of the acquisition.<sup>292</sup> Designed to aid fabrication at MoMA and where the works might go on loan, the Build Instructions specify materials, solidify dimensions, list step-by-step instructions, and provide schematic drawings and photographs to confirm certain details and installation conditions. They also note other requirements, such as the recording and speakers for *Accompaniment for La Monte's "2 Sounds" and La Monte's "2 Sounds"* (1961).<sup>293</sup> A few notes indicate acceptable leeway for interpretation by the person making the structures in order to accommodate, for instance, existing spatial and physical conditions, which vary with every location. For the works requiring hanging ropes, the Build Instructions suggest that installers rely on existing structures such as beams, noting, "different spaces require different hardware."<sup>294</sup> Even with these points of flexibility, the Build Instructions participate in a language based on

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<sup>292</sup> For example, in performances at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 2004, and at MoMA in 2009, and in Zurich in 2011. The August 2011 performances at The Box helped refine these as well, and they were firmly in place by the 2014 Salzburg exhibition. See Breitweiser, 288-289.

<sup>293</sup> Specifically, "*2 sounds* should be played loudly on two speakers that are located on different sides of the room. The work may not be played on headphones." Installation instructions, Simone Forti: Accompaniment for La Monte's 2 sounds, The Box and Simone Forti archive.

<sup>294</sup> Installation instructions, Simone Forti: Accompaniment for La Monte's 2 sounds; Hangers Installation Instructions (The Box and Simone Forti archive).

measurements, materials, and construction procedures shared between artists, galleries, and museums that permit certain artworks to travel geographically and through time. As a preparatory guideline, the Build Instructions can be reproduced in unlimited emailed PDFs and Xeroxed copies, much like sheet music or a textual script, and interpreted by the carpentry specialists already on hand at the host museum or hired by it.<sup>295</sup> Not unlike an allographic score, the Build Instructions function as a generator for multiple outcomes, yielding basically identical equipment or props in each instance, to be destroyed after the exhibition [Figure 3.29].<sup>296</sup>

The Dance Constructions Build Instructions do not alone generate each of Forti's pieces, but they reflect the involvement of the exhibition venue, usually a gallery or museum, in an artwork's fabrication. Supplying or making parts of an artwork—or even a complete one—may once have been outside the domain of the museum, but over time practices such as Minimalism in sculpture have made it a regular occurrence. In an interview about his early 1960s plywood forms, for example, Robert Morris described how he “liked the idea of the thing being completely reconstitutable at any moment and place, and the lack of precious materials.”<sup>297</sup>

When these were exhibited in distant galleries and museums, “it was easier to reconstitute the

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<sup>295</sup> At MoMA, building the equipment for the Dance Constructions is “a collaboration between [the MPA], Exhibition Design and Production, and Exhibition Planning and Administration.” MPA Collection Specialist, email message to the author, December 2, 2016.

<sup>296</sup> The MPA Collection Specialist noted that there is more cost associated with storing the equipment than re-building it for each exhibition (email message to the author, December 2, 2016). In the past, Forti expressed interest in re-purposing the equipment after performances: a 1970s proposal for a workshop at CalArts described Forti's performances at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1971 and indicated plans to place the structure built for *Slant Board* “outdoors on the Valencia campus so that anyone who is interested will be able to play on it and explore the movement possibilities it suggests” (unpublished proposal/artist statement, ca. 1971, Simone Forti archive).

<sup>297</sup> In Benjamin H.D. Morris, “A Conversation with Robert Morris in 1985,” in Julia Bryan-Wilson, ed. *Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 58.



work than to ship it,” he claimed.<sup>298</sup> Morris’s works have been produced this way for exhibitions for decades, sometimes many years after they were first conceived. Morris’s arrangements of L-Beam sculptures from 1965 were re-fabricated in 1966 and 1969, and paired *Columns* after the 1961 painted plywood “original” were made out of painted aluminum in 1973 [Figure 2.23, 3.30].<sup>299</sup> Even more recently the L-Beam sculptures were remade in 2004 for “A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968 at Los Angeles’s Museum of Contemporary Art. This approach to objects, in which the newly-made object does not disturb the status of the artwork, enacts a performative logic made explicit by the Dance Constructions in their embodiment. As works such as Morris’s align sculpture with conceptualism and performance, they definitively trouble the autographic original that cannot be reproduced or forged, a disruption viewed by some as Minimalism’s enduring legacy in visual art.<sup>300</sup>

Understanding Forti’s “theater” as crucial to the inception of Minimalism helps not just to explain accusations of “theatricality” but also the lasting and fundamental relationship of her early works to those in other forms. One can view manifestations of a wide range of artworks, including drawings, installation, and Conceptual Art as well as sculpture, as performances like those in music or theater. Conceptual Artist Sol LeWitt, for example, has been explicit about this

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Dating conventions for these works vary: *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* leads with the re-fabrication date, while other sources use 1961/1973 or omit the later date altogether, leaving the question of whether there was an “original” work rather vague (*Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, 90-93). The use of aluminum in the latter realization of *Columns* suggests that the initial painted plywood may not have been the ideal material, and later versions provided the chance to improve upon it. See also the discussion of Column in note 176.

<sup>300</sup> Rosalind Krauss, for example, has written, “For Minimalism almost from the very beginning located itself, as one of its radical acts, within the technology of industrial production. That objects were fabricated from plans meant that these plans came to have a conceptual status within Minimalism allowing for the possibility of replication of a given work that could cross the boundaries of what had always been considered the un-reproducibility of the aesthetic original,” in “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” 5.

analogy, characterizing the plans for his works, lines drawn directly on the wall by hired assistants, as “a musical score that could be redone by any or some people”<sup>301</sup> [Figure 3.31]. Martha Buskirk, in her study of artworks using plans, certificates, and other instructions, emphasized the participation of LeWitt’s works in allographic logic and noted how they resist the paradigm of the original and the copy: more than one LeWitt can exist at a time, and the artist “has stipulated that they should not be maintained as artifacts.”<sup>302</sup> The meaning of the drawings resides in their appearances at particular times and in particular places, rather than in the instructions, and they can take place more than once, each new drawing a legitimate artwork. They are not reproduced but rather produced anew each time, and this production can be delegated to (performed by) others. Works like Morris’s and LeWitt’s made their first appearances mostly after Forti’s *Dance Constructions* in 1961 but entered museums such as MoMA long before 2015, their cyclical materiality and co-articulation with viewers in exhibitions perhaps better represented in the Departments of Painting and Sculpture, Drawings and Prints, and even Photography, than in the MPA. Their procedures for collection and display at the museum prepared the way for recognizing the possibility of acquiring the *Dance Constructions*.

LeWitt reduced the mechanism for transferring his wall drawings to a collector or a museum to a minimum, which reflected the conceptual nature of the works and underscored their allographic properties. Buskirk wrote, “for these works, the only object that is actually transferred is a certificate, accompanied by a diagram with instructions for the realization of the drawing.”<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Quoted in Buskirk, 45.

<sup>302</sup> Buskirk, 45-46.

<sup>303</sup> Buskirk, 45.

This elegant transfer method foregrounds how delegates who carry out the score provided by the drawing do not need to be overseen by the artist but simply authorized by his legal document [Figures 3.32, 3.33].<sup>304</sup> Forti had experimented with a similar but less formal transfer mechanism when she generated her early texts for *Slant Board* and *Huddle*, published in *An Anthology* in 1963, which conveyed the simplicity of the pieces, their availability to new performers, and their departure from conventional models of dance [Figure 2.26]. Her texts did not simply translate the Dance Constructions into language but represented a new art form, one could argue, signaled by the very term “Dance Construction.” The allographic structure of the textual scores identified and potentially produced movement outside of conventional technique and choreography, and the pieces’ capacity for circulation and repetition via simple texts signaled that they *were* outside of conventional technique and choreography. As texts in the anthology, Forti’s scores (like LeWitt’s drawings and certificate) also removed the need for body-to-body transmission in the production of the two Dance Constructions, foregrounding the communicability and availability of the embodied knowledge in the works rather than its exclusivity.

While innovative in their departures from dance and in their relations to other art forms such as poetry and music, Forti’s early 1960s *Anthology* texts at the same time drew upon writing as a longstanding mechanism for transmitting dance.<sup>305</sup> Despite debates about dance’s capacity for

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<sup>304</sup> Buskirk’s book details a number of ways such ideals have been applied broadly across post-1960s practices, causing problems for artists, collectors, and museums. Buskirk discussed these problems primarily in relation to the collector Giuseppe Panza, with whom a number of artists were in conflict over his ownership and fabrications of their work, especially Donald Judd and Dan Flavin. Art historian James Meyer noted Buskirk’s “excellent account of Panza’s conceptualist reading of Minimalism,” which contrasted the more rigorous “conceptual” attitudes of Morris and LeWitt with those held by Judd and Flavin, who eventually accused the collector of fraud and deliberate misrepresentation of their artworks through his own fabrications. Buskirk, Introduction and Chapter 1, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, (1-56) and Meyer, “Minimal Unconscious,” 146 n. 19.

<sup>305</sup> The library report *Securing Our Dance Heritage* discussed how text is one of the oldest mechanisms for recording and transmitting dance: “what we know of dance in earlier centuries rests on pictures and word

literacy, and general resistance to the idea of translating dance into language, it can be surprisingly precise for communicating dance.<sup>306</sup> Long before the 1960s, strings of ballet terms, mostly in French and backed by the standardized ballet technique of American and European schools, were put together to produce the same movements consistently, and still function this way today. The phrase “*tombé, pas de bourée, glissade, grand jeté*” denotes the same low traveling steps and small glide that prepare for a large split jump, regardless of how skilled or experienced the dancer is, or whether the instruction is given in a children’s class or professional rehearsal. Written language has been especially critical for dance’s practical matters: until the middle of the twentieth century, for example, when dance was first awarded copyright in the United States, choreography was represented in copyright law as a *verbal* description within a work of theater.<sup>307</sup> Even earlier in the century, modern dance pioneers Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis of Denishawn licensed and sold “word notes” to dancers and schools around the country, allowing for the monetization, distribution, and reproduction of their choreography across the United States [Figures 3.34-3.36].<sup>308</sup> Dance historian and theorist Susan Foster has argued that

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descriptions,” naming Sappho, Homer, Aristophanes, Euripides, Plato, Rumi, and others as dance writers. It also described how “hidden” dance documentation could be found in the texts of ethnographers observing activities such as masquerade, religious rituals, and other social movement practices in contexts where recording is inappropriate or unavailable. Snyder, “Documentation,” *Securing Our Dance Heritage*, 3 and 6.

<sup>306</sup> Dance scholar D’Amato has argued that it even provides a site for conceiving and composing choreography, about Forti’s use of language in *An Anthology* specifically. D’Amato, “Mobilizing the Score.”

<sup>307</sup> Kraut’s history of copyright detailed different ways choreographers negotiated its “fixation” requirement, including through written descriptions (*Choreographing Copyright*, in particular xi-xiii).

<sup>308</sup> Barbara Naomi Cohen’s fascinating account of “The Franchising of Denishawn,” demonstrated how Shawn and St. Denis participated in a robust dance-by-mail market, their “word note” system enabling the Denishawn brand to appear on all kinds of stages and supporting their own schools (Denishawn), formative sites of modern dance where Martha Graham and other influential figures trained in the early twentieth century. Denishawn sold booklets with numbered instructions that corresponded with bars of music on a score, accompanied by photographs with sample postures and formations; these sometimes included rolls for player piano. Cohen concluded her research on these documents with emphasis on the efficacy of communicating dances in words: “in order to finance the school, they sold dances; to sell dances, they had to notate them in a clear, legible word system. A huge repertory of dances thought lost can be recovered from convention notes, promotional throwaways and notations purchased for use in small town recitals.” Cohen’s account emphasized the financial benefit of these scores at the time, and the historical benefit today, which

language and writing provide the very basis for choreography, contributing to the spread of French social dances across Europe and Britain in the eighteenth century and giving rise to concert dance.<sup>309</sup>

Even more precisely, Foster's theorization of choreography depends on a notation system for dance devised by Pierre Beauchamps in the seventeenth century for Louis XIV, first published by Raoul Auger Feuillet in 1700. According to Foster, this notation served as an abstracting and universalizing mechanism that enabled dances to travel across bodies and continents, as the *Anthology* texts (may) have done for Forti's Dance Constructions.<sup>310</sup> But the ideal of translating dance into a graphic form that can be retained for long periods and disseminated widely puts into particular relief how Forti's works diverge from other choreographic methods and precedents. In the twentieth century, practitioners striving toward making dance universally recordable and transmittable developed different methods of representing body positions, gestures, and pathways through space, which are ideally simultaneously abstract, precise, and flexible in order to extend to every style of dance and even human movement in general. Labanotation, the system preferred today in the US, was invented by choreographer Rudolf von Laban in Germany in the 1920s, and uses shaded bars and triangles on a vertical graph to describe movements and

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reorients the narrative of the early modern dance movement as one with strictly spiritual and aesthetic ambitions. Repressing the commercial narrative in favor of more esoteric concerns, i.e.: the spiritual, intellectual, and theoretical, is a persistent trend in histories of American dance. Barbara Naomi Cohen, "The Franchising of Denishawn," *Dance Data* 4, [1979], n.p.

<sup>309</sup> Foster's work on the relation of dance to text has been a critical foundation for the field of dance studies. See, for example, Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>310</sup> According to Foster, once the symbolic system was internalized in European ballet techniques and routines, it could travel further, but in the transition from the page to the body in European ballet, "dance was severed from the symbolic system that had given it materiality and parity with the other arts. Without that system, the guarantor of movement, equivalent to the land or government that secured paper money, dance was reframed as the most feminized and trivial of accomplishments." Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 43.

positions of the hand, arm, torso, and legs.<sup>311</sup> Separate symbols detail the head, face, and other body parts, as they move together and sequentially in combination with music [Figure 3.37, 3.38]. Although these scores are very complex to produce and decode, out of reach of laypeople, they have been credited with moving “dance out of a realm of illiteracy and into a form with a written equivalency,” that is, making dance into a discursive form.<sup>312</sup> For some, this development in documentation, which contributed to dance achieving status as property through copyright, bear directly on dance’s ontology and identity as a form of knowledge.<sup>313</sup> Goodman, for example, in his theorization of the allographic and autographic arts, identified the development of notation systems for dance as a high point in its achievements and evidence of a fundamentally repeatable condition.<sup>314</sup>

In practice, the centralized Dance Notation Bureau (DNB), established in 1940, oversees the notation of dances into Labanotation in the US, retains the scores, and administers the process of

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<sup>311</sup> Other formalized dance notation systems include: Benesh Movement Notation, used in Great Britain, and Eshkol-Wachmann Movement Notation (EWMN), developed by Noa Eshkol, an Israeli artist and theorist.

<sup>312</sup> Snyder, “Documentation,” *Securing our Dance Heritage*, 7.

<sup>313</sup> Snyder linked dance’s “literacy” to the achievement of copyright by way of notation: “the importance of [copyright] went far beyond the copyright process. It marked the first time that dance was acknowledged as a separate phenomenon that could be described in its own terms, with its own symbol system” (7). As noted in the introduction to this study, Hanya Holm’s 1948 choreography for the Broadway musical *Kiss Me Kate* was the first dance to be copyrighted (in 1952), and was notated in Labanotation for this purpose. Most accounts of this achievement likewise emphasize the role of Labanotation, but Kraut contextualized Holm’s successful copyright application within earlier attempts by other artists, and ascribed Holm’s success to a number of different factors, the development of notation systems only one of them. Kraut’s book overall demonstrated how before (and even after) landmark dates in copyright law, dancers and choreographers have developed their own mechanisms for asserting property rights. See Snyder, “Documentation,” in Johnson and Snyder, *Securing Our Dance Heritage*, 7-9, and Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright*, in particular Chapter 4, “‘High-brow’ meets ‘Low-down’: Copyright on Broadway,” 165-218.

<sup>314</sup> Goodman conceded that the allographic may not account for all of dance’s attributes, however (Goodman, 211-218).

staging dances.<sup>315</sup> A notator skilled in Labanotation translates a dance as a choreographer or her representative teaches it to new performers, recording the choreography and related information such as characterization and imagery, as well as information about costuming and other details. The DNB keeps this score in a database, upon which dance schools and companies draw to find a work to perform that is appropriate for their number of performers and venue.<sup>316</sup> After obtaining permission from artists or their estates, and paying the associated fees, the company works with a stager skilled in both Labanotation and dance to transmit the choreography to the new performers.<sup>317</sup> Observing the process of staging the Broadway musical *Kiss Me Kate* (1952) from Labanotation in 1965, an exhilarated journalist compared the process to producing a work of theater, and the work of a dancer to an actor, who consulted “the score to clarify a point, just as an actor might consult his script about unfamiliar lines.”<sup>318</sup> The writer concluded, “this behavior may be a portent of what dance rehearsals will be like in notator’s Utopia, where every dancer will be literate.”<sup>319</sup> Indeed, today the DNB promotes a certain kind of “utopia,” emphasizing the accuracy of dance notation and the reliability of its staging process, particularly over retrieving a dance from the memory of a dancer who did it in the past. Its website claims its staggers have “one big advantage,” that “when a question arises, the score can be consulted *and a definitive*

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<sup>315</sup> The DNB was established in 1940 at Ohio State University, a member of the Dance Heritage Coalition. “About the DNB,” <http://www.dancenotation.org>; <http://danceheritage.org/members.html> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>316</sup> The DNB’s website advertises that it has over 600 scores in July 2017. This is a tiny fraction of the dance produced in the US since the DNB’s founding, and the cost of notating a dance (one estimate is \$20,000) has prevented the broader use of this method and repository. DNB, “Notating Dances,” and “Library & NTD Catalogue,” <http://www.dancenotation.org> (Accessed July 20, 2017).

<sup>317</sup> DNB, “Notating Dances” and “Staging from the Score,” <http://www.dancenotation.org>, (Accessed February 1, 2017). The DNB does not list how much their service fee is for an individual applying to stage a work, but it ranges from \$295-395 for universities and dance companies; additional fees include licensing, royalties, a stager’s fee, and a style coach (if applicable).

<sup>318</sup> Author unknown, “Backstage View: Copyright by Hanya Holm,” *Dance Magazine* (July 1965): 44.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

*answer is provided.*<sup>320</sup> Proponents of Labanotation insist the symbols, the score, and the staging process have the capacity to preserve dance over the long term, accurately recording a dance and then providing a guarantee on generating it again.<sup>321</sup>

The specialized knowledge and costs of notating have limited the translation of most dances into Labanotation or another system, however, and practitioners tend to be critics of dance notation systems, which undermine its wide use as a tool for the project of retaining a dance. Dancer and dance writer Lizzie Feidelson wrote in 2013 that dance notation “is passionately pursued by an esoteric niche of dance scholars and former dancers; but the practice is widely dismissed by the dance community as an illegitimate preservation method. To most choreographers, writing down a dance seems like an academic misappropriation.”<sup>322</sup> Although Feidelson’s comments appeared in an article about Merce Cunningham, she did not refer to his view on the matter, which was articulated in his only published book, just as notation systems were gaining traction in the dance community in the US. In *Changes* (1968), Cunningham complained:

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<sup>320</sup> Emphasis added. Despite the DNB’s stated certainty, some artists and estates require a “style coach” to supervise and/or elaborate on the DNB stager’s work. DNB, “Staging from the Score,” Dance Notation Bureau, <http://www.dancenotation.org>, (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>321</sup> Francis Yeoh’s article about choreographic trusts quoted Laban expert Ann Hutchinson Guest, who contrasted the DNB’s knowledge with that of a work’s dancers. Guest explained that the notators of George Balanchine’s choreography “had the advantage of capturing vital details expressed by Balanchine, his concepts of movements, his particular details and explanations,” yet “the guardian dancers continue to ignore [the notations]...because of the prevalent theory that any dancer who has danced in the piece is a better source” (quoted in Yeoh, “The Choreographic Trust,” 236). Guest is one of the founders of the DNB and a primary promoter of the notation system in the US; her comments reflect the at times entrenched opposition between notators and practitioners.

<sup>322</sup> Feidelson, “The Merce Cunningham Archives.” She continued, even more stridently, “While proponents of dance notation tout its practical use for preservation, there’s also an unspoken feeling among them that widespread use of notation could provide a stronger foundation for the scholarly study of dance—a historically unacademic art form... It is as though notators believe that dance will remain in the dim, unenlightened shadow of other art forms until it learns to write.” See also note 66.



Notation—all of these systems based as they are on symbols which are translated by the dancer, are out of whack. The element that has always troubled me was the translating act. The notator looks at a step, translates it into a symbol, writes it down, then at some time later, the dancer looks at the symbol, translates it back into a step, and then does it. But this is not the way a dancer acts. In his class and in his rehearsing, he looks directly at a step, or someone doing a movement, and reorganizes that immediately into his own body. It is more direct than the symbol syndrome.<sup>323</sup>

For Cunningham, the immediacy and physical specificity of dance's embodied knowledge simply could not be converted into symbols or language, a stance perhaps developed in response to the notation of his own *Totem Ancestor* (1942) in Labanotation at a very early date in his career [Figure 3.37].<sup>324</sup> In his view, dance only passed between bodies without translation, or the body itself was the means of translation, and notation doubly compromised this process, as it first encoded dance and then decoded it over again. Cunningham used elaborate charts and diagrams (some of which were reproduced in *Changes*) to generate his choreography and serve as memory aids, but for him the body was the primary site of movement invention and storage, and he disseminated this knowledge directly to company dancers.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Merce Cunningham, *Changes* (New York: Something Else Press, 1968), n.p.

<sup>324</sup> According to the DNB website, the short solo was notated in 1942 by Lena Belloc; a *New York Times* article elaborated that it was a collaboration with Guest. Jack Anderson, "Dance View: A New Wine Cellar Stocked with Vintage Choreography," *New York Times*, November 29, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/29/arts/dance-view-a-new-wine-cellar-stocked-with-vintage-choreography.html> (Accessed 1 February 2017); "DNB Notated Theatrical Dances Catalogue" <http://dancenotation.org/catalog/EditDanceDetails.aspx?DanceID=125> (Accessed February 1, 2017). This score appears to have facilitated a revival of the dance in 1999 and a performance in 2010, even though it officially went out of MDC's repertory in 1954. Merce Cunningham Trust, "Choreography," *Totem Ancestor*, <http://dancecapsules.mercecunningham.org/overview.cfm?capid=46110> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>325</sup> Feidelson interpreted Cunningham's notes as such: "unlike dance notation, they were made for composition, not preservation; no mark is definitive, or arbitrates a question about a particular movement better than a dancer's memory can. Instead the notes transmit the frenzy of creation, and perhaps the fear of forgetting: a jotted arrow indicating a breathless need to move on to the next gesture before it slips away" (Feidelson, "The Merce Cunningham Archives"). Cunningham's notebooks and slips of paper are held by the

Yvonne Rainer, Cunningham's student and a founding member of the Judson Dance Theater, arrived at a very similar position on notation after her experience of having *Trio A* (1966) notated in the early 2000s.<sup>326</sup> When she was approached by notators eager to take on her iconic dance, the choreographer was skeptical: she wrote, "the subtleties and dynamics of this dance, performed without the structuring support of a musical score, seemed outside the domain of any graphic notation system."<sup>327</sup> But, as she reflected in a document about the process, she saw "an opportunity to set the record as straight as possible and forget, at least for the moment, my scruples and caveats about fetishization and immortality."<sup>328</sup> Detailed documentation seemed at odds with the "free-wheeling" spirit of the 1960s in which the work was created, but Rainer had recognized over time that "precision has always been an important component of *Trio A*," producing its signature geometric lines and "uninflected pace."<sup>329</sup> Labanotation tentatively held out the promise that *Trio A* and potentially other dance works of the 1960s—although they may not have appeared technically challenging and avoided a polished look—could be "preserved" exactly.<sup>330</sup> Indeed, the Laban score produced in 2003 for *Trio A* rigorously recorded every

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New York Public Library, and permission from the Merce Cunningham Trust is required to view them: Merce Cunningham Dance Company Choreographic records, \*MGZRC 83. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

<sup>326</sup> According to the DNB, Rainer had prior experience with dance notation: a section of her work *Continuous Project - Altered Daily* (1969-70), "Chair/Pillow" was notated in 1970. Although Rainer has not commented publicly on that process, the dance, which is performed to music, is very different from *Trio A*, containing abrupt changes of direction and plain, angular movements that lend themselves to documentation by this method. See <http://dancenotation.org/catalog/EditDanceDetails.aspx?DanceID=440> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>327</sup> Yvonne Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 6-7. This is an unpublished update to "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," *Dance Research Journal* 41, No. 2 (Winter 2009): 12-18, from early 2011; subsequent references are to the later unpublished version, provided by the artist in 2011.

<sup>328</sup> Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 6-7.

<sup>329</sup> Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 6.

<sup>330</sup> The primary concern of Rainer's article was the "paradoxical project" of the "exact preservation" of *Trio A*. "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 6-7.

idiosyncratic gesture and smoothed-out sequence, and Rainer's odd facings, which were seldom frontal in the dance [Figures 3.39, 3.40]. When put to the test, however, Rainer found that the performance by dancers who had learned *Trio A* from the Laban score "needed not just fine tuning but gross adjustments."<sup>331</sup> While comprehensive and internally consistent, Rainer learned how the notation was *unfaithful* to the actual dance and needed her oversight and "adjustments" for it to pass satisfactorily to new performers. Forti's intervention into concert dance with the Dance Constructions posed even more basic questions about how movement and the body are organized than *Trio A*, which drew upon existing modern dance and ballet techniques even as it departed from them. Although *Trio A* and the Dance Constructions may have looked similarly causal and "uninflected," by using physical structures to generate movement, Forti's works re-oriented choreography and resisted dance notation altogether. This puts into even sharper relief how the effects produced by each choreographer were achieved by wholly different means.

Moreover, testing Forti's Dance Constructions against dance notation demonstrates how her works are truly realized anew in each performance, putting particular pressure on the original-copy paradigm. Without set choreography, the simple instructions and equipment/props create the action in the Dance Constructions, each following a consistent course but never happening the same way twice. The pieces set the physical constants of gravity and inertia in relation to variables such as mass, speed, and volume, experiments that can be run and re-run but never repeated exactly. A record of the Dance Constructions in Labanotation would first require translating the pieces beyond recognition and striving toward a single version would definitively transform the works. A precisely choreographed pile of climbing people in *Huddle*, for example,

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<sup>331</sup> Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 7-8.

would eliminate the immediacy of the in-the-moment decisions made by individual performers and organize the interactions between them into a definitive pattern and instruction. Notating *Huddle* would betray the impossibility of coding how gravity directed the ascent and descent over the hill of people in any given performance. Likewise, giving the climbers in *Slant Board* a fixed arrangement and route for their climbing would reduce the real-time interaction of gravity and its effects on the body into a simulation. The negotiation of the ropes and other performers on the inclined plywood is, like *Huddle*'s, un-codable: if one performer's effort becomes the model for another's, *Slant Board* is transformed into a piece of precise choreography. How exactly the hanging loop of rope responded to the collisions in *Hangers* depended on the weight of the person standing in it, how it was hung from the ceiling, and how hard and from what angle people knocked into it—aspects impossible to predict or encode. This is not to say the Dance Constructions do not have specificity (or even choreography), but that they carry further dance's inherent questions about repetition and variability, stasis and change. A “model” performance for Forti could not repeat one in the past but newly approach the obstacles and instructions. This could not be fully recorded nor translated into words, lines, and symbols. The allographic ideals of notation systems for dance have a number of limitations, but they are particularly incompatible with the Dance Constructions, demonstrating the need for different technologies for recording, retaining, and transferring the works to another caretaker. As such, the “constellation of materials” for MoMA took recourse to other tools used for the communication of dance, but it also emerged that the artist's embodied knowledge would be essential for performances of the works in the future.

## Choreographic Models

As the “constellation of materials” for the MoMA acquisition formalized information into tangible things for the MPA to acquire and use to aid production of future versions of the works, it foregrounded the specificity of Forti’s knowledge as well as the specificity of the works. It drew on some of dance’s documentation methods such as video recording and incorporated group exercises to cultivate correct approaches to the works, keeping Forti’s perspective and experience at the center of the materials. In this way the “constellation of materials” emphasized dance’s duplication of the singular subject through body-to-body transmission and prepared the ground for the plan for using proxies for the artist, discussed in more detail in Part II’s next sections, Authenticity and Continuation/Conservation. The textual instructions, teaching videos, and plan for “qualified teachers” establishes that the Dance Constructions are not—and maybe never were—open to performance by just anyone, even if they appear that way. They also assert how the “pedestrian” or “neutral” performance quality of the works is highly considered and technical, even if it might not appear that way. As it provided solutions for reconstituting the Dance Constructions in spite of (because of) their lack of set choreography and traditional dance training, the transfer of Forti’s works to MoMA formalized a small repertory with attendant technique, reflecting and producing dancerly dimensions of the works.

The evolution of Forti’s instructions from the 1960s texts to those Forti developed for the acquisition by MoMA in 2015 represents the convergence of the values communicated by the spare scores with the practical requirements for maintaining the Dance Constructions over time, particularly in a museum. In the decades since they were published in 1963, Forti’s six short sentences in *An Anthology* instructing readers about *Huddle* and how to do/make *Huddle*

expanded to a full page of teaching instructions.<sup>332</sup> In the written instructions for MoMA, the artist provided details on the number of performers, costuming, and suggested warm-ups for *Huddle*, along with lessons learned from years of experience teaching the piece. Forti included similar instructions for each of the works, to be used in conjunction with the teaching videos, lingering on their subtle textures and how to achieve them. For example, the teaching instructions for *Hangers*, in which “walkers” pass between “hangers” in loops of rope, indicates, “the attitude of all the performers should be ‘natural.’”<sup>333</sup> The scare quotes around “natural” reveal this as a performed quality, not a given but generated or produced in a conscious way. In fact, how most forms of dance organize the body is the opposite of natural, and the casual, meditative appearance of *Hangers* is carefully designed and rehearsed.<sup>334</sup> In her textual instructions Forti also provided exercises to facilitate certain skills, such as a game that develops alertness and response time, in preparation for pulling the ropes of the wheeled wooden bins in *Roller Boxes*.<sup>335</sup> For scaling and traversing *Slant Board*, the artist recommended video recording and playing back practice runs, a common device used in conventional dance rehearsals that would enable performers to evaluate and improve their performance quality and compositions on

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<sup>332</sup> “Teaching instructions, *Huddle*” in “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive. See also Figure 2.26.

<sup>333</sup> “Teaching Instructions *Hangers*” in “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive.

<sup>334</sup> An entire body of technique known as “somatics” emerged out of the dance works and workshops of the 1960s and 70s, including Forti’s, the evolution and codification of which Doran George traced in “A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Los Angeles, 2014). Moreover, one might argue that Forti’s careful materials and protocols were necessary *because* of somatics, which by 2015 had evolved to the point of generating a recognizable look at odds with the those desired in the Dance Constructions.

<sup>335</sup> “Teaching Instructions *Roller Boxes*” in “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive.

the angled board.<sup>336</sup> Forti's instructions reveal how the arrangements of the figures on the board—seemingly automatic and intuitive, unplanned—are nevertheless cultivated. Putting this embodied knowledge into words enabled Forti's experience and preferences to be conveyed to new teachers and performers but also conveyed that the Dance Constructions *have* this embodied knowledge, perhaps obscure until this point and disguised by their informal appearance.

Forti's texts supplement the teaching videos recorded at The Box in 2011, which are at the heart of the transfer of the Dance Constructions to the museum, featuring Forti herself passing along the Dance Constructions, a historic transmission of the works that serves both documentary and instructional purposes. Documentation often provides instruction on how an artwork looks or is installed/performed, but these videos are explicitly designed for use by authorized teachers of the Dance Constructions, capturing Forti's transmission process and her preferences for performances of the works. The newly expanded set of Dance Constructions was recorded at The Box under good lighting and spatial conditions, with the latest video technology [Figure 3.25].<sup>337</sup> The edited recordings span several hours on a hard drive: Forti first gives a general introduction to the Dance Constructions and an overview of the rehearsal and performance process. Then introducing each piece, she speaks about what she was thinking about when she made it in 1960 or 61, using narratives consistent with the artist statements written for the acquisition. The video for each work is divided by inter-titles: "Day 1," "Day 2," "Dress Rehearsal," "Performance,"

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<sup>336</sup> "Teaching Instructions / *Slant Board*" in "Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions" draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive.

<sup>337</sup> The videos included recordings of Forti teaching *Huddle*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, *Slant Board*, *Accompaniment* (all 1961), as well as *Roller Boxes* and *See Saw* (both 1960). One of the "some other things" *From Instructions* was recorded later in 2015, at The Box's new gallery location, after Forti had revisited the work for the exhibition in Salzburg in 2014.

with the teaching process unfolding smoothly in a complete sequence and culminating in a single-take recording of the Dance Construction in front of an audience. Very simply shot and produced, the videos contain a number of markers of their documentary qualities, including a minimum of editing and no special effects, and the casual placement of the camera in the gallery, signaling the video's veracity and reliability as an unadulterated document.

Taken together, the teaching videos provide guidelines for future performances of the Dance Constructions and affirm Forti's originating authority over the works, identifying her embodied knowledge, even though Dance Constructions do not have "choreography" per se. A group of former students, mostly artists and dancers, receive instructions with physical commentary by the artist. Then they are given a chance to try out the actions, ask the artist questions, and rehearse the works, all of which is captured in the recording. In the process, Forti illuminates complications that arise in practicing and performing the works: for example, she demonstrates the wide stance people need in *Huddle* in order to support each other and uses a partner to establish how easily someone can lose her balance without it. While she teaches, Forti also provides details about performance quality, which produce both the actions and mood of the pieces. A frantic pace of walking between the ropes in *Hangers*, for instance, not only disrupts the light tone of the work, it detracts from observing the effects of gravity as it pulls the people standing in the ropes back to center. And *Slant Board* requires a good deal of practice to learn to move on the steep surface of the board, with some performers adjusting right away and others never fully getting used to it.



As performer Steve Paxton, a member of the initial cast for Dance Constructions, recalled his experience of *Slant Board* in 1961, he stressed the deceptively simple qualities of Forti's works as well as her careful oversight of the works. In the lone known account of the rehearsals for "five dance constructions and some other things" in 1961, Paxton remembered, "works for groups were 10 minutes long, and each piece had a simple thing to *keep doing*. Verbal instructions for these works could be minimal because there was no slack in the situation, once begun."<sup>338</sup> However, Paxton noted, "establishing this style in the performing context of the early 60s did present some challenge."<sup>339</sup> Paxton's comments convey how executing *just* Forti's instructions without embellishments was harder than it looked and required Forti's guidance. His recollection continued, "Simone told us (the initial cast) that she worked hard to have an idea and wanted to see those thoughts without other people's ideas mixed in. One might imagine that *Slant Board* was foolproof, but Simone's remark indicates that we were goofing on her material."<sup>340</sup> One might also imagine that the first cast of Forti's first Dance Constructions was able to use the equipment with a minimum of instruction and rehearsal, but Paxton's account relayed their preparation, practice, and the artist's careful watch and direction. Even though the works do not have set choreography—and perhaps because they do not have steps that are organized into a fixed pattern—they require a certain kind of "technique," a neutrality and directness of approach that can fulfill Forti's vision. The teaching videos Forti recorded in 2011 and provided to MoMA in 2015 thus emphasize both Forti's expertise and the possibility of "correct" or "ideal" (dare we say "museum-quality") Dance Constructions.

