

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Picturing Process: Lynda Benglis' Cantilevered Pours

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8vw826rm>

Author

Filreis, Kelly Justine

Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Picturing Process: Lynda Benglis' Cantilevered Pours

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Kelly Justine Filreis

June 2016

Thesis Committee:
Dr. Liz Kotz, Chairperson
Dr. Susan Laxton
Dr. Jason Weems

Copyright by
Kelly Justine Filreis
2016

The Thesis of Kelly Justine Filreis is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible, first, without the encouragement of my advisor and thesis chair, Dr. Liz Kotz. With her guidance, I have learned to trust my impulses while researching and to fully consider the implications of my writing. Dr. Susan Laxton and Dr. Jason Weems provided incisive and thought-provoking comments on my thesis draft, and I appreciate their help in pushing me to develop my ideas further. I also wish to thank Dr. Jeanette Kohl, whose unwavering enthusiasm for my thesis in its very early stages helped me develop it further.

In addition, I want to thank the UC Riverside Department of the History of Art for approving my proposal to travel to the Archives of American Art and Barbara Brink for generously providing the funding for me to conduct this vital research. Accordingly, I also thank the staff at the Archives of American Art for kindly accommodating my requests. Furthermore, Jill Vuchetich, head archivist at the Walker Art Center, helpfully located the files in the museum's archives that I needed and also some that I didn't realize at the time that I would need.

I also want to thank those behind the scenes who have helped me complete this thesis in a number of ways. Alesha Jaennette, graduate coordinator, kept me informed and prepared. My cohort at UC Riverside, importantly, maintained a sense of humor and camaraderie even during the most stressful moments of the program. Finally, I thank my family and friends for their love and support.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Figures	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Making Work Visible: Documentation of Ephemeral Sculpture	15
Chapter Two: Situating the Site and the Viewer	37
Conclusion	66
Figures.....	71
Bibliography	103

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Lynda Benglis, *Excess*, 1972, purified beeswax, damar resin and pigments on masonite and wood, 36 x 5 x 4 inches. Image source: <http://visualarts.walkerart.org/oracles/details.wac?id=4670&title=Lexicon&style=images> (Accessed March 2016) 71
- Figure 2: Lynda Benglis, *Element from Adhesive Products*, 1971, pigment and polyurethane, 80 x 36x 12 inches. Image source: <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artworks/element-from-adhesive-products> (Accessed March 2016) 72
- Figure 3: (Left to right) Rachel Harrison, *Huffy Howler*, 2004, *Al Gore*, 2007, *Chicken*, 2008, Lynda Benglis, *Element from Adhesive Products*, 1971. Still image from “Abstract Resistance,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy0rGaj382o> (Accessed March 2016) 73
- Figure 4: Lynda Benglis, *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016) 74
- Figure 5: Lynda Benglis, *Phantom*, Kansas State University Union Art Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/nathan/lynda-benglis-new-museum-2-11-11_detail.asp?picnum=3 (Accessed March 2016) 75
- Figure 6: Lynda Benglis, *Pinto*, Paula Cooper Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016) 76
- Figure 7: Lynda Benglis installing armatures for *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016) 77
- Figure 8: Lynda Benglis, *Brunhilde*, 1970. Image source: <http://www.paris-art.com/exposition-art-contemporain/lynda-benglis/benglis-lynda/10409.html> (Accessed March 2016) 78
- Figure 9: Lynda Benglis, *Quartered Meteor*, 1969, cast 1975. Lead and steel on steel base, 59 x 66 x 62 inches. *Quartered Meteor* is a lead cast of *Untitled (King of Flot)*. The original polyurethane sculpture no longer exists. Image source: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/benglis-quartered-meteor-t13353> (Accessed May 2016) 79

Figure 10: <i>Life</i> magazine spread, “Fling, Dribble, and Dip,” 1970. Image source: <i>Life</i> magazine, volume 68, no. 7, February, 1970, pages 62-63.	80
Figure 11: Lynda Benglis, <i>Totem</i> , MIT Hayden Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/lynda-benglis/totem-1971 (Accessed March 2016).....	81
Figure 12: Lynda Benglis, <i>Totem</i> , MIT Hayden Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: <i>Lynda Benglis</i> , edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.....	82
Figure 13: "Lynda Benglis: Polyurethane Foam 2-Component System" promotional poster, 1971. Image source: Archives of the Walker Art Center, Lynda Benglis artist file.	83
Figure 14: Richard Serra, <i>Verb List</i> , 1967-68, graphite on paper, 2 sheets, each 10 x 8 inches. Image source: http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/10/20/to-collect (Accessed March 2016).....	84
Figure 15: Richard Serra throwing lead for <i>Splashing</i> , 1968. Photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni. Image source: http://www.gianfrancogorgoni.it/en/gallery/category/51-richard-serra.html (Accessed March 2016).....	85
Figure 16: Lynda Benglis, <i>Adhesive Products</i> , Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (accessed March 2016)	86
Figure 17: Lynda Benglis pouring polyurethane for <i>Adhesive Products</i> , Walker Art Center, 1971. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016) (Accessed March 2016).....	87
Figure 18: Lynda Benglis, <i>Odalisque (Hey Hey Frankenthaler)</i> , 1969, pigment and latex, 165 x 34 1/2 inches. Image source: https://www.dma.org/collection/artwork/lynda-benglis/odalisque-hey-hey-frankenthaler (Accessed March 2016)	88
Figure 19: Lynda Benglis, <i>For Carl Andre</i> , 1970, acrylic foam, 56 1/4 x 53 1/2 x 46 3/16 inches. Image source: http://themodern.org/collection/for-carl-andre/1169 (Accessed March 2016).....	89
Figure 20: Installation view, <i>Anti-Illusion</i> at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969. Image source: http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/anti-illusion-proceduresmaterials/ (Accessed March 2016)	90

Figure 21: Lynda Benglis, <i>Contraband</i> , 1969, pigment and latex, 3 x 116 1/4 x 398 1/4 inches. Image source: <i>Lynda Benglis</i> , edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.	91
Figure 22: Lynda Benglis, <i>Bounce</i> , 1969, pigment and latex. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016)	92
Figure 23: Lynda Benglis, <i>Adhesive Products</i> , Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. The light from Flavin's installation can be seen in the right corner. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)	93
Figure 24: Lynda Benglis and assistants installing <i>Adhesive Products</i> , Walker Art Center, 1971. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)	94
Figure 25: Lynda Benglis, invitation for an exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, 1974. Image source: http://www.flashartonline.it/article/lynda-benglis/ (Accessed March 2016)	95
Figure 26: Lynda Benglis, <i>For Darkness (Situation and Circumstance)</i> , Milwaukee Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Image source: <i>Lynda Benglis</i> , edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.....	96
Figure 27: Lynda Benglis, <i>For Darkness (Situation and Circumstance)</i> , Milwaukee Art Center, 1971. Image source: <i>Lynda Benglis</i> , edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.	97
Figure 28: Lynda Benglis, <i>Phantom</i> , 1971. Reinstallation at the New Museum retrospective in 2011. Image source: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/arts/design/18benglis.html?_r=0 (Accessed June 2016)	98
Figure 29: Lynda Benglis, <i>Wing</i> , 1970, cast aluminum, 67 x 59 1/4 x 60 inches. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016).....	99
Figure 30: Lynda Benglis, <i>Crescendo</i> , 1983-84/2014-15. Cast bronze, 111 x 82 x 186 inches. Image source: benglis.stormking.org/crescendoetc.html (Accessed June 2016)	100
Figure 31: Lynda Benglis pouring polyurethane for <i>Crescendo</i> at Modern Art Foundry, New York, 2015. Photo by Sebastian Kim. Image source: Lawrence, Nora R., ed. <i>Lynda Benglis: Water Sources</i> . Mountainville, N.Y.: Storm King Art Center, 2015.	101

Figure 32: Katharina Grosse, *One Floor Up More Highly*, installation view. Image source: <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2011/02/katharina-grosse-at-mass-moca/> (Accessed June 2016)..... 102

Introduction

The American sculptor, Lynda Benglis, has long been known for her extensive explorations of material, using the more traditional lead and bronze along with sprayed aluminum and even glitter. This project in some ways has emerged from an erstwhile encounter with her work in the 2010 exhibition, *Abstract Resistance*, held at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Taking its title from an installation by Thomas Hirschhorn, curator Yasmil Raymond argued that the works in the exhibition, spanning 1952 to 2010, interrogate the status of art by “confront[ing] the commodity of comfort with a barricade of contradictions and irreverence.”¹ The exhibition posited that abstraction in the latter half of the twentieth century was a self-critical practice but also wary of the social and political abstractions which structure the world. While Benglis has not made such distinctly political claims about her sculpture, her particular form of abstraction, guided by the qualities of her chosen materials, can be nevertheless understood as irreverent toward both sculptural convention and the expectations of the viewer.