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<sup>338</sup> Steve Paxton, "Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson," *Contact Quarterly* VII, no. 3/4 (Spring/Summer 1982): 58.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

The teaching videos in the “constellation of materials” slow down and linger over details in each of the Dance Constructions, demonstrating Forti’s methods of eliciting the works to her satisfaction as well as clearly legible examples of them. Documenting the process of teaching and performing the Dance Constructions, the teaching videos bypass any notational recording system and overcome some of the limitations of historical recordings of the works. Film and video are the most common tools for capturing dance, but they have their disadvantages as documentation to “preserve” dance. In Forti’s case, the Dance Constructions had been recorded together in 2004, along with *See Saw* and *Rollers*, but the group was not comprehensive (it excluded *Hangers*) and the recording demonstrated many of the limitations of video for dance, with its limited perspective and flattened images.<sup>341</sup> *Huddle* had been recorded in the mid-1970s, with Forti appearing in at least one of the two versions in the video she called the “Huddle Tape” but is now simply titled “*Huddle* (1974)” in MoMA’s online index of its collection [Figure 3.41].<sup>342</sup> The performances in 1974 were slightly longer than contemporary performances of *Huddle*, about fifteen minutes each, and their circumstances were informal, with no audience detectable. Someone (likely Forti) directed the cameraperson by saying “OK, go” when the performers were ready to begin, and it is valuable as one of the earliest recorded instances of Forti’s famous piece. Its quirks as a document give it specificity of time, place, and performers: a

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<sup>341</sup> *Simone Forti: An Evening of Dance Constructions* (Artpix Notebooks, 2009), DVD.

<sup>342</sup> “Videotapes” inventory, ca. 1975. Simone Forti clippings file, \*MGZR. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library. This video was acquired by MoMA at the same time as the other materials, and catalogued with them, but not listed on the draft inventories: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200110?locale=en>, and <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200109?locale=en>, (Accessed July 1, 2017). I viewed it in Salzburg at the Museum der Moderne in July 2014; the checklist for the exhibition lists it as 30 minutes, with camera by Andy Mann, produced by Castelli/Sonnabend Videotapes, “List of Works in the Exhibition,” in Breitweiser, 293.

phone rings in the middle of one of the performances, and someone dashes across the back of the studio/gallery space to answer it, and the performers' clothes and the tape's picture quality place the document securely in the 1970s. Low lighting prevented recording the performances in any great detail, although it is unclear whether recording even under the best of conditions could convey all of the subtleties of *Huddle* that are only observable in person.

The loss of subtlety was one of Rainer's key complaints about a 1978 film of *Trio A*, shot in 16mm but since transferred to video [Figure 3.42]. Rainer executed the work for dance historian Sally Banes as a solo in a studio, but "because of the camera's fixed position and its tendency to foreshorten, the video and film of the dance lack the precision that live teaching can impart and reveal only the merest indications of [*Trio A*'s] patterns and directions," she later wrote.<sup>343</sup> The new medium (film/video) transformed key spatial aspects of Rainer's dance, which the Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) has likewise noted as one of recording's limitations for dance.<sup>344</sup> The DHC's "Documenting Dance" guide also cautioned that theatrical lighting has to be adjusted or eliminated for film and video, and in fact, recording might not capture the dance at all if the lights are so low that an image cannot be recorded. The same is true for movement that is so small as to almost be imperceptible, or if a performance space is especially intimate or unusual, factors crucial to experiencing the Dance Constructions. Forti's works derived a great deal of their meaning from almost imperceptible movements and sounds, intimate atmospheric shifts, and simply the experience of being close to another person in live performance. The distinctly

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<sup>343</sup> Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation," 6.

<sup>344</sup> DHC, "Documenting Dance," 13.

anti-theatrical qualities of the Dance Constructions, like *Trio A*'s, similarly threatened to disappear, or rather were all but lost, on film and video, especially these early recordings.

More alarming to Rainer is how the 1978 film of *Trio A* has transformed the identity of her work. The artist has recalled that the recording was made “three years after I had stopped publicly performing and twelve years after the original performance of the dance. The difference between the two performances – one in my memory, muscles, and photos, the other on the screen – is immense.”<sup>345</sup> The film is valuable as the earliest record of the famous dance, with the choreographer performing it herself, but when compared with other methods of retaining or preserving *Trio A*, in Rainer’s own mind, body, and scrapbook, Banes’s film fell far short for the choreographer. And, compared with her own recollection of the standards for her performance, Rainer the dancer fell far short. For Rainer, Banes’s film captured a different dancer and maybe even a different work in 1978 than what was performed in the 1960s: the film “reveals someone who can’t straighten her legs, can’t plié ‘properly,’ and can’t achieve the ‘original’ elongation and vigor in her jumps, arabesques...and shifts of weight.”<sup>346</sup> *Trio A* had modified dance techniques to create a distinct look in which steps and positions did not appear to be fully executed, running into each other without particular emphasis. But these had an exactitude, and Rainer found her latter-day performance very much lacking, calling into question how the film could be considered an accurate representation or even documentation of the work. Still, regardless of the film’s fidelities or infidelities, the video transfer of the film recording is now owned by major art institutions, including MoMA, and is largely how *Trio A* is known to new

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<sup>345</sup> Rainer’s “*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” 6.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

audiences.<sup>347</sup> In addition, the 1978 film is also largely how *Trio A* is known to new *dancers* of the work. Rainer wrote, “when I hear rumors of people learning *Trio A* from the video, I know that they have only achieved a faint approximation of the dance with little understanding of its subtleties.”<sup>348</sup> The attempts of these dancers to learn and perform *Trio A* from the 1978 recording, however they may strive to resemble an “original” performance or the recorded “original,” cannot achieve it, owing both to Rainer’s compromised performance captured in 1978 and the inherent limitations of recording dance in film and video. These renditions, even as they aim for exactitude in reproducing Banes’s film, are not and will never be *Trio A*, according to the artist.<sup>349</sup> For Rainer, *Trio A*’s continued precision—and integrity as an artwork—requires in-person passage of the work from teacher to student. As such Rainer has developed a model for teaching *Trio A* to new performers that depends on a handful of authorized “transmitters” who have worked extensively with the artist to teach the dance to the dancers, companies, and art galleries and museums that request it.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> The video transfer of *Trio A* is distributed by Video Data Bank, from whom MoMA purchased the rights in 2012: <https://www.moma.org/rails4/collection/works/119867?locale=en> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>348</sup> Rainer, “*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” 6.

<sup>349</sup> These attempts at learning and performing *Trio A* from the 1978 recording provide examples of an invalid or otherwise inauthentic live performance, working against the notion of a live performance as automatically authentic in relation to its documentation, a larger lesson of Rainer’s experience of “preserving” *Trio A*. Rainer’s narration overall indicated that her 1978 performance was not the “original” *Trio A* (even using that language) and the film/video is even further removed from the work, with the versions attempting to replicate the recording still further from the source. Performance theorist Auslander, whose scholarship challenges the idea of the live as more authentic than documentation, provided a way of thinking about performances such as those imitating the *Trio A* film/video, noting “it is worth considering whether performance recreations based on documentation actually recreate the underlying performances or perform the documentation” (Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” 2).

<sup>350</sup> One of the five current teachers, Sara Wookey, has advanced this term in particular (<http://sarawookey.com/trio-a/>, accessed July 1, 2017).

“Preserving” *Trio A* is a project that Rainer admits is “paradoxical,” but to which she remains committed.<sup>351</sup> Rainer goes so far as to use the term “original” for *Trio A*, although as a dance a true original is foreclosed, a condition that is particularly acute in the Dance Constructions.<sup>352</sup> As we have seen, Forti’s works must be created anew every time they are performed, and even though this creation falls within a very close set of parameters, the artist nonetheless decided that her long-term plans for the Dance Constructions must include proxies like Rainer’s “transmitters” for carry forward her embodied knowledge to instantiations of her works in the future. Forti’s protocol in the “constellation of materials,” like Rainer’s plans for *Trio A*, emphasize Forti’s expertise and the need for body-to-body transmission in passing the works to new performers. To the autographic archival materials and allographic plans and instructions for the Dance Constructions, Forti added a *repétiteur*—either herself or a “qualified teacher”—who transmits the works to new performers. Thus, in very literal terms, the physical materials from Forti’s archive, and the graphic, written, and recorded instructions for the execution of the works by others together comprise Forti’s “original” artworks at MoMA. At the same time, they raise the question of whether the “constellation of materials” creates new “original” Dance Constructions that future Dance Constructions model, with the help of the teacher, thus transforming the essential nature of the works. This could submit Forti’s work to the autographic logic that performance and especially dance resists—and with which the museum may be the most comfortable.

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<sup>351</sup> Rainer, “*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” 6.

<sup>352</sup> An “original” *Trio A* is especially hard to locate: Rainer worked on the dance for an extended period and showed it in a number of performances before it took its prominent place in the longer dance *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968). In her reflection of preservation, Rainer discusses this history but does not define an “original.” Rainer, “*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” 1-3.

Theater scholar Rebecca Schneider's formulation of the act of transmission, which is fundamental to theater and dance, locates an "original" in the act of passage from one custodian of performance to another. These acts passing performance between performers and from generation to generation, disrupt time, subjectivity, and—according to Schneider—have the potential to defeat even death.<sup>353</sup> In very real terms, the passage of the Dance Constructions from the individual body to the institutional body is designed to exceed the artist and defeat death. But Schneider's theorization of the passage of performance from body to body, its "jump" from one performer to the next, also aims to demonstrate the unpredictability of performance, highlighting the difficulty of containing and controlling it, especially over time. Forti's knowledge could not entirely be translated into a thing and represented in the "constellation of materials" for MoMA, requiring a surrogate. This does not just reveal how Forti's Dance Constructions could not entirely be alienated from their maker as property, but also highlights insecurity within the framework of owning rights.<sup>354</sup> Living bodies and subjects have agency that destabilizes power and ownership, and the passage of Forti's works revealed aspects of the Dance Constructions that would remain embodied, incompletely "owned" within the museum's collection.

Previous examples of owning rights in dance have demonstrated the limits to owning rights to a work of dance, which provides both a warning and tools as Forti's Dance Constructions enter the museum. Returning to the example of copyright gone awry in this study's introduction, modern dance pioneer Martha Graham's contested estate pitted the highly trained dancers in Graham's

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<sup>353</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 131.

<sup>354</sup> Dance scholar Anthea Kraut wrote, introducing her study of choreographic copyright, "the nature of dance as embodied expression means that the lines between dance-maker as possessive subject and the dance as possessed object are frequently muddy. Claims of intellectual property rights in dance are thus uniquely suited to highlight the contradictions of subjecthood and the instabilities of power" (xiv).

company against her estate's executor and heir who was bequeathed the rights to Graham's dances.<sup>355</sup> Without permission from that heir, no one could teach the technique or perform Graham's dances, leading to the effective disappearance of Graham's work in the late 1990s.<sup>356</sup> A long process of court cases and legal appeals eventually awarded most of the rights to Graham's work to the dancers who could perform the dances, and much of the dance community celebrated that the Graham dancers had finally gotten their dances back.<sup>357</sup> According to dance writer Paul Ben-Itzak, the dancers were "true" surrogates who replaced the body Graham lost in death, and the decision restored the "rightful order of things," representing nothing less than Graham's bid for immortality.<sup>358</sup> The specialized body-subjects of the Graham dancers extended the artist's subjectivity past her lifetime and gave lie to the notion of dance as solely intellectual property, revealing how imposing such terms onto processes—and people!—cannot fully contain them, producing critical failures in ownership.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> This was Ron Protas, Graham's companion who had been involved with the company and school before her death but not as a dancer; he was designated sole beneficiary in Graham's last will two years before she died (Kraut, 250).

<sup>356</sup> Feidelson reported that in the course of the "Graham debacle," Protas "locked the Graham sets and costumes in a warehouse to which no one else had the key" (Feidelson, "The Merce Cunningham Archives").

<sup>357</sup> Graham did not copyright all of her choreography, making it unclear which property had actually been inherited and which entity owned which rights. Two different Copyright Acts, from 1906 and 1976, were applied to the works Graham made over sixty-five years, while the two sides argued for and against Graham's ownership of the dances that she created. In the end, the judge decided that Graham never legally owned many of her works and therefore couldn't bequeath them to someone else. They were, rather, property of the center and the school, with which she had a number of contracts over the years; the choreographic works Graham conceived and executed as an employee were "works for hire," doctrine given by the 1909 Copyright Act (Kraut, 250-258). Dances made before Graham's first contract with the center in 1956 either went to Protas or entered the public domain. Those commissioned by other parties, including two of her most famous works: *Appalachian Spring* (1944) and *Night Journey* (1947) are now in the public domain because their copyrights were not renewed (Kraut, 254 n.126).

<sup>358</sup> "Flash Analysis 8-14-2001, "Martha is Dead, Long Live Martha," *Dance Insider*. Quoted at length in Kraut, 259-260.

<sup>359</sup> Choreographer and performer Richard Move provides an entertaining example: Move developed an homage to Graham at a New York nightclub "dragging Martha back from the dead," such that "for four years Richard Move was more or less the only person in the world performing Martha Graham's choreography" (William Harris, "Dragging Martha Back from the Dead," *New York Times*, December 6, 1998, 10 and Selby Wynn Schwartz, "Martha@Martha: A Séance with Richard Move," in *Women and Performance: A Journal of*



In her arrangements for the future of the Dance Constructions, Forti provided her proxies to the museum to carry forward her knowledge and authority, a guarantee on future versions of the works that also limits the role of the museum in determining the legitimacy of the bodies performing in the institution. The full scope of the role of the surrogate is discussed in more detail in the next section, Authenticity. Precisely because of how dance complicates the terms of “original” and “copy,” it provides a site to examine conflicts between physical and intellectual property, which may increasingly be at work in the museum as it moves from collecting objects that are autographic to producing artworks on the basis of rights using an allographic model. The “constellation of materials” that formalized Forti’s artworks for the MPA exhibited aspects of both. Following models for maintaining a choreographer’s repertory favored the “dance” part of the formulation “Dance Construction,” and located body-to-body transmission (either directly or through a proxy) as necessary for performing her works, which could also emerge as a key resource for the institution and its changing core competencies.

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*Feminist Theory* 20 no. 1 (2010), 75). Kraut included commentary on Move to inform her discussion of the conflict between Martha Graham’s legal, institutional, and biological bodies (Kraut, 241 and 248-262), while dance theorist André Lepecki engaged directly with the implications of dance’s bodily archive and the unauthorized ghosts mobilized by Move’s work (“The Body as Archive,” 135-139).

## **Establishing Authenticity and Provenance**

Within the framework of the modern art museum, authenticity has traditionally been located in the singular artifact made by an individual artist. An original artwork is distinguished by its material facts and connection to a singular, expressive genius, established through stylistic analysis and detailed provenance information. The museum's core functions of acquisition, conservation, and display have sought to highlight and preserve the precious materiality of one-of-a-kind objects, establishing connections between artworks, artists, and greater historical narratives. Theorists such as art historian Rosalind Krauss, who argued that "originality" and "authenticity" constitute "the shared discursive practice of the museum, the historian, and the maker of art," have endeavored to point out the constructed nature of these terms as well as their prominence in evaluations of modern art.<sup>360</sup> Yet despite their construction—and the rise of artworks in the 1960s that challenge these very terms—evaluations of an artwork's reality, legitimacy, and quality remain at the foundation of art museums and art history. As detailed in the introduction to my study, dance in general resists the original-copy paradigm, in that an "original" performance often cannot be precisely located or defined, nor recorded for an absolute reference. Its repetitions and body-to-body transmission create "reproductions" that have equivalence with the first or best performance: the fact of repetition or iteration does not inherently reduce a single performance's authenticity. As detailed in Part I of my study and previous sections of Part II, the Dance Constructions are particularly ill-suited to the paradigm, insofar as every instantiation is a specific combination of factors including the space, audience, built objects, and performers. Because their movements are determined by small chance

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<sup>360</sup> Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," 162.

variations, they cannot be repeated, even more resolutely than choreographed patterns and steps. Each manifestation of the Dance Constructions is unique and theoretically as “original” as any other.

As the Dance Constructions were considered for acquisition by the MPA, these questions became even more urgent and pointed. How could MoMA collect the “real” Dance Constructions? Which versions would it collect? How would it know its versions were authentic? When the process started as a conversation about *Huddle*, there really was no object to acquire—not even a prop—and the work typified how each of the Dance Constructions came together with a unique set of actors in a unique place, followed its own course, and then was over, forever. Recapturing any version is impossible. Forti’s works also appeared to undermine traditions in dance wherein authenticity could be located in the skills of the performers and their relationship with a choreographer: they were so straightforward as to not exhibit a specific style or technique, and Forti had at points let some of them spread out beyond her direct supervision and control. The process of producing and gathering materials for the acquisition of the Dance Constructions and articulating their requirements for the future established some of these requirements, thus fulfilling certain terms for authenticity. Simply entering into an art system applied autographic terms to Forti’s choreographic works: a gallery provided legitimacy and tools for articulating her contemporary art practice and biography as an artist. As seen in the previous section of Part II, Dance as Art Object, the items gathered from Forti’s archive had a singular materiality like many other objects in the museum, and some were newly created in order to make the relationship between artist and work even more explicit. The instructions, both recorded and written, that were produced for the acquisition highlighted Forti’s individual embodied knowledge and its

passage to others. This identified techniques for executing and fine-tuning the Dance Constructions, which Forti or another proxy would oversee in her absence. This last mechanism from dance introduced to the museum—or made newly explicit—the embodied knowledge that does not just define the quality but also authorizes many choreographic works. If in 1961 the Dance Constructions, in their use of minimal instructions and physical structures, seemed to bring about the Barthesian “death of the author” via the removal of the artist’s “hand,” the materials for the MPA endeavored to put it right back, although perhaps in new form.

While establishing terms and a procedure for authenticity of the Dance Constructions at MoMA, the acquisition process overall, according to some commentators, threatens to betray essential qualities of Forti’s works, which could never be authentic at a museum. Krauss’s provocations are part of a contested field of debate about what constitutes authenticity in art, particularly with respect to performance. Whereas the 1960s art critic Michael Fried decried “theatricality” in art, a number of other theorists have insisted upon the time-based, phenomenological, and ephemeral aspects of art as constituting the only authentic thing about it, including Krauss as she theorized sculpture.<sup>361</sup> The extreme end of this latter viewpoint pictures the individual subject and body as uniquely capable of generating meaning in a one-time-only scenario, as seen in iconic examples of Performance Art, while others have been at pains to demonstrate the complex apparatus constructing such a notion of live art’s authenticity.<sup>362</sup> Lambert-Beatty summarized some of the debates about the factors determining authenticity in art and performance as she considered the

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<sup>361</sup> This is discussed in Part I, see note 187 in particular.

<sup>362</sup> Philip Auslander and Peggy Phelan represent key poles in this debate in performance studies, the former’s *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999 and 2008) offering a rejoinder to the latter’s 1993 *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*.

museum's role as a regulator: the "rights model," she wrote, "belongs to and perhaps produces, a particular set of terms. The coordinates it gives for performance are not presence and trace, or embodiment and image, or immediacy and mediation – but circulation and restriction."<sup>363</sup> Her comments circumvented a discussion of the legitimacy of a performance based on its internal or inherent characteristics—including the popular view that liveness *equals* authenticity—pointing instead to the museum's management of performance as its significant factor. With this view, the museum authenticates performance at the same time that it takes authenticity away. Lacking a clear critical consensus demonstrates not just the terms up for debate but how ideals of reality, quality, and originality and whether they apply to Forti's Dance Constructions remain somewhat suspended. Nevertheless, this section of the dissertation identifies various versions of authenticity mobilized in MoMA's acquisition and tests them against some of these views.

To begin with, conducting a conversation with an art museum about acquiring the Dance Constructions established an autographic outlook, the recognition of the artist and her works as exceptional and singularly important. As the conversation continued and then reached the point of acquisition, a number of external factors were required to establish the legitimacy of the transfer of the Dance Constructions. Their transmission to the MPA directly from the artist rather than another owner, and Forti's representation by a reputable commercial gallery, The Box, helped to authorize the negotiations. The fact that Forti is still living and available for consultation at the time of the sale also created trust in the works' origin and the process of transfer. Similarly, the documentation and archive relics in the "constellation of materials" draw upon their connection to Forti's physical person to give the package value as an art object,

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<sup>363</sup> Quoted in Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 130.

leaning on the autographic conventions of Performance Art that underscore the singularity of the artist and the singularity of past performances. These most clearly demonstrated the artist's authorship and authority, ensuring Forti's works are not fake or otherwise forged, are of high quality in relation to other objects, and have special historical importance, all traditional values of the art museum.<sup>364</sup> These criteria would also have to be applied to the immaterial items in the acquisition, the performances, harder to guarantee using conventional museum or art historical tools. The acquisition thus generated items to which these values apply.

If the understated, casual appearance of the pieces and their inherently collaborative nature undermine the idea of a solo artist with an ambitious vision, the acquisition package for MoMA unambiguously consolidates Forti as author and the Dance Constructions as authored, promoting her unique conception of the works as well as their material specificity. It identifies the Dance Constructions, despite their simplicity and limited movement, as expressive artworks, articulations of the artist's specific subjectivity. Forti's drawings, although produced after the first performances of the Dance Constructions, resemble preparatory sketches, much like the studies that precede a large-scale painting, creating a narrative of individual creation from an idea to its manifestation. The drawings position performances of the Dance Constructions as the culmination of that familiar if not mythic narrative. Along the same lines, Forti's artist statements written for the acquisition create a narrative of her interior life and ideas when she made the works, suggesting how the Dance Constructions answered questions she was asking in

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<sup>364</sup> MoMA spells these out in its CMP: the reasons given for deaccessioning an artwork in the collection include, "the object is redundant or is a duplicate," "the object is of lesser quality than other objects of the same type either already in the Collection or about to be acquired," "the authenticity, attribution or genuineness of the object is questionable," and "the object lacks sufficient aesthetic merit or art historical importance to warrant retention." The Museum of Modern Art, "Deaccessioning," CMP, 4.

the early 1960s, and proposing a set of “intentions” like those presumed for artworks in more stable mediums.<sup>365</sup> Recalling the influences of Japanese Gutai artist Saburo Murakami, photographer Eadweard Muybridge, and composer John Cage, Forti wrote in the introduction to her artist statements for the Dance Constructions, “these artists told me that if there was something I needed to experience I could construct a situation to give it to me.”<sup>366</sup> She continued about the group as a whole, “I made the dance constructions [*sic*] out of the need to feel things as simple and basic as the gravitational pull between my mass and the rest of the earth, or a need to push and pull and climb.”<sup>367</sup> Each realization of the Dance Constructions in performance can thus be understood as furthering or carrying out the artist’s “need.” The performances create a direct route to the author like those provided via her hand in the drawings, her imaged body in the photographs, and her recorded voice in the teaching videos. With the narrative establishing in the teaching statements and illustrated in the drawings and photographs, the performances of the Dance Constructions can be traced to the artist’s singular vision and process.

Likewise, the *Handwritten draft of "Huddle" Performance*, the artist statement written out by hand, testifies to the individuality of the artist, of the piece of paper, of *Huddle*, and of Forti’s authorial relationship to *Huddle*. Invoking a signature, a drawing, and the residue of a performance, the *Handwritten draft* gives *Huddle* a more constant form while asserting it as Forti’s original artwork. The pages contain *Huddle*’s description and instructions, underscoring the work’s many manifestations and its availability to performers and spectators far beyond Forti

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<sup>365</sup> An artist’s “intentions” is how conservators generally characterize what goes on in the conceptualization and making of an artwork, and what conservation seeks to preserve, discussed in the next section, Continuation/Conservation.

<sup>366</sup> “The Dance Constructions,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 1.

<sup>367</sup> “The Dance Constructions,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 2.

herself.<sup>368</sup> But handwriting and signing the *Handwritten draft* made the single document function as both a score and a certificate of authenticity. In the art context this device supplies a work that might otherwise appear allographic with autographic qualities, as seen in LeWitt's certificates for his wall drawings [Figures 3.31, 3.32]. Scholars have just begun to explore all of the ways art institutions and markets labor to lock down artworks and practices that are inherently repeatable as singular and singularly authored. The emergence of practices in the 1960s, in particular Minimalism, which relied on industrial fabrication, but also book publication, small-scale manufacturing, and chance procedures, among others, removed (or seemed to remove) signs of the individual artist and opened the artwork up to unlimited reproduction. This has undermined the standards of value based on the artwork's object's originality, authenticity, and singularity, and other measures have to be taken to guarantee these objects and practices within the art market. For these works, the connection with the artist and guarantee of her authorship have to be produced administratively or by some other means in order to participate in the gallery and museum system. "The removal of the artist's hand, rather than lessening the importance of artistic authorship, makes the sure connection between work and artist that much more significant," argued Buskirk, whose book catalogues the external mechanisms—chiefly certificates of authenticity and other symbolic arrangements—devised to establish the "sure connection."<sup>369</sup> Indeed, Forti's *Handwritten draft of "Huddle" Performance* acts as both a

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<sup>368</sup> She wrote, "as I have taught *Huddle* in hundreds of movement workshops across the world, it has taken on a life of its own. I have made it clear that whoever has learned it is free to teach it and do it, and as long as it is being done in an informal context, I don't even need to know about it. From time to time some former students send me a picture of a *Huddle* that they've done in a studio or in the street in some distant land, and I see that *Huddle* has managed to hold its form, and its name, through the decades." "*Huddle*," artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 9.

<sup>369</sup> Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 3. Tracing even further this legacy of 1960s art practices, historian Miwon Kwon wrote, "certificates of authenticity have gained in significance as a mechanism to guarantee the singularity, originality, authenticity, and more fundamentally the *identity* of a work of art. In fact, in most cases there is no work without the certificate to secure its status as such." Her argument overall demonstrated how the procedures engendered by certificates



realization of *Huddle* in a different form, and as a “displaced signature” (a term Buskirk has used elsewhere to characterize certificates of authenticity), reinforcing her authorship and the work’s legitimacy in the museum’s collection.<sup>370</sup>

Scholars have started to consider the function of such devices in relation to performance, in a few cases in museums. Theater scholar Rebecca Schneider largely dismissed the use certificates of authenticity and copyright for performance, declaring such autographic aspirations as ineffective against the inherently allographic logic of performance.<sup>371</sup> She also dismissed the emphasis placed on performance’s exceptional liveness by theorists and artists who aim to locate an “original” in a single embodied encounter. Schneider positioned these strategies used by performance studies and Performance Art in relation to the contest between “theatricality” and “authenticity.” She wrote,

While theater and its actors, scripts, sets, and emotional dramas have never been assumed to be pure, singular, or authentic, many performance artists and their modernist theatre ancestors [...] have sought authenticity, and indeed pitched theatricality against authenticity, looking instead for what [performance theorist] Richard Schechner termed

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can constitute the “work” of an artwork and provide a large measure of its meaning, using as her primary example the works by the late artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres (FGT). “The Becoming of a Work of Art: FGT and a Possibility of Renewal, a Chance to Share, a Fragile Truce” in Julie Ault, ed. *Felix Gonzalez-Torres* (Gottingen: Steidl/Dangin, 2006), 295.

<sup>370</sup> The term appears in Buskirk’s essay for an exhibition that put on display certificates of authenticity and other contracts artists have used to define and guarantee their works, taking as its starting point the certificate as an aesthetic object in its own right. Martha Buskirk, “Certifiable,” in Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf, eds. *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art* (Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2011): 99.

<sup>371</sup> Schneider helpfully paraphrased comments by performance theorist Richard Schechner from 1965: “despite the policing properties of copyright concerning *drama*, there can be no original in *theatre*” (Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 131 and 219 n. 57). This gloss was drawn from Schechner’s field-defining “Theatre Criticism,” which distinguished between the text that could be regulated and the live performance that (theoretically) could not. In *Tulane Drama Review* 9, no. 3 (1965): 13-24.

“actuals” in 1970 and what [Performance Artist] Marina Abramović terms “pure and raw” today.<sup>372</sup>

Schneider pointed out relations between theater and Performance Art in order to counteract the ways scholar-director Richard Schechner’s prominent theorization of performance foregrounded the live experience of it in almost spiritual terms in order to insist on its singularity and originality. She saw Abramović’s insistence on a transcendent physical and emotional experience for the performers and spectators of her Performance Art pieces as a similar move. In their evanescence and intensity, these performances could thus exceed their melodramatic, fakey theatricality and their mediumistically confusing theatricality as well as their inherently reproductive (not singular) theatricality—and finally achieve authenticity. Schneider continued,

For antitheatrical modernist theater and disappearance-invested or authenticity-driven (even copyright-seeking) performance art, the mantra has generally been: imitation is the opposite of creation; or, it takes a Great Solo Artist to make art or re-perform art acts; or, auratic art can’t be copied because imitation destroys aura; or, true art vanishes in second hands.<sup>373</sup>

The author characterized the quest for singularity in a field premised on repetitions as requiring (flawed) rhetorical and even legal devices, apparatuses external to it, in order to secure its “authenticity.” These autographic mechanisms (fail to) regulate fundamentally allographic forms, according to Schneider, monitoring the exclusivity of performance and limiting certain kinds of transformations, such as the re-performance of an iconic Performance Art by Abramović piece by unauthorized persons, or the translation of one of Tino Sehgal’s “constructed situations”

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<sup>372</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 15. Schneider’s text overall demonstrated how “theatricality” is a negative term for both the visual and performance arts, although differently inflected in each field.

<sup>373</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 15-16.

into a representative photograph. These are circulations of their “original” performances that both artists strenuously resist—yet there is nothing inherent in the performances that would keep them from being taken up in such a way.<sup>374</sup> According to Schneider, the museum confirms and furthers these autographic pretensions.

Schneider’s theorization puts these conflicting aims into sharper relief but does not discuss how dance negotiates between the singular and the repeatable as a fundamental condition. The acquisition of the Dance Constructions by MoMA created and introduced dance precedents to the institution in order to secure the authenticity of the works collected by the museum. On the one hand Forti’s “constellation of materials” for MoMA confirmed “a Great Solo Artist” and “auratic art,” emphasizing “creation” over “imitation” and highlighting the artist’s expressiveness. At the same time, the materials demonstrated that the works have to be taken up by new generations of performers otherwise they will not be seen at all. The teaching videos, textual instructions, and plans for qualified teachers in the “constellation of materials” underscore the Dance Constructions’ status as dances, supplying the works (and the museum) with expertise. Quite literally formalizing the pieces for the museum, the materials work against the seeming simplicity, boundlessness, and automatic, un-authored appearance of the Dance Constructions, detailing their specific characteristics. By creating skill and locating it in a specific person, the materials for the acquisition participate in (and produce) the dance logic that secures its identity and legitimacy through the transmission of embodied knowledge and its execution by specific subjects with that knowledge. The simultaneous emphasis on an individual and her ideas, and the circulation of her knowledge—in particular embodied knowledge—to

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<sup>374</sup> Collins, 34.

other people is a task for which dance and choreography are uniquely suited. Dance's methods of securing legitimacy through personal contact and training, and MoMA's openness to absorbing such methods, made it possible for Forti to distribute her supervising authority among teachers who would consult with MoMA on new productions of the works, not just enabling the museum to present them past her lifetime but also ensuring their authenticity.

Picturing Forti's authorship and authority over the works, the materials stress the need for Forti's embodied knowledge in the Dance Constructions, as well as its distribution through teaching. Although youthful in behavior, Forti's appearance of advanced age on screen in the recordings emphasize her role as originator and director of the works and cast the performers of the Dance Constructions as choreographed by the artist with a sure and direct hand.<sup>375</sup> In the videos, Forti teaches the works as her repertory, providing lessons learned from previous instantiations as well as corrections and adjustments in order to reach desired outcomes. This communicates that the works are teachable and takes place through the artist. Historically concert dance has been even more devoted than visual art to the notion of the artist's singular authority and the importance of her direct physical presence in the legitimacy of her work. Under almost no circumstances, for example, would a dance be created without the choreographer present, and its incorporation by other bodies define and emphasize the subject from which it originates. Years of training with an artist or her disciples in class, performance, and rehearsal create the legitimacy of dancers and therefore their dances, resulting in highly specialized and exclusive knowledge held by a small number of people. Within the larger community of dancers, for instance, a "real" Martha Graham

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<sup>375</sup> Forti has performed many if not all of the Dance Constructions in the past – including at MoMA in 2009, and Salzburg in 2014 – but the artist did not join the performances recorded in Los Angeles in 2011.

dancer would be detectable by how she looks and how she moves, while an “authentic” piece of Graham choreography would not be much (or at all) removed from the originating company of dancers. The works by Forti, the Judson Dance Theater, and related figures that emerged around mid-century appeared to change all of that, requiring little in the way of dance training and rehearsals, but the prospect of passing these works to new performers exposed how some of their revolutions in modern dance were illusions, at least in part. Rainer’s experience with the “preservation” of *Trio A*, for example, in Labanotation and in video recordings led her to conclude that her direct involvement was necessary for the work’s continued authenticity, vigorously asserting the principles of authorship, expertise, and skill underlying dance. Likewise, even in the absence of choreography in its strictest sense, Forti’s materials and protocols for the acquisition configure the authenticity of Forti’s works through their formal specificity and technical details as well as their supervision by and connection to the artist.<sup>376</sup>

For the transfer of the works to MoMA, Forti invested her authority over the Dance Constructions in additional people who act like duplicates of the artist herself, upon whom the museum can rely to guarantee the works once Forti passed on. Dance’s body-to-body transmission promises that people can keep and share knowledge through their bodies and through time, and Forti’s arrangements with MoMA draw on this feature/technology, identifying “high-quality teachers” who will be central to the works’ long-term care.<sup>377</sup> She named as Initial Project Coordinator for the Dance Constructions her longtime colleague and collaborator Sarah Swenson, who transmitted some of the works to new performers for engagements in Brazil and

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<sup>376</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 15-16.

<sup>377</sup> “Long-Term Conservation,” MPA questionnaire.

Korea in 2012.<sup>378</sup> In this capacity, Swenson served as a stand-in as legitimate as the artist, asserting the artist's intents and preferences and authorizing the works as correct and legitimate. Swenson's teaching under these circumstances, in Forti's absence, both helped solidify the need for this kind of oversight and affirmed that it could be surrogated. Under MoMA's new stewardship, Swenson supervises productions of the Dance Constructions with the authority to teach the works to performers and make decisions in place of the artist, giving the works both consistency and continued life into the future.<sup>379</sup> In addition to Swenson, Forti has selected a handful of other teachers she has trained personally and who will also serve as her proxies for new performances of the works.

Examples of other approaches to historical dance works demonstrate how highly practitioners regard body-to-body transmission and how far its surrogation can extend. For example, dancer and professor Kim Jones's recent account of her efforts to recover the 1935 solo *Imperial Gesture* by Martha Graham conveys her deeply held faith in an enduring chain of succession from choreographer to dancers [Figures 3.43, 3.44]. The extant archival material for Jones's reconstruction was extremely fragmentary, but when she consulted with other company dancers Jones reported, "it was amazing how much we intuitively understood [...] by studying, dancing, and performing Graham's dances. This knowledge has been transmitted literally from body to body across decades and generations of dancers. While the archival evidence provided images,

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<sup>378</sup> These were for the exhibitions "MOVE: Choreographing YOU - Art & Dance since the 1960s" at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, Korea (July-August 2012) and "The Imminence of Politics," the 30th Sao Paulo Biennale at the Pavilhão Ciccillo Matarazzo in Sao Paulo, Brazil (September-December 2012). Swenson's title is from the MPA questionnaire: "Long-Term Conservation," MPA questionnaire.

<sup>379</sup> As Project Coordinator, Swenson handles some of the logistical functions familiar to dance but less familiar to the museum, such as working with the presenting museum to sort out complex rehearsal and performance schedules. She is also a teacher and may perform both functions at once. I conducted conversations with Swenson about the process in November 2016 and December 2017 (Los Angeles, CA).

data about how it feels to perform Graham's work became [the project's] greatest resource."<sup>380</sup>

Jones and her collaborators trusted this knowledge implicitly, even though the two senior dancers worked with Graham in the 1940s and 50s, but not in the 1930s when the solo originated, Jones's own exposure to the artist was at the end of Graham's life when the choreographer was no longer actively involved in the company's performances, and the principal dancer from the present-day Martha Graham Dance Company never studied Graham's technique or her dances during the artist's lifetime: Graham died in 1991.<sup>381</sup> Yet this convinced Jones (and others) of the integrity of her project, to the extent that Jones's version of *Imperial Gesture* is "one of a few 'reconstructions' to be completed after Graham's death and added to the Martha Graham Dance Company's repertory without the choreographer's explicit approval."<sup>382</sup> The Graham dancers all felt they had a direct connection to the artist through her technique and repertory, bodily knowledge cultivated through long hours in classes, rehearsal, and on stage, and gave them license not only to invoke or inhabit Graham's dancing body in performance, but also in the creation process, generating "Graham's" steps and movement style nearly eighty years after Graham had first performed the dance (and over twenty since the artist died) [Figure 3.52].

The technical skills required for the Dance Constructions are very different from those in Graham's works, but Forti's materials and plans for surrogates to maintain the quality of her works in MoMA's collection raise questions about whether it is of a different order or degree

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<sup>380</sup> Kim Jones, "American Modernism: Reimagining Martha Graham's Lost *Imperial Gesture* (1935)," *Dance Research Journal* 47 no. 3 (December 2015), 64.

<sup>381</sup> Jones called the senior dancers "elders in the Graham community": Ethel Winter was 87 at the time (now deceased), Linda Hodes was 79; it is unclear from the narrative whether they were able to dance or demonstrate any movements in their meetings (57-58).

<sup>382</sup> Jones, 51.

than the body-to-body transmission that distributed Graham's subjectivity and extended it beyond the life of her physical body. Future dancers are not at this point charged with impersonating Forti, and the teachers of the Dance Constructions are not charged with emulating or reproducing the performances recorded in the teaching videos: they are charged with facilitating new version of the works. A teacher such as Swenson must retain the chance and accidents in order to keep the Dance Constructions "authentic." But would a teacher someday regard Forti's materials as a model for future performances like those for a more conventional dance? These choreographic tools for transmitting the Dance Constructions displaces the burden of making the works from the museum and recognizes the expertise and authority that emanates from the artist herself and her trusted representatives. But do they translate the Dance Constructions into a format that acts like an original and a copy? Is there a way that following all of the "correct" instructions yields something that is not an authentic Forti dance? Even more broadly, are other dance "preservations" invested in original-copy models when dance refuses such aims? Is this what causes problems for their projects?

As the Dance Constructions were acquired by MoMA, they stressed the body-to-body transmission that takes place in dance and uniquely negotiates the auto- and the allographic, generating its own terms for authenticity. Dance's paradigms for authenticity manage access to an artwork—a project that is also at the core of a museum's operations. Lambert-Beatty identified "circulation and restriction" as key operations for exercising authority over performance in the museum but did not explore the ways performance is itself invested in these "coordinates," particularly dance. Tino Sehgal's *Kiss* (2003), with its acquisition via oral transmission of a score, merges the terms of choreography with those of the museum, quite



literally capitalizing on access to bodily knowledge in the visual arts context [Figure 3.6].<sup>383</sup> The entry of Forti's works into MoMA's collection offered additional tools for the control and distribution of such knowledge, which may have lessons for other works in MoMA's collection.

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Tracking an object's origins and history through provenance provides another means of ensuring an artwork's authenticity as it enters a museum's collection, but it is challenged by contemporary art that has ephemeral parts and exists only as it is exhibited. Traditionally provenance ensures that an artwork proposed for acquisition is firmly tied to its previous owner(s) and that its history as an object is well understood, which provides a guarantee that the artwork has not been misappropriated, stolen, or forged and is entering the museum in good faith.<sup>384</sup> Typically bills of sale, condition or insurance reports associated with loans and exhibitions, and restoration records substantiate the movement, ownership, and transformations of an object, which accumulate over an artwork's lifetime. Ideally every appearance, movement, and alteration of an artwork will be accounted for, but it is acceptable for a provenance to have some gaps, especially artworks with

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<sup>383</sup> While responses to Sehgal's work vary, Bishop made an important observation that "his works seem to tear apart any equation between being live and being authentic; indeed the very fact that his work runs continuously in the space for the duration of an exhibition, performed by any number of interpreters, erodes any residual attachment to the idea of an original or ideal performance" (*Artificial Hells*, 224).

<sup>384</sup> According to MoMA's Collection Management Policy: "The museum will not purchase or accept as a gift, bequest or loan any work of art it knows or has good reason to believe is of questionable provenance or was stolen or sold under duress. In acquiring works of art for its Collection and in borrowing works for exhibitions, the Museum shall consider and, wherever possible, follow guidelines promulgated from time to time by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and the American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD)," The Museum of Modern Art, "Provenance," CMP, 5.

long and complex histories.<sup>385</sup> Without a history of stewardship by and within the art system, and in the absence of stable and permanent objects at the center of the Dance Constructions’ “constellation of materials,” the provenance of the Dance Constructions had to be constructed and approximated instead. The solutions devised for provenance of Forti’s works, detailed in this section, nonetheless exhibited substantial gaps in the historical record and variations in the works over time. The MPA has reduced the requirements around provenance for the works in its collection, but materials were still gathered and produced in order to demonstrate a history of prior manifestations of the Dance Constructions in performance. This performance history contains inconsistencies, ambiguities, and absences, pointing out some of the incommensurability of Forti’s works with the museum system that strives toward comprehensive knowledge. Overall the process demonstrates that a performance history striving toward the standards of traditional provenance research may only be achieved for the Dance Constructions now that the works are in MoMA’s collection.<sup>386</sup>

Forti’s works and her involvement in the process of preparing the Dance Constructions for purchase reduced the museum’s requirements around provenance: at MoMA, purchasing a work directly from a living artist circumvents the need to consult the Art Loss Register, an international database for the recovery of stolen or lost high-value items.<sup>387</sup> The artist’s presence

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<sup>385</sup> MoMA’s policy for acquisitions reads, “for works valued at \$25,000 or more, as complete and detailed an account of the object’s provenance *as can be obtained* must be provided” in advance of the committee meeting to approve an acquisition. The Museum of Modern Art, “Acquisitions,” CMP, 3 (emphasis added).

<sup>386</sup> Indeed, the MPA Collection Specialist wrote, “we hope to continue provenance documentation by traveling with the works for future exhibitions and/or receiving documentation of future iterations from borrowing institutions,” suggesting how the museum has the reach and resources to oversee documentation going forward. MPA Collection Specialist, email message to the author, November 18, 2016.

<sup>387</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, “Acquisitions,” CMP, 3.

provides a guarantee on the transfer of her work from the “studio” to the institution, and the provenance solutions developed for the acquisition of the Dance Constructions exhibited characteristics of this kind of transfer. Yet Forti’s works, while they had not been owned before MoMA’s acquisition, had a complex history, some of it outside the artist’s supervision. The MPA has adjusted its expectations for provenance to reflect the performative qualities of the work it collects: the MPA’s Collections Specialist explained, “provenance is not necessarily customary in MPA in the same way that [it] is for more traditional object-oriented art forms. We do like to have documentation from previous iterations or installations of performance and time-based media works, but we don’t have this for all of them, nor is it necessarily required for acquisition.”<sup>388</sup> Documentation of previous performances helps MoMA establish a previous life in the world, proving both its existence and providing details about the work itself (via its prior manifestations). A work like Sehgal’s *Kiss*, for example, would not necessitate the customary provenance of a painting or sculpture, but also—as a museum-native work—would not have evidence of a life outside of the institution. Forti’s Dance Constructions were attractive in part because of their long history, and some of the items in the “constellation of materials” referred to this history. Forti’s artist statements for the Dance Constructions asserted their official forms while providing some performance history for them, noting their 1960 and 1961 performances and alluding to performances outside of these contexts.<sup>389</sup> Likewise some of the archival materials contained details about past performances: Forti’s *See Saw* drawing described the first performances of the work by Rainer and Morris at the Rueben Gallery in 1960, and the 2011

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<sup>388</sup> MPA Collection Specialist, email message to the author, November 18, 2016.

<sup>389</sup> For example, Forti named curator Chrissie Iles of the Whitney Museum as she commented on a performance of *Platforms* after 1961, but did not identify the occasion. “Platforms,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 11.

notebook (and videos) contained a narrative of its re-staging in Los Angeles fifty years later. The four photographic prints of performances of *Slant Board* and *Huddle* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam discussed earlier confirmed that these works appeared at this location in 1982.

These documents in the “constellation of materials” provided evidence of occasions named in the performance histories gathered and compiled by both The Box and the MPA during the negotiations for the Dance Constructions. The gallery supplied to the museum a spreadsheet listing the known performances of each of the works since 1961, drawn from extant photographs, recordings, and ephemera and building on the “Selected Performances and Exhibitions” listing published in the 2014 Salzburg retrospective catalogue.<sup>390</sup> Such a record helped the gallery and the museum identify historical instances of the works under discussion, and some of them demonstrated the Dance Constructions’ participation in and proximity to other artworks, exhibitions, and art historical movements such as Minimalism and Conceptualism. More recent performances of the Dance Constructions indicated that the works were of art world interest, in-demand, and producible in the present. The Box’s spreadsheet and the Salzburg list proved that the Dance Constructions had been performed for decades, and had been documented to a certain degree, but they concealed a number of challenges to obtaining a comprehensive historical account of their appearances. Forti’s pieces often appeared in casual venues where they went unrecorded by photography, film, or other means. Mentions of Forti were made in old newspaper accounts, but the works shown were not always identified; conversely, posters and

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<sup>390</sup> This was supplied to the gallery based on my research for the 2014 Salzburg retrospective, the “Selected Performance and Exhibitions, Lectures” in the exhibition’s catalogue. While the list in the catalogue was the most comprehensive account of Forti’s appearances to date, it generally did not identify individual works performed in each show, and focused on Forti’s earliest production. It also, like the exhibition, emphasized Forti’s contributions as an individual artist rather than the many collaborative works and improvisations, which she initiated and in which she participated over the years. Breitweiser, 285-290.

advertisements with Forti's name did not always guarantee that she performed.<sup>391</sup> Other works from the 1960s had similar difficulties: there were few witnesses and little press coverage in the early years; documentation of performances was nonexistent or incomplete; and, performances took place in a variety of settings, especially studios and classrooms.<sup>392</sup> These conditions have made these performances into a special class of lost objects, barely visible or knowable, which has increased their desirability for museums—and even their authenticity, if one measures meaning in how “lost” an artwork or a performative gesture is.<sup>393</sup>

Forti's 1960-61 works were both persistently lost and persistently present as they entered MoMA's collection, with gaps in certain details and excesses of others complicating a tidy, linear, and complete performance history. The manifestations of Forti's *Huddle* in particular, in settings as provisional as its huddled form, made a full listing of its past appearances impossible. In her artist statements for *Huddle*, Forti noted how she taught the work around the world throughout her long career and “made it clear that whoever has learned it is free to teach it and

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<sup>391</sup> Gerard Forde's “Plus or Minus 1961 – A Chronology 1959-1963” notes, for example, that Forti was listed to appear in a concert in February 1962 but did not. In Robinson and Xartrec, 266 n. 20.

<sup>392</sup> There is also reluctance on the part of the artists, including Forti, to recover every detail of their early works. In an interview just before the 2014 Salzburg exhibition, Forti said, “part of me has been a little nervous about getting defined about having everything on view instead of [...] in the recesses of my subconscious,” and later, about having all of her artwork and ephemera in one place and on display, “I kind of liked not knowing what was stored in Vermont, what was stored in a basement in New York, and what was stored under my bed” (“Simone Forti in conversation with Jennie Goldstein,” 2 and 8). In the catalogue for the exhibition, Forti remarked, “personally, I feel I do my most beautiful work in the studio situation, and I would be happy to keep it there,” Sabine Breitweiser in Conversation with Simone Forti, “The Workshop Process,” in Breitweiser, 33.

<sup>393</sup> Accounts such as Lambert-Beatty's early reading of 1960s performance suggest that the meaning of a work like Jim Dine's *Car Crash* (1960) can be obtained in the play between the details in their documentation and those that were lost. Such a reading enhances the status of the “original” performance but is problematic for works that were never documented (implying that no meaning can be generated), or that persist to the present day (that were never lost). Lambert, “Documentary Dialectics.”

do it.”<sup>394</sup> Furthermore, she continued, “as long as it is being done in an informal context, I don't even need to know about it. From time to time some former students send me a picture of a *Huddle* that they've done in a studio or in the street in some distant land, and I see that *Huddle* has managed to hold its form, and its name, through the decades.”<sup>395</sup> Even though its form is consistent, obtaining every detail about *Huddle*'s prior manifestations remains permanently elusive. Paradoxically, this loss is produced through *Huddle*'s stubborn persistence and presence, which Forti has encouraged and facilitated. The work's profusion of appearances makes locating an “original” performance impossible while at the same time generating an excess of “original” appearances, all of them authorized versions because Forti relinquished her full authority over the work.

*Huddle*'s repetitions and variations complicated the history of the work presented by the “constellation of materials” for MoMA. For example, in one of the photographic prints of *Huddle* in the gallery of the Stedelijk Museum in 1982 included in the acquisition package, a performer was captured descending headfirst over the little structure of people [Figure 3.21]. Forti did not explicitly permit nor prohibit such a move in the past, but the artist has discouraged the trajectory in the instructions and videos for MoMA and in recent workshops and performances.<sup>396</sup> This small conflict demonstrates the divergence of the work's history with its official version in MoMA's collection, and further troubles the notion that knowing every detail

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<sup>394</sup> “*Huddle*,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 9.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> The photograph representing *Huddle* in *Handbook in Motion* likewise captured a climber descending head-first, 58. Forti's contemporary recommendation is out of concern for the safety of the performers, “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft (The Box and Simone Forti archive); also observed at The Box in 2011, Salzburg in 2014, and in workshops in 2017 at Pieter Arts Space and We Live in Space, Los Angeles, CA.

of *Huddle*'s history produces a clearer vision of the work. Similarly, the 1974 "Huddle Tape" recording of the piece that now resides in the MPA contained two instances of the work that were fifteen minutes long [Figure 3.41], rather than the ten minutes prescribed in the work's teaching instructions and videos for the MPA produced in 2011-2015 [Figure 3.25]. With these examples, one sees how an ever-more thorough history of *Huddle* and complete collection of its documentation could disrupt rather than secure a coherent picture of the work. Moreover, although *Huddle* is a simple work, these examples demonstrate some variations over the years, but these did not threaten its legitimacy or validity as an artwork. Forti's acknowledgement of the work's life outside of her direct supervision admits certain changes to the work, changes she might never know or see.

As described in this introduction's study, dance has a tolerance for change that other art forms do not: it necessarily changes over time as different people embody the works. Both in their specific histories as artworks and in their nature as works of dance, the Dance Constructions were not performed in exactly the same way over time, and absolute consistency did not constitute their authenticity or even their identities as artworks. Performance theorist Diana Taylor has written about dance as part of a category of knowledge, the "repertoire," which depends on living subjects, who enable performance to last through time but do not have the same consistency as inert material things or their repositories. She explained, "as opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning [...] dances change over time, even though generations of dancers (and even individual dancers) swear they're always the same. But

even though embodiment changes, the meaning might very well remain the same.”<sup>397</sup>

Contrasting the archive and the repertoire, Taylor uses dance to demonstrate how people carry information through time in dynamic ways, and performances can achieve the same effects or meaning as they evolve. In Forti’s body of work, various accounts of the work described at the outset of this study, *Platforms*, suggest that the piece went through a number of modifications and adjustments—including to its title, which was “*Steam—A Ghost Opera*” on one occasion—before arriving at the simple whistled duet performed at MoMA in 2009 and later collected by the MPA. This version, recorded on the 2011-2015 teaching videos and described in Forti’s written instructions and artist statement, consists of two performers lying under wooden boxes and sounding a simple tone, over and over again, for ten minutes.<sup>398</sup> In the artist statement for the work, Forti notes that some changes had been made to the piece over time and mentions the use of wooden lifts to prop up the boxes at one end to give the whistling greater resonance.<sup>399</sup> But she does not mention other sounds that seem to have been used in earlier instantiations of the work. *New York Times* dance critic Don McDonagh’s review of a concert at New York University (NYU) in May 1969 described a piece in which Forti was “lying under a box, playing the pennywhistle or talking interminably on the telephone.”<sup>400</sup> McDonagh identified only one performer under a box, using two different kinds of “voices,” but Peter Moore’s photograph captured two wooden boxes on NYU’s gymnasium floor [Figure 2.5].<sup>401</sup> It is likely that someone joined Forti in the second box and McDonagh simply did not know who it was or did not find it

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<sup>397</sup> Taylor, 20.

<sup>398</sup> This is also the action/sound described in *Handbook*, although it went on for “about fifteen minutes,” 62.

<sup>399</sup> “*Platforms*,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 11.

<sup>400</sup> Don McDonagh, “Audience Enlisted in Whitman Recital,” *New York Times* (May 5, 1969): 54.

<sup>401</sup> Peter Moore’s photograph of the work at NYU illustrates *Platforms* in *Handbook*, 63.



interesting enough to write about, but what if the work consisted of Forti under a wooden box, playing and talking to another box that *did not* contain a respondent? This would have given “*Steam—A Ghost Opera*,” as McDonagh called the piece in the review, a sense of communicating into a void and the loss of a companion.<sup>402</sup> The sounds of talking and whistling would have created an entirely different conversation or conflict than the two whistles calling to each other and overlapping, a daytime drama rather than a dreamy “love duet” as Forti later described *Platforms*.<sup>403</sup>

The recovery of these details and transformations expands the potential experiences and meanings of *Platforms*, multiplying its possible histories as far back as the work’s earliest performances. Reflecting in 2014 on her role as a performer in Forti’s first “five dance constructions” evenings in 1961, Yvonne Rainer wrote,

“one of the most effective constructions for me was the most simple: a platform just long and high enough to accommodate and conceal Simone’s prone body (or was it Bob Morris’s?). After she had placed herself beneath it, an expectant silence engulfed the

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<sup>402</sup> The titles McDonagh used suggests that he had a program for the performance, which has not been recovered to date, or that he got the titles from Forti directly. His short review also used “Climb” for *Huddle*, which has sometimes been called “Mountain.” *Simone Forti: From Dance Construction to Logomotion* (Los Angeles: UCLA Dance/Media project, 1999). Elsewhere in her body of work, Forti has given the same work different names over the years or called by the same name works that varied quite a lot from performance to performance, complicating the use of a title as a stable identifier. Julia Bryan-Wilson wrote, referring to a 1968 work *Sleepwalkers* (which has also been called *Zoo Mantras*), “Forti has a relaxed relationship to titling; similar sequences of movement reappear under different names as they evolve over the years.” Bryan-Wilson, “Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo,” 38 n. 21.

<sup>403</sup> About *Platforms*, Forti remarked in 2016, “I see it as a love duet. Where it’s like when you’re sleeping next to someone you love, and you’re in another place [...] you’re each in your own dreams. And yet, you hear each other breathe [...] it’s kind of a nighttime piece” (Quoted in Lim, “MoMA Collects”). The telephone described by McDonagh boosts the energy of the work, with the boxes suggesting the repression that goes on in domestic spaces. Of course it is also possible that *Steam—A Ghost Opera* in 1969 was a different work altogether and Moore’s photograph of it best illustrated *Platforms* for Forti’s book in 1974.

small audience. And then, as though to gently mock those expectations, the sound of a tennis ball being dribbled came from underneath the platform. The effect was delicate, hilarious, and thrilling.”<sup>404</sup>

While Rainer experienced the subtle suspension produced by the presence, pauses, and sounds issuing from under a plywood box in *Platforms*, the mechanism that generated these effects might have been entirely different: a single person with a tennis ball, rather than a couple whistling.<sup>405</sup> It is difficult, indeed impossible, to verify or elaborate on these recollections (which are always fallible), particularly without film or other recordings. There are not even contemporaneous accounts of the first evening in 1961, and even then, surely some information could be missing. Likewise without a program listing the titles of the works, there is no way to know if and how Forti named them for the premiere. *Platforms* (or *Steam—A Ghost Opera*, or whatever it was called) had variations from its very first performances, frustrating the search for an “original” or definitive version of the performance and a complete picture of all its manifestations. *Platforms*, at least in its earliest years, was like a living thing, its continuity and authenticity not dependent upon a perfectly secure and unchanging set of facts and details. Using Taylor’s model of the repertoire is helpful for understanding how *Platforms*—and the Dance Constructions as a whole—have necessarily changed over time and yet remain the same works. Each need not aspire exactly to its prior versions in order to remain the same work, and in order

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<sup>404</sup> Yvonne Rainer, “On Simone Forti,” in Breitweiser, 72.

<sup>405</sup> Rainer’s “(or was it Bob Morris?)” recalls an assertion in Lambert-Beatty made in her assessment of other performances from the same period, which posits that a performance’s meaning is found in its documentation and representation. The historian noted how, in critic Michael Kirby’s account of Dine’s *Car Crash*, Dine drew “a large car in (perhaps) yellow,” the parenthetical (perhaps) “an admission of a reportorial lapse. Kirby is admitting the imperfection of his memory of the event.” Paradoxically, however, the admission of error confers additional truth to the account: “by this one minor slip, every other descriptive detail in the text is bolstered and reconfirmed. It is precisely because of the imperfection of the representation that we can take it as a stand-in for the performance itself” (Lambert, “Performance Lost and Found,” 279).

to remain authentic. In very real terms, the arrival of *Platforms* at MoMA solidified a single version of the work, creating an “original” version even as the work exhibited changes going back to its very first performances.

The ability of the museum to produce and sustain a single version of the performance of *Platforms* (and a single history of that version) confirms its creation of “originals.” But does it then take away the authenticity of this “official” version of *Platforms*? Forti and her protocol for continuing *Platforms* authorize the version that the museum acquired, but is it already compromised by the museum’s framework? If, as Taylor suggests, the repertoire is its own kind of history apparatus, closing down the future possibilities of *Platforms* could also curtail this historical function of the performance. While its proliferations create ambiguities and alternative possibilities, the repertoire carries historical knowledge across bodies and across time. It disrupts a linear model, undermining “authenticity” on the basis of singularity, disappearance, and even its location in an individual body or subject, as seen especially in dance. The negotiation of history via the body is one of choreography’s core operations, its knowledge capable of crossing from a ballet in the eighteenth century, to an experimental work from the 1960s, or from rehearsal last week. Each manifestation of a dance is also an appearance of its prior performances, rehearsals, citations and influences, as well as the subjects who have made its transmissions possible.<sup>406</sup> Does the museum inhibit such disruptions and appearances? Or is this troubling of time: anachronism, inconsistency, even eruptions exactly what the museum is

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<sup>406</sup> Indeed, according to Schneider, “to trouble linear temporality – to suggest that time may be touched, crossed, visited, or revisited, that time is transitive and flexible, that time may recur in time, that time is not one – never only one – is to court the ancient (and tired) Western anxiety over ideality and originality. The threat of theatricality is still the threat of the imposter status of the copy, the double, the mimetic, the second, the surrogate, the feminine, or the queer” (Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 30).

designed for? The final section of Part II addresses some of these questions through Forti's plans for continuing her works in the future, which definitively challenge notions of conservation based on an "original" object, carrying questions about performance's evolutions and operations as history even further.

## Continuation/Conservation

The area of most concern in the MPA's acquisition of the Dance Constructions, for both the artist and the museum, was the question of how to continue Forti's works once they were in the museum's collection, especially after Forti herself would no longer be able to oversee them. MoMA had acquired the rights to produce the works but also needed to guarantee that they had the skills and ability to produce them for audiences in the future: as the MPA put it, quoting Forti, "MoMA is not merely acquiring the rights to the dances [...] but more specifically 'the ability to have these pieces continue their life past when I do mine.'"<sup>407</sup> The "constellation of materials" defined the Dance Constructions as they entered the MPA, and Forti had supplied tools for authorizing them, which are deployed along with her protocol for staging the works and ensuring their quality. Her procedures join increasingly diverse methods for maintaining works of contemporary art that pressure the museum's techniques and traditions of conservation. As outlined in the introduction to this study, contemporary art since the 1960s has in many cases by accident or design challenged conservation's core principles devoted to an expressive artist's "intentions" and the unchanging original object, engendering an array of alternative approaches without a consensus or single way forward.<sup>408</sup> Maintaining works of contemporary art with

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<sup>407</sup> Quoted in Lim, "MoMA Collects."

<sup>408</sup> In a volume about the conservation of contemporary art, European curator D.H. van Wegen characterized responses to the difficulties new mediums and forms have presented as falling into one of two categories. On the one hand, conservators have redoubled their commitments to certain "ethics" for preservation, such that they become rigid rules applied equally to artworks of all types, even those to which they seem inappropriate. On the other hand, contemporary art curators and conservators have "declare[d] that the artist's opinion is of a higher order than any other consideration," higher even than the opinion of a materials specialist, for example, or of dominant art historical narratives about the aims and outcomes of art trends and movements (206).

The curator also held the view that it is not the artist's function to find solutions for preserving her work: elevating the artist as an authority on various questions of preservation is putting the problem and the responsibility for a solution where it does not belong." Van Wegen believed instead the conservator/curator could "correctly" interpret the work in order to uncover the best conservation strategy: "the fact that artists are not the best spokespersons on the meaning of their work is already apparent from their decision to express themselves in an artwork in the first place" (206). Van Wegen similarly regarded the practice of

ephemeral or unpredictable elements and in unconventional mediums often requires upgrading hardware and software, re-formatting media to reflect changing technology, and migrating data to new platforms where it can be accessed and presented for visitors. These are computer metaphors but apply more broadly, to negotiating organic versus durable materials, translating artworks that rely on outdated equipment of many kinds, and transferring information so it can be experienced in the present, even facilitating the transformation of a work if required. As such, conservation has become a more active process of enabling an artwork to continue to be seen by audiences, even producing the artwork for exhibition if it has no permanent material form.

Dance, in its resistance to documentation and preservation, offers challenges to museum conservation paradigms but also specialized tools for the project of sustaining embodied and ephemeral works. The body-to-body transmission at the heart of dance's creation and perpetuation creates a stronger connection between the first instantiation of a work and its subsequent versions, which in many circumstances are considered just as legitimate. As explored throughout Part II, dance and performance also have a different relationship to change over time than other forms—they necessarily change as they are performed—and a work's legitimacy is thus assured by other means. Forti's Dance Constructions were particularly unrepeatable from manifestation to manifestation, owing to their physical and compositional structures, but these also limited the possible transformations of the works. The simplicity of the works (even their anomalies as dances) made it conceivable that MoMA might be able to collect and perpetuate the works, yet in the plans for their continuation the artist and the museum took recourse to dance

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consulting an artist's spouse or studio assistant about an artwork's future as neither his job nor his area of expertise (206-207). "Between Fetish and Score: The Position of the Curator of Contemporary Art," in Ijesbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, eds. *Modern Art: Who Cares?* (London: Archetype Publications, 2005, orig. 1999).

and its strategies to secure them for and within the institution, assuring artist and museum alike of their ongoing authenticity and quality. Dance represented a new medium and offered new technologies to the MPA, which as a department demonstrates a significant shift in the institution from collecting and preserving object-oriented art. In the announcement about the acquisition, MPA department head Comer said, “we’re particularly interested in the idea of body-to-body transmission,” suggesting both how the acquisition of Forti’s work foregrounded techniques from dance and how it offered the MPA new ways of considering its collection, if not caring for it.<sup>409</sup> Forti’s plans for the continuation of the works also divided the responsibility for the works among several actors, placing much of it outside of the institution, thus downplaying its role in making the works as they were produced at MoMA and loaned to other museums.

With its contemporary art focus, the MPA may be the most challenged of the departments in the institution to adapt museum procedures for conservation. The MPA has significantly customized its questionnaire for living artists, a requirement of MoMA’s Collections Management Policy (CMP).<sup>410</sup> The questionnaire is the most comprehensive document about caring for the Dance Constructions, providing an overview of all of the items assembled and produced for the acquisition, with sections on content, duration, performance, objects/props, space, audience, documentation, and long-term conservation. It contains questions specific to the types of work in the MPA’s collection, asking the artist to “include text on whether the work must be performed exactly the same each time, or whether there is some degree of interpretation on the part of the

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<sup>409</sup> Quoted in Lim, “MoMA Collects.” It is not clear whether Comer was referring to Schneider’s formulation.

<sup>410</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, CMP, “Acquisitions,” 3 and MPA Questionnaire.

performer and/or curator.”<sup>411</sup> It also asks, “how can we sustain a high level of quality over time?,” even “how would you envision your work in 50 years?”<sup>412</sup> Recognizing varying standards for exactitude in repetition, the delegation of authority to others such as performers and curators, and the possibility of an artwork changing over time, the MPA’s questions accommodate key characteristics of performance, while the format of the questionnaire reflects the trend toward detailed documentation and reliance on the artist for direction on the continuation of her works.<sup>413</sup> The MPA has added video documentation of the artist to its conservation procedures in order to retain from the “source” as much information as possible that may shed light on future maintenance of the artworks.<sup>414</sup> In Forti’s case this oral history interview provided background on the works as well as some information on their future performance, augmenting the videos of Forti teaching the works that were central to the acquisition.<sup>415</sup> As a strategy for conservation these tools did not just prioritize the views and preferences of the artist for the ongoing realization of the Dance Constructions, but also elicited her expertise, developed from over fifty years of overseeing performances of the works and an equally long engagement in experimental dance more generally. To this Forti added a proxy,

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<sup>411</sup> “Artist’s Statement,” MPA questionnaire.

<sup>412</sup> “Long-Term Conservation,” MPA questionnaire.

<sup>413</sup> Other museums have similar questionnaires, such as the Tate Modern’s “Live List,” while projects such as the Variable Media Network have been developing open-source databases and software that apply to a great number of artworks and can be shared across institutions. Pip Laurensen, Christiane Berndes, Hendrik Folkerts, Diana Franssen, Adrian Glew, Panda de Haan, Ysbrand Hummelen, Andrea Lissoni, Isabella Maidment, Angela Matyssek, Kate Parsons, Capucine Perrot, Vivian van Saaze, Tatja Scholte, Patricia Smithen, Sanneke Stigter, Paulien ‘t Hoen, Renée van de Vall and Gaby Wijers, “The Live List: What to Consider When Collecting Live Works,” *Collecting the Performative Network*, 24 January 2014, <http://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/collecting-performative/live-list> (Accessed January 1, 2018), and Variable Media Network, <http://www.variablemedia.net/e/index.html> (Accessed February 15, 2018).

<sup>414</sup> Walker Art Center curator Philip Bither generalized, “MoMA attempts to capture video documentation of artists describing in detail how they want the works to be (re)performed in the future.” Bither, “Collecting.”

<sup>415</sup> Interview with Ana Janevski and Simone Forti, MoMA, New York, NY (December 2015). Video recording at the Museum of Modern Art, MPA curatorial department offices.



who had fewer years of experience with the Dance Constructions but Forti's authorization to oversee them for MoMA and other museums in her absence, specified in the MPA's questionnaire and the acquisition's legal documents.<sup>416</sup>

Forti developed three models for the continuation of the nine works transferred to MoMA, articulated in the MPA questionnaire, the teaching videos and instructions, artist statements, and in consultation with her primary proxy, Sarah Swenson, the "Initial Project Coordinator." The first model, which applies to two works, requires no teaching: the equipment and a set of instructions or recorded model are sufficient for executing the pieces. The second, which applies to the 1960 piece *See Saw*, uses the physical framework of the see saw like a script for a play. Forti explicitly invoked the theatrical paradigm in her instructions and invited the museum to appoint another creative artist to interpret the work's structuring framework. The third model, which applies to most of the works, uses the dance model of a choreographer's repertory, and requires Forti, the Project Coordinator, or another teacher to teach performers and monitor future performances of the works. Creating a set of correct or ideal versions of six of the Dance Constructions and requiring a teacher to emulate these draws upon the works' dance lineage, aspects disguised in their simple appearance and exposed by the transfer—even created at this juncture. Forti's models offer a theory of "conservation" for art and the "preservation" of dance that recognizes the impossibility of rescuing or saving an "original" when the art in question is something a viewer experiences rather than beholds. Mobilizing ways performative works already persist over time, Forti's plans for the continuation of the Dance Constructions past her

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<sup>416</sup> In "Long-Term Conservation," Forti specified her colleague Sarah Swenson as "Initial Project Coordinator," and referred to "Final Purchase Agreement Section 9D and Attachment B" in the section "Other" as solidifying this appointment (MPA questionnaire).

lifetime create test situations which will play out in specific times and specific places but cannot be projected exactly. Taken together, they hold various relations to a “model” performance or outcome, raising questions about whether the acquisition overall transforms the Dance Constructions to fit an autographic or original-copy framework, or if they resist this framework. Indeed, Forti’s models for continuation—and the museum’s interest in executing them—may in fact expose ways MoMA has evolved away from such a model in the wake of post-1960s contemporary art.