Two of the artist’s sculptures in the exhibition, both from 1971, served as a historical crux for the continually shifting boundaries among painting, sculpture, and installation which reverberated throughout the galleries. The first, titled *Excess*, was one of many three-foot long lozenge-shaped wax paintings made between 1966 and 1974 (Figure 1). In these works, Benglis built up layers of hot pigmented wax over Masonite board with a wide brush. The wax melted and eroded with each added layer, forming

¹ Yasmil Raymond, *Abstract Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Postscript/Walker Art Center, 2011), 16.

delicately sculptural surfaces that suggest fungal or vegetal growth. While her wax paintings were originally displayed as if they could “float on the wall,”² *Excess* in 2010 bared its age and fragility and was held in place behind a protective Plexiglas box.³ The second piece on view, titled *Element from Adhesive Products*, was a much larger all-black form that protruded several feet out from the wall (Figure 2). This strange, rather ambiguous shape resembles both an exaggerated paint drip and a toxic oil spill, but it is comprised only of hardened polyurethane foam. Concealing its hanging support, the object appeared to have been frozen in motion, perpetually dripping from the wall.

In a striking example of Raymond’s aim to combine “now-legendary figures” with “younger artists who have revolted against the aesthetic orthodoxies of their times,”⁴ Benglis’ work was placed in proximity to three Rachel Harrison sculptures made between 2004 and 2008 (Figure 3). Often embellished with garishly-colored gestural brushstrokes, Harrison’s sculpture mines the familiar tropes and references of twentieth century art. The placement of these works forged a clear lineage born out of Benglis’ experimentation with eccentric materials, colorful pigments, and blatantly anthropomorphic forms that opposed the geometric confines of minimalist sculpture. Yet, dispersed in the middle of the gallery, Harrison’s sculptures suddenly made Benglis’ works seem austere and

² Lynn Gumpert, Ned Rifkin, and Marcia Tucker, *Early Work: Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner* (New York, NY: The New Museum, 1982), 10.

³ The wax lozenge paintings are rare; Benglis would melt down many to stay warm during the winter in her unheated studio. See Lynda Benglis, and Phong Bui, “Lynda Benglis with Phong Bui.” *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 11, 2009. <http://brooklynrail.org/2009/12/art/lynda-benglis-with-phong-bui>.

⁴ “Abstract Resistance,” *Walker Art Center*, accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.walkerart.org/calendar/2010/abstract-resistance>.

refined as they quietly clung to the wall. *Excess* assumed the role of a precious relic of the past in the loud presence of the newer work; the visceral surface of the wax painting was literally sealed off, denying to the viewer any fantasy of touch.

Furthermore, the *Element* was estranged from its original context. The lone object is not an individual sculpture, but rather the only remaining piece from a much larger installation comprised of nine poured polyurethane forms. Titled *Adhesive Products*, it was made on-site at the Walker Art Center in 1971 (Figure 4).⁵ *Adhesive Products* was the third of six installations made that year. The first, entitled *Phantom* (Figure 5), was shown at the Kansas State University Union Art Gallery. *Phantom* was followed by two group exhibitions in the spring and summer: *26 by 26* at Vassar College and *Directions 3: Eight Artists* at the Milwaukee Art Center. Following these were *Pinto* at Paula Cooper Gallery (Figure 6), and, finally, *Polyurethane Foam, 2-Component System* at the Hayden Gallery at MIT.

Although each iteration was different, as they were all poured on-site, I consider each version to be a variation on a single procedure. Benglis would first install an armature comprised of wooden cantilevers, chicken wire, and plastic sheeting against the wall at varying heights (Figure 7). She then mixed liquid polyurethane with pigments and poured the mixture over the armatures. As the liquid flowed down the surface of the plastic and the excess pooled on the floor, it hardened and expanded. The pours themselves were comprised of a number of layers, strategically placed by the artist to achieve the dramatic effect of an object caught in motion. Once completely cured, the

⁵ *Abstract Resistance* marks the first public exhibition of the *Element* since the original installation in 1971.

armatures were removed, resulting in a repetitive row of sweeping forms that flowed from the wall and into the exhibition space. Despite this time and labor-intensive process, after the run of the exhibition Benglis would then destroy and dispose of the works.⁶

Although my project focuses on the six installations of 1971, it is important to note that the first version of a cantilevered pour, *Brunhilde*, was made at the Kölner Galerie Müller in Cologne in 1970 (Figure 8). While the six installations of the following year achieved a range of heights and positions, requiring the frequent assistance of a ladder, *Brunhilde* was only poured from the wall at the height of a wooden stir stick. It also maintained firm contact with the floor. A review of this exhibition in the German periodical, *Das Kunstwerk*, focuses on the physicality of the “awkward” and “Walt Disney-esque” objects but also hints that as a group these “Pop-caves” had the potential to become immersive and cavernous environmental spaces.⁷

Yet in his review of a similarly-composed solo exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery four months prior, critic Willis Domingo was not convinced of the material’s potential to transform the gallery space as a whole. He observes that these polyurethane forms, such as the five-foot tall *Untitled (King of Flot)* (Figure 9) were not “assertive enough to really interact with the room. Somehow they are still framed; they create a pictorial space

⁶ Curator Eric Crosby notes that after the Walker exhibition closed, the museum’s director at the time, Martin Friedman, procured the surviving element. In 1990, when his tenure at the museum ended, Friedman placed the object back into Walker storage. In 1997 the object was officially accessioned. See Eric Crosby, “Adhesive Products: Lynda Benglis at the Walker.” *Walker Art Center Living Collections Catalogue*, 2015. <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/introduction>.

⁷ Günter Pfeiffer, “Lynda Benglis,” *Das Kunstwerk*, November 1969, 67. Translation by the author.

within a confined area without adding anything to the entire room.”⁸ *Brunhilde*, then, might in fact signal a direct attempt to break from this sculptural autonomy. By pouring the polyurethane foam over an armature, Benglis called attention to the space *beneath* the work as well as made the gallery wall an integral part of its structure. The way Benglis’ strange congealed forms are to be read in relation to the site in which they are placed remains a critical, yet not fully resolved, issue.

Domingo’s aversion to the undesired framing of ‘pictorial’ space in the exhibition also brings up an broader issue of this project that is not unique to Benglis’ works. The 1960s and 1970s saw sculpture, as Rosalind Krauss has famously theorized, in an “expanded field” which pushed the once-autonomous position of sculpture into the realms of architecture and landscape. The task of modern sculpture, no longer defined as monument, was to respond to its newfound placelessness.⁹ While this sculptural turn ultimately led to work outside of the confines of the gallery space, seen in Michael Heizer’s large-scale alterations of the physical landscape, Krauss finds its origins in minimalist sculpture’s reliance on the gallery space in constructing a phenomenal encounter rather than a single, idealized vantage point from which to view the work.

Art critic Max Kozloff commented on this condition of sculpture in his 1968 review of *9 at Castelli*, a now-legendary exhibition organized by the well-known artist, Robert Morris.¹⁰ Kozloff called the casually arranged, mostly ephemeral works on view

⁸ Willis Domingo, “Reviews: In the Galleries,” *Arts Magazine*, March 1970, 58.

⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 34.

¹⁰ It is important to clarify that Benglis did not exhibit in *9 at Castelli*. By the mid-1970s, however, she would exhibit with many of the artists involved in the exhibition, including Rafael Ferrer, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Keith Sonnier.

“an attack on the status of the object” because nothing about the final arrangement of form suggested permanence or stability. He observed,

...the idea of the object is engulfed by the volatility, liquidity, malleability, and softness—all the unstable characteristics—of the substance which embodies it. Which means that the object becomes largely a reference to a state of matter, or, exceptionally, a symbol of an action-process about to be commenced, or already completed.¹¹

The object, then, reflexively displays its own material condition and the process of its making. Liquidity and malleability certainly describe Benglis’ poured polyurethane works. After the polyurethane hardened, she offered no further intervention that would conceal the drips and frozen flows. However, Kozloff’s observation of the apparent shift in the definition of an object—from rigid form to ephemeral material—is not applicable to the entirety of Benglis’ *oeuvre*, because after the six installations she maintained a more conventional relationship to sculptural objects. Yet the six installations of 1971 challenge Benglis’ absence from discourses on the “expanded field” of sculpture, as their scale and mode of display simultaneously suggest ‘environment’ and sculptural ‘object.’

A 1970 feature in *Life* magazine had two significant effects on Benglis’ career. One was immediate, as her placement on the first page of the article likely increased her exposure, helping her gain a number of exhibition invitations in the following years. The second has had a long-lasting effect, solidifying her position in the canon of process art alongside Eva Hesse, Richard Serra, and Richard Van Buren. Titled “Fling, Dribble, and Dip,” the feature brought together these aforementioned artists as “young sculptors [who]

¹¹ Max Kozloff, “9 in a Warehouse: ‘An Attack on the Status of the Object,’” *Artforum*, February 1969, 39.

pour their art all over the floor.”¹² Accordingly, the first page of the article contains an iconic Hans Namuth photograph of Jackson Pollock that was published in *Life* magazine in the summer of 1949. Pollock’s pose, stepping into his horizontally-positioned canvas, evokes direct visual parallels between the painter’s and the younger sculptors’ gestures (Figure 10).¹³ However, the article also states that these artists were not simply repeating abstract expressionism but trying to “emphasiz[e] the organic process of art-making” and “stress the physical nature of their materials in a way that is both improvised and controlled.”¹⁴

The *Life* magazine photographs of Benglis show the artist pouring latex directly on the floor for an exhibition at the University of Rhode Island in 1969, an approach that would anticipate her on-site installations to come. The progression of the six images—beginning with a single modest stream of fluorescent pink latex in the corner of the room and ending with a complete dispersal of color across the floor—appeal to the author’s assertion in the article, as the seductive artificial Day-Glo colors simultaneously appear to

¹² David Bourdon, “Fling, Dribble and Dip,” *Life*, February 27, 1970, 62.

¹³ Much has been written about the impact of Namuth’s photographs of Pollock painting and the *Life* magazine article. It introduced the artist to a broader American audience, posing a pointed question as its title: “Jackson Pollock: Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?” Since the publications of the images, Pollock’s paintings and these highly circulated images were forever linked. In fact, critic Barbara Rose noted in 1980 that when people write about Pollock’s paintings, they are actually writing about the works *through* their knowledge of these images. Art historian Amelia Jones coined what she calls the “Pollockian Performative,” which constructs a genealogy of contemporary performance through Pollock’s original gesture. She argues that Pollock’s legacy marks the shift between the modern individual and the postmodern dispersed subject. See Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters.” *ARTnews*, December 1952; Barbara Rose, *Pollock Painting*. New York: Agrinde Publications, 1980; and Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

¹⁴ Bourdon, “Fling, Dribble and Dip,” 62.

be highly composed yet unrestrained as they spread across the floor. All of the artists in the article appear in the photographs alongside their work; Benglis, Serra, and Van Buren adopt Pollock's signature pose, while Hesse is pictured entangled in her rubber-dipped ropes. In the photographs, process is ultimately conveyed not through finished works, but through the artist's direct interaction with materials. Material fluidity and the artist's ephemeral actions have in turn become the features of the art historical category of process art.

“Process art” is in itself a somewhat vague category, as its key artists and ideas overlap with other sculptural practices that were broadly characterized by critic Robert Pincus-Witten as “post-minimal.” Art historian Kristine Stiles has written that process art is “both precise and imprecise, an ahistorical referent and an historically specific periodizing marker.”¹⁵ Of course, while any kind of art would involve some kind of material or intellectual process, the term in this context implies a heightened attention to displaying, as a finished work, “how art comes into being.”¹⁶ This can involve its material, procedural, or social conditions, as the focus shifts from product to production. Grace Glueck, an art critic for *The New York Times*, once described process art as “The New Disorder” in her review of Robert Morris' 1970 retrospective at the Whitney Museum. Glueck was referring to the “expressive power” of the industrial scale of his work and the overall formlessness of his arrangement.¹⁷ More recently, using this

¹⁵ Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 577.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 686.

¹⁷ Grace Glueck, “Process Art and the New Disorder,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 1970.

retrospective as a case study, Julia Bryan-Wilson has persuasively argued that process art was implicitly tied to the social conditions of labor. As she observes, Morris' efforts are put on display "in order to demonstrate how the physical work of the artist becomes reified."¹⁸ Morris, as this project will reveal, had a central role in theorizing process art, most significantly because of his 1968 essay published in *Artforum*, titled "Anti Form." However, the critique of an artwork's reification surfaces in a number of artists' practices, writing, and museum exhibitions during this time.

Despite her participation in a number of process art exhibitions, Benglis maintained early in her career that her work was not process art. She understood at the time that the forms her sculptures take stand apart from their production. Her statement for the 1969 exhibition at Finch College, *Art in Process IV*, explains:

I am interested in organic form and synthetic material and in synthetic form and organic material. The image varies with the materials used...I am not involved with just process. I am involved in all the associations with material...With the firing of the wax paintings I realized that the idea of directing matter logically was absurd. Matter could and would take, finally, its own form.¹⁹

By 1977, she was still insistent that her work be read outside the now fully-established canon of process art. In an extensive interview with *Ocular* magazine, she reflects on her early works,

I was making an image...I think the so-called 'process artists' had definite steps and that the process and the work were one. The process could not be clearly read in any of the works that I've done. The process was always hidden. The process was transformed by the image.²⁰

¹⁸ Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970," *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 2 (June 2007): 345.

¹⁹ Elayne H Varian, *Art in Process IV* (New York: Finch College Museum of Art, 1969).

²⁰ "Interview: Lynda Benglis," *Ocular*, Summer 1979, 36.

Process art, according to Benglis, involved “closed systems” of logic; the finished work only goes as far as displaying evidence of the artist’s predetermined activity. The process in her early work is not completely hidden, but there is a distinct difference in the way that these works might be read which complicates Benglis’ position in this discourse. For instance, due to Benglis’ removal of the armatures that shaped the liquid polyurethane in her cantilevered installations, she effectively removes the sources of her imagery and the objects that most directly point to her process.

Yet Benglis’ desire to create a quasi-pictorial “painterly image”²¹ that, to her, is highly opposed to process art does not fully address what has prompted the desire to read her work as process in the first place: the formation of her imagery is inherently involved with time. The associative “images” that form are the direct results of specific temporal and material processes that, per Kozloff, point to the means of their making. For instance, as the poured drips of polyurethane foam cure, expanding into their final configuration, the material changes from a liquid surface to a solid structure.