### **No Teaching: *Censor* and *From Instructions***

Two of the “some other things” from Forti’s 1961 evenings were transferred to the museum with the other Dance Constructions in 2015, *Censor* and *From Instructions* (both 1961). Although they were not acknowledged in MoMA’s announcement about the acquisition, evidence of the two works was sprinkled throughout the “constellation of materials,” and together they created their own model for continuation, which was much simpler than those for the other seven works that were collected.<sup>417</sup> *Censor* and *From Instructions* both foregrounded conflicts, and the model Forti designed for the continuation of these works let the conflicts play out in front of an audience with a minimum of instruction. Performing the works at MoMA or in another venue did not require the body-to-body transmission of a teacher. Instead, these works could be executed with the proper equipment and textual instructions or a recorded model and could be performed without rehearsal, special skill, or the oversight of the artist (arguably fulfilling the promise the

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<sup>417</sup> The “constellation of materials” included the following for *Censor*: the schematic drawing from the early 70s [Figure 3.13] and an aluminum pot. The Build Instructions included *From Instructions* and Forti wrote a brief statement and instructions. In informal conversations, Forti has noted that she included *Censor* because she did not want *Censor* to get “lost.”

Dance Constructions seemed to hold out in their initial emergence). This model for continuation eliminated the artist or her proxy's involvement in the transfer of the works, giving the museum and the performers who carried them out full responsibility for the continuation of the works, with the confidence that the two pieces will retain their identities and integrity.

The works Forti called "some other things" were four brief, expressive gestures that came between the extended durations of the five Dance Constructions and *See Saw* in the 1961 loft performance. Although the precise order in which they appeared in the first evenings is unknown, Forti described three of them in *Handbook in Motion*, and reprised a fourth in the 1970s and 80s; she included them all in her descriptions for the 2014 Salzburg retrospective and in the artist statement appended to the MPA's questionnaire.<sup>418</sup> *Censor* consisted of a duet in which one performer shook a metal pot with nails in it while another performer sang (shouted) a song. *From Instructions* gave performers opposing instructions, pitting them against each other in a physical struggle. The performers in *Herding* repeatedly asked the audience to move to different locations in the loft space until they grew tired of it. And *Paper Demon* featured a performer festooned with balls of newspaper on strings, thrashing and screaming. As the bursts of energy and noise were inserted between the repeated actions of the five Dance Constructions, one can imagine they created additional texture for the 1961 evening in Ono's loft and keyed the audience to shifts in dynamics and affect.

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<sup>418</sup> Forti, *Handbook* 66-67, and "The Dance Constructions," artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 3. See also note 83.

None of the “other things” were included in the performances at The Box in 2011, despite the comprehensiveness implied by the title “Simone Forti, First Complete Presentation of *Dance Constructions*, 1961.” In 2012, however, The Box Gallery produced a solo exhibition, “Soundings,” of Forti’s varied works using sound from several decades of her long career, and Forti performed *Censor* for the exhibition’s opening, which may have inspired its inclusion in the eventual acquisition. For the occasion, the artist purchased an aluminum roasting pan at a thrift store, filled it with nails and screws from the gallery’s stash, and sang in Italian, while shaking the pan vigorously, performing what was once a duet as a solo.<sup>419</sup> For the rest of the show’s run at the gallery, *Censor* was shown as a sculptural installation: the metal vessel was open on the floor and overflowing with screws, while small speakers inside played recorded sound [Figure 3.45]. Once the exhibition was over, the hardware was returned to the gallery and the pan shipped overseas where *Censor* was presented in several exhibitions, both as a performance and a sculpture.<sup>420</sup> In Salzburg in 2014, for example, the work was primarily performed as a duet: it made a glorious racket, erupting raucously and bouncing off the gallery walls, the singer straining to beat out his vigorously moving opponent [Figure 3.46]. It went on for a couple of minutes until it completely stopped: the silence then was almost as deafening as the preceding din. *Censor* was also performed simultaneously on two bridges as part of an outdoor festival early in the show’s run, and the museum purchased an additional metal pot for this performance [Figure 3.47]. The 2012 roasting pan from Los Angeles represented the work

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<sup>419</sup> A similar performance appears at the end of *Simone Forti: “Sounding” Exhibition Walkthrough* video recording. Camera by Naotaka Hiro and Editing by Jason Underhill, posted on Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/134506671> (Accessed February 1, 2018).

<sup>420</sup> “Selected Performances and Exhibitions, Lectures” in Breitweiser, 288-290.

for the remainder of the Salzburg exhibition, on the floor of the first gallery with the Dance Constructions [Figure 3.29].

The variable number of performers and *Censor*'s manifestation as a sculpture indicate Forti's dynamic conception of the work: it can be a duet or solo, a performance or a sculpture. Its central conflict, adapted to the demands of an exhibition or performance situation, rather than its unchanging materiality, constitute the identity and integrity of the work. And this conflict is so straightforward as to not require special instruction or choreography. When Forti transferred the work to MoMA, she included the aluminum pan, increasingly dented and scratched, but specified in the MPA's questionnaire that the pan was neither the "original" from 1961 nor exceptional in any way: it could be replaced when it wore out.<sup>421</sup> She did not include *Censor* in the teaching videos with the other works, nor did she write explicit instructions for performing it. New performers would use the metal pot (or a replacement), the work's description (in *Handbook* or elsewhere), and/or a recorded example of it to inform their own renditions but were not obligated to recreate an "ideal" performance of the work or replicate prior versions. This approach to the work's continuation communicated a lack of preciousness about its physical materials, and reassurance that *Censor* can persist through time with a minimum of instruction or direction.<sup>422</sup>

The people can change, the duet can become a solo, the location can change, the length of the

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<sup>421</sup> "Installation Objects," MPA questionnaire. In response to the question, "Which items are provided with the acquisition?" Forti's studio responded, "Pan ('Censor') Note: this is not the original pan used in 1961 performance. Pan can be replaced after rendered unusable."

<sup>422</sup> That the metal pan purchased and used by Forti in 2012 represented the work in the museum's gallery in Salzburg in 2014 (rather than the newer one bought by someone else) reflected the museum's reflexive autographic perspective towards physical materials.

piece can change, the song can change, the metal pot can change—in fact, *will* change—and *Censor* will remain *Censor*.

*From Instructions*, the other “other thing” in the acquisition, also contains a good deal of variability, and derives its interest from how its central struggle plays out. The publication of “Instructions for a Dance” in *An Anthology* along with Forti’s “dance reports” and two of the Dance Constructions in 1963 telegraphed the accessibility of the piece’s central proposition to performers with a minimum of instruction, quite literally [Figure 2.23]. They provide two performers with contradictory movement directives: “One man is told he must lie on the floor during the entire piece. The other man is told that during the piece he must tie the first man to the wall.” Forti’s recollection in *Handbook in Motion* provides a few more details, and Robert Morris recalled performing the piece in 1961 in the catalogue for the 2014 Salzburg retrospective.<sup>423</sup> But *From Instructions* was not performed again until that exhibition’s opening, which provided Forti a chance to establish a consistent set-up for the work and consider it for the MoMA acquisition [Figures 3.48]. She devised a solution for tying a person to a plain gallery wall without injuring them by installing two small wedges of wood and a large eye hook with a rope through it that got attached to the wall at about hip height [Figure 3.49]. She also invented a solution for ending the work if the struggle had no clear winner: if the second performer does not succeed in tying the first performer to the wall, after ten minutes a third party declares a draw—and Forti performed this role at the Salzburg opening.

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<sup>423</sup> Morris in Breitweiser, 46-47.

Back in Los Angeles in 2015, Forti duplicated the set-up and filmed a performance of *From Instructions* at The Box by two of her friends and colleagues.<sup>424</sup> Instead of Forti demonstrating the action of *From Instructions* and providing feedback during practice as she had done for other Dance Constructions (*Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, and *Accompaniment*), the video for this work showed Forti giving a brief warm-up, identifying the work's simple instructions, and the two performers jumping right into the action. Their sweaty, physical contest was captured in a single take, compelling in its intensity and beautifully framed in the simple gallery setting. It looked at first like the bigger man, the one trying to tie his opponent to the wall, would win: there were several close calls. But the smaller man persevered, resolutely remaining on the floor despite the efforts to dislodge him. The performers were exhausted by the end when Forti at last stepped in to stop the action. She then guided a warm-down that was captured on camera: all three stretched together and reflected on the experience, a conversation that proceeded largely from the perspective of doing the piece, but also from watching it. One of the performers poetically reported that he thought the experience was going to be a fight but found out that it was more about singularity of purpose, persisting at something you might not be able to win. The realization and the conversation overall demonstrated how the two men (and even Forti herself) became recipients of the work's specific lessons. These lessons could be learned but not taught, with *From Instructions* demonstrating how spectators, performers, and even the artist became subject to the work.

In the MoMA acquisition, Forti included this recording with the other videos of her teaching the Dance Constructions, and the gallery prepared building instructions for the hook, rope, and

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<sup>424</sup> *From Instructions* teaching video, viewed in progress at The Box, Los Angeles, 2015.

wooden wedges.<sup>425</sup> She also wrote a very brief artist statement for *From Instructions*, and elaborated the instructions somewhat to include how to end the work without a winner.<sup>426</sup> But the instructions also specify, “this piece requires no teaching,” indicating that *From Instructions* does not require the transmission or oversight of Forti or one of her proxies when staged in a museum.<sup>427</sup> The work is learned through experience, and, like *Censor*, its integrity is derived from following simple instructions through to an end. In fact, the recording of *From Instructions* demonstrates how an artwork is a site for learning, even body-to-body transmission, for those doing it and for those watching it. The limited materials defining *Censor* and *From Instructions* in the MoMA acquisition and protocol for their future reflect the straightforward nature of their assignments and the brevity and ephemerality of their first performances in 1961.<sup>428</sup> Barely there in the first place, the artist does not assume that these instances could be emulated or recovered, but rather that their especially succinct and especially visible central principles have stability that will guarantee them through time, without requiring special training of the performers or guidance by the artist. As a model for continuation, Forti’s plans and materials carry out some of the initial “allographic” and “conceptual” promises of the Dance Constructions in 1961: that one can just do the works by looking at them or reading about them. They also demonstrate how people have to make certain decisions in order to continue artworks in the absence of the artist. In *Censor* these result in variations that do not change the essential nature of the artwork, while

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<sup>425</sup> Simone Forti: “From Instructions” Building Instructions.

<sup>426</sup> “Teaching Instructions *From Instructions*” in “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Louder and expressing violence in ways the others works collected by MoMA do not, *Censor* and *From Instructions* operate like irritants in the acquisition, exposing contrary dimensions of the Dance Constructions and the acquisition overall.



*From Instructions* creates a situation that generates visceral, physical, and psychological lessons for everyone involved.

### **“A Framework for a Theater Piece”: *See Saw***

The model Forti developed for the 1960 work *See Saw* foregrounds its new interpretations once she is no longer overseeing it herself. First performed by Bob Morris and Yvonne Rainer at the Reuben Gallery in 1960 (see Part I) and reprised in “five dance constructions and some other things” in 1961, *See Saw* was acquired as one of Forti’s Dance Constructions with its own distinct terms for continuation or future presentations: it is not taught to performers by Forti or one of the authorized teachers but rather is wholly re-made by a new director when it is “loaned” to another museum or presented at MoMA. The materials and protocol for MoMA removed any single version as an “original” or definitive *See Saw*, while the wide interpretive latitude driving the work’s future instantiations asserted the longevity of *See Saw*’s framework over any individual subject or presentation, the theatrical paradigm providing the work’s stability over time. For the acquisition, Forti wrote an artist statement for the work and provided a video of her own process of developing the work with performers in 2011, along with her notebook from that occasion. These materials served as representations of the work and reference tools for subsequent productions but did not define how the work would look or proceed under a new director. The instructions she provided in the “teaching instructions” read in full:

*See Saw* cannot be taught, but must be created newly by a director. The basic ingredient is a see saw, that is, a support and a board which balances on the support. And performers. The director can come from any field of the arts, a choreographer, architect,

theater director, poet, composer, et cetera. It is important to find someone really interesting and with fresh ideas, to create their version of *See Saw*.<sup>429</sup>

Forti's instructions differentiated the work from the other Dance Constructions and removed the need for a qualified teacher. As she charged the curator of an exhibition or producer of a festival with selecting a director to remake *See Saw* with the eponymous playground equipment and performers, Forti defined the work in terms of theater—even though it did not have a linguistic script—and proposed the integrity of *See Saw*'s structuring framework as an immutable engine for physical and interpersonal relations between two performers. The see saw acted as such an engine for many years in Forti's body of work, and the process of revisiting the work in exhibitions and devising the plans for MoMA provided an opportunity to review, articulate, and define it.

Under Forti's direction, *See Saw*'s action and emotion emerged out of exploring the properties of the set-up of the tipping board, and the unique characters and chemistry presented by the two performers. Forti recalled in her *Handbook in Motion* and in the artist statement for MoMA how Bob Morris and Yvonne Rainer improvised in a “matter-of-fact,” “straight-faced,” manner in *See Saw*'s first appearances in 1960 and 61. At one point Morris picked up an art magazine and began to read aloud, and Rainer “threw a fit,” pushing them wildly out of balance [Figures 2.7].<sup>430</sup> Their struggles, as well as moments of collaboration and cooperation, were developed in rehearsals in which the performers experimented with the see saw while Forti watched and

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<sup>429</sup> Instructions, *See Saw*, “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft. The Box and Simone Forti archive.

<sup>430</sup> *Handbook*, 39-42 and “*See Saw*,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 5.

directed.<sup>431</sup> Not driven by set choreography or steps, Morris and Rainer discovered movements and activities in practice, setting a particular tone for the work, which they could call up in performance.<sup>432</sup> The dynamic set-up, the see saw, kept the performers responding to each other and the movement of the board in real time and contained the real risk of one of them falling off, heightening the work's live qualities. With its intersubjective encounters limited to the two performers, the intensity of their physical and emotional connections was heightened. Rainer recalled that sculptor George Sugarman, "after seeing Simone's piece [in December 1960], exclaimed enthusiastically, 'It's like a Chekhov play!'"<sup>433</sup> The performers negotiated the drama and the equipment somewhat differently each night because the equipment demanded it, but nonetheless generated similar tensions between themselves and with the audience, effects that were repeated by others as years went by.

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<sup>431</sup> The rehearsals took place in the studio Rainer and the two Morrises shared on Great Jones Street, according to Rainer (Rainer, *Work*, 5); Forti wrote Halprin that initially she expected to perform opposite Morris but her "knees were bad" (Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155). In a certain light, might Forti's thwarted performance constitute the "original" version of the work?

<sup>432</sup> This rehearsal/creation process, drawn at least in part from Halprin's approach to making concert dance and Dunn's pedagogical method deploying simple experiments, expanded the kinds of recall and repetition taking place in performance, but nonetheless still troubled the idea of an "original" performance, of *See Saw* and many works like it.

The dynamic intersection of Happenings, poetry, dance, music, and theater – in which Forti was a key figure – opened theater up to new modes of production around 1960, giving rise to so-called "devised" theater. This mode of invention departed from the model of a pre-existing script and its interpretation: instead, actors developed material using exercises or improvisation and a director shaped or assembled it, sometimes into a fixed text or set score. Devised theater is essential for theater production today, although the Theater Development Fund's *TDF Theatre Dictionary* emphasizes the diversity of definitions. Theirs includes a video of a statement by Judith Malina of the Living Theater, a New York company whose creation process was one of the origins of devised theater; the company shared a building (and frequently its stage) with Merce Cunningham, his dancers, and his students starting in 1959. Eric Grode, "Devised Theatre," <http://dictionary.tdf.org/devised-theatre/> (Accessed August 1, 2017); chronology from Forde in Robinson and Xartrec, 247-252.

<sup>433</sup> Rainer, *Feelings Are Facts*, 196.

The work's simple, sturdy structure enabled *See Saw* to travel around the world and demonstrated how it need not be exactly the same in order to remain the same artwork. Forti brought *See Saw* to Rome in 1969 and performed it with dancer Steve Paxton as part of a dance and music festival she had helped organize [Figure 3.50].<sup>434</sup> She also made it a segment of her 1981 piece *Jackdaw Songs*, performed in her loft in New York. This version, performed by Richmond Johnstone and Susan Rethorst, included a picnic basket with sandwiches and grapes [Figure 3.51], and Forti wrote at the time, "I've been looking over the movements I've gathered over the years [...] I'm putting them together in a new way, moving more towards theatre."<sup>435</sup> As the embodiment and even the actions changed, the framework remained, keeping *See Saw* the same *See Saw*, whether it was shown on its own or part of a larger work.<sup>436</sup> More recently, as Forti revisited the Dance Constructions for performances at museums, her efforts suggested the difficulty of recovering an "original" version. Forti prepared the piece for performances at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) in 2004, in conjunction with the exhibition "A Minimal Future?" and in 2011 at The Box, the recordings of which eventually comprised the sample videos for MoMA.<sup>437</sup> Each of these versions of *See Saw* were performed by a man and a woman, who wore costumes much like those in the 1960s photographs and described in

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<sup>434</sup> This was the "Festival Danza Volo Musica Dynamite (Dance Flight Music Dynamite)" at the L'Attico Gallery in June 1969. The performers included Terry Riley (music), La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela (music with Forti singing), Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay, Yvonne Rainer, (dance) and David Bradshaw (who made a work with dynamite). A 2010 exhibition chronicled the activities of the L'Attico gallery in the 1960s and 70s, where Forti performed at least three times: "L'ATTICO di Fabio Sargentini 1966-1978," MARCO: Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma (October 2010-February 2011); it included an extensive catalogue.

<sup>435</sup> Program notes quoted in Pamela Sommers, "Simone Forti's 'Jackdaw Songs,' *The Drama Review: TDR* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 125. See also Meredith Morse, "Between Two Continents: Simone Forti's *See-Saw*" in Breitweiser, 37-44.

<sup>436</sup> Forti's comments and the role of *See Saw* in *Jackdaw Songs* also suggest that *See Saw*'s inherent theatrical qualities helped drive this new approach to making work.

<sup>437</sup> The MOCA performances were recorded in Simone Forti, *An Evening of Dance Constructions*, Artpix, 2009, DVD; also in in-progress teaching videos (The Box and Simone Forti archive).

*Handbook*. Elements such as an apple and the reading material were retained, as were actions Forti had described, in particular the woman's "fit." It is impossible to know how closely these renditions resembled the first performances in 1960, but they suggest Forti was recalling a certain formula for these latter-day versions [Figures 3.52, 3.53].<sup>438</sup>

In 2014, however, when Forti staged *See Saw* for the retrospective exhibition in Salzburg, the artist departed somewhat from the example provided by the first performances in 1960-61. She worked with three different male-female pairs to develop three different versions, each of which had subtly different tones: sexual, sweet, fiery, and directed the six performers to choose their own costumes and keep their own time [Figures 3.10, 3.54].<sup>439</sup> The magazine element was tried and discarded: somehow it wasn't quite working, and the movement and emotional material the dancers developed was sufficiently compelling, each following its own course. The child's toy that makes a "moo" sound when tipped over was affixed to the underside of the board, as in previous versions, but Forti did not make an appearance at the end, singing a folksy song. Part of this was practical: Forti would not be in Salzburg for all of the *See Saw* performances, but the choice also communicated a shifting conception of the work—one that could continue without her. In a conversation with the curator leading up to the 2014 retrospective, Forti noted, "I'm beginning to think that *See-Saw* is not really a *Dance Construction*. It's a score for a play. And then the score has to be interpreted."<sup>440</sup> Forti's comments went beyond the idea that the people

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<sup>438</sup> As such, they evoke Auslander's comment that "it is worth considering whether performance recreations based on documentation actually recreate the underlying performances or perform the documentation," (Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," 2).

<sup>439</sup> I was present in Salzburg for ten days of rehearsals prior to the opening of "Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body" on July 25, 2014 at the Museum der Moderne.

<sup>440</sup> Breitweiser, 27 [original spellings and italics retained].

performing would replace each other but the work would remain more or less the same. Framing the work in terms of theater did not just distinguish the work from the others, but also expressed how it would need to change in order to continue engaging the two characters and the audience.

Forti formalized her discoveries about *See Saw* and defined it for the future in the package of materials and protocol for continuation for MoMA. She wrote in the artist statement for the work, “over the years there have been different props or accompanying materials, which helped set the tone.”<sup>441</sup> These included “an art magazine or other reading materials, an apple, a picnic box with sandwiches,” but they did not transform the work into another one.<sup>442</sup> The artist explained that “subsequent performances” of *See Saw* “have taken on different moods and qualities” than the first performance, and noted that her description of the initial performances in 1960-61 was “not meant to give the definitive version of the piece.”<sup>443</sup> As such, she declared that each of the prior instances of *See Saw* was as valid and genuine as any other, and for the future she hoped “that any new interpretation would remain recognizable as the piece, *See Saw*.”<sup>444</sup> The materials in the “constellation” thus provided references while firmly assigning Forti’s versions to the past. Once Forti no longer had oversight of the work, a totally different artist would be given that responsibility (by MoMA or the “borrowing” institution), and that person might have a better handle on what the piece could do for current audiences.

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<sup>441</sup> “*See Saw*,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 4.

<sup>442</sup> “*See Saw*,” artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 5.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

Recently, theater producer Mark Russell described how theater is designed to “hook audiences on an experience and lead them through it,” locating its efficacy in communication with and relevance to its spectators.<sup>445</sup> With expert leadership and performance, even very old theatrical works, such as those by Shakespeare, endure and feel like they address contemporary issues. The persistence of these works from the past do not require (in fact can be quite hampered by) aspiring to the precise repetition of prior performances. Forti’s typology for *See Saw* welcomed how a future director will approach the work differently than Forti, proposing that Forti alone could not fully foresee or proscribe the creative possibilities inherent in the situation, especially the ways it would continue to engage performers and viewers.<sup>446</sup> With change as a value, the work’s internal dynamism and the dynamism of artistic succession formed the basis for its ongoing life in the world. The see saw acted as a site for invention, its physical rather structure generating real-time action and effects in performance. A new generation of artists will use it as a jumping-off point for their own visions of the work: already a one director has staged it with two sawhorses and three performers, and two other artists collaborated on developing and performing their own version [Figures 3.45, 3.46]. As such, the *See Saw* contained possibilities in 1960 that were not (and perhaps could not) be realized until today.<sup>447</sup> Forti’s vision of the

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<sup>445</sup> Russell, “Theatricality” in *In Terms of Performance*: <http://www.intermsofperformance.site/keywords/theatricality/mark-russell> (Accessed February 1, 2017).

<sup>446</sup> Scholar Andre Lepecki has theorized the “afterlives” of dances in a similar vein, using as examples artists revisiting the choreography of others, who generated significant changes to the first artist’s work in a self-conscious reconstruction process Lepecki characterized as “archival.” He argued that these reconstructions mobilized “a creative (yet virtual) potential already lodged in the artwork itself,” capitalizing on incomplete yet powerful forces and ideas unexhausted by the work to date. Although Lepecki was more theoretical than practical about how the interpretive artist activated this potential in a dance, Forti’s typology for *See Saw* demonstrated how such an idea could work over the long term. Lepecki, “Body as Archive” in *Singularities*, 139.

<sup>447</sup> Recall Forti’s remark to Halprin 1960: “I don’t think I’ll ever know what to make of the see-saw.” Her plans today suggest perhaps she never fully figured it out—and left it for others to play with. Letter reprinted in Bennahum, Perron, and Robertson, 155.

ongoing life of *See Saw* stresses the impossibility of the artwork remaining exactly the same over a period of time, especially a long period of time, while at the same time removing the priority of Forti's (or anyone's) "original." Taken as a model for conservation, the theatrical model provided by *See Saw* foregrounds how the continuation of an artwork involves interpretive transformation and (re)invention, with the authority for the interpretation given to someone other than the author of the work.

### ***Repertory and Répétiteur: Slant Board, Huddle, Hangers, Platforms, Accompaniment, and Roller Boxes***

For six of the nine total works MoMA acquired, Forti developed a different model for continuation drawing on precedents for retaining a choreographer's or a dance company's repertory. It proposes that Forti's works, with the proper supervision, could and should remain more or less the same into the future, even far into the future. This model for continuation does not contain the creative interpretation of the model for *See Saw*, nor does it display the self-sufficiency of no teaching. With the proxy guaranteed by Forti's body-to-body transmission, a performance of one of these six Dance Constructions using the protocol is not a reconstruction or a re-performance, simply a performance (a construction) of the Dance Construction. One of the least visible aspects of the arrangements for the future of Forti's works, that is, defining the terms for the "qualified teacher" of the dances, was especially important in this regard. Forti stipulated that she herself or a designated surrogate would teach *Slant Board, Huddle, Hangers, Platforms, Accompaniment, and Roller Boxes* to new performers [Figures 3.57-3.60]. Moving into the future, the "qualified teacher" will assure the quality and authenticity of new productions of these works using as a guide her embodied knowledge acquired through direct contact with the



artist and the documentation of the pieces produced for the acquisition. Thus, a small repertory was created as the Dance Constructions were acquired by the MPA, the legitimacy of which the museum carries forward in consultation with the artist or her selected representatives. The protocol provides for the continued performance and quality of artworks without a secure “original” or permanent form, and promises that they will remain—and remain genuine over time.

The materials for the MPA and Forti’s comments on continuation in the MPA’s questionnaire assert that, even though the Dance Constructions do not have precisely choreographed steps, their action is still very specific, with elements resembling set pieces, costumes, and even casting and roles. As they specified shapes, performers, actions, and duration, Forti’s instructions in the videos and teaching instructions lingered on the works’ individual textures and qualities, details that must be maintained in order for the works to remain the same works, potentially even more challenging to elicit than those in other dance works with conventional choreography. The videos and supplemental instructions communicate each work’s specific tones, moods, and movement qualities, making it very clear that performers can “goof” on the pieces, as Steve Paxton termed falling short of the ideal when he recalled his experience working with Forti as a director on some of these pieces.<sup>448</sup> Indeed, Forti discovered, potentially as early as 1961, how traditional dance training can work against the proper execution of her works.<sup>449</sup> The Dance Constructions contained in-the-moment negotiations of body, object, and forces of inertia and gravity, along

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<sup>448</sup> Paxton, “Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson,” 58.

<sup>449</sup> Paxton wrote, “Verbal instructions for these works could be minimal because there was no slack in the situation, once begun. Establishing this style in the performing context of the early 60s did present some challenge, as I recall” (“Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson,” 58).

with subtleties of energy, carriage, movement quality, and expression. The written and recorded instructions as well as the recorded examples in the “constellation of materials” ideally communicate these requirements so that they will remain legible and available to teachers and therefore performers long into the future.

In the years since Paxton performed, and especially as Forti re-visited the works between 2009 and 2015, the artist identified trouble spots and common problems, which need monitoring in order to maintain the quality and identity of the works. For example, she explained about *Hangers*, the work that consists of people hanging in ropes and others walking between them, “I have to be careful that the performers’ eyes stay open, and that they keep seeing. That their gaze doesn’t turn inwards. I call that the zombie look. Say a performer who is used to doing very technical things now is being asked to just stand there in the rope while walkers brush across them. Such a performer is likely to get a zombie look.”<sup>450</sup> This detail makes even clearer that, though the dances of the 1960s may have *looked* natural, they probably were not. Such aspects of the Dance Constructions had to be made explicit in Forti’s materials and protocols for MoMA, which are even more detailed perhaps than for choreography in a recognized dance tradition in which more of the embodied knowledge can be unspoken and taken for granted. Forti also developed other standards for the group: her protocol stipulate that a certain amount of time be spent in rehearsing the Dance Constructions for an exhibition, over eighteen hours for all six of them together.<sup>451</sup> This time is used for building rapport between the performers, going over the

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<sup>450</sup> Quoted in Lim, “MoMA Collects.”

<sup>451</sup> The total amount of time appears on the MPA questionnaire, which breaks down to three hours per piece; *See Saw* requires more rehearsal, an additional six hours (“Long-Term Conservation,” MPA questionnaire). Much of this description is based on my own experience learning the works in 2011, and from observing rehearsals in Salzburg in 2014.

action, troubleshooting problems, and practicing understated skills. As such, a modest but specialized technique for the Dance Constructions was created at the moment of their acquisition by the museum.

Maintaining this “repertory” and “technique” for the future is designed as a shared project between MoMA, Forti and the project coordinator, Sarah Swenson, and the handful of other teachers Forti has trained personally. When she discussed the importance of the gaze in *Hangers*, Forti emphasized the teacher’s supervision: she wrote, “It’s the job of the teacher to get [the performers] excited about the piece, and that the piece has its own interest and beauty.”<sup>452</sup> Familiarity and facility with the simultaneous simplicity and complexity of *Hangers*, as well as Forti’s methods for teaching it, will enable the teacher to inspire performers to produce it to Forti’s standards. Forti has delegated her authority only to people she trusts to convey her embodied knowledge through body-to-body transmission. This role, like a rehearsal director, is not without precedent in Forti’s history with the Dance Constructions: she relied upon colleagues to stage works overseas without her presence while the discussions about the acquisition were underway. In her new capacity as Project Coordinator, Swenson acts as a kind of lead teacher, coordinating between MoMA, the teacher, and the presenting venue in order to make sure all of Forti’s conditions for the Dance Constructions are met. Swenson, along with a few other teachers chosen by Forti on the basis of working together on other projects, extends Forti’s authoring and authorizing capacity now that the works are in MoMA’s collection. Their special designation and expertise means that the museum is not fully responsible for the aesthetic characteristics of the

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<sup>452</sup> Quoted in Lim, “MoMA Collects.”

Dance Constructions. It provides an important administrative apparatus and site for display but—at least for the time being—defers to the artist as the expert.

Forti's protocol for continuing the Dance Constructions identified the biggest challenge to the ongoing existence of the Dance Constructions in "keeping an active team of high-quality teachers."<sup>453</sup> At present they are limited to a few individuals with whom Forti has already had a working relationship, although additional plans have been proposed to expand the pool of teachers, yet to be executed.<sup>454</sup> When the acquisition was announced, MoMA stressed its relationship with the New York dance organization Danspace Project: MPA department head Stuart Comer emphasized that the two organizations would work together to develop "a new model of workshops [...] to ensure that this work continues to inhabit the dance community and new generations who will carry it forward."<sup>455</sup> Under this scheme, Danspace will provide a venue and contacts in the dance world for a series of workshops for dancers to learn the Dance Constructions and the artist's approach to teaching them. It will also provide a suitable space for teaching and rehearsing, which MoMA presently lacks.<sup>456</sup> The workshops will be filmed, so that a record remains of Forti teaching teachers as well as teaching the works. Ideally these teachers will be from different geographical locations and can be contracted later and when needed by MoMA to produce the works at either the midtown museum in New York or elsewhere where

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<sup>453</sup> "Long-Term Conservation," MPA questionnaire.

<sup>454</sup> These are details drawn from conversations with Forti, Judy Hussie-Taylor, Executive Director of Danspace, in May 2016 (New York, NY) and Sarah Swenson in November 2016 and December 2017 (Los Angeles, CA). According the 2016 MoMA press announcement, the museum would like to conduct such workshops annually; none have taken place to date. Lim, "MoMA Collects."

<sup>455</sup> Quoted in Lim, "MoMA Collects."

<sup>456</sup> The plans for MoMA's latest expansion include a performance "studio," which suggests the training might eventually take place in the institution.

the works may be loaned, liaising with performers and institutions around the world. Under this plan, the artist's approach to teaching the works will be broadly invested, but for the time being it is limited to teachers Forti knows well, following her own precedents as an artist. At present the assumption is also that Swenson will be able to teach future teachers and consult with MoMA on her replacement as Project Coordinator, but official procedures for that process have yet to be established. Multiplying Forti's embodied knowledge and authority through surrogates even further could grant the artist and her works a certain kind of "permanence" despite their ephemerality, with a collaborative body of knowledge sharing resources and responsibilities for the ongoing care of Forti's works.<sup>457</sup>

Although both MoMA and Danspace Project are new to maintaining a dance repertory, examples of single-choreographer dance companies (such as Martha Graham's and Merce Cunningham's) have demonstrated that embodied knowledge can be maintained beyond the founding artist's lifetime.<sup>458</sup> The specific nature of Forti's works—in their simplicity and fresh construction every

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<sup>457</sup> That this aspect remains in-progress reflects the newness of such an arrangement for MoMA (and for Danspace). On behalf of Danspace, Hussie-Taylor indicated that it perceived its role as temporary, helping the museum develop contacts and competencies so that it can facilitate workshops training teachers on its own; MoMA emphasized the annual recurrence of such training and how Forti's works would remain in contact with the dancers for whom they have been influential and who have already taken care of them to date.

Such a collaboration with Danspace (and Swenson, and the teachers) is not totally novel for MoMA: in recent years the museum has promoted its relationships with outside experts, and for dance especially they have played a substantial role. Choreographer Ralph Lemon, for example, served as a curator for "Some Sweet Day" in 2012, a series of six performances by high-profile choreographers, which was part of almost a decade of involvement with the museum in various roles. "Some Sweet Day" (2012), <https://www.moma.org/calendar/performance/1292> (Accessed February 1, 2017). While on the one hand these consulting arrangements recognize the expertise of the authority (in Forti's case, Danspace, Swenson, and other teachers), there is also an exoticized or even ethnographic cast to them, largely due to an imbalance of power in their respective cultural positions, economic standing, and influence.

<sup>458</sup> Choreographer Jérôme Bel's recent project *MoMA Dance Company* (2016) called upon members of the museum's staff to perform dances of various styles in MoMA's atrium, putting on display the people working together to make the museum function. The title suggested that the institution might one day maintain a roster of performers who can execute works of dance and performance, a proposition suggested by the collaborative aspect of Forti's plans. Bel's project was part of a longstanding program at MoMA, "Artist's Choice," in which contemporary artists are invited to curate exhibitions from MoMA's collection; his choice

time—hold out the promise that they might live forever. Recall Steve Paxton’s comment: works like Forti’s “are not intended to remain the ‘same’ from one performance to the next, let alone for 20 years. Yet, because they are generalities and include change, they have a kind of structural immutability.”<sup>459</sup> Still, it may be that the acquisition established model or ideal performances, even though the Dance Constructions had initially refused them, so that the works might be recognized by the museum’s original-copy framework. The performances at The Box in August 2011 almost automatically became exemplary models by virtue of their recording, which captured a definitive moment in the life of Forti, her teaching, and the Dance Constructions. By virtue of the transfer of these recordings to MoMA, and the directive for future teachers to draw upon them, the recordings provide authoritative versions of the Dance Constructions, to which future versions may inevitably aspire and treat as if they are an original to be emulated.<sup>460</sup> Indeed, the correct, authorized performances for *Slant Board*, *Huddle*, *Hangers*, *Platforms*, *Accompaniment* (all 1961), and *Roller Boxes* (1960) demonstrated that it might be possible for these works to have ideal performances, which was never as clearly evident until the point of their institutional acquisition. According to views like Paxton’s this could compromise the ability

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suggested that the people at the museum are as much a part of the collection as its objects—but his choreography also subjected them to a great deal of objectification. Performances at MoMA, New York, October 17-31, 2016, “Artist’s Choice: Jérôme Bel/MoMA Dance Company,” <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1669> (Accessed January 15, 2018).

<sup>459</sup> Paxton, “Performance and the Reconstruction of Judson,” 56.

<sup>460</sup> The MPA Questionnaire asks, under “Long-Term Conservation”:

MoMA: How can we sustain a high level of quality over time?

Forti: High-quality teachers: Sarah Swenson as Project Coordinator and MoMA’s association with Danspace.

MoMA: How would you envision your work in 50 years?

Forti: Basically unchanged.

MoMA: What are the main challenges or complications of this piece?

Forti: Keeping an active team of qualified teachers. This challenge is mitigated by the existence of detailed teaching videos (already delivered to MoMA).

of the Dance Constructions to live on. Forti's plans left this question open by way of her approach to *Huddle*, which provides an epilogue to my study.

## EPILOGUE

### “A Life of its Own”: *Huddle*

*Huddle*, the work that both typifies and stands apart from the group of Dance Constructions, was included in the acquisition of Forti's works by MoMA in 2015. Yet, owing to its unique form, informality, long life, and wide circulation (as Forti has shared the piece with performers and students around the world over the past fifty years), fully capturing and containing the work for the museum was impossible. Forti's plans for *Huddle*'s acquisition by MoMA recognized this impossibility with an unusual arrangement that permits the work's ongoing life in the world beyond the supervision of the museum, which is to say it can exist at once inside and outside of the museum. Importantly, the work's life outside the museum is understood as a critical part of sustaining it for the future. These plans set the caretakers of *Huddle* in the museum in relation to stewards beyond it, authorizing and legitimizing the Huddles produced by both. The arrangement provokes questions about which set of operations is going to be better for the work—which is more authentic and/or more secure—and is perhaps designed to leave them unanswered. This final section of my study provides details about these arrangements and the process leading up to it as well as some speculations on the future of *Huddle*.

As already discussed throughout this dissertation, *Huddle*, Forti's most well-known work, directly and economically joins the poles of dance and object, person and thing, working through these distinctions over the course of its ten minutes and then dissolving back into its surroundings. As the performers cluster together and climb over each other in the huddle shape, they enact the conjunction of dance and sculpture as well as the amorphous and in-between



characteristics that made Forti's early work so distinctive and influential for a number of forms when it emerged in the 1960s and have enabled it to endure over the years since. The people making *Huddle* make up the work itself, their huddling and climbing keeping it going until they tire and the work disappears altogether—only to be re-constituted another time, in another place, with a new set of actors. *Huddle* is singular and repeatable at the same time, complex and simple, moving and static, wild and contained, juxtaposing the individual with the group in a way that values both singularity and collectivity.<sup>461</sup> Its lessons concern dance and art, as seen in Part I's discussion of Forti's impact on the interdisciplinary environment in New York in the 1960s, but go beyond them to human organization and relations more generally. The work promotes (indeed, requires) collaboration and participation, as well as sensitivity and receptivity. The experience of a performer is sweaty and physical, involving effort that is real, direct, and unpredictable. It contains unspoken but clear cues to climb and to support and small but palpable risks with every shift of the shape. The experience of an absorbed watcher is that it could go on forever and never change, yet every moment is distinctive and fleeting. The way each person climbs and settles back in to the group is utterly unique but still speaks to how we all tackle big challenges and move through them in marvelous ways.

*Huddle* is singular among the Dance Constructions in that it does not require any props or built equipment and can be readily manifested in many situations—even on the fly—and Forti brought it with her everywhere she traveled in her long career as a teacher and performer. With its low-level requirements for skill it was accessible to many people, highly adaptable for different numbers of participants, and portable to distant locations. It could be presented as an artwork and

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<sup>461</sup> In "Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo," art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson likened *Huddle* to a "beast" (38).

used as an exercise in group building, teamwork, and practicing a straightforward movement quality, and as such *Huddle* appeared in several of Forti's group works over the years as well as in compositions devised with students [Figures 3.1, 4.1].<sup>462</sup> In addition, as dancers in the 1970s and beyond built upon Forti's and the Judson Dance Theater's model for movement de-emphasizing classical technique and foregrounding real-time interaction, *Huddle* has remained relevant to many practitioners until the present day. It serves as both an instructive somatic experience and as a way to access an important historical precursor—an ancestor—for contemporary dance practices.<sup>463</sup> The dance community creates a dense network of interest and expertise in the Dance Constructions by way of its collective history and bodily knowledge, and Forti, as well as the MPA curators and other commentators, recognized that her negotiation with MoMA about the future of *Huddle* had the potential to impact all of these people.

During the negotiation process, Walker Arts Center curator Philip Bither, for example, noted the dance world's interests in *Huddle* in a debate with MoMA's Associate Director Kathy Halbreich, a debate that identified risks attending the institutionalization of *Huddle* as well as risks in leaving its future to chance. Halbreich asked Bither, who had doubts about MoMA "purchasing" the work, "listen, what's so bad about us attempting to preserve this great work? Who else is going to preserve it?"<sup>464</sup> Bither conceded that "it will be great that MoMA owns it and preserved

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<sup>462</sup> *Huddle* was ubiquitous in Forti's practice in other ways, too: she made drawings of it in the 1970s and the "Huddle Tape" in 1974. She also collaborated with a holographer to create a number of freestanding sculptural works that display a flickering image of the clustering and climbing people as a viewer creeps around the pedestal.

<sup>463</sup> Forti's "The Feel of An Ancient Form," written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dance practice Contact Improvisation (Contact), called *Huddle* a "dinosaur" in relation to Contact, of the same "genus" but not the same "species." (She also called *Huddle* "extinct" at that time: it would be resurrected with more regularity soon afterwards, starting ca. 2000.) *Contact Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998): 3.

<sup>464</sup> Quoted in "He Gave Me Blues, I Gave Him Back Soul: Philip Bither, Ralph Lemon, and Sarah Michelson in Conversation," in Ralph Lemon and Triple Canopy, eds. *On Value* (Brooklyn: Triple Canopy, 2016), 42. A

it, and has hours of Simone on video teaching *Huddle* to other dancers, and that that's all captured," but still had concerns.<sup>465</sup> He asked, "how do you protect it so that it doesn't get so tangled in MoMA's bureaucratic morass that it won't be allowed to see the light of day when some small college wants to do their version of *Huddle*?"<sup>466</sup> For Bither, the same mechanism that purported to "preserve" or "save" the work could also suppress it, limiting the availability of the work to practitioners. Recognizing the importance of Forti's works to dance producers of all sizes, he feared *Huddle* would need to be protected *from* its institutional protector, in order to continue to have a life and attain visibility for a public. And yet Halbreich noted that there might not be another party or parties appropriate for or stable enough in the long term to assume the project of sustaining *Huddle*. MoMA had the institutional structure and continuity—the very bureaucracy Bither feared—that could ensure *Huddle*'s transmission long after the artist, the debate, and the two speakers passed on.<sup>467</sup> With Bither articulating broad claims to experiencing and performing the work, and Halbreich the belief that the museum's exclusive framework would be necessary for *Huddle*'s continuation, they represented opposing views on what the museum could and would do for Forti's work, even for works of art more generally.

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commentator from the audience of the "Modern Monday" talk Forti participated in (part of the *On Value* series) expressed discomfort with the word "buyer" in relation to a dance. Forti cut in: "I think a term that would be more descriptive of what happens is, 'taking on the responsibility to keep something alive.'"

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> About the case of Erick Hawkins, a mid-century choreographer whose work is no longer performed today, Feidelson wrote, "Hawkins's near-total disappearance is an unpleasant reminder of how much dance depends on institution, in practice and in preservation. Money greatly affects a dance's 'life.' A dance cannot just be known, it must also be seen—performed for audiences at theaters, given ongoing resources and broad access" (Feidelson, "The Merce Cunningham Archives").

Forti's plans for the future of *Huddle*, which were finalized after this conversation took place, simultaneously render the debate unnecessary and mobilize its terms indefinitely: they established the legitimacy of the institution as a custodian for the work as well as the legitimacy of custodians outside of it. *Huddle* was defined as an art object for MoMA's collection like the other Dance Constructions, through Forti's first-person texts, historical artifacts, and instructions for the piece's future enactment. As discussed in Part II of the dissertation, Forti's handwritten artist statement translated *Huddle* both into language and a tangible object and asserted her authorship of the work, while the archival photographs of *Huddle* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam represented the work in the past [Figures 3.21, 3.22]. *Huddle* was recorded in performance at The Box in 2011, the culmination of workshops given at The Box for the purpose of recording Forti teaching the Dance Constructions to new performers, and Forti wrote teaching instructions to accompany this documentation [Figure 3.25].<sup>468</sup> (For obvious reasons, *Huddle* was not included in the Dance Constructions Build Instructions.) Now that *Huddle* is in MoMA's collection, it is listed in MoMA's online catalogue as a performance, as a video (the 1974 recording), and as the handwritten statement—and a combination of all three, dated 1961-1974, a listing that reflects how a combination of artifacts in the “constellation of materials” represented each work and the group of Dance Constructions as a whole.<sup>469</sup> To the autographic archival materials and allographic instructions, Forti added the dance device of a *repétiteur* who transmits

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<sup>468</sup> “Teaching instructions, *Huddle*” in “Dance Constructions / Teaching Instructions” draft (The Box and Simone Forti archive).

<sup>469</sup> See <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200109?locale=en>. *Huddle* is consistent with how the other works are listed in MoMA's index, which lists many (but not all) of the items individually and then groups them together by performance. Neither the *Handwritten draft* nor the *Huddle* video were listed on the draft inventory I viewed (The Box and Simone Forti archive).

the artist's embodied knowledge to new performers, identifying specific subjects to carry Forti's authority forward into the future.

At MoMA and in other museums, *Huddle* is staged like most of the Dance Constructions, by contracting one of Forti's surrogates to teach *Huddle* to new performers, who draws on her training, years of personal experience with Forti, and the documentation of the work at MoMA. This uses the dance model of repertory and *repétiteur*, with the "qualified teacher" ensuring the performance of *Huddle* to certain standards and guaranteeing the work as official and authentic in Forti's absence.<sup>470</sup> Outside of the institution, dancers and other performers have Forti's authorization to enact *Huddle* without the museum's express permission, which is guaranteed by the documents for the acquisition.<sup>471</sup> Forti stipulated that *Huddle* be allowed to take place in "informal contexts," requiring the museum to continue the artist's practice of widely sharing the work. Early in the dialogue about the museum acquiring *Huddle*, Forti wrote an artist statement for *Huddle* with language similar to the statements eventually provided to MoMA. She explained,

I have taught *Huddle* in dance workshops hundreds of times. There it has taken on *a life of its own* as I have made it clear that whoever has learned it is free to teach it and do it.

The assumption has been that as long as it is being done in an informal context, I don't even need to know about it. From time to time a former student sends me a picture of a

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<sup>470</sup> "Huddle," artist statement appended to MPA questionnaire, 9.

<sup>471</sup> This was confirmed by discussions with the artist, The Box, and email correspondence with the MPA Collection Specialist, with the MPA Collection Specialist writing, "One follow up: please don't publish the language from our contract with Simone provided above without getting approval first—I'm not sure this would be allowed in the original language but it's likely that you could paraphrase the general idea." MPA Collection Specialist, email message to the author, January 23, 2017.

*Huddle* that they've done in a studio in some distant land, and I see that *Huddle* has managed to hold its form, and its name, through the decades.<sup>472</sup>

The acquisition of *Huddle* by MoMA obligated the museum to recognize and permit *Huddle*'s "life of its own" beyond its (or anyone's) oversight. The people who learned the piece from Forti in her workshops in past years and who sought to teach it to their own students will continue to be allowed to do so without such transmission of the work being challenged as unofficial or inauthentic, or a violation of Forti's copyright and/or MoMA's performance rights.<sup>473</sup> This arrangement complicates the museum's sense of exclusive possession of the work, yet another example of how dance disrupts traditional notions of ownership. Likewise, sanctioning both the "inside" and the "outside" versions of *Huddle* does not give priority to one route to authenticity over another: those *Huddles* achieved by way of a surrogate for the artist and cultivating specialized skills are as "real" or "true" as those collectively produced outside of the museum framework.

Shared among so many people for so long, *Huddle* was not entirely Forti's to sell, trade, or transfer, and her plans for its acquisition by MoMA acknowledge this difficulty. Much like the conundrum of a dance as simultaneously not sufficiently alienable to become property and too tightly attached to the body to be properly owned, *Huddle* is too deeply invested in and tied to a community of dancers to be fully separated from it, and so no single person—not even Forti—

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<sup>472</sup> Emphasis added, "Huddle Artist's Statement" (2010), Simone Forti archive.

<sup>473</sup> MoMA collected the performance rights to the Dance Constructions, but the rights for *Huddle* are not exclusive. The museum characterized Forti as retaining her copyright for all of the Dance Constructions, despite them not falling under one of the (autographic) categories of artworks protected by moral rights legislation in the US (the Visual Arts Rights Act of 1990). MoMA's website lists Forti as owning the copyright for the Dance Constructions in the current year; also MPA Collection Specialist, email message to the author, January 23, 2017.

can claim complete authority over it. These bodies of knowledge can neither fully possess nor relinquish *Huddle*, which will continue regardless of the work being part of an art collection at a major museum. As detailed throughout this dissertation, dance demonstrates how owning the rights to a work does not fully guarantee the existence and authenticity of that work, for instance when the embodied knowledge of the Martha Graham company dancers won out over the legal rights in the contest for Graham's choreography.<sup>474</sup> Through Graham's choreography and technique, Graham's dancers had shared the artist's body (some of them for many years), and the outcome of the legal battles that followed her death recognized this shared custodianship, giving the rights to what the dancers already "owned" fully over to them once Graham herself was gone. Forti's arrangement with MoMA likewise grants those with bodily knowledge of *Huddle* legitimate rights to the work and makes their stewardship of the work official. By recognizing *Huddle*'s "life of its own," Forti asserted that the performance rights the museum holds are not exclusive and identified another way the work can continue past her lifetime, leaving the question open about which steward can better ensure its longevity.

From the very first discussions of the "preservation" of Forti's work, the artist noted how *Huddle* refuses individual ownership in its central condition as something to be shared and experienced together by a group of people. When MoMA's curator broached the topic with her in 2009, Forti's immediate response was that "no one could own the *Huddle* though, or have exclusive rights to perform or teach it. It is part of its nature that everybody owns it, and that it spreads

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<sup>474</sup> Kraut's discussion of copyright in dance in *Choreographing Copyright* also provided a number of earlier examples of embodied methods of knowledge distribution and protection: these evolved within an economy of exploitation, namely that of black jazz and tap dancers in the 1920s and 30s, mostly in New York, whose nightclub acts were routinely stolen for Broadway shows. See in particular "'Stealing Steps' and Signature Moves: Alternative Systems of Copyright," 127-164.

out.”<sup>475</sup> How to acknowledge, articulate, and facilitate *Huddle*’s collective properties thus became a key consideration in the acquisition. To this end, Forti began describing *Huddle* as having a “double life.” In her artist statement for the work, Forti elaborated,

...as the term “Dance Construction” may have foretold, [*Huddle*] has taken part in the histories of two artistic communities. To the art world *Huddle* is conceptual and minimalist, a work born full fledged as an idea. Its material is a group of people in a single location and in steady state action. The action is right there to be seen, without refinement or stylistic filters. Perhaps in the art world *Huddle* is understood primarily from the perspective of the viewer and as a visual experience, although there is some degree of identification with the physicality of the performers.<sup>476</sup>

This description relates the work to well-known art historical movements in which Forti (and *Huddle*) were involved. It also captures Forti’s recognition of how *Huddle* is primarily seen in contemporary art contexts, as a materialization of an idea, an object-like work to be looked upon by viewers. In the dance world, in contrast, Forti wrote, “*Huddle* is felt primarily from the point of view of the participants, as a physical experience. The participants work together to support the climber through spontaneous adjustments as the vectors of weight-bearing play themselves out through muscles and bones.”<sup>477</sup> In other words, *Huddle* is a sensory, proprioceptive experience foreclosed or inadequately available through mere viewing. By identifying its “double life,” Forti stressed *Huddle*’s participation in two different cultures, and its operations as both an object and an experience (with emphasis on different groups of people). Not only would *Huddle*’s acquisition by a museum have to take this dual history into account, Forti wanted the

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<sup>475</sup> Schlenzka, “Simone Forti: Drunk With Movement.”

<sup>476</sup> “Huddle Artist’s Statement” (2010), Simone Forti archive.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.



experience to remain accessible, accessibility that could provide an additional guarantee on the work's future.

As the deliberations with MoMA went on, Forti examined dance's models for continuing choreography past an artist's lifetime as well as some of the dance community's alternatives to exclusive ownership paradigms, which her earliest works had helped inspire. As an example, in a public talk at MoMA during the process of defining the Dance Constructions and the protocol for their continuation, the artist invoked the dance form Contact Improvisation (Contact) and its decentralized and "democratic" method of self-regulation, as Forti termed it.<sup>478</sup> With roots in *Huddle*, Contact is an improvisational movement form/method that relies not on modern or classical dance techniques but on the sharing and transfer of weight and momentum between practitioners [Figures 4.2, 4.3].<sup>479</sup> Practitioners "jam" in groups and sometimes perform for others, but Contact is largely experiential rather than presentational, a practice more than a performance. A few years after Contact emerged in the 1970s, its leading practitioners heard about injuries arising from people trying out the form without adequate preparation.<sup>480</sup>

According to Nancy Stark Smith, one of the form's originators along with Steve Paxton, the

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<sup>478</sup> "Modern Monday," MoMA, October 21, 2013.

<sup>479</sup> "Modern Monday." Contact Improvisation (usually called Contact or CI) was invented by Steve Paxton with several collaborators in the 1970s on the heels of their experiments in the Judson Dance Theater (1962-64) and the collective Grand Union (1970-76). Specifically its origins have been located in Steve Paxton's experiments with a group of male dancers at Oberlin College: they presented this highly physical work as *Magnesium* in 1972. See Steve Paxton, "Like A Famous Tree, A Dialogue with Liza Bear," *Avalanche* 11 (Summer 1975): 26-30 and Steve Paxton, Daniel Lepkoff, David Woodberry, Laura Chapman, Karen Radler, Annette La Rocque, Scott Jones, Gwen Thomas, "Contact Improvisation," *Avalanche* 11 (Summer 1975): 24-25. See also note 463.

<sup>480</sup> Nancy Stark Smith, one of Contact's initiators, specified, "three years into the practice of Contact Improvisation [ca. 1975], we began hearing of physical injuries resulting from people doing Contact from having seen it in performance without an introduction to the subtle sensing work that underlies the more vigorous physical activity." Nancy Stark Smith, "A Question of Copyright – Some History," *Contact Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1998), 35.

group considered official routes for monitoring the practice like “trademarking the name and certifying or authorizing teachers.”<sup>481</sup> These devices could help ensure proper training and injury prevention, but the group decided that “the prospect of policing Contact was not appealing” and might even close down the form’s possibilities.<sup>482</sup> Instead, they devised a collaborative mechanism that was much like the dance practice itself, a newsletter “in which to report activity and current thinking within the work, to keep the work open by inviting ourselves and others further into the dialogue.”<sup>483</sup> *Contact Newsletter* (now *Contact Quarterly*) has since 1975 provided perspectives from practitioners and information on Contact workshops and jams as the form has spread around the world. It rotates through different editors (including Forti) and invites contributions from the Contact community at large, serving as a site for sharing information, identifying the Contact community, and asserting the collective “ownership” of Contact. Supplying a discursive arena for transferring knowledge in addition to its embodied one, the newsletter is a vehicle for sharing and regulating the practice outside of an ownership structure, a participatory project rather than the work of a few people wielding legal authority or instruments. Twenty-five years after it began, Stark Smith concluded that the solution for managing Contact via a collective agreement rather than a legal arrangement had been essential for maintaining Contact’s core principles of resilience and flexibility, “leading to the

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> “Preliminary papers were drawn up but were never signed,” Stark Smith wrote (35). The debate about trademarks and copyright among Contact’s initial innovators took place just as dance gained its own category in copyright law: it was approved in 1976 and instated in 1978. Undoubtedly press coverage and conversation in the dance community at the time suggested copyright as a solution, but—as with Forti’s Dance Constructions—it is unclear that Contact Improvisation would have qualified for copyright had this group continued to pursue it.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

considerable expansion and enrichment of the work by many individuals over the years.”<sup>484</sup> For Forti, Contact’s management by these means provided additional evidence for the ways her work could carry on without her. *Huddle*, like Contact, had been a participatory project for most of its history and proliferated far beyond its originator (Forti). Forti’s arrangement with MoMA sought to formalize or preserve this dimension of *Huddle*, wagering that its spread might continue to happen on its own while also pressing the museum into the service of the work’s manifestation beyond its walls.

*Huddle*, like Contact—and indeed all dance—obeys physical laws but not necessarily legal ones, its embodied nature pressuring ownership arrangements such as trademarks, certificates, and copyright. These systems rely on a singular “original” (or create a singular “original”), against which other versions are verified, but dance and especially *Huddle* can never be repeated exactly. Forti’s materials and plans for the acquisition of the Dance Constructions test whether the museum offers dance another version of the original-copy paradigm, or if the apparatus has evolved into something more choreographic, which recognizes the impossibility of an original. Forti’s arrangements with *Huddle* authorizing every performance of the work take this inquiry even further. Both the museum and the world beyond it provide routes to “authentic” versions of *Huddle*—indeed, they are all the same work of equal legitimacy. Removing the authority and priority of any single producer, be it a museum presenting the work in an exhibition or a group of dancers performing on the street, Forti submits everyone to the choreographic logic, including

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid. Stark Smith concluded by taking recourse to metaphors of literacy: “the final test of teaching Contact is if someone who studied with you can go to a Contact jam and dance with a student of someone else. If the ‘language’ has been transmitted, a ‘conversation’ can be had.”

herself, firmly disallowing the “original” but making each version valuable and authentic, its own original [Figures 4.4-4.24].

Going forward, the art institution’s investment in caring for autographic objects is a key component of maintaining *Huddle*’s “double life” in the future. Forti’s procedures take advantage of structures already in place at the museum for preserving physical materials, keeping track of protocols, and managing other logistics, even human resources. The museum is not cast as capable of maintaining the bodily knowledge required to pass along *Huddle*, but its charge to maintain the work includes migrating the documentation created in 2011 to new playback formats and devices when digital video is outdated, producing copies of instructions when necessary, and enabling teachers to access them, thus facilitating its continued passage. The museum shores up Forti’s authorship of the work with its emphasis on the singular artist and via the highly regulated mechanism of the surrogate, adopting dance’s methods for managing and distributing subjectivity. It also separates viewers from participants in *Huddle*: in a gallery, the work is a distinct event-object produced by teaching special skills to selected performers, and mechanisms such as security guards and cultural interdictions on touching fine art prevent spectators from joining in on a performance, which continues its identity as a visual experience. This *Huddle* is by necessity more formal, more exclusive, more choreographed, and more performative than Huddles in the past and perhaps Huddles elsewhere, but Forti’s scheme insists on the work’s place in the museum. And it considers every version—at least in theory—the same work.

Outside of the museum, people can carry on making and experiencing *Huddle* as they always have been, and Forti's plans test whether this will continue without her. The accessibility of the skills required to make the work have enabled its spread, and its transit between practice and object—between knowledge and thing—have both kept it alive and prevented it from settling down into something that can be fully taken over by anyone. It requires little formal delivery of knowledge but rather a shared commitment to the task of huddling and climbing and attention to the physical feedback provided by a dynamic situation. Once Forti set it in motion with students and performers, *Huddle* became self-regulating, self-generating, and self-extinguishing. Forti's plans for its future propose that its consistent shape and limited internal dynamics, as well as the continued passage of the work to others, will promise *Huddle* a "life of its own" even after Forti is no longer passing it along herself. What is more, the arrangements with MoMA provide an additional communication apparatus, attesting to *Huddle*'s existence, providing examples of the work, and training official teachers and performers who can share it with their colleagues and students.<sup>485</sup> This recruits MoMA to serve *Huddle*'s "life of its own" in addition to its life at the museum. If leaving the work to be tended by a museum risks it becoming objectified, leaving it to anonymous stewards has its risks, too. While broad, diverse, and decentralized, *Huddle*'s "community" is subject to changing trends and priorities. In dance, some types of performance and training are popular at certain points and others fade away, responding to evolving aesthetics as well as social and political pressures. Dance's institutional memory is short, limited by the brief careers of most practitioners. As much as the community can freely spread *Huddle* without

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<sup>485</sup> It remains to be seen whether MoMA will facilitate dialogue with practitioners enacting *Huddle* outside of the museum, but one could imagine it creating a community around *Huddle*, hosting workshops for performers and other interested parties, keeping a database of images of *Huddle* from around the world, and even responding to inquiries from practitioners with instructions for how to manifest the work.

permission or Forti knowing about it, with this freedom comes the possibility of the work might also get lost. Left to its own devices, the community could eventually forget the work altogether.

Forti's plans for the future of *Huddle* demand of everyone an ethic of sharing rather than owning—much like *Huddle* itself—and while the plans are very specific to the work's form and history, they reflect the broader implications of the choreographic logic within and beyond contemporary art. Each of Forti's two different custodians represents interests in a different kind of object and offers a different kind of continuity, demonstrating how both are at work in post-World War II art practices. On the one hand, MoMA's stewardship expresses a drive toward a definitively knowable thing, and a commitment to the stability of that thing through exclusive and proprietary means. On the other hand, the continued existence of *Huddle* outside of the art museum underscores the epistemological features of the artwork, with an understanding of stability as achieved through motion, wide distribution, and collective feedback. Together, the two guardians hold together art as an experience rather than or in addition to an object one beholds, insisting on it as a bodily encounter. The partnership, invoked by Forti's *Huddle* and her work overall but extending far beyond them, reveals how the singular and the multiple, the changing and the unchanging, and even what's here and what's gone, are never fully separate from one another. They are implicit within many if not all works of art as well as the sites for experiencing them, each a performance called forth by the other.



Figure 1.1  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at MoMA, 2009



Figure 1.2  
Simone Forti,  
*Accompaniment for La Monte's 'Two Sounds' and La Monte's 'Two Sounds'* (1961)  
Performed by Simone Forti at MoMA, 2009





Figure 1.3  
Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A*, (1966)  
Performed at MoMA by Pat Catterson, 2009



Figure 1.4  
Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A* (1966)  
Performed at MoMA by Jimmy Robert and Ian White, 2009



Figure 2.1  
Simone Forti, *Slant Board* (1961)  
Performed at School of Visual Arts (SVA), 1967



Figure 2.2  
Simone Forti, *Slant Board* (1961)  
Performed at L'Attico Gallery, Rome, 1968



Figure 2.3  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at Loeb Student Center, New York University, 1969





Figure 2.4  
Simone Forti, *Hangers* (1961)  
Performed at Hauser and Wirth, Zürich, 2011

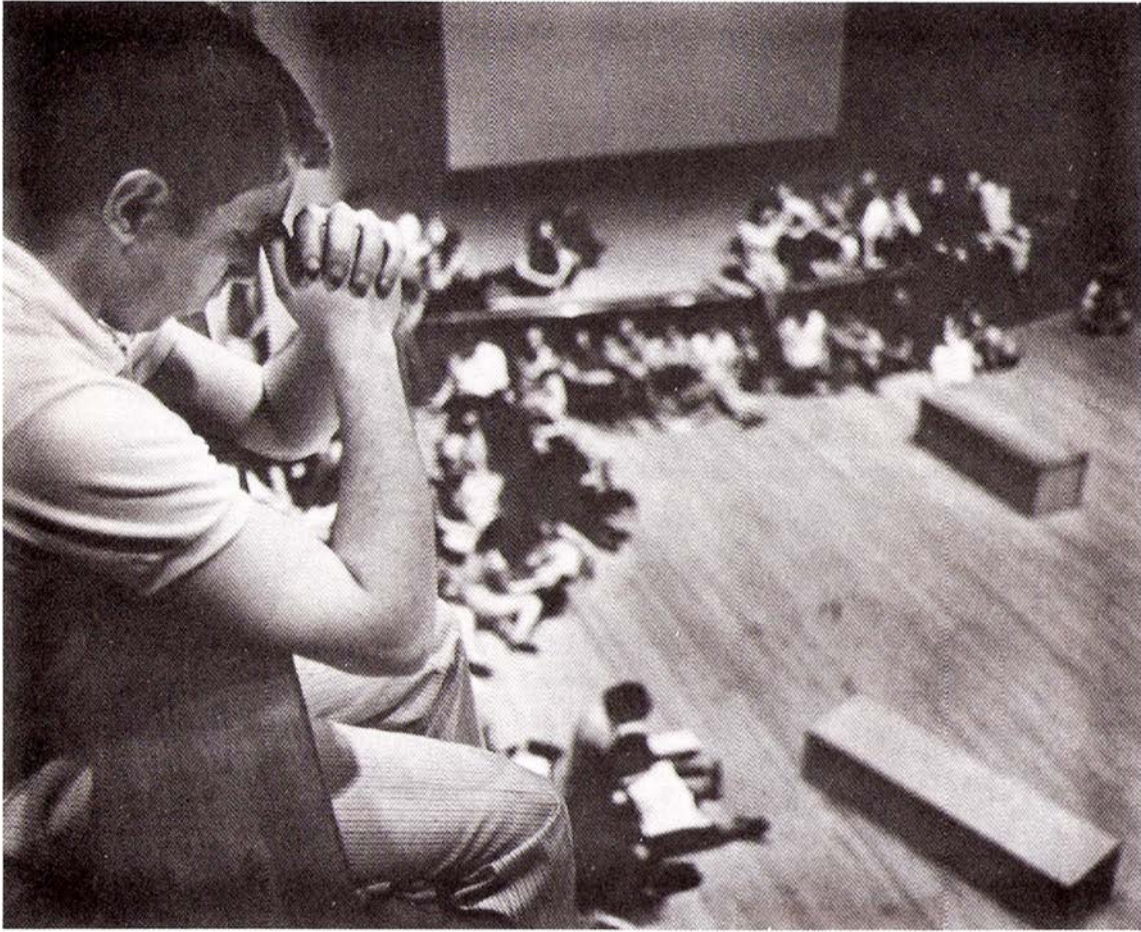


Figure 2.5  
Simone Forti, *Platforms* (1961)  
Performed at Loeb Student Center, New York University, 1969

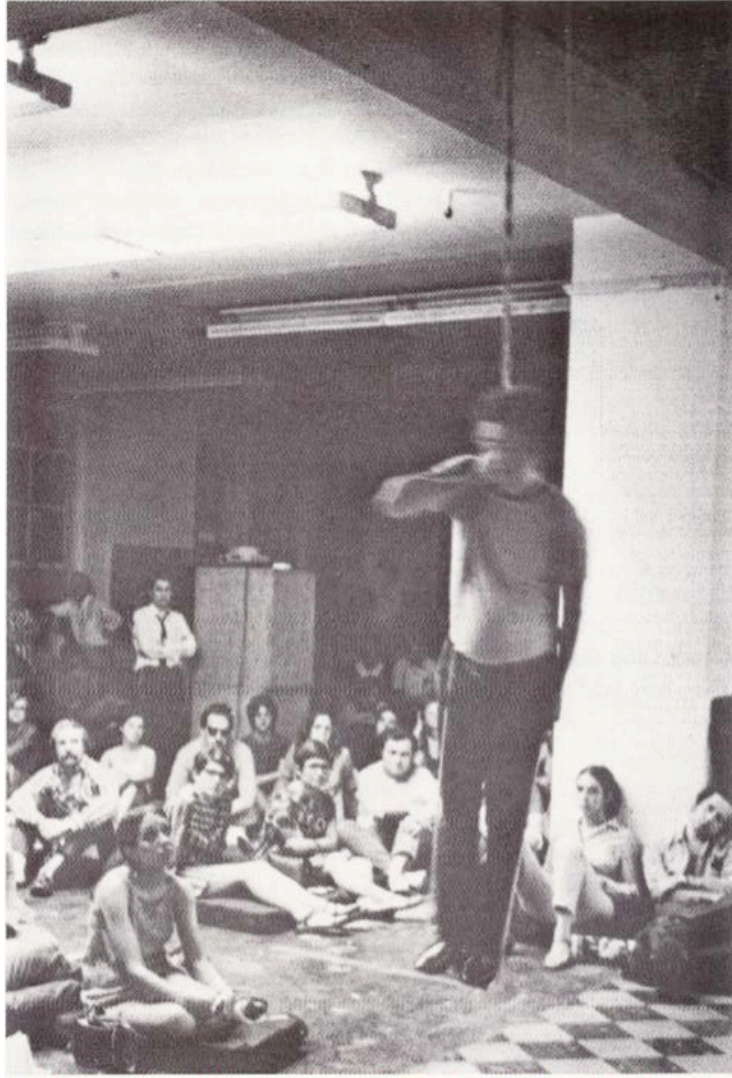


Figure 2.6  
Simone Forti,  
*Accompaniment for La Monte's 'Two Sounds' and La Monte's 'Two Sounds,'* (1961)  
Performed at Cornell University School of Architecture, New York Studio, 1968



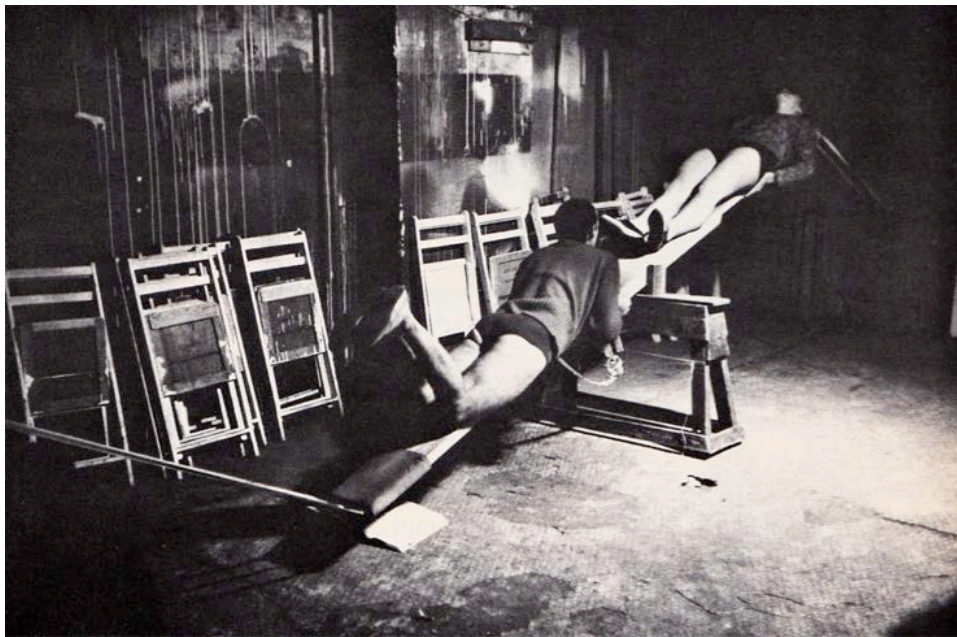


Figure 2.7  
Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer in Simone Forti's *See Saw* (1960),  
Performed at Reuben Gallery, New York, 1960