Even the title of art historian Susan Richmond’s expansive 2013 monographic study on Benglis, *Beyond Process*, very pointedly attempts to draw attention away from her affiliations with process art and instead focus on a “direct engagement with the work itself.”²² Richmond turns to Benglis’ use of materials and organic imagery to discuss its intersection with theories of craft, kitsch, and gender. Richmond discusses Benglis’ poured works in relation to Benglis’ burgeoning, yet thorny, relationship to feminist art

²¹ Ibid., 40.

²² Susan Richmond, *Lynda Benglis: Beyond Process* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 25.

practices, stating that the six installations “tacitly indicate an artist who desired freedom from traditional artistic as well as social boundaries.”²³ Richmond carefully dissects Benglis’ position in feminist discourse, noting that while Benglis herself felt uneasy about conflating her gender and her art, the artist was nevertheless highly aware of the social conditions that often subordinated female artists. Benglis has remained a crucial figure in discourses on feminist art as her erotic and corporeal forms productively complicate the relationship between the body and sculptural production.

Although Richmond’s book importantly opens up the possibilities for understanding Benglis’ *oeuvre* through the socio-political context of its time, I want to linger on the associations often made in her early career, whether superficial or not, between Benglis and process. In this regard, my analysis necessarily intersects with a primarily male cast of artists and critics. This is not meant to create a gendered comparison between Benglis and her male peers, but it does reflect the conditions of artistic production at this time. As Benglis was one of just a handful of New York-based female sculptors to achieve a certain level of notoriety at this time, it is unavoidable that I encounter her work alongside that of mostly male artists and critics.

I do not wish to claim that the artist has been underrepresented in art historical discourse or that she has been improperly placed into the canon of process art. Instead, this project is motivated by the fact that Benglis has maintained a rather uncertain position in discourses on postwar art. While they may have managed to avoid making a

²³ Ibid., 44.

direct claim as sculpture, painting, or installation, the six cantilevered pours, as a distinct series, engage in a complex dialogue with “process” unmatched by her other works.

Although Benglis has tended to work in loosely-defined series of material investigations—I would define the six installations as a series, just as her wax lozenges comprise another—the six installations rarely are discussed apart from her other works that are made out of poured polyurethane. Due to their intended ephemerality, these six installations resist easy classification as objects that fit conceptually with her other works, and, as a result, they require a more thorough examination than they have previously received. While sculpture produced in the late 1960s and 1970s is well-documented and heavily-researched, many of the canonical works often only exist as fragments, memories of time passed. Benglis’ cantilevered installations are now removed from their original context, only existing now as “relics” and documentation photographs and video. This raises a number of essential questions with broader implications on the legacy of postwar sculpture. Devoid of a phenomenological reading, how does the primarily optical function of photographic documentation inform the meaning of these works? In turn, how might one conceive of the effect of the objects in the original spaces in which they were produced?

In light of the manifold ways in which Benglis’ work may be read, the aim of the following chapters will be to parse the various frameworks that intersect with the six installations. In Chapter One, I discuss the role that photography can play in both obscuring and defining Benglis’ process. Documenting the works both their finished state and in process, the camera, I argue, offers an advantageous framework to see the objects

unfurl in the gallery space. While some artists working during this time were opposed to the camera's ability to flatten or obscure their work, I argue that in the case of Benglis' installations, photography and video are devices that allows one to further understand the materiality of Benglis' pours. Thus, the relationship between documentation and sculpture is not merely to illustrate what no longer exists. Instead, the act of making of her installations parallels that of a photograph, as both are produced by a similarly indexical and nearly automatic means.

Chapter Two turns to the sites in which the installations are produced.²⁴ As photography can be considered a mediating lens through which one views the finished works, so can the gallery space. Examining, first, Benglis' invitation to the seminal, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials*, an exhibition which favored ephemeral objects and site-specific work, I examine the ambivalence that many critics had about Benglis' relationship to this practice in her early work. However, by turning to larger-scale ephemeral installation, Benglis more directly considered not just her materials, but the *presence* that is established by her gestural process. As such, I turn to the way that the gallery becomes an integral part of the way her work can be read. My use of the term "gesture" throughout the text is not meant to relate her work back to Abstract Expressionism. While the *Life* magazine article might have enforced Pollock's claim on

²⁴ While Benglis is not often conceived as an "installation" artist (and comprehensive histories and theories of installation art are still in development), I follow Anne Ring Petersen's parameters of installation art which "activate space and context;" "stretch the work in time;" and "have a phenomenological focus on the viewer's bodily and subjective experience." See Anne Ring Petersen, *Installation Art: Between Image and Stage*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015, 41.

it, the term in this case, refers to Benglis' interest in the contextual relationships the installations evoke with the viewer; the forms, in other words, gesture *toward* the viewer.

What maintains essential for both chapters is developed from Benglis' own artist statements. She is interested in the authority of her materials, and consequently, steps aside as the 'author' of her works to allow the objects to effectively make themselves. In so doing, Benglis' installation works against the modernist paradigm that Hans Namuth's *Life* photographs of Pollock reinforce. By situating the cantilevered pours into this significant discourse on photography and site, my project ultimately addresses the seeming disparity that was theorized in the late 1960s and early 1970s between the permanence of object-based art and ephemeral event in postwar art.

Chapter One

Making Work Visible: Documentation of Ephemeral Sculpture

A black and white video abruptly begins, closely focused on a man vigorously stirring and carefully pouring a viscous liquid into a white plastic bucket. The wooden stir stick bobs up and down in the bottom of the frame as the camera pans out to reveal a large room that is covered in plastic sheeting. The camera follows the man as he walks across the room, while a title card interrupts this ambiguous moment to finally announce the subject of this video: *Totem (Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam)*. By focusing on the artist's assistants wearing respirators and rubber gloves as well as the floor littered with buckets and plastic, these first few minutes suggest that this activity is a clear departure from the typical image of a painter in the studio. However, the viewer's uncertainty about the sterile setting is soon resolved as the "painting" that is promised by the video's title finally commences. A pair of gloved hands carefully tips a bucket, and a thin stream of black liquid spills over the edge, lands, and flows, lava-like, across the frame.

In this video, Benglis is overseeing the production of *Totem* for her exhibition, *Polyurethane Foam 2-Component System*, at the Hayden Gallery at MIT (Figure 11). This solo exhibition, held in the late fall of 1971, was the sixth and final large-scale installation of cantilevered pours. As a culmination of all she had learned about the material from the previous five installations, the scale and variations between each form is particularly ambitious. Where most spanned just a single gallery wall (the exception being her exhibition at the Milwaukee Art Center) and commanded a more uniform

movement along the wall, the MIT exhibition spanned two perpendicular walls. Some of the pours were placed up high or even underneath other pours, breaking the regularity of the placement of her previous works (Figure 12).

Although the video documentation usefully records her process, it cannot capture the vivid color. Prior to this installation, most cantilevered pours were monochromatic layers of black, white, or grey. At MIT, the pink, red, and orange pigments nod to her Rhode Island installation, reveling in the visual delight of these unexpectedly saccharine colors. Bykert Gallery owner Klaus Kertess observed that these colors also produced an architectural effect,

Two red and orange forms reached out from one wall to the perilously delicate extension of a pink and red form on the adjoining wall, flattening out the corner between them. The only form that touched the floor, the flat black one on the short wall, did so not with a sturdy leg but with a spindly antenna ending in a puddle that in no way could give support.¹

The anthropomorphic details that Kertess provides—that the sculptures possess not a “sturdy leg” but a “spindly antenna”—highlight the underlying importance of the physicality of their presence. Kertess’ reading of color does not define it through painting and the pictorial flatness of color, but instead observes the way the colors actually *touch* the gallery walls and floor.

The video, *Totem*, serves as a complete documentary record of all the steps involved in its production, from the installation of the chicken wire and plastic, the mixing of the polyurethane, the pouring, and finally, the removal of the cantilever supports. Additionally, audio of an interview with Benglis appears as a voiceover during

¹ Klaus Kertess, “Foam Structures,” *Art and Artists*, May 1972, 37.

this activity. In fact, the artist more often appears in the video as a disembodied voice rather than on-screen. Benglis' voiceover functions to almost reassure the viewer that what they are seeing is authentic to her process as she entertains what would soon become the customary questions regarding her work, particularly her relationship to Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and painting.