Figure 2.8  
Simone Forti in Anna Halprin's *Branch Dance* (1957)



Figure 2.9  
Simone Forti, Anna Halprin, and A.A. Leath in Anna Halprin's *Branch Dance* (1957)  
Performed on Anna Halprin's "dance deck," Marin County, California



Figure 2.10  
Simone Forti in Anna Halprin's *Trunk Dance* (1959)



Figure 2.11  
Simone Forti (center) in Anna Halprin's *Trunk Dance* (1959)  
Performed at San Francisco Playhouse, San Francisco



Figure 2.12  
Simone Forti, *Rollers* [*Roller Boxes*] (1960)  
Performed at Reuben Gallery, New York, 1960





Figure 2.13  
Simone Forti, *Slant Board* (1961)  
Performed at L'Attico Gallery, Rome, 1968



Figure 2.14

Simone Forti, sketch sent to Anna Halprin, ca. February-March 1961  
Correspondence in the Anna Halprin Papers, Museum of Performance + Design

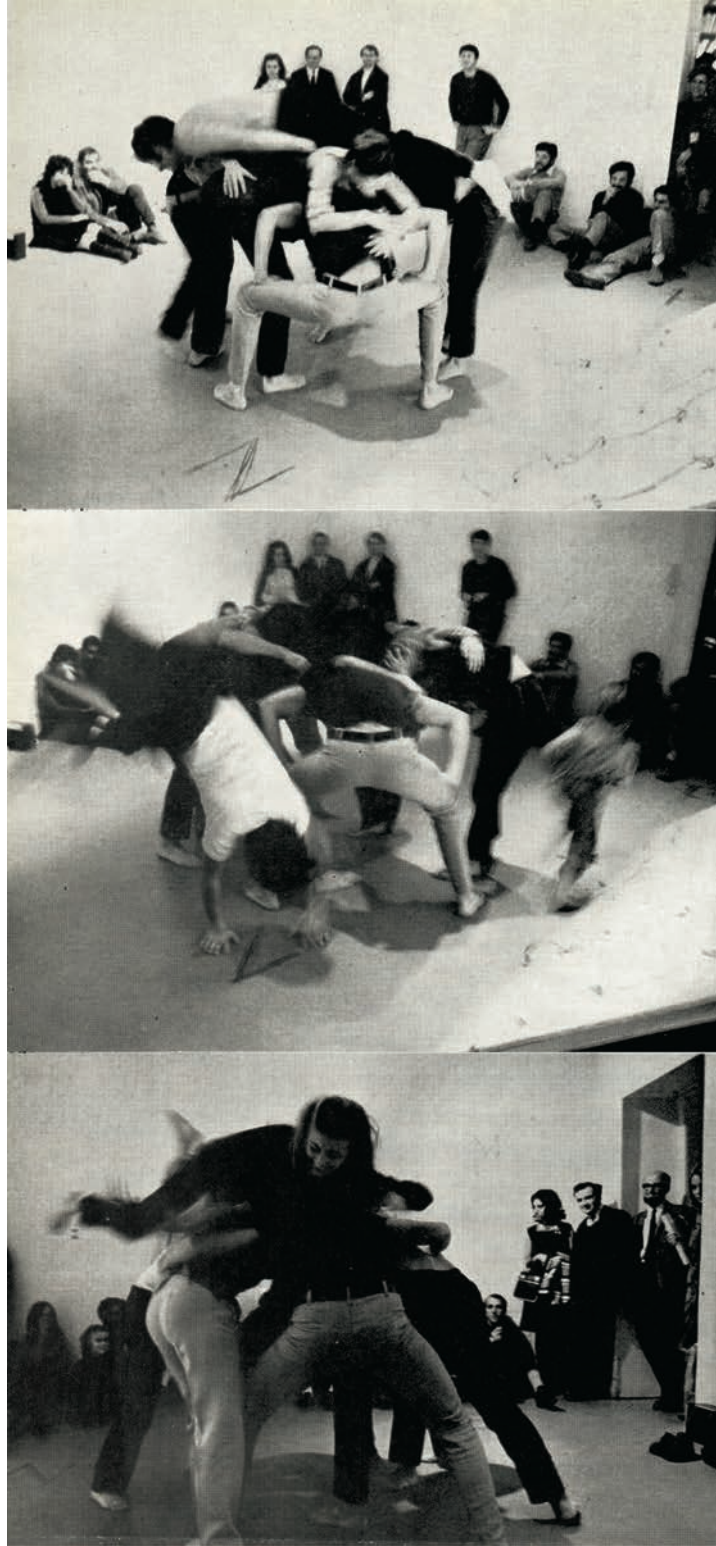


Figure 2.15  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at L'Attico Gallery, Rome, 1968



Figure 2.16  
Yvonne Rainer, *We Shall Run* (1963)  
Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, 1965







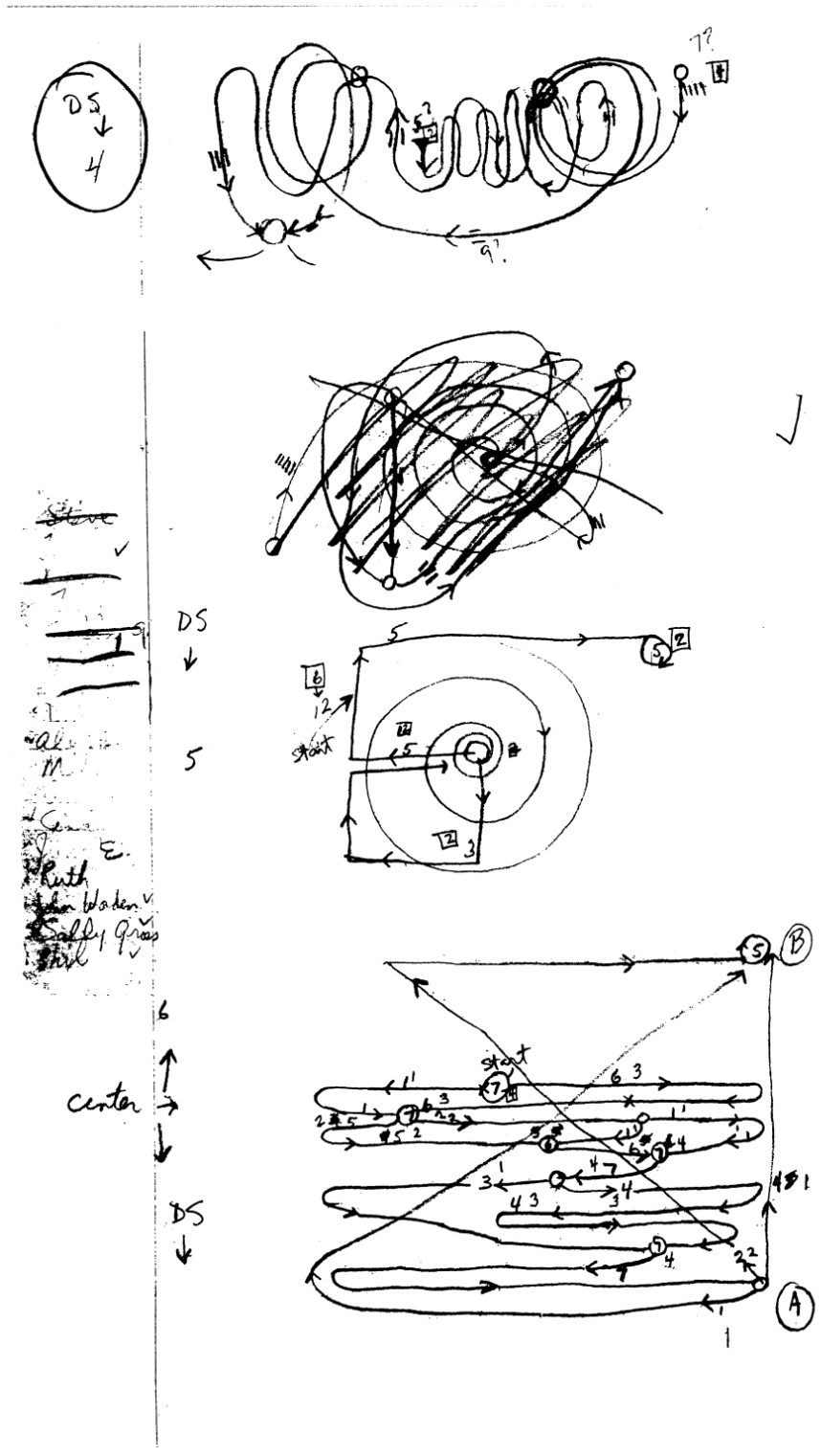


Figure 2.18  
 Yvonne Rainer, running patterns in *We Shall Run* (1963) – hand-drawn diagram



Figure 2.19  
Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A*, 1966  
Debut Performance at Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1966

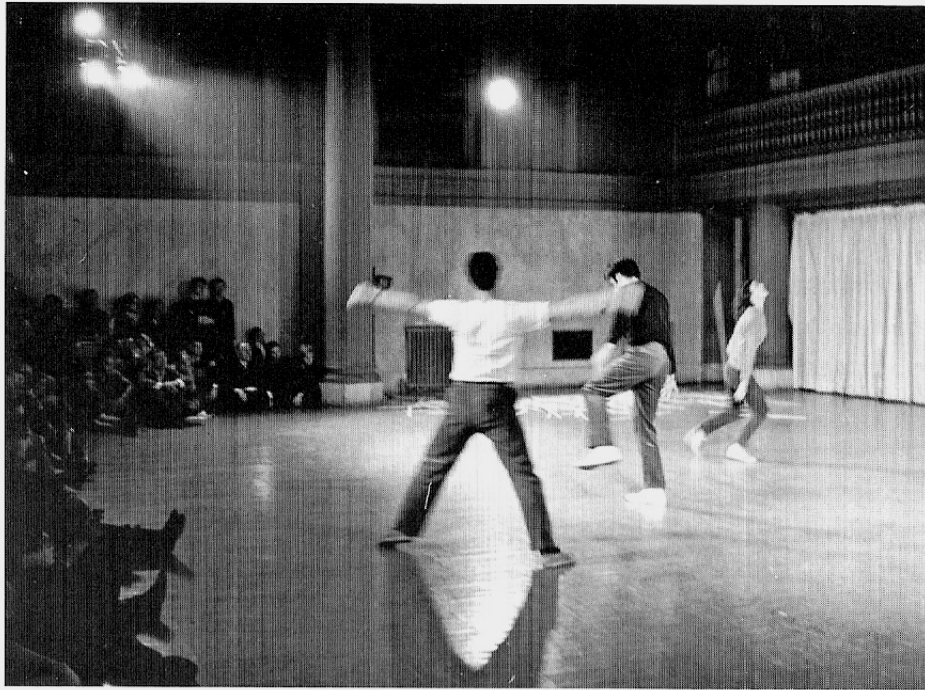


Figure 2.20  
Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A*, 1966  
Top: Debut performance at Judson Memorial Church, New York (1966)  
Bottom: *Trio A* performed by John Erdman in Rainer's *Story of a Woman Who...* (1973)

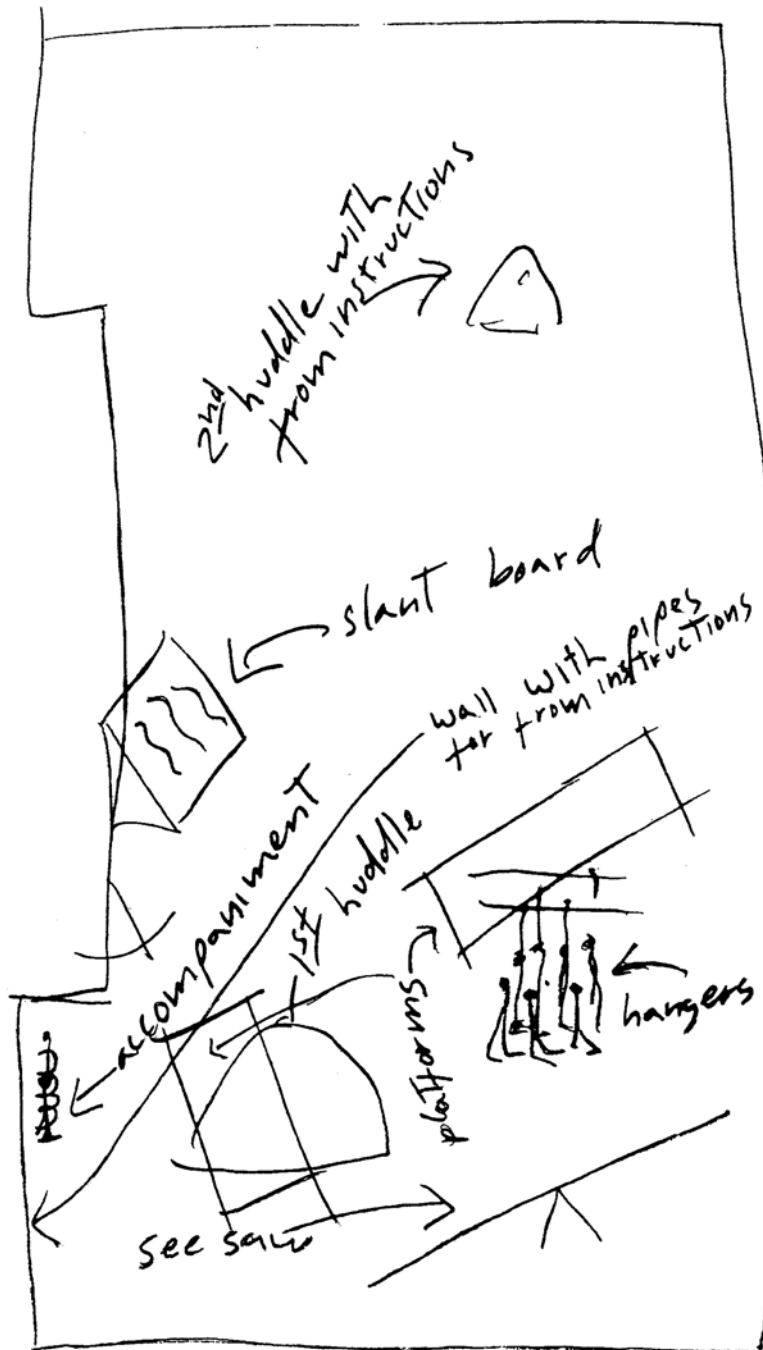


Figure 2.21  
 Simone Forti, map for “five dance constructions and some other things” (ca. 1974)  
 Reprinted in *Handbook in Motion*, 1974

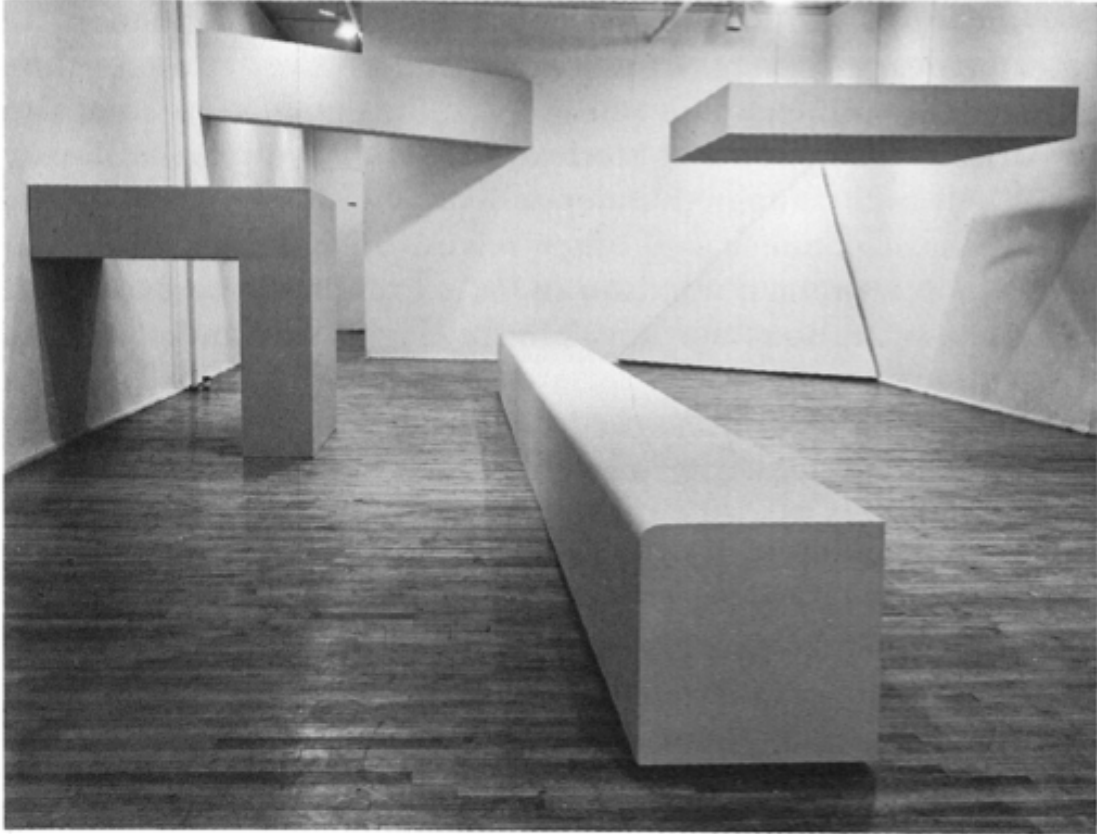


Figure 2.22  
Robert Morris, Green Gallery Installation, 1964



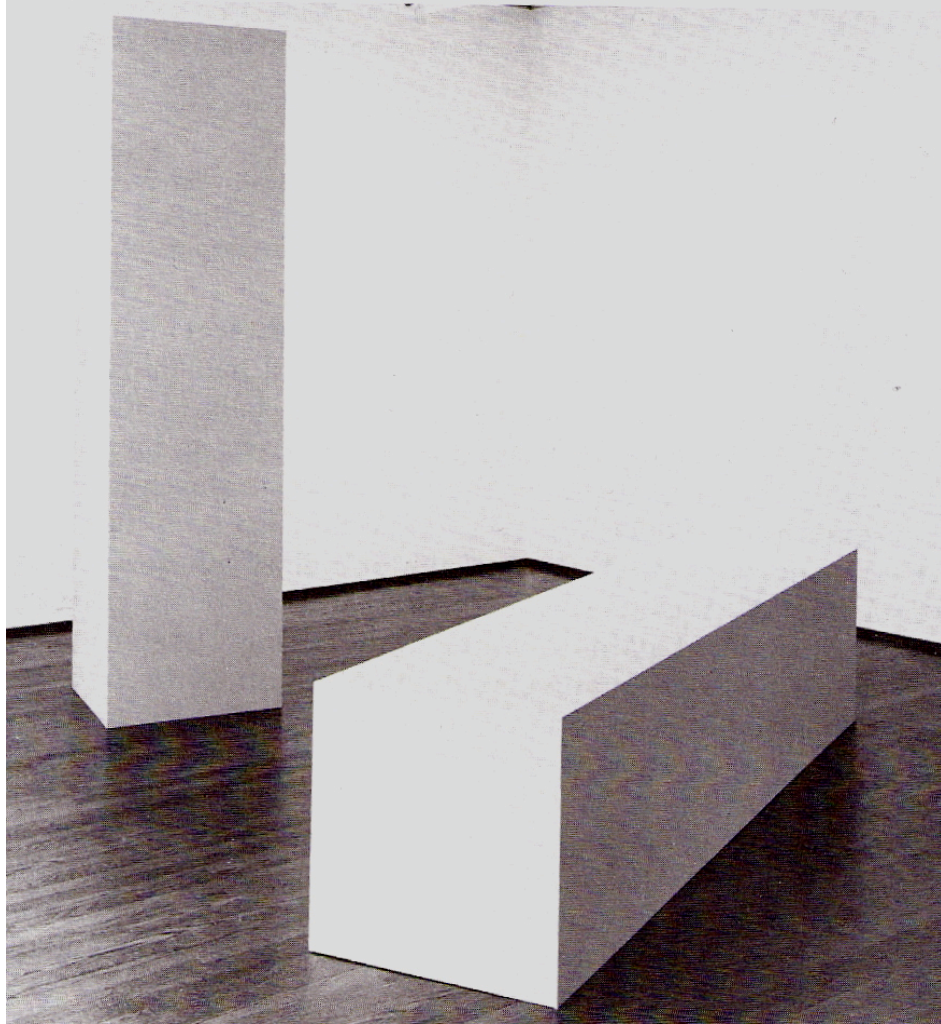


Figure 2.23  
Robert Morris, *Two Columns*, (1961, refabricated 1973)  
1973 version: painted aluminum, two units, each 96 x 24 x 24 inches  
1961 version: painted plywood



Figure 2.24

Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961)  
Walnut box, speaker, and three-and-one-half hour recorded tape  
 $9 \frac{3}{4} \times 9 \frac{3}{4} \times 9 \frac{3}{4}$  inches





**DANCE REPORT :**

An onion which had begun to sprout was set on its side on the mouth of a bottle. As the days passed it transferred more and more of its matter from the bulb to the green part until it had so shifted its weight that it fell off.

**DANCE REPORT :**

Straining, four young boys pushed a ball of snow up a snow covered hill. The boys then let the ball roll down. As the ball rolled it increased its size and the boys ran after it. While rolling, the sphere split into two half spheres, the flat surfaces facing upward. The boys climbed into these halves and made them rock about. And then they went away.

**DANCE CONSTRUCTION :**

A group of seven or eight people stand together in a very close huddle. One member of the group climbs up the mass of people and then down again becoming once more a part of the mass. Immediately another is climbing. The movement must be constant but not hurried. Sometimes it happens that there are two climbing at once. That's all right. The dance construction should be continued "long enough", perhaps ten minutes.

**DANCE CONSTRUCTION :**

Three people move on a 8 by 8 foot square platform inclined at 45°, using for support five or six ropes which hang from the top of the incline. Each person keeps moving from side to side and from top to bottom of the plane picking up and dropping different ropes as needed. No one is to get off the board during an allotted time of about 10 or 15 minutes. Any mover may rest whenever tired using the ropes in any way to facilitate resting. It is suggested that the movers wear tennis shoes.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR A DANCE :**

One man is told that he must lie on the floor during the entire piece.

The other man is told that during the piece he must tie the first man to the wall.

Figure 2.26

Simone Forti in La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, eds.  
*An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1963)



Figure 3.1  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at MoMA, 1978





Figure 3.2  
Simone Forti and Peter Van Riper, *Umi Aui Owe* (1979)  
Performed at MoMA, 1979



Figure 3.3  
Chris Burden, *Deluxe Photo Book 1971-1973* (1974)  
Three-ring binder, hand-painted cover, edition of 50



Figure 3.4  
Paul Chan, *Waiting for Godot* (2007)  
Props, archive materials  
Installation view, MoMA, date unknown



Figure 3.5  
Dara Friedman, *Musical* (2007-2008)  
Still from video (color, sound, 48 minutes)





Figure 3.6  
Tino Sehgal, *Kiss* (2003)  
Constructed situation, dimensions variable  
Top: performance at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2010  
Bottom: performance at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2014



Figure 3.7  
Simone Forti, *Slant Board* (1961)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014





Figure 3.8  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014



Figure 3.9  
Simone Forti, *Hangers* (1961)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014



Figure 3.10  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014

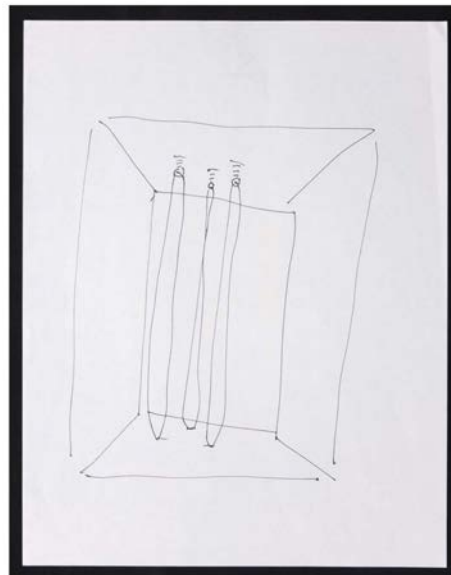
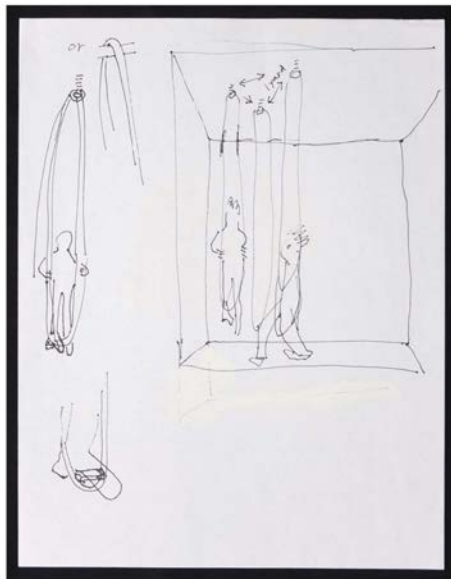
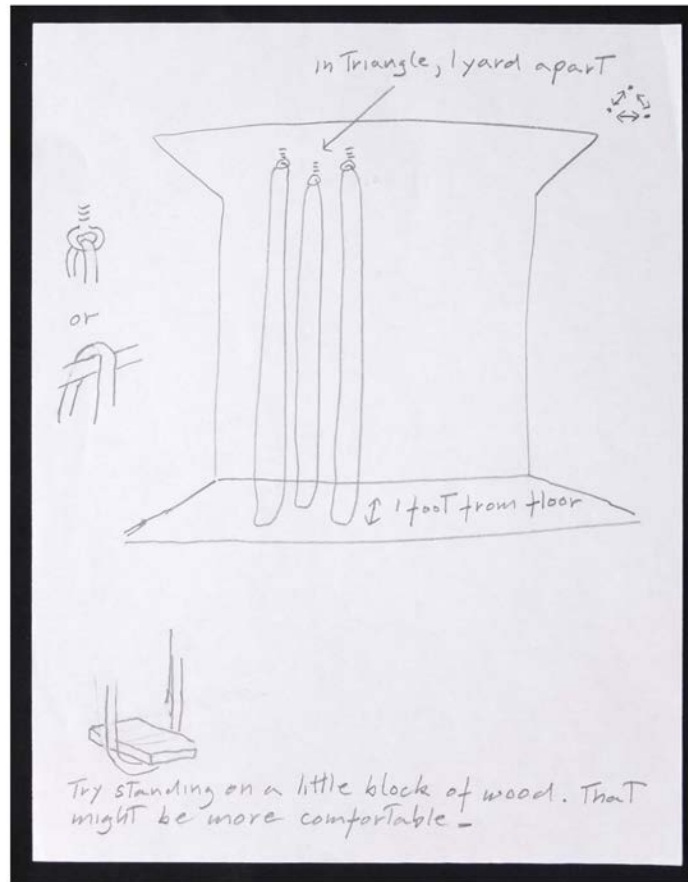


Figure 3.11  
 Simone Forti, *Hangers* sketches – set of three (ca. 2010)  
 Pen and pencil on paper, 11 x 8.5 inches





Figure 3.12  
Simone Forti, *Hangers* sketch (ca. 2010)  
Pen on paper, 17 x 14 inches



Figure 3.13  
Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion: Original drawing from Censor* (1973)  
Pencil on paper, 8.5 x 11 inches

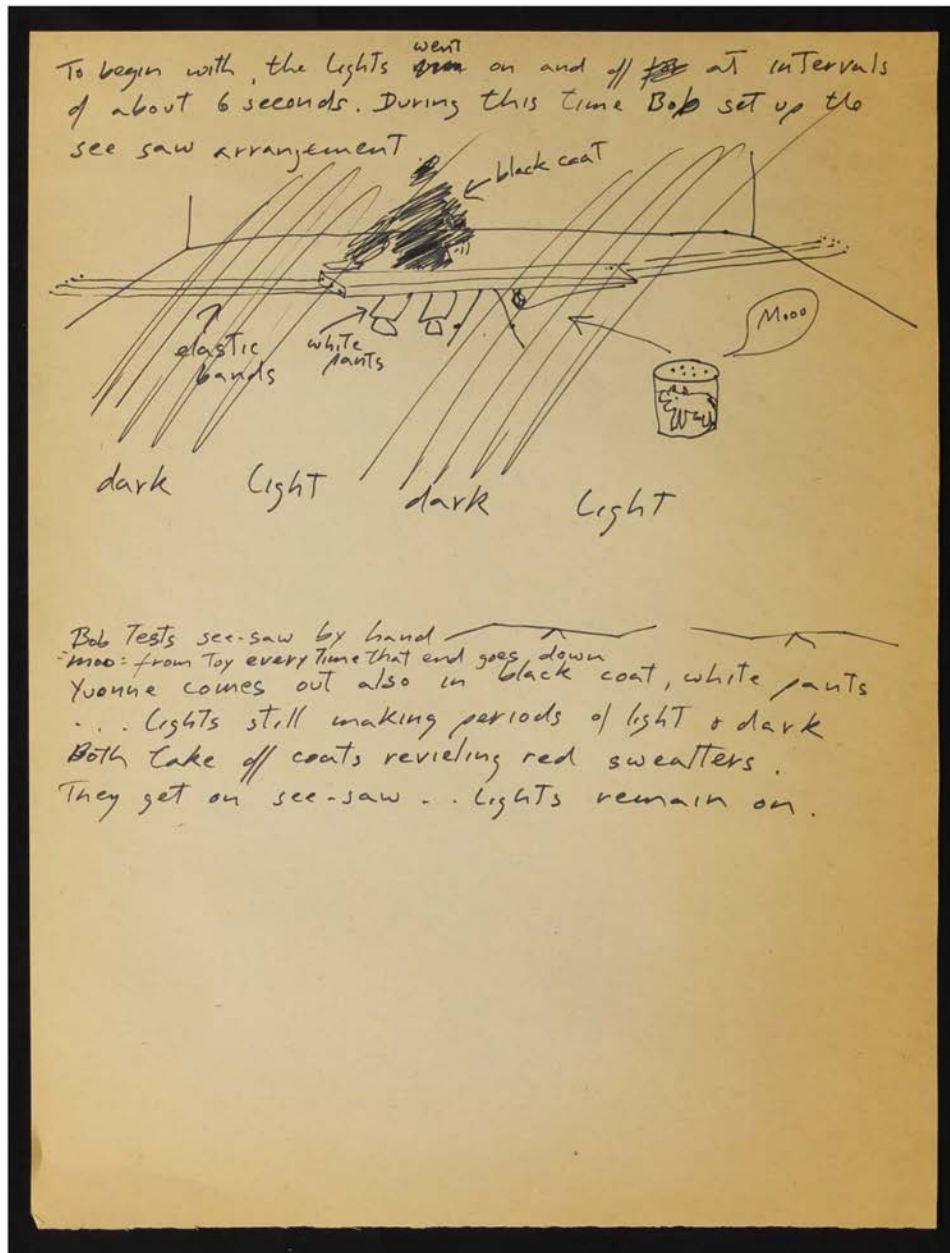


Figure 3.14  
 Simone Forti, *See Saw* - hand drawn/written description of original performance (1961),  
 with notes about Bob Morris (ca. 1972)  
 Ink on newsprint, 14 x 11 inches

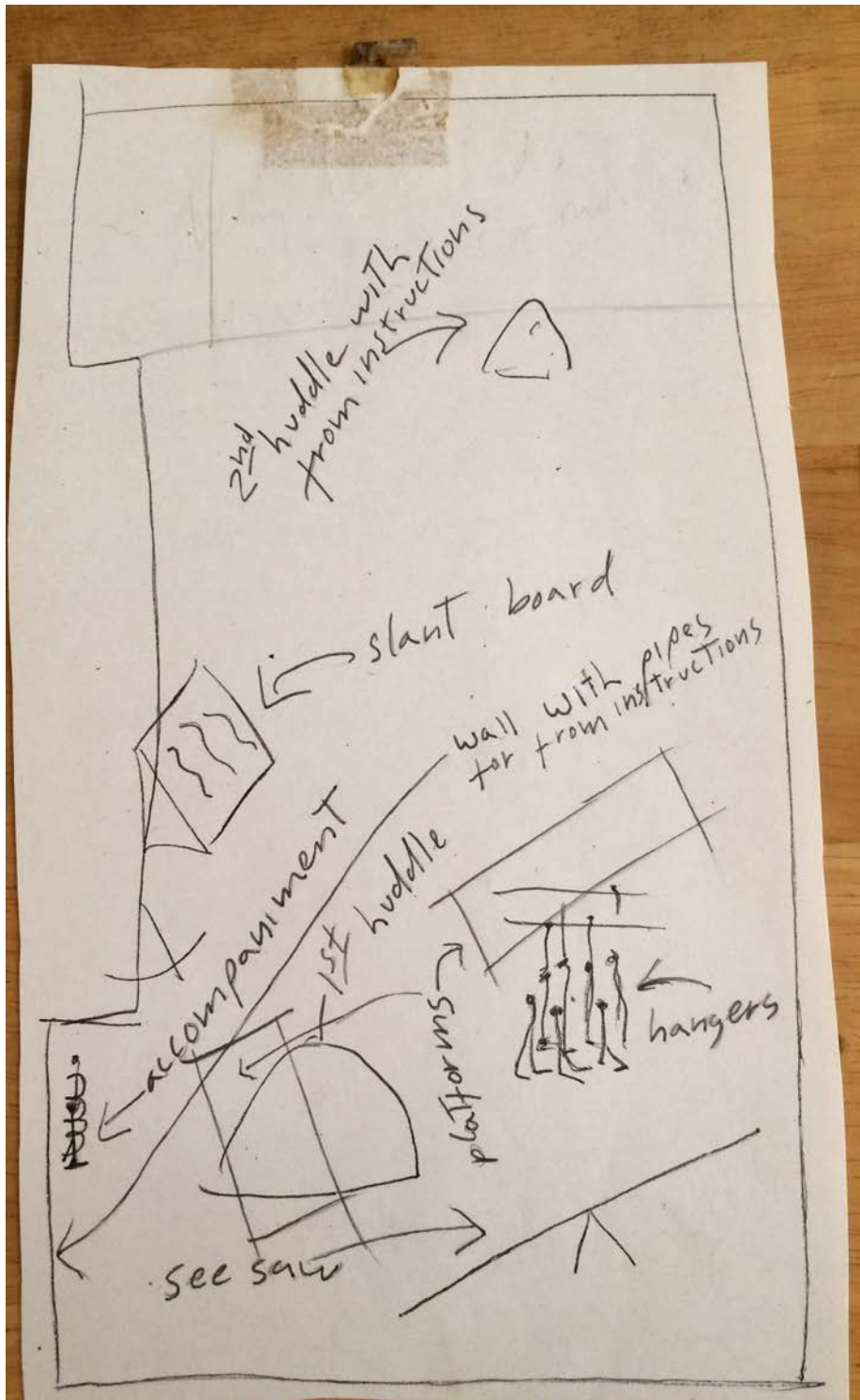


Figure 3.15  
Simone Forti, *Dance Constructions: Yoko Ono Chambers St. Loft Map* (1974)  
Ink on paper, 10 x 7 inches



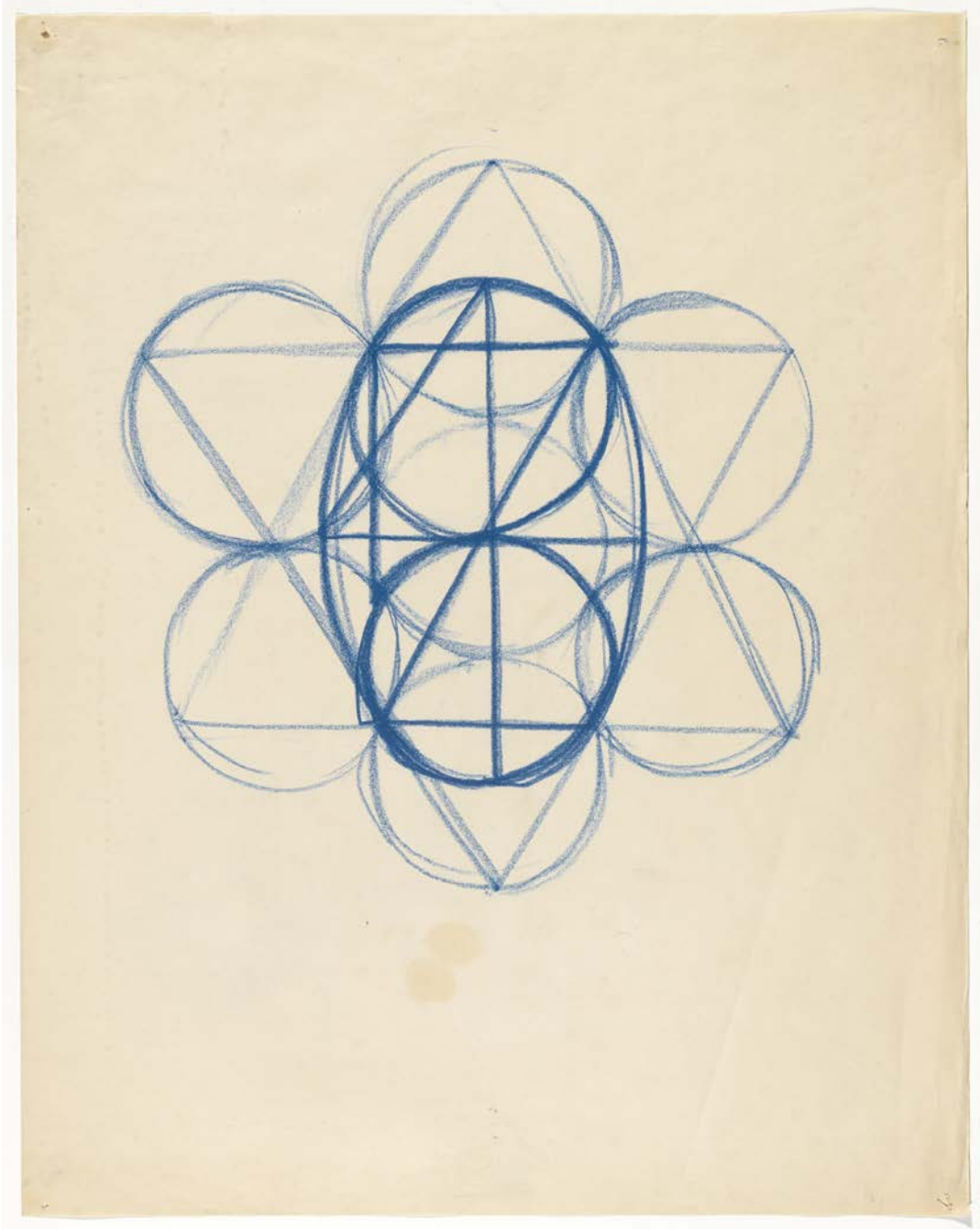


Figure 3.16  
Simone Forti, *Large Illuminations Drawings* (1972)  
Colored crayon on paper, 19 x 24 inches

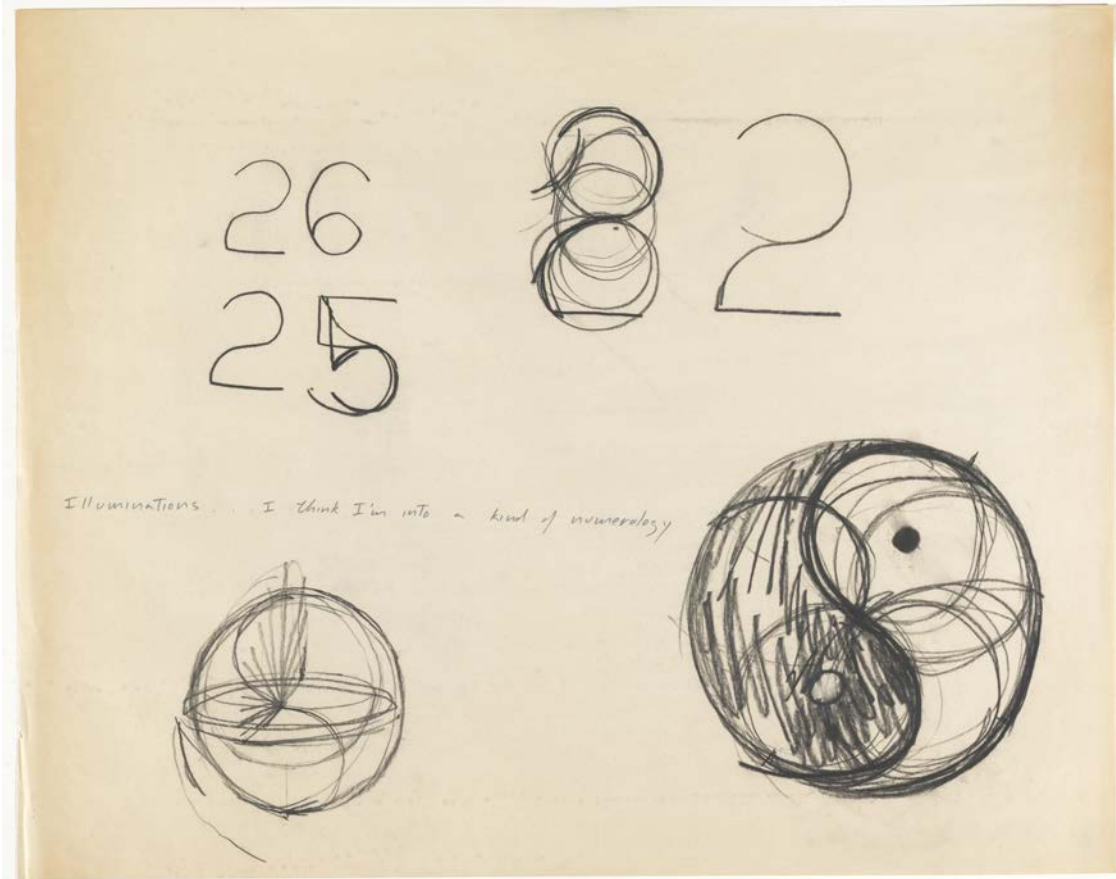


Figure 3.17  
Simone Forti, *Large Illuminations Drawings* (1972)  
Charcoal and felt-tip pen on paper, 19 x 24 inches



Figure 3.18  
Simone Forti in Simone Forti and Charlemagne Palestine, *Illuminations*  
Performed at Parcheggio di Villa Borghesi, Rome, 1974



Figure 3.19  
“Isadora Duncan: Drawings, Photographs, Memorabilia” exhibition at MoMA, 1941-42  
Installation view



Figure 3.20

Top: Marc Chagall, *Aleko*. Costume design for the ballet *Aleko* (1942), 15 x 10 ¼ inches

Bottom: Marc Chagall, *Aleko's Fantasy*. Sketch for the choreographer for Scene IV of the ballet *Aleko* (1942), 10 3/8 x 16 inches

Both watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper

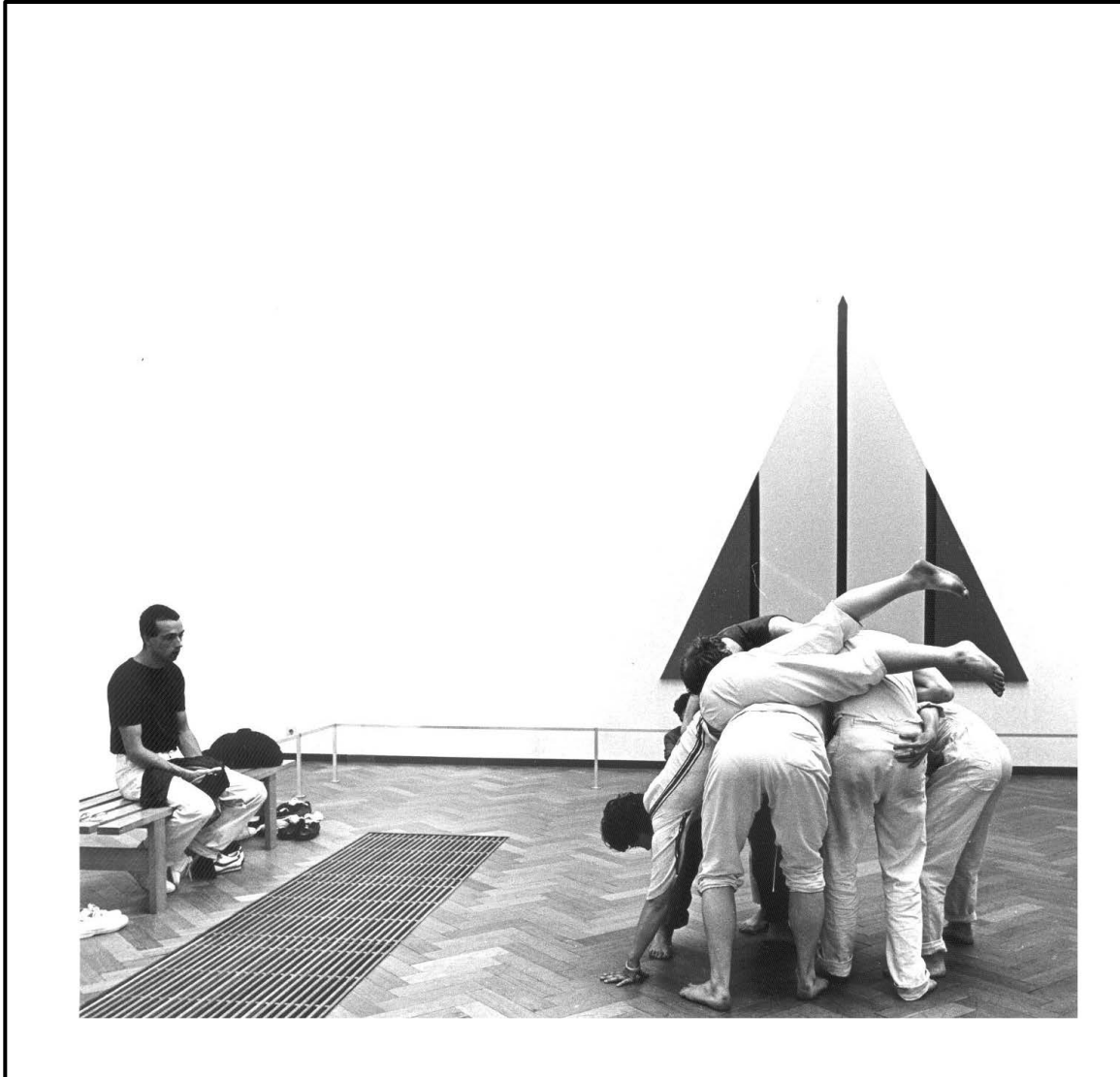


Figure 3.21  
Photographer unknown  
Simone Forti's *Huddle* (1961) at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1982  
Black and white print, 8 x 10 inches



Figure 3.22  
Photographer unknown  
Simone Forti's *Huddle* (1961) at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1982  
Black and white print, 8 x 10 inches



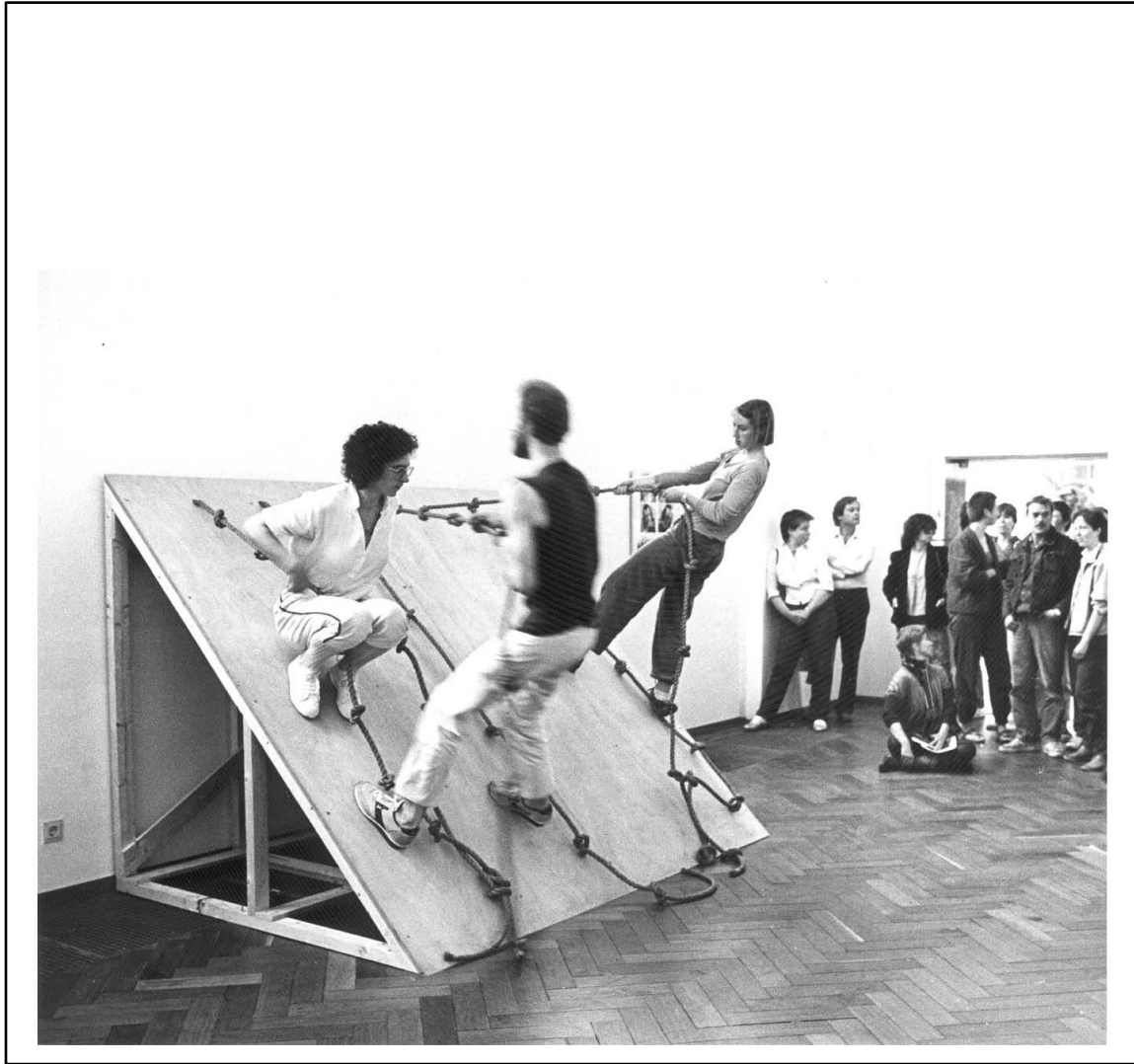


Figure 3.23  
Photographer unknown  
Simone Forti's *Slant Board* (1961) at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1982  
Black and white print, 8 x 10 inches





Figure 3.24  
Photographer unknown  
Simone Forti's *Slant Board* (1961) at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1982  
Black and white print, 8 x 10 inches



Figure 3.25  
*Huddle* Teaching Video (2011-2015)  
Installation at MoMA, ca. 2015



Figure 3.26  
Simone Forti, *Notebook – See Saw Notes* (2011)  
Bound notebook, 14 x 11 x 1 inches



Figure 3.27

Joseph Beuys, *Eurasia, Siberian Symphony 1963, 32<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Fluxus* (1966)  
 Panel with chalk drawing, felt, fat, taxidermied hare, and painted poles  
 6 feet x 7 feet, 6 ¾ inches x 20 inches



Figure 3.28

Manfred Leve with Joseph Beuys,  
 Joseph Beuys's *Siberian Symphony*, performed during Festum Fluxorum/Fluxus/Musik  
 und Antimusik/Das Instrumentale Theater, Staatliche Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf,  
 February 2, 1963  
 Gelatin silver print, 6 13/16 inches x 9 3/16 inches



Figure 3.29  
“Simone Forti: Thinking With the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,” Installation view  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014



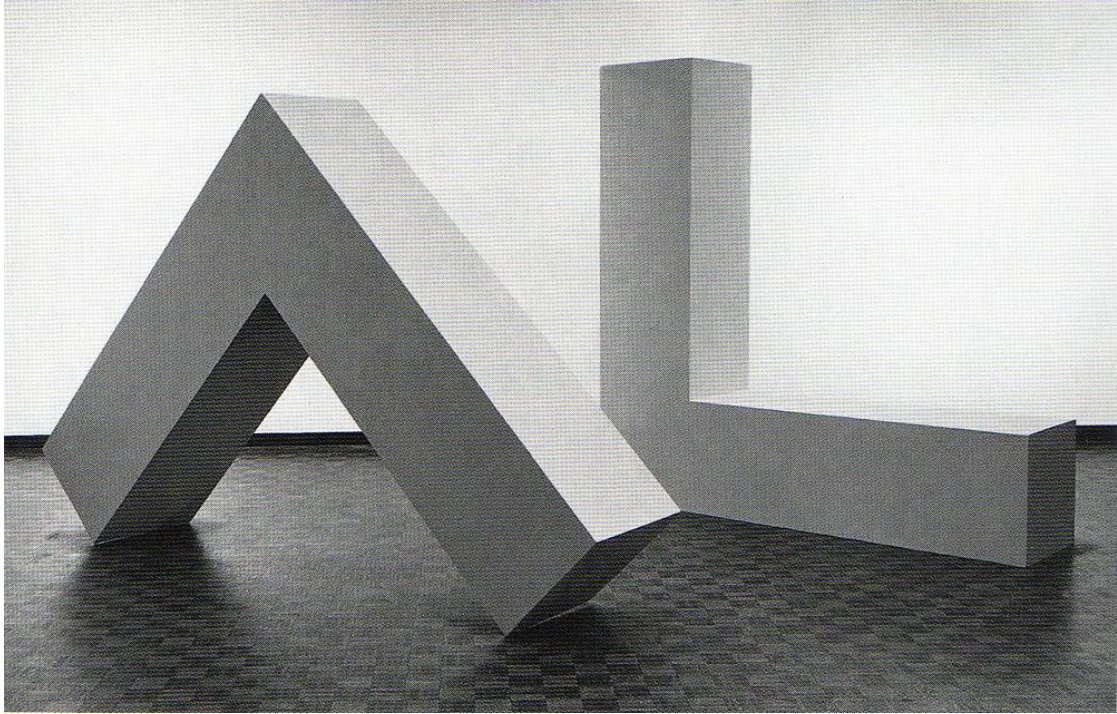


Figure 3.30

Top: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Two L-Beams)*, (1965, refabricated 1966)  
Bottom: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Three L-Beams)*, (1965, refabricated 1969)



Figure 3.31  
Sol LeWitt wall drawing installation at Dia:Beacon

# C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the Sol LeWitt wall drawing  
number 70 evidenced by this certificate is authentic.

Straight lines about six inches (15 cm) long,  
touching and crossing, drawn at random using  
four colors, uniformly dispersed with maximum  
density, covering the entire surface of the  
wall.

Red, yellow, blue, black pencil  
First Drawn by: Ralph Holcomb  
First Installation: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,  
New York, NY.  
February, 1971

This certification is the signature for the wall drawing and must  
accompany the wall drawing if it is sold or otherwise transferred.

Certified by



Sol LeWitt

© Copyright Sol LeWitt \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Figure 3.32  
Sol LeWitt's certificate for Wall Drawing No. 70



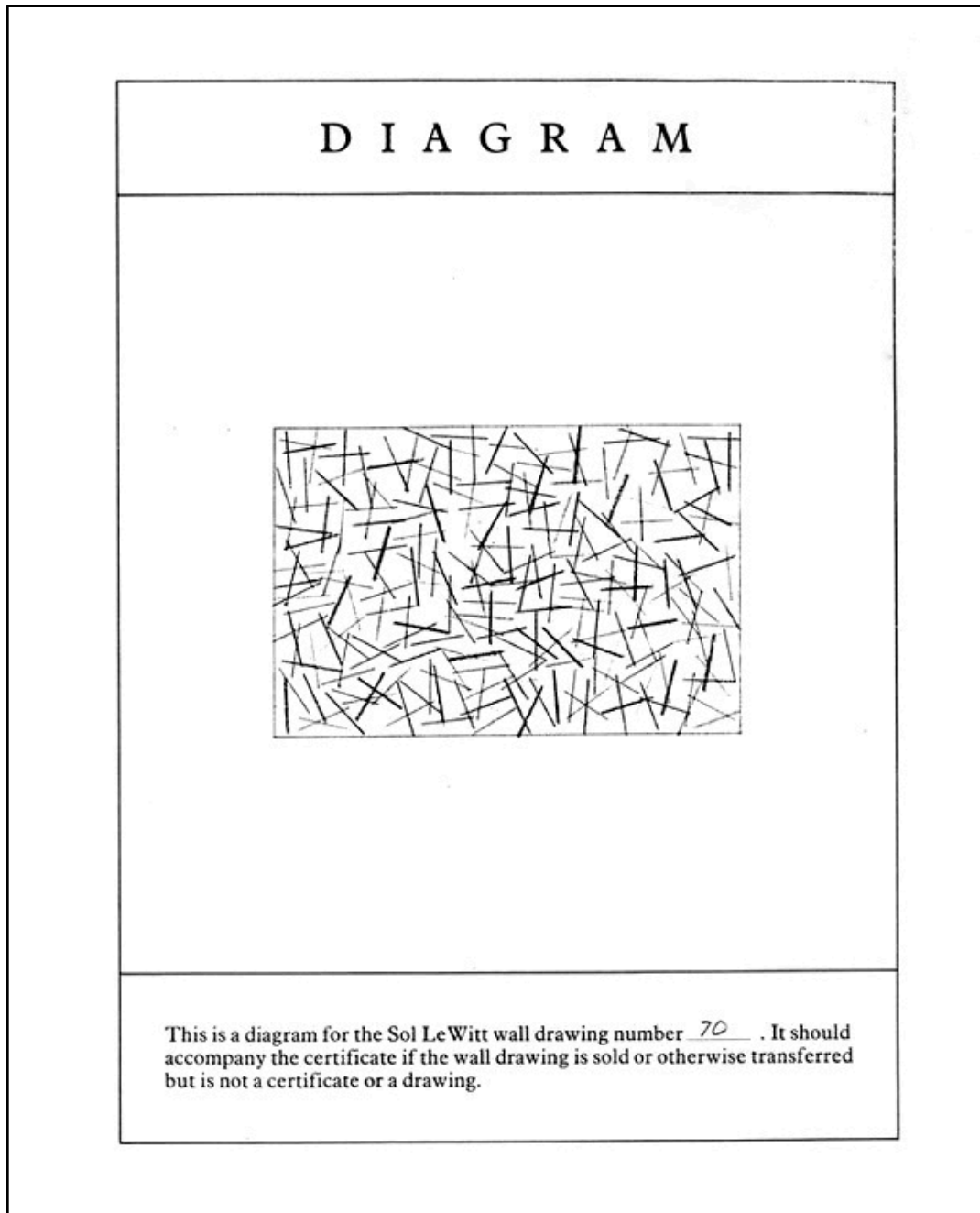
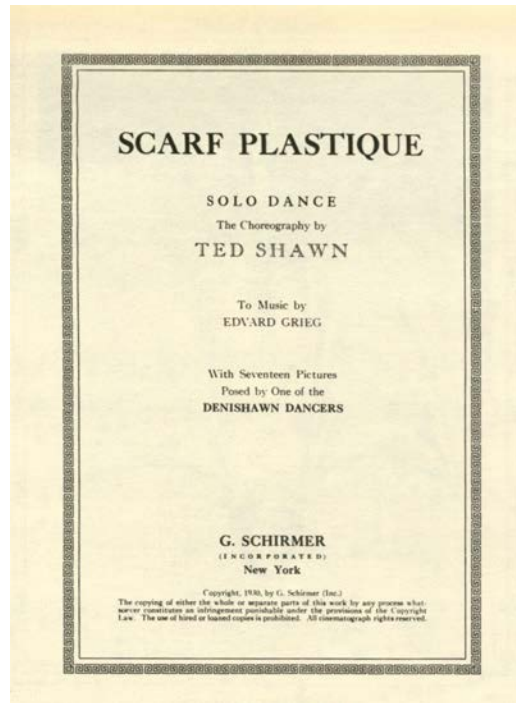


Figure 3.33  
Sol LeWitt's diagram for Wall Drawing No. 70 (ca. 1971)



**Scarf Plastique**  
A Denishawn Dance

Created by Ted Shawn Music by Edvard Grieg

*Poco andante*  
Piano

*II Allegretto con moto*

*dolciss.* *Tempo I<sup>o</sup>*

*III cantabile*

Figure 3.34  
Ted Shawn, *Scarf Plastique* (1930)  
Denishawn “word note” booklet, cover and musical score



# SCARF PLASTIQUE

## Solo Dance

(A "Denishawn" Creation)

*The Choreography by*

TED SHAWN

*To Music by*

EDVARD GRIEG

In the golden age of Greek civilization, the nude human body was viewed as normal and right—covering being used when needed for protection against weather, or for the exigencies of labor or travel. At other times clothing was thought of as decoration, as an extension in design of the lines of the body, and not as a modest necessity—often a great cloak was worn, hung from the neck, completely revealing the body against the concentric circles made by the folds of the cape. It is amazing what a variety of designs can be created by the arrangement of one piece of uncut material—greater beauty, in fact, is thus achieved than by any of the cutting and sewing methods used by the *couturières* of this age. Witness the dress of the Hindu woman, the *sari*, which has remained in fashion for hundreds of years because nothing more beautiful has ever been discovered, and yet the *sari* is one straight piece of material, woven with borders and designs in an infinite variety of colors, but draped on the body uncut, without the aid of buttons, pins, hooks and eyes, snap-fasteners and all the other complicated devices needed in modern dress.

This plastique dance is specifically a study in the lines of the body as complemented and extended by the lines of one long scarf. It is shown in the pictures as being performed in fleshings only, as that is the ideal—nothing but the lines of the body and the lines of the scarf. But where necessary or desirable, a long tube of pleated sheer material, in the Greek archaic manner, may be put over the fleshings. Care should be taken, however, that the costume clings to the figure and is in no way stiff or bulky, so that the original design of each posture is not in any serious way changed.

The movement, as in all Denishawn plastiques, is smooth, flowing, and sustained, and performed with an air of impersonal, effortless dignity. It is a mood of gracious womanhood, colored ever so slightly by the sadness of the music.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE DANCE

(The length of the scarf is arrived at by each individual, who drapes the scarf in the manner shown in Picture 1. When this is done, the arms, still holding the scarf, are lowered to the side, and this is the opening pose.) The music is in 4/4 time—there are 4 counts or beats to the measure. The opening pose is held during Measures 1 to 7 inclusive.

I. During Measures 8 and 9, raise arms slowly to the sides, shoulder high (Picture 1). On the 8th count brush the right foot forward.

**Measures 10 to 13 inclusive.** Starting with the right foot, walk ten counts in a semi-circle to left, ending with back to audience, face in profile to left, left foot crossed over back; holding this pose count 11 and 12 (Picture 2). On count 13 drop the scarf out of the hands, and hold through count 16 (Picture 3).

**Measures 14 to 17 inclusive.** Starting with right foot, walk twelve counts back-stage and make a circle of the stage to left, ending facing left, in profile to audience. During these twelve steps, take ends of the scarf from where they are tucked into the shoulders (Picture 4) and throw them on the floor to the rear, putting hands to shoulders (Picture 5). On count 12 dip slightly, on count 13 pull body up into pose and hold through count 16.

**Measures 18 to 21 inclusive.** Starting with right foot, walk 8 counts right, turn facing forward on 8th step. During these eight steps spread the scarf, and when turning on count 8, throw ends of scarf to front. On counts 9 and 10 step back right and left, hands going underneath the scarf from the inside. Cross hands on breast on count 11 (Picture 6). Hold count of 12 with weight on left foot. Use 4 counts to bring hands out and throw scarf over forearms as in Picture 7.

**Measures 22 to 25 inclusive.** On counts 1 and 2 step forward right and left; on counts 3 and 4 step back right and left; on count 5 throw right end of scarf over left shoulder, and on count 7 throw left end of scarf over right shoulder. Hands down at sides on count 9 (Picture 8). Hold until count 17, and then on the high note rise to balls of feet, lift arms over head (Picture 9).

II. **Measures 26 to 39 inclusive.** Time changes to 3/4—three beats to the measure. With hands still over head, waltz Measures 26 to 29 inclusive, to right. Holding ends of scarf out to side, waltz Measures 30 to 35 inclusive, right. Step right foot on count 1, extend left foot across to right on 2, hold 3 (Measure 34) (Picture 10). Step left foot on count 1, close on count 2, hold 3 (Measure 35). Measures 36 and 37 repeat opposite. (Time changes here to 4/4.) Count 1, throw ends of scarf in front, on counts 2, 3, 4; walk right letting go of scarf in left hand, throw right end of scarf over left shoulder. On count 5 profile pose, facing right, weight on right foot, right hand up, head back. Hold until count 8 (Picture 11). Measures 38 to 39 inclusive.

14808

Figure 3.35

Ted Shawn, *Scarf Plastique* (1930)

Denishawn "word note" booklet, introduction and step-by-step instructions

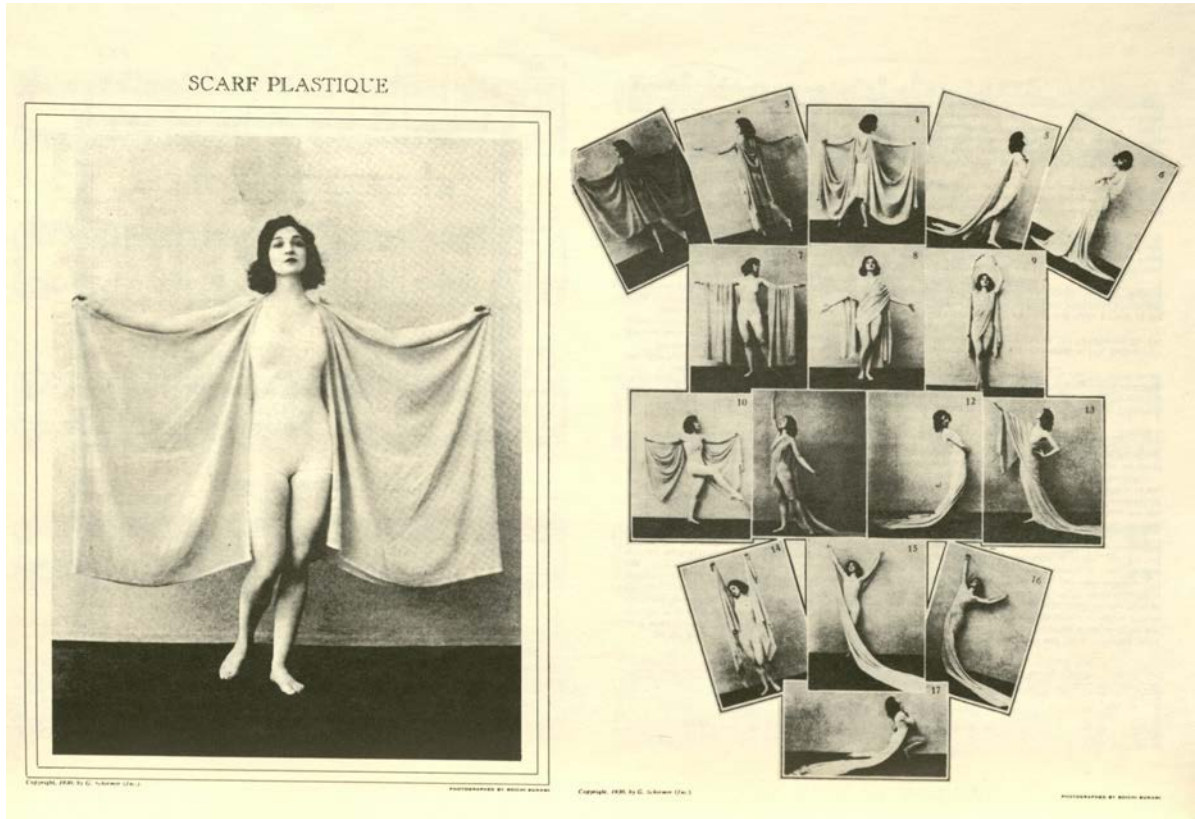


Figure 3.36  
Ted Shawn, *Scarf Plastique* (1930)  
Denishawn “word note” booklet, photo demonstration

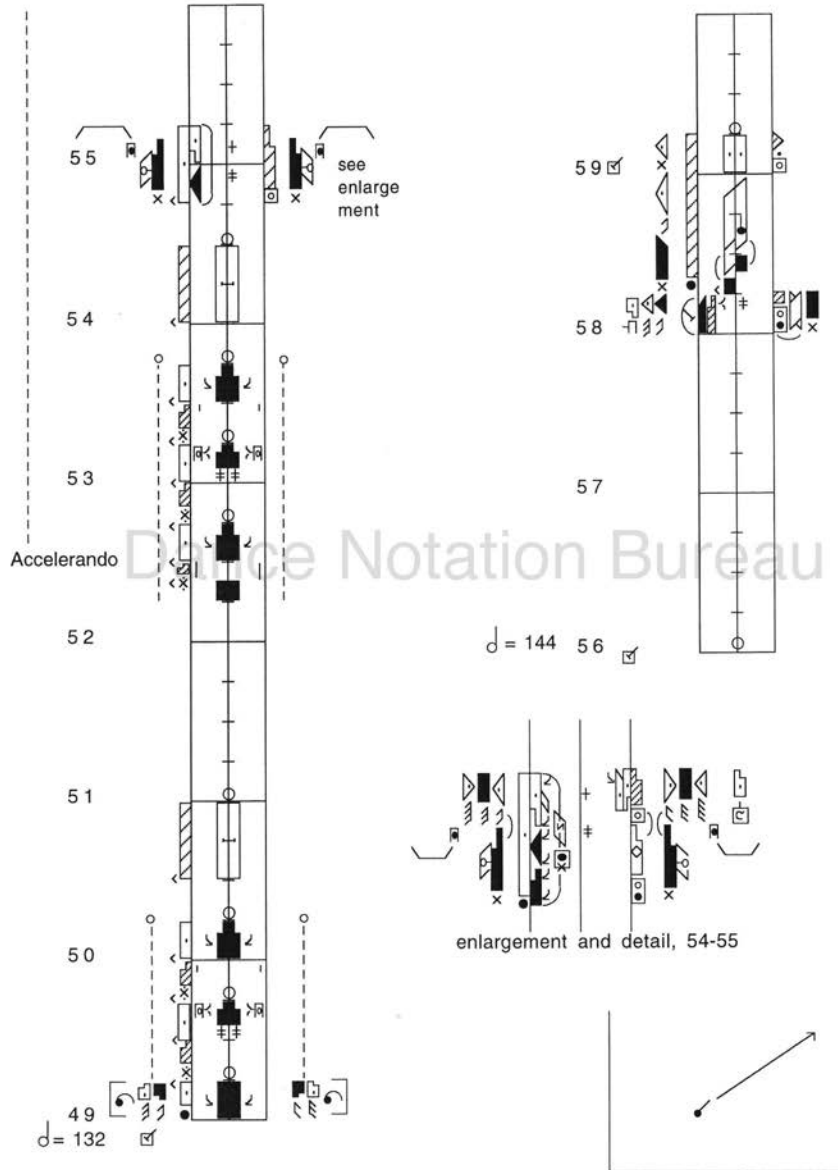


Figure 3.37  
Labanotation Score for Merce Cunningham's *Totem Ancestor* (1942)



Each Labanotation symbol gives four pieces of information:

1. Direction of the movement is indicated by the shape of the symbol. (See diagram below.)
2. The level of a movement is shown by the shading of the symbol; diagonal strokes for high, a dot for middle, and blackened for low.