Although Benglis admits in her voiceover that the legacy of the "Abstract Expressionist aesthetic" is "liberating," she proclaims emphatically in the interview, "I am my own generation."² Clear associations can be made (and have been made) between Benglis' pour, which produces what she calls a "live" surface,³ and the Abstract Expressionist use of paint. However, as art critic Robert Pincus-Witten would observe in 1974, Benglis' use of materials also closely aligns with her own generation of primarily New York-based process artists who "transposed the easel tradition questioned in Abstract Expressionism into an actual environmental enterprise."⁴ Accordingly, this chapter examines these practices surrounding Benglis' early work, made at a time in which sculpture was often produced as a byproduct of an ephemeral action rather than as a permanent form. I argue that although this work may have claimed to resist the permanence of sculpture, the ephemeral works have otherwise been fixed in place by

² Don Schaeffer and Ann McIntosh, *Totem (Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam)*, VHS (Hayden Gallery, MIT, 1971).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," *Artforum*, November 1974, 54. The artists he is referencing in this particular passage are Richard Van Buren, Eva Hesse, Alan Saret, Richard Serra, and Keith Sonnier, artists that Benglis had exhibited with by the mid-1970s.

documentation. Benglis' six cantilevered installations contrast this position, for attention shifts from the artist as the author of the action to the agency of the material itself.

In 1964, less than a decade prior to this exhibition at MIT, critic Harold Rosenberg would remark on the temporality of the art object which would foreground the art practices of the 1960s and 1970s. "The short-lived work of art," he writes, "displays art as an *event*."⁵ Citing Marcel Duchamp as the progenitor of this practice, he notes that impermanence became a "stylistic device"⁶ through the use of ephemeral materials and temporary installation. Rosenberg's term "event" is meant not only to signal the artist's activated presence in art production. It also strongly implicates the viewer, as he asserts that an artwork's temporal condition arrives only "when it is considered as an encounter between the artist and his audience."⁷ While Rosenberg, a champion of Abstract Expressionist painting, was wary of emerging ephemeral art practices and Happenings, the broader implications of his text is wide-reaching. By destabilizing the notion of a painting as a timeless and unchanging object, Rosenberg opened the possibilities for theorizing all kinds of art production, including sculpture, as events that are contingent on time.

Yet only Benglis' MIT exhibition emphasized the apparent life cycle of the installations. A promotional poster and a press release reveal that the gallery would be open not only for viewing the finished work, but also for viewing the production and the

⁵ Harold Rosenberg, "The Art Objects and the Esthetics of Impermanence," in *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience* (Horizon Press, 1964), 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

eventual destruction of the forms (Figure 13).⁸ Furthermore, a short “epilogue” at the end of the video shows the forms being sawed off the wall. Dramatically, they crash onto the floor with a loud thud. The gallery assistants gather around the fallen forms, kicking and breaking them down into smaller fragments. Benglis’ audio interview returns, but her voice is quickly drowned out by the commotion captured in the frame. She states, “After they’re completed, that’s it for me. I think the space is going to be used for something else. I think that the foam pieces are made for this particular situation.”⁹ She explains this further in a 1983 lecture at the Walker Art Center, where the issue of the sculpture’s destruction is both a conceptual element and a practical solution:

I decided purposely to destroy it because it would have ended up in dormitories and various places, individual pieces being sold, and that was not what I wanted for the future of it...And it hurt to do it but I realized at that time a lot of us were doing location pieces, and there was no way that a work of this kind could stay up forever in a space.¹⁰

Benglis’ statement also confirms that she is deliberately aligning herself with the artistic practices of this time, perhaps even the aforementioned *9 at Castelli*. Each individual pour was meant to be seen together, within the specific confines of the gallery space in which they were made. However, in so doing, she does not acknowledge the alternative future of the piece. With art defined as an ephemeral event, the art object still survives, almost mythically, through documentation.

⁸ The press release states that viewers could “watch her work through an interior glass wall of the gallery” starting ten days before the exhibition opening. See “Press Release, Lynda Benglis at the MIT Hayden Gallery.” News Office, MIT, October 28, 1971. Lynda Benglis Artist File. Archives of the Walker Art Center.

⁹ Schaeffer and McIntosh, *Totem (Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam)*.

¹⁰ Lynda Benglis, *Lynda Benglis: Dialogues*, Cassette tape (Walker Art Center, 1983), Archives of the Walker Art Center.

With the enduring interest in volatile materials and temporary installations in the 1960s and 1970s, it is not surprising that video and photographic documentation would play a crucial role in shaping its legacy. As a result, many artists and critics during this time remarked on photography's role—and, in most cases, its limitations—in fixing in place these ephemeral works. Robert Morris adopted what might be the most resistant position. In his 1978 essay, “The Present Tense of Space,” the artist maintained that the photograph distances the viewer from the work of art. He describes the essential conditions for viewing his “situational” art as completely contingent on one’s presence in the gallery space. This work, he argues, is “absolutely opposed to the meaning of photography,” as the “static, consumable image” deprives the viewer of a phenomenological experience.¹¹ The photography of sculpture introduces distinctly pictorial issues of cropping and framing onto the otherwise spatial and dimensional field.¹²

In 1969 the artist Robert Smithson similarly declared that “photographs steal away the spirit of the work...”¹³ as the contexts in which they are produced cannot be conveyed in the images. Yet by 1971, he appears to have revised his position on both still

¹¹ Robert Morris, “The Present Tense of Space,” *Art in America*, February 1978, 79.

¹² The intersections of sculpture and photography have become the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications in recent years. I am specifically indebted to the stimulating questions about the possibilities of photography beyond its documentary function, particularly in the 2010 exhibition, *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today* at the Museum of Modern Art. See Roxana Marcoci, ed. *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010 and also Sarah Hamill, *David Smith in Two Dimensions: Photography and the Matter of Sculpture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.

¹³ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 184.

photography and film. In his essay “Art Through the Camera’s Eye,” he asserts that the technological possibilities of the camera can produce abstracted landscapes, new modes of perception that are not always apparent in the represented objects. He writes, “There is something abominable about cameras, because they possess the power to invent many worlds.”¹⁴ The camera would not always faithfully preserve the work of art through documentation, but instead, it could abstract or manipulate this viewer’s perception of space. In Smithson’s later analysis, the camera shifts from a detached witness to an interpreter of the world.

There is a dearth of published and available images of Benglis’ six cantilevered installations which has, I believe, limited the possibilities for reading these works. The existing photographs of the finished installations favor a wider, distanced view in order to fit as many of the pours in the frame. The process does not get lost in this particular kind of framing, but the effect of the finished forms—their *presence* in the gallery space—is not as fully considered in the photograph. In other words, following Morris, they lose their specific phenomenological charge, and like the camera’s proximity to the objects, the installation distances itself from the viewer.

Morris’ aversion to the photograph comes directly out of the broader issue that process artists declared about the ephemeral status of the object. The finished object, if there is one at all, would not be removed from the means of its production. Rather, “the

¹⁴ Robert Smithson, “Art Through the Camera’s Eye,” in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 371.

act of making the work could become the work itself.”¹⁵ It is noteworthy, though, that most, if not all, artists making this kind of work did not completely reject the use of photography nor did they deny their desire to circulate or promote their work. Among the images of process art that stand in for the objects depicted, I wish to focus on a particular genre of images that most specifically relate to the problems of ephemeral sculpture. Although many ephemeral works were documented in their completion and were heavily circulated as well, the photograph of the work in progress, and, therefore, the artist at work, maintains an important relationship to process art. If process is in fact about the act of making, documentation of the artist at work would most literally illustrate this intention. However, the photographer is left to decide which moment to capture; one image would stand in as the “event” of the work’s production.