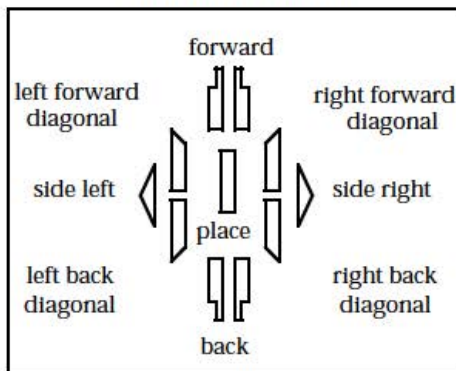
3. The part of the body that is moving is indicated by the column on the staff in which the symbol is placed. A Labanotation staff represents the human body; the center line of the staff divides the left side of the body from the right. Symbols to the left of the center line refer to the left-hand side of the body, symbols to the right of the center line to the right-hand side of the body.

Some body parts must be identified by a symbol, for example:

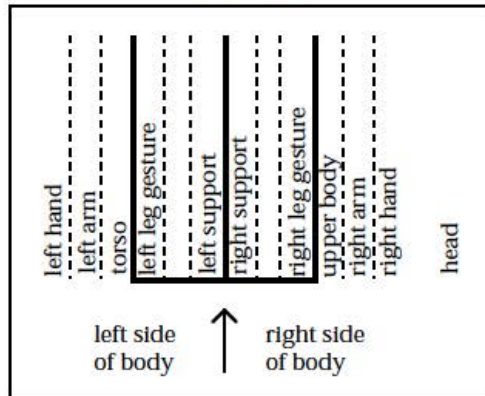
☉ = the head, ☐ = the face, ☙ = the hands, ☑ = the front of the left shoulder

4. Duration of the movement is shown by the length of the symbol. The staff is read from the bottom up; moving ahead in time. The tick marks on the center line divide the time into counts and the horizontal lines correspond with the bar lines in the music. Movements written on the same horizontal line occur simultaneously; movements written one above another occur sequentially. Measure numbers and dancers' counts appear to the left of the staff.

### Direction Symbols

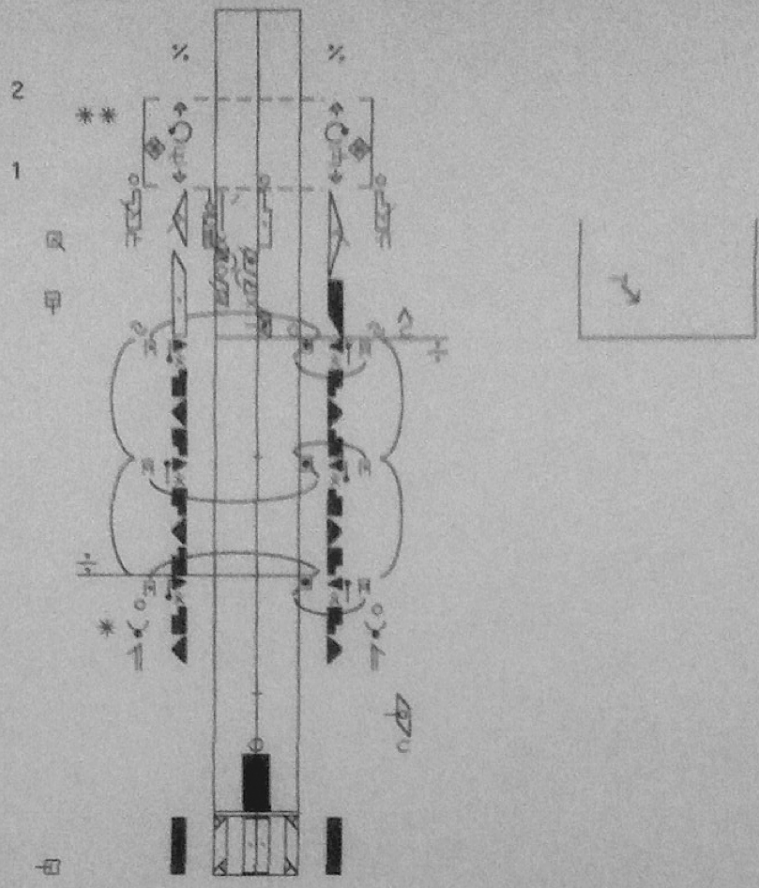


### The Staff



(Dance Notation Bureau, Inc., 1998)

Figure 3.38  
Reading Labanotation, Dance Notation Bureau



\* weighty/heavy sign, as explained in Ann Hutchinson's 1970 Labanotation textbook. In Dr. Hutchinson Guest's 2005 Labanotation textbook, the sign appears with the centre of gravity part of the sign (the black ball) sitting on the centre part of the inside edge of the upward curve.

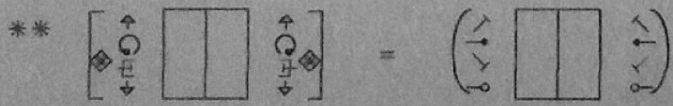


Figure 3.39  
Labanotation Score for Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1966), prepared 2003

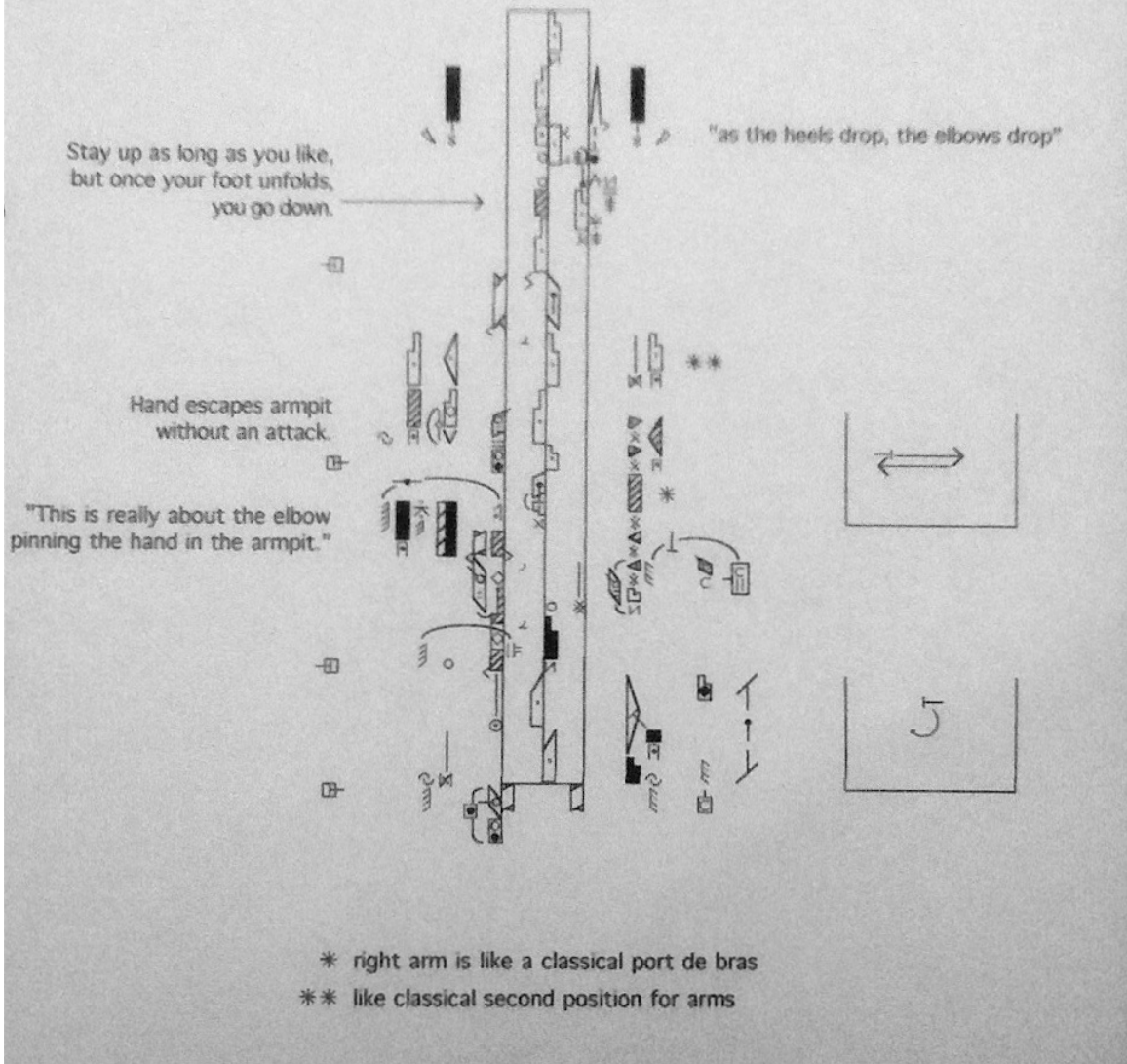


Figure 3.40  
Labanotation Score for Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1966), prepared 2003





Figure 3.41  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Still from 1974 video (called by the artist “Huddle Tape”)



Figure 3.42  
Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A* (1966)  
Stills from film produced by Sally Banes, 1978



Figure 3.43  
Barbara Morgan's photographs of Martha Graham's *Imperial Gesture* (1935)



Figure 3.44  
Blakely White-McGuire as Martha Graham in *Imperial Gesture*  
Performed in 2013



Figure 3.45  
Simone Forti, *Censor* (1961)  
Installation at The Box Gallery, Los Angeles, 2012



Figure 3.46  
Simone Forti's *Censor* rehearsal, 2014  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria





Figure 3.47  
Simone Forti, *Censor* (1961)  
Top: Performance in Salzburg 2014  
Bottom: Metal pans used for *Censor* in Salzburg 2014



Figure 3.48  
Simone Forti, *From Instructions* (1961)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014



Figure 3.49  
Equipment used for *From Instructions* (1961),  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014





Figure 3.50  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Performed at L'Attico Gallery, Rome, 1969

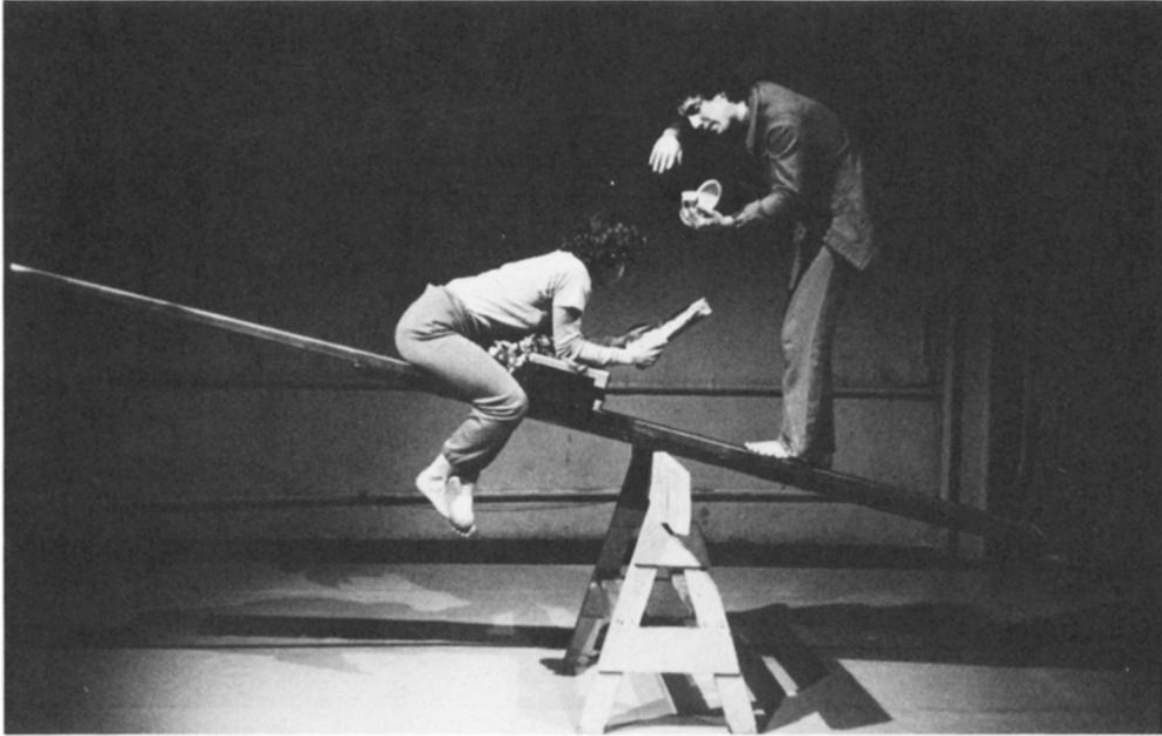


Figure 3.51  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Performed in Simone Forti, *Jackdaw Songs* (1981), New York City



Figure 3.52  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Performed at The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, 2004





Figure 3.53  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Performed at The Box Gallery, Los Angeles, 2011



Figure 3.54  
Simone Forti's *See Saw* rehearsals, 2014  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria





Figure 3.55  
Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)  
Directed by Luca Frei  
Performed at Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, 2015



Figure 3.56

Simone Forti, *See Saw* (1960)

Developed and performed by Mie Frederikke Christensen and Margaux Parillaud  
Presented at Vleeshal, Middelburg, Netherlands, 2016



Figure 3.57  
Simone Forti teaching the Dance Constructions for  
“Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,”  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2014)





Figure 3.58  
Simone Forti teaching the Dance Constructions for  
“Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,”  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2014)



Figure 3.59  
Simone Forti teaching the Dance Constructions for  
“Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,”  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2014)



Figure 3.60  
Simone Forti teaching the Dance Constructions for  
“Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body, A Retrospective in Motion,”  
Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2014)





Figure 4.1  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed with workshop participants at Modern Art Galerie in Vienna, Austria, 1978



Figure 4.2  
Nancy Stark Smith and Steve Paxton practicing Contact Improvisation  
Top: Location Unknown, 1980  
Bottom: Naropa Institute, Boulder, CO, 1984





Figure 4.3  
Nancy Stark Smith practicing Contact Improvisation  
Dates and locations unknown



Figure 4.4  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at MoMA, 2009



Figure 4.5  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed in Vienna, Austria, 2010





Figure 4.6  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed on the High Line, New York, 2012



Figure 4.7  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 2013



Figure 4.8  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland, 2014





Figure 4.9  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, 2014



Figure 4.10  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed in Salzburg, Austria, 2014



Figure 4.11  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at Sector 2337, Chicago, 2015





Figure 4.12  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Performed at Danspace, New York, 2016



Figure 4.13  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.14  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown





Figure 4.15  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.16  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.17  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown





Figure 4.18  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.19  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.20  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.21  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.22  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.23  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



Figure 4.24  
Simone Forti, *Huddle* (1961)  
Location unknown



## Appendix A

### **Selected History of Dance in/and the Museum: 1920s/30s-1979, mostly United States**

This timeline relates dance events in major museum galleries and theaters or sponsored by them, mostly in the United States, drawn from archival sources and published chronologies. It begins with the first mentions of dance in the museum in the 1920s and 1930s, as modern art museums were established, and ends with 1979, when the primary museums presenting dance had phased out their programs (the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York), or had firmly established them (the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis and the Guggenheim Museum in New York). Although there was significant overlap in the aesthetics of dance, performance, music, and other genres in the 1960s and 1970s, the events identified here were largely presented by self-identified choreographers, members of dance companies or collectives, or were later primarily associated with dance.

Grey type denotes important presentations of dance in related venues, e.g.: loft concerts, art galleries, or museums overseas related to the major figures of this study.

October 1926 – Evelyn Adams “a program of interpretative dances,” part of a series sponsored by the Museum Patrons’ Association, Sculpture Gallery of Los Angeles Museum (a precursor to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA)

1933 – The Wadsworth Atheneum (Hartford, CT) purchases the Serge Lifar collection of Ballet Russes sets and costumes

October 1934 – The Wadsworth Atheneum presents the first public performances of George Balanchine’s new company (later the New York City Ballet), in the museum’s Avery Theater

1937-38 – The Wadsworth Atheneum presents modern dance choreographers Mary Wigman, Hanya Holm, Truda Kaschmann, and Alwin Nikolais

October 1939 – The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) acquired New York City Ballet co-founder Lincoln Kirstein’s dance archive: 1535 books, 1631 prints, 1212 photographs, 238 stereopticon slides, 6 sculptures, 780 lantern slides, 19 films, 200 programs and miscellaneous items

March 1940 – Dance Archive opens to the public

October 23–November 19, 1940 – “Forty Years of the American Dance” exhibition

October 21, 1941–January 10, 1942 – “Isadora Duncan: Drawings, Photographs, Memorabilia”

1939-41 – The Wadsworth Atheneum presents modern dance choreographers Charles Weidman and Humphrey, Martha Graham with dancers Merce Cunningham and Erick Hawkins, and Agnes de Mille

1940 – Spring Dance Festival at the Walker Arts Center (Minneapolis, MN)

1943 – “Around the World with Dance and Song” begins at the American Museum of Natural History (New York, NY). The program consisted of approximately fourteen concerts a year and totaled 123 performances by the time it ended in 1952.

Spring 1943 – Merce Cunningham serves as dance director for a series of five musical “Serenades” at MoMA

1944-45 – MoMA establishes Curatorial Department of Dance and Theatre Design from the material in the Dance Archives

May 24–September 17, 1944 – “Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibition: Dance and Theatre Design”

October 14, 1947–January 4, 1948 – “World of Illusion: Elements of Stage Design” exhibition

January 1948 – “An Evening on American Dance” at MoMA, presented by the Continuations Committee of the American Dance Committee of the World Youth Festival

1948 – MoMA’s Department of Theatre Arts (formerly the Department of Dance and Theatre Design) is returned to a division of the museum’s library

October 1949 – Early modern dancer Ruth St. Denis at the American Museum of Natural History, part of “Around the World with Dance and Song”

May 12, 1951 – Brooklyn Museum of Art (Brooklyn, NY) presents “Invulnerables” by Alwin Nikolais

December 16-18, 1960 – Simone Forti, *See Saw and Roller Boxes* in “varieties. happenings at the Reuben Gallery”; Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg are also on the program at the Reuben Gallery (New York, NY)

May 26-27, 1961 – Simone Forti, “Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things,” Yoko Ono’s Chambers Street Loft (New York, NY)

July 6, 1962 – “A Concert of Dance,” first concert by the Judson Dance Theater, Judson Memorial Church (New York, NY). Works by Bill Davis, Judith Dunn, Robert Dunn, Ruth Emerson, Sally Gross, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko, David Gordon, Gretchen Maclane, John Herbert McDowell, Steve Paxton, Rudy Perez, Yvonne Rainer, Charles Rotmil, Carol Scothorn, Elaine Summers, Jennifer Tipton.

February 13, 1963 – Merce Cunningham and Dance Company at the Women’s Club of Minneapolis, sponsored by the Center Arts Council of the Walker Art Center

March 20-21, 1964 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Avery Auditorium

April 24, 1964 – Judson-affiliated artists at the Annenberg Auditorium (Philadelphia, PA). Sponsored by the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, produced by critic/performer Jill Johnston. With Yvonne Rainer, Judith Dunn, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, David Gordon and Valda Setterfield, Lucinda Childs, Albert Reid, Carla Blank and Sally Gross, Robert Morris.

May 9, 1963 – The Washington Gallery of Modern Art gallery presents Judson Dance Theater Concert of Dance Number Five, America on Wheels (Washington, DC). Part of the “Pop Festival,” organized by Alice Denney in conjunction with “The Popular Image” (April 18-June 2, 1963). Choreographers and dancers: Carolyn Brown, Trisha Brown, William Davis, Judith Dunn, David Gordon, Barbara Lloyd, Albert Reid, Jennifer Tipton, Robert Rauschenberg, Valda Satterfield, Per Ulaf Ultvedt.

Fall 1963 – Spring 1964 – The Merce Cunningham Dance Company tours the US, appearing at universities and regional arts centers including Arkansas Art Center, Colorado Springs Fine Art Center, and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis (sponsored by the Center Arts Council of the Walker Arts Center)

March 8, 1964 – The Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Baltimore Museum of Art (Baltimore, MD)

March 20-21, 1964 – The Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Avery Auditorium

May 4, 1964 – Japanese dancer Sahomi Tachibana performed in the entryway of the Walker Arts Center in association with the opening of an exhibition of the Walker’s jade collection

June 24, 1964 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *Museum Event No. 1* at Museum des Jahrhunderts (Vienna, Austria)

Sept 8-14, 1964 - "Five New York Evenings, " Moderna Museet (Stockholm, Sweden). With the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *Museum Event No. 2* and *No. 3*; composer David Tudor; choreographers Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris; and choreographers Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Robert Rauschenberg, Öyvind Fahlström, Steve Paxton.

March 6-7, 1965 – Yvonne Rainer at the Wadsworth Atheneum, "Two Evenings of Modern Dance" in the Avery Auditorium

September 23, 1965 – Trisha Brown, "Concert for Milwaukee" Milwaukee Art Center (Milwaukee, WI)

October 1965 (ca.) – Los Angeles Junior Ballet, Bing Theater, LACMA

January 1966 – Dance performance by Joan Skinner and group for the opening of Lucio Fontana, "The Spatial Concept of Art" exhibition at the Walker Arts Center

April 1966 – "5 Choreographers in 3 Dance Concerts" at LACMA and the Rollerdrome in Culver City, Los Angeles. With Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Robert Rauschenberg, organized by critic/performer Jill Johnston.

August 7, 1966 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *Museum Event No. 4*, Fondation Maeght (Saint Paul de Vence, France)

January 28, 1967 – Los Angeles Junior Ballet, "The Ugly Duckling," Bing Theater, LACMA

April 15-16, 1967 – Ann Halprin at the Wadsworth Atheneum, *Parades and Changes* in Avery Auditorium (part one), Morgan Wing (intermission/coffee), Morgan Wing and Avery Court (part two)

November 1967 – "Fall Gallery Concerts" at the School of Visual Arts (New York, NY). Series included Simone Forti, Robert Rauschenberg, Steve Paxton, Steve Reich, Deborah Hay, Les Levine, Elaine Sturtevant, and John Giorno.

1967 – Alwin Nikolais, *Somniloquy*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

May 5, 1968 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *Museum Event No. 6*, Lakeview Art Centre (Peoria, IL)

November 1, 1968 – The Ghana Dance Ensemble, Bing Theater, LACMA, in conjunction with "Sculpture of Black Africa: The Tishman Collection" exhibition

November 6, 1968 – The Afro-American Ballet, Bing Theater, LACMA, in conjunction with “Sculpture of Black Africa: The Tishman Collection” exhibition

December 6, 1968 – Barbara Lloyd (Dilley), Gordon Mumma, Trisha Brown, “new dance theatre and music,” in MoMA galleries. Last in series of four “Student Evenings” organized by the museum’s Junior Council (October 25, November 8, November 22, and December 6).

December 28, 1968 – “Black Culture Festival” at LACMA, including US Boot Dancers (Bing Theater), Afro-American Zulu Dancers (Ahmanson), in conjunction with “Sculpture of Black Africa: The Tishman Collection” exhibition

Tues Jan 21, 1969 – Composers’ Showcase “Sight and Sound” performance at the Whitney Museum (New York, NY). Dancer Jean Erdman and company appeared in conjunction with electronic tape music by Milton Babbitt and Anthony Martin’s light compositions.

February 24 and 25, 1969 – Deborah Hay, “911 A Dance Concert by Deborah Hay,” at the Whitney

November 1969 – Meredith Monk, “Juice: A Theater Cantata,” Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

November 11, 1969 – Twyla Tharp, “Dancing in the Streets of London and Paris, Continued in Stockholm and Sometimes Madrid,” Wadsworth Atheneum

January 22, 1970 – An Evening of Dance with Twyla Tharp, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY)

January 29, 1970 – Merce Cunningham at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in association with “New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970”

February 11, 1970 – Deborah Hay with a large group of people from Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum

March 31, April 1-2, 1970 – Rainer, *Continuous Project – Altered Daily*, Whitney Museum.

May 31, 1970 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *Museum Event*, Musee d’Art Moderne de la Ville (Paris)

October 24, 1970 – San Fernando Valley Junior Ballet Company, Bing Theater, LACMA

February 26, 1971 and March 5, 1971 – Simone Forti, "Two Evenings at the Pasadena Art Museum," Pasadena Art Museum (Pasadena, CA)

March 30 and 31, 1971 - Trisha Brown "Another Fearless Dance Concert," Whitney Museum

April 20 & 21, 1971 - Alex Hay & Steve Paxton, Whitney Museum

May 26-28, 1971 – Grand Union Residency at the Walker Arts Center

May 29, 1971 – Yvonne Rainer, *Numerous Frames*, Walker Arts Center

November 1971 – Alwin Nikolais Dance Theater at the Wadsworth Atheneum

December 3, 1971 – Merce Cunningham's *Loops* (solo) at MoMA

March 6-12, 1972 – Merce Cunningham Dance Company residency and performances at Walker Arts Center

April 6, 1972 – Alvin Ailey Dance Company at the Wadsworth Atheneum

April 15, 1972 – Viola Farber Dance Company, Whitney Museum

April 21, 1972 – Yvonne Rainer's *Performance* at the Whitney Museum

April 29, 1972 – Natural History of the American Dancer at the Whitney Museum. With Carmen Beuchat, Suzanne Harris, Cynthia Hedstrom, Rachel Lew, Barbara Lloyd, Mary Overlie, Judy Padow.

December 1, 1972 – "The Wadsworth Atheneum presents Trisha Brown and Company," Wadsworth Atheneum

1973 – Elaine Summers, *Energy Changes*, MoMA Sculpture Garden.

March 1973 – Deborah Hay "Circle Dances" at Wadsworth Atheneum

May 18, 1973 – "Music for a Dance: Merce Cunningham & Christian Wolff," Whitney Museum

May 14 and 15, 1974 – John Cage and Merce Cunningham perform *A Dialogue* in the Walker Arts Center

November 6, 7, 9, 1974 – “Three Concerts/Three Places,” Trisha Brown and Company, Walker Arts Center

1975 – Grand Union residency, Walker Arts Center

1975 – David Gordon and Valda Setterfield perform “Chair” and “One Act Play” in conjunction with the exhibition “Herman Miller” at the Walker Arts Center

1976 – Trisha Brown residency, Walker Arts Center

April 8 & April 11, 1976 – “Trisha Brown and Company, Inc.,” Forth Worth Art Museum, Forth Worth, TX

1976 – Contact Improvisation, ReUnion Performance, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [today SFMOMA], San Francisco, CA

October 29-31, 1976 – Forti’s *Planet* in “The Institute for Art and Urban Resources presents Group Works by Simone Forti at PS 1 (Project Studios One),” [today MoMA PS1], Long Island City, NY.

February 9, 1977 – Simone Forti Performance with Peter Van Riper, San Francisco Museum of Art

May 13-14, 1977 – Trisha Brown, San Francisco Museum of Art

October 13, 1977 - Simone Forti and Peter Van Riper, *Big Room*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

November 10-11, 1977 – Trisha Brown at Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

June 17, 1978 – Simone Forti Performance with Peter Van Riper, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

August 18-19, 1978 - *Individual and collaborative pieces involving movement and sound* by Simone Forti and Peter Van Riper, in “PROJECTS:PERFORMANCE” in Summergarden, MoMA

October 15, 1978 - Merce Cunningham and John Cage, *Dialogue*, Walker Arts Center

January 10, 1979 – Simone Forti / Peter Van Riper dance, Noontime Performances, Whitney Museum of American Art, Downtown Branch, New York

August 3-4, 1979 – Simone Forti's *Umi Aui Owe* with musician Peter Van Riper in "Summergarden," MoMA



## Appendix B

Simone Forti's descriptions of the "five dance constructions" and two of the "other things" in *Handbook in Motion* (1974), 56-67. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained.

### SLANT BOARD

"Slant Board" is a dance construction. It requires a wooden ramp eight feet square leaned against a wall so that it forms a surface inclined at a 45-degree angle to the floor. Along the top of the inclined plane five or six holes are drilled and a rope fastened in to each. The ropes are knotted at approximately one-foot intervals, and when not in use reach almost to the bottom of the board. The piece begins when three or possibly four people get on the ramp. They have been instructed to keep moving from top to bottom and from side to side of the board, which can be done only by using the ropes. The movement should not be hurried, but calm, and as continuous as possible. The activity of moving around on the board on such a steep surface can be strenuous even when done casually. If a performer needs to rest, he may do so by using the ropes any way he can to assume a restful position. But the performers must stay on the board for the duration of the piece. It was first performed for ten minutes, and should last long enough for the audience to walk around and observe it. I suggest the performers wear tennis shoes.

### HUDDLE

#### Another Dance Construction

"Huddle" requires six or seven people standing very close together, facing each other. They form a huddle by bending forwards, knees a little bent, arms around each other's shoulders and waists, meshing as a strong structure. One person detaches and begins to climb up the outside of the huddle, perhaps placing a foot on someone's thigh, a hand in the crook of someone's neck, and another hand on someone's arm. He pulls himself up, calmly moves across the top of the huddle, and down the other side. He remains closely identified with the mass, resuming a place in the huddle. Immediately, someone else is climbing. It is not necessary to know who is to climb next. Everyone in the huddle knows when anyone has decided to be next. Sometimes two are climbing at once. That's O.K. And sometimes sounds of laughter come from the huddle. The duration should be adequate for the viewers to observe it, walk around it, get a feel of it in its behavior. Ten minutes is good. The piece has also been formed in such a way that, as it ended, each of the performers found six other people from the audience to get a second-generation huddle going, until six were happening simultaneously.

### HANGERS

#### Also a Dance Construction

“Hangers” requires some preparation. Five ropes are required, each tied to form a long loop hanging from the ceiling to within a foot of the floor. Hanging in each rope stands a person. Each of these “hangers” stands with one foot in the bottom of the loop of his rope. A small block of wood placed between the foot and the rope makes this position a lot more comfortable. It is important that each hanger center his body well between the two sides of his rope. The hangers are instructed simply to stand passively. There are four “walkers” who are instructed to walk, weaving in and out of the hangers, and among each other. The ropes should not be hung in a straight line, and should be close enough to touch each other that, as the walkers walk among the hangers, they can’t help but gently bump them, causing them to roll and sway. When the piece was first performed it last five minutes, but it could last ten or for whatever time seems in proportion to the rest of the situation.

## PLATFORMS

This piece is a dance construction and a duet for whistling. It requires two platforms (wooden boxes without bottoms) and two performers, preferably a man and a woman. The platforms should each be long enough and high enough to hide a person, but they should not be exactly alike. They are placed in the room some distance apart. The man helps the woman get under her platform, walks over to his, and gets under it. Under the platforms, the two gently whistle. They can easily hear each other, for the boxes act as resonating chambers, making the sound clear and penetrating. It is important that the performers listen to each other. Their whistling should come from the easy breathing of a relaxed state of easy communion. Each inhalation should be silent, and as long as normal breathing. The piece goes on for about fifteen minutes. The man should wear a watch, so that he knows when the designated time is up. He emerges from under his platform, and helps the woman from under hers.

## ACCOMPANIMENT FOR LA MONTE’S 2 sounds AND LA MONTE’S 2 sounds

This piece is an accompaniment for “2 sounds,” a twelve-minute tape by La Monte Young. The tape is a recording of two continuous, very loud and complex sounds, one of very low frequency, and one of very high, playing simultaneously. The accompaniment requires one rope and one person to ride in the rope. The rope ends are tied together to form a long loop, which is fastened to the ceiling, and hangs within a foot of the floor. The rope should be discretely positioned in the room so that it can be viewed casually, its off-center location clearly indicating that it is an accompaniment to the principal event, La Monte’s tape. The piece begins when a person gets into the rope. A second person turns on the tape, slowly turns the person round and round until the rope is completely wound up, and walks away. The sound fills the space. The rope unwinds, then rewinds on its own momentum, unwinds and rewinds on and on until, finally, it becomes still. The unwinding ends many minutes before the tape is over. The person remains in the rope, hanging plumb and listening.

## FROM INSTRUCTIONS

One man is told that he must lie on the floor during the entire piece. Another is told that he must tie the first man to the wall. The room in which the piece was first performed had pipes running along the wall. Some physical structure is required. As the men's instructions are conflicting, the result is a physical conflict. During the first performance, a short time after "From Instructions" started a second "Huddle" took place in another part of the room. Certainly everyone was aware that the huddle was going on, and looked at it from time to time, but most of the attention focused on "From Instructions."

## CENSOR

One person shakes a pan full of nails very loudly, while another sings a song very loudly. The volume should be in perfect balance.

Appendix C

FIVE DANCE CONSTRUCTIONS & SOME OTHER THINGS

by

Simone Morris

Participants: Ruth Allphin  
Carl Lehmann-Haupt  
Marnie Mahafey  
Bob Morris  
Simone Morris  
Steve Paxton  
Yvonne Rainer

a tape by La Monte Young

at Yoko Ono's studio  
112 Chambers Street  
top floor

FRIDAY, May 26, SATURDAY, May 27, 1961  
8:30

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