In a 1986 essay on Richard Serra, art historian Rosalind Krauss discusses the physicality of the artist’s various gestures over the span of his career. These gestures, articulated by Serra himself in his *Verb List*—such as ‘to roll, to crease, to bend’¹⁶—are implicitly tied to the materials which he used (Figure 14). During the early stages of his career in the late 1960s, he was concerned less with the production of objects but instead with the immediate effects of his actions. Krauss asserts that Serra’s sculptures and videos abstract and at times fully remove qualities of figurative representation, noting

¹⁵ Marcia Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble: Forty Years in the New York Art World*, ed. Liza Lou (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 84.

¹⁶ Rosalind Krauss, “Richard Serra/Sculpture,” in *Richard Serra/Sculpture*, ed. Laura Rosenstock (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986), 16.

that instead the body becomes “the ‘ground’ of the sculptural experience,”¹⁷ the receiver of a specific spatial and material condition that is shaped by the artist’s gesture.

It is for this reason, then, that Krauss begins her essay with a discussion of the artist’s own body. Reading a Gianfranco Gorgoni photograph of Serra, who is masked by a helmet, goggles, and respirator, and “reduced to silhouetted gesture,”¹⁸ Krauss establishes that this is distinctly an image of Serra “at work” (Figure 15). Serra stands in the center of the frame, grasping and preparing to throw a ladle of molten lead. He is making his famed *Splash* piece for *9 at Castelli*, in which he repeatedly threw molten lead into the seam where the wall meets the floor. However, Gorgoni removes any evidence of this activity, placing Serra amidst the residue and materials of his process.

Krauss emphasizes the repetition of Serra’s gesture through her reading of the photograph. She observes that Serra is captured in a perpetual cause without an effect, or “an action deprived of an object.”¹⁹ The photograph does not give any indication of the finished work and instead favors the open-endedness of his gesture. By eschewing the object completely, the photograph is a device to affirm the artist’s authority. She states,

The genre of the Portrait of the Artist...is the signifier of art’s hidden but persistent narrativity; for the unfolding of the artist’s gesture in *this* work, which is a model on a small scale for the larger unfolding of all his gestures into that totality of his works to which we give the name *oeuvre*, is the story of the artist...The portrait is always pregnant, we could say, with his development: beginning, middle, and end.²⁰

In this case, the photograph functions not merely to document or record, but also to

¹⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16.

²⁰ Ibid.

allegorically situate the subjectivity of the artist. Though Krauss maintains that Serra's work at this time attempted to avoid the interiority and individualism of Abstract Expressionism—the notion that the artist is projecting an internal emotion with paint—I would contend that this photograph of Serra suggests otherwise. While his repetitive gesture and masked appearance may be depersonalized, he is still presented rather heroically, overcoming his surroundings and the fatigue of what must be physically demanding work.

Curator Darsie Alexander extends this analysis of this photograph, an incisive observation that is worth recalling in full. She writes,

Gorgoni positions his camera to suggest obliquely the merger of the artist's body with common warehouse equipment; a large propane tank, situated by the lens as if extending from Serra's left hip, occupies a position of visual dominance and anchors the artist's anatomy to the work site. Serra's self-directed gesture and the compositional strategies of the photographer collude to form an impression of the artist as foreman of his own labors...²¹

The photograph of Serra, due to the position of the artist in the frame, reinforces the centrality of the artist as a producer. With Serra, as Alexander points out, seemingly anchored to his surroundings, the image does little to actually separate it from the artist portraits that came before him—particularly the famed Hans Namuth photograph of Jackson Pollock mentioned in the introduction. As art historian Amelia Jones has observed, "...modernist criticism and art history *rely on* the (male) body of the artist to

²¹ Darsie Alexander, "Reluctant Witness: Photography and the Documentation of 1960s and 1970s Art," in *Work Ethic*, ed. Helen Molesworth (Baltimore; University Park: Baltimore Museum of Art; Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 56.

confirm their claims of transcendent meaning.”²² Serra’s aim to consider the viewer’s subjectivity when viewing his work would only be mediated by the presence of the artist as author. While it may not account for his entire *oeuvre*, this image of Serra has nevertheless become an iconic image of his early work, describing his general interests in the gritty tactility of industrial materials.

Gorgoni’s photograph of Serra was first published on the cover of Grégoire Müller’s *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for Art of the Seventies*. This book primarily features photographs of an early cast of (male) process artists in their chosen environments—sublime outdoor landscapes and stark white gallery spaces—and deeply immersed in activities that more closely resemble those at construction sites than art studios. Pictured alongside Serra are, for instance, photographs of cranes piling the rocks that would form Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*. Gorgoni also captures Robert Morris in a contemplative pose that mirrors *The Thinker*; he is sitting atop a pile of wooden boards, surveying the site of his Whitney retrospective. Müller’s introduction to the book explains that at the time of his text, sculpture “has no precise meaning.”²³ The ‘issue’ of sculpture in the seventies most crucial to Müller is that sculpture was no longer a “symbolic system.” Rather, “a work exists by itself” and is therefore more directly involved with the viewer as a type of perceptual *experience*.²⁴

Gorgoni’s photographs, capturing the artwork’s production, illustrate Müller’s

²² Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 62.

²³ Grégoire Müller, *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies* (New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972), 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

concerns as they provide images of the ephemeral activities and environments. But these photographs also complicate the legacy of the original works, not just because they provide only a fragment of the process, but because they rely on positioning the artist at the center of this gesture. The ‘sculpture’ in all its varying forms is once again minimized, read *through* the presence of their maker. As a result, the photographs turn the relatively casual or disparate approaches into stylish, even romantic, images of the artist at work.

Two exhibitions at the Finch College Museum of Art—*Art in Process IV* in 1969 and *Projected Art: Artists at Work* in 1972—contributed to the persistent interest in the artist’s presence in a work of art. *Art in Process IV* was the fourth exhibition in a series of six which displayed “the development of an image.”²⁵ On view in the exhibition were finished works placed alongside the letters, notes, sketches, and photographs of the works in progress. Accordingly, paired with several of her previously-made wax lozenge paintings and a new poured polyurethane corner sculpture produced just for the exhibition, an image of Benglis working in her studio was exhibited.

However, *Art in Process IV* was not particularly well-received. In Bitite Vinkler’s lukewarm review of the exhibition in *Art International*, the critic observed that documentation serves a mostly commemorative purpose. Vinkler warns the reader that

²⁵ “Press Release for Art In Process IV” (The Finch College Museum of Art, 1969), Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Files, Art in Process IV, The Archives of American Art. This exhibition brought together the following artists who, despite the differences in their work, shaped the canon of process art: Carl Andre, Benglis, Mel Bochner, William Bollinger, Rafael, Ferrer, Barry Flanagan, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Richard Van Buren, and Lawrence Weiner.

documentation on display “can easily breed a new kind of romanticism and even nostalgia with regard to the value of a work of art: the memory of the creation or presentation of something that no longer exists is apt to be more compelling than the sight of a tangible work of art, no matter how venerated.”²⁶ Placed alongside the actual works of art, the documentation does not serve as a memory of the now lost artwork. Vinkler observed that the “process” on view didn’t actually alter the way she viewed the finished works. If the work on view was meant to, by its nature, convey ‘process,’ would it not be redundant to also show the documentation of process?

Philip Leider was similarly unconvinced about the role that the documents played in the reading of the works on view. First, he noted that none of the documentation was particularly revealing. Many of the letters on view declared nothing about the actual works, but instead were simply casual written confirmations of participation between museum director Elayne Varian and the artists. Second, Leider’s review implies that the supplementary documents actually take away from the finished works. Mentioning nothing about the actual wax paintings on view, he sardonically declares Benglis’ accompanying statement—“I am continuing my questioning of formal considerations”—as “Catalog Statement of the Year.” He also questions the need to actually show the graph paper sketch that sculptor Carl Andre produced to demonstrate how to arrange 120 bricks into two 60-brick squares.²⁷ This left the question of the role of process open-ended; what did seeing these documents actually *do* for the finished work?

²⁶ Bitite Vinkler, “New York,” *Art International*, March 1970, 91.

²⁷ Philip Leider, “New York: Art in Process IV, Finch College,” *Artforum*, February 1970, 69.

Projected Art: Artists at Work addressed this question more directly by turning to the artist's role in art production. It eliminated objects altogether, and instead displayed documentation videos and "over-life size images...running simultaneously in one room" at eight second intervals.²⁸ The exhibition presented an exhaustive list of artists.²⁹ In fact, many of the "Artists at Work" were not involved in process art at all, and the exhibition included iconic figures such as Joseph Albers, Willem de Kooning, and Helen Frankenthaler. The quantity of slides prompted a program director at the New York State Council on the Arts to write to Varian during the exhibition's state-wide tour, "Many of our exhibitors feel that there is too much material in the exhibit."³⁰ With so many images, the exhibition could only present brief glimpses of individuals; it turned the "Artist at Work" into an archetype. The format of the exhibition, guided by the slide carousels' repetitive clicks and rotations, reinforced the idea of artistic process as a dynamic and continuously changing procedure. It challenged the notion of a permanent artwork by instead presenting it instead as a fleeting image. Despite not always showing art that was

²⁸ "Installation Instructions for *Projected Art: Artists at Work*" (The Finch College Museum of Art, 1972), Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Correspondence, *Projected Art: Artists at Work*, The Archives of American Art.

²⁹ It is unclear whether Benglis was shown in the exhibition. Published bibliographies and curricula vitae do not indicate her participation, However, there is a video reel of the artist pouring *Phantom* at Kansas State University and the artist is mentioned in a few artist lists in the exhibition records of the exhibition. See the Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, *Projected Art: Artists at Work*, The Archives of American Art.

³⁰ "Letter to Elayne Varian from Robert Braiterman" (The Finch College Museum of Art, 1972), Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Correspondence, *Projected Art: Artists at Work*, The Archives of American Art.

intended to be ephemeral, the premise of *Projected Art: Artists at Work* achieved what process art often aimed to do: undermine the autonomy of a complete or finished object.

New York Times art critic Grace Glueck responded favorably to the unprecedented access to the new working methods of the younger generations of artists, writing, “It’s fascinating to see how the studio loses its walls and brushes [to] give way to the bull-dozers.”³¹ Yet the most important observation that Glueck makes is that the exhibition did not strictly show documentation of artists at work. It also dedicated significant time to showing artists’ performance tapes. The difference, of course, lies not in the video format, but in the original conditions for making the work. Performance tapes capture an event that was made *for* the camera; it has no prior existence outside what the viewer sees in the photograph or on-screen. Thus there is no difference between what is circulated (a secondary account) and the more privileged original event.³² Documentary video, on the other hand, is made as a kind of record, evidence that the object, event, or ephemeral situation once existed independently.

However, media theorist Philip Auslander has suggested that there is actually little distinction between photographs (and, by extension, videos) as performance documentation and photographs that *perform*. Performance, Auslander proposes, “is always at one level raw material for documentation, the final product through which it will be circulated and with which it will inevitably become identified.”³³ By conflating

³¹ Grace Glueck, “Artists at Work Subject of Finch Show,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 1971.

³² Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (September 2006): 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

these two types of videos, *Projected Art: Artists at Work* consequently imbued all of the exhibiting artists' videos—and photographs—with an element of performance.

Benglis' six installations, however, are not performances. Even the MIT installation, which invited gallery visitors to view the work in progress, was not conceived by the artist to be watched. Following Auslander's position, it is the presence of the camera during the production of Benglis' installations, and the subsequent circulation of images, that lend a performative quality to the objects themselves. When one views *Totem: Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam*, for example, one is not watching the artist. Instead, the polyurethane, caught in its short-lived liquid state, is performing for the camera.

In the positions I have outlined in the beginning of this chapter, photography appears to work against the spatial properties of installation, distancing the viewer from the physical objects. When it makes a record of the work, the image, first, is restricted and flattened to a single point of view. Second, it relies only on an optical, rather than a phenomenological, perception of the object. Third, it easily packages the often chaotic and messy process with a single image that speaks for the entire work. Fourth—and lastly—the image establishes the artist at the center of the work, repeatedly performing an empty interiority that in no way challenges the modernist conflation of the artist and the work.

In contrast, the documentation of Benglis' work may offer a different reading of her installations. As I mentioned earlier, the available photographs of the cantilevered pours are limited to, most often, very regularized vantage points (Figures 4-6). The

exception to these photographs are those made by the Walker Art Center's staff photographer, Eric Sutherland, on the occasion of Benglis' installation of *Adhesive Products* at the museum. In one particularly striking image (Figure 16), the camera appears to have been placed as if it was one of the poured objects; the camera is *in* the installation, boasting a proximity that is so close that it can capture the rarely-seen underside of the forms. The deep impressions of the plastic sheet on which the polyurethane once rested is a covert but direct trace of Benglis' process. It contrasts with the 'top' of the object where a sumptuous, rounded drip of black pigmented polyurethane spills over the edge. Visible in the object are two temporal conditions. On the underside is an indexical reminder of an action having taken place, and, on the top where the drips have congealed, an illusory suggestion of the object's continued liveliness. The poured form extends diagonally across the photograph from the wall in the upper right corner to the floor in the bottom left. This in turn frames three people in the exhibition space who are viewing the work. The photograph in the end is much more about placing the viewer in the space, approaching the forms from the perspective of the embodied spectators pictured in the frame.

While Walter Benjamin famously wrote that reproducible media detaches the object from its traditional "unique existence," he also acknowledged that the viewer's encounter with the photograph "reactivates the object reproduced."³⁴ This is exemplary in Sutherland's photograph, as the dramatic shift in proximity that reveals how the once-

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 221.

fluid material was caught in motion changes how one can read the series as a whole. Its tactility rendered in the frame elicits a more phenomenological reading of the work, despite the fact that one is not actually present in the space. From this perspective, is it possible to understand the objects—now as images—apart from their once-material presence?

An often-published photograph of the work in process shows Benglis pouring *Adhesive Products* (Figure 17). She wears a respirator and gloves, in addition to plastic goggles, an ensemble which completely obscures her face. Her arms are outstretched as she pours pigmented black polyurethane over the surface of her armatures. Sutherland's photograph partially conceals the artist behind her work. Benglis' body is not in fact "anchored" to the site, but instead she is fully absorbed by the surrounding artificial landscape of chicken wire, plastic, and foam. The photograph is full of traces, evidence, of both her process and the final object, although at this point still in its early stages. Hardened layers of polyurethane cling to the plastic; residual touches of polyurethane are smeared along the sides of the plastic sheets. What this photograph depicts, I propose, is not merely an image of the artist at work, despite her central presence in the frame. Unlike the Gorgoni's photograph of Serra, the viewer sees the material in motion and not just the artist caught in mid-action. The turned bucket, from which a thick stream of polyurethane flows, appears as a dark, circular void in the center of the photograph. Where, as Krauss observes, the Serra photograph depicts the timeless effort of the artist, in the Benglis photograph, time, in fact, seems to be the subject, as the constant stream of polyurethane serves as a continued reminder of the object's materiality formed over time.

The photographs and video documentation of Benglis' work, on one hand, resemble the function of documentation as outlined by art critic Lawrence Alloway, who writes that "the documentary photograph is grounds for believing that something happened."³⁵ Alloway's position anticipates what Roland Barthes wrote about the photograph in 1980. As an index of the subject captured by the camera, the photograph represents a fleeting moment of the past, reminding the viewer that "*the thing has been there*."³⁶ But it would be impossible to assert that documentation of the process can provide this completely transparent or unmediated transcription of the work in process. The photograph, technologically limited, is only capable of rendering fragments of time passing. But even video, which can capture long takes and motion, can be edited and rearranged into any narrative desired. *Totem: Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam*, for instance, compresses a week-long process into a twenty-seven minute long video.

But Benglis' cantilevered pours might benefit from another reading of the video. There are often moments in which it slips into abstraction in a manner that is almost indifferent to any notion of 'proper' documentation. At times, all that can be seen is the liquid polyurethane freely flowing down an ambiguous blank surface; the camera observes as it pools and quickly expands toward the edge of the frame. In another instance, the camera is placed underneath the armature where no spectator would have access to during the installation. The camera points up toward the polyurethane as it fills in all the crevices and seams of the plastic sheet. In these shots, the context of the gallery

³⁵ Lawrence Alloway, "Artists and Photographs," *Studio International*, April 1970, 163.

³⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 76.

is removed as is the body of the artist. Accordingly, the camera magnifies the results of Benglis' gesture; it offers a view of the material that one wouldn't necessarily see in the exhibition space. The video camera, in this case, is given a perceptual advantage to see the work unfold, a viewpoint that was rarely admitted in artists' accounts of documentation.

In the case of Benglis' work, process is not conveyed through the artist's body performing a repeated gesture. Returning to Benglis' catalog statement for *Art in Process IV*, she subtly subverts her own position as the author of the work. She states, "With the firing of the wax paintings I realized that the idea of directing matter logically was absurd. Matter could and would take, finally, its own form."³⁷ Benglis is willing to displace her own authorship of the object, permitting them to essentially 'make' themselves. The objects act, to borrow from anthropologist Alfred Gell, as "indexes of agency."³⁸ Now understood as independent of their maker, they leave traces that manifest within larger systems of interaction and circulation, akin to the function a photograph itself. The pours, once freed from the armature, are both a residue and a trace; Benglis' use of material and the proximity that the documentation allows insists that we see her forms not merely as an object but as phenomena. The material agency of the objects that comprise the six installations ultimately discloses itself photographically, mirroring the camera's automatic act of capturing or freezing a moment in time.

³⁷ Varian, *Art in Process IV*, n.p.

³⁸ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 15.

In her 1991 catalogue essay for *Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures*, curator Susan Krane acknowledges that “Benglis believed in the validity of, and the need for, touch and authorship.”³⁹ This statement on its own supports the argument for the ongoing inclusion of Benglis’ pours in the conventional lineage of Abstract Expressionism. Harold Rosenberg, prior to writing on ephemeral art as “event,” asserted that Abstract Expressionism’s trademark gestural mark-making “[broke] down every distinction between art and life.”⁴⁰ As William Kaizen explains,

the collapse of this distinction meant the collapse between the work of art and its maker...Life for Rosenberg was biographical, and the artist was a heroic creator, an existential superman whose every mark became a moral act, realizing a will to power with each gesture.⁴¹

However, Krane’s notion of authorship is not defined by such individualistic claims of self-expression. The personal “autographic gesture” at the heart of Abstract Expressionism is instead employed by Benglis to suggest “a socialized self, seen in relation to the artist’s public as well as inner being.”⁴²

Benglis’ works have incidentally been given many labels throughout this chapter, from paintings to sculptures to installations. Given how easy it is to slip between these categories, perhaps it is not as productive to definitively state *what* they may be, but rather what effect they may have. This chapter aimed to unpack Benglis’ intersections with the expanded sculptural practices in the late 1960s and additionally the role of

³⁹ Susan Krane, *Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures* (Atlanta, Ga. : Seattle: High Museum of Art, 1991), 12.

⁴⁰ Harold Rosenberg, quoted in William Kaizen, “Framed Space: Allan Kaprow and the Spread of Painting,” *Grey Room* 13 (Autumn 2003): 83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Krane, *Lynda Benglis*, 12.

photography and video in illustrating, even enhancing, the materiality of an artist's gesture. Documentation and the object are closely linked in Benglis' work. This is apparent not only in how her work was documented in process but also how the material itself performs photographically as an automatic process apart from the interference of the artist.

The photographs and video documentation do not work against the objects they depict. They establish a better understanding of the agency of the sculptural object, and, furthermore, challenges the assumption that they are indexical traces of the artist herself. From this newfound understanding of how the individual pours perform as objects and as images, I turn, in Chapter Two, to the multiple implications of Benglis' process in the spaces in which they are produced. I will expand on the intersection between sculpture and environment, and, importantly, the way Benglis' work has interacted within the highly contested territories of the gallery space—the floor and the wall.

Chapter Two

Situating the Site and the Viewer

The six cantilevered installations of 1971 exist in a liminal position between sculpture and environment. Undulating from the wall, they evoke a situation that appears entirely uncontrolled, while at the same time are wholly dependent on, even stabilized by, the wall as a support. As I describe in Chapter One, documentation establishes ephemeral views of the pours unfolding, offsetting the assumption that the still photograph is fundamentally opposed to process art. But what happens when the polyurethane has cured and when the armatures are removed? Describing the installations as “animistic, hulking winglike projections,”¹ “lava flows,”² “a tropical rainforest,”³ and “the drooping foliage of some malevolent, prehistoric swamp plant”⁴ critics and art historians have largely maintained that the installations appeared as a more terrestrial, living site than one that rests comfortably within the confines of the gallery space.

Yet looking at the documentation photographs of each exhibition, it is impossible to ignore their rather conventional placement on the gallery’s white walls or the nearly regularized spacing between each work. It is also difficult to posit that Benglis was aiming for a completely transformative or immersive environment that radically broke from her contemporaneous works. Rather, the artist was more interested in the

¹ Ibid., 27.

² Caroline Hancock, Franck Gautherot, and Seung-Duk Kim, eds., *Lynda Benglis* (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009), 11.

³ Kertess, “Foam Structures,” 37.

⁴ Grace Glueck, “New York,” *Art in America*, September 1971, 122.

transformative potential of materials themselves. The six installations thus exist within two different kinds of spaces. The first is more metaphorical and evocative; the objects gesture *toward* the viewer, establishing an unsettling presence.

The second space is more physical and structural. While the context of the gallery was certainly a concern for artists prior to the 1960s, the expanding notion of sculpture as event prompted many artists and critics to respond to what this would mean for the site of the exhibition itself. It is apparent in the display and ensuing critical reception of the installations that site nevertheless informed the reading of her work. This chapter navigates the different kinds of spaces that the installations create, asserting that Benglis' gesture manifests not only in the material conditions of the objects, but also in the way they interact with the exhibition space.

Among the first of Benglis' work to receive critical attention were brightly-colored floor-bound latex pours. Between 1968 and 1971, Benglis made a series of works that, by many critical accounts, emerged from the legacy of Abstract Expressionism. A 1969 feature by Douglas Davis in *The National Observer*, titled "This is the Loose Paint Generation," highlights the physicality of contemporary art which "march[es] in reverse."⁵ Rather than citing the more logical and "cool" systems of the reigning Minimalist sculpture, the article suggests that the source for this younger generation lies in the traditions of Abstract Expressionist painting. However, the article notes that some artists—including Benglis, Sam Gilliam, and Richard Tuttle—strictly avoid the rigidity of painting by eliminating the need for the traditional rectangular canvas support. "We

⁵ Douglas M. Davis, "This Is the Loose Paint Generation," *The National Observer*, August 4, 1969, 20.

are no longer involved in Greenberg's glimpses,"⁶ states Benglis matter-of-factly in the article. She is referring to the art critic, Clement Greenberg, and his strict logic of modernist painting that demanded pictorial flatness.

Curiously, the article places the "Loose Paint Generation" in opposition to the emerging process artists, such as Barry Le Va, Robert Morris, and Alan Saret, all of whom Benglis would exhibit with in the forthcoming years. Davis' interpretation of the contrasting process artists stems from the group's use of ubiquitous, dull industrial materials and ignores their gestural—and often—spontaneous acts. On the other hand, the "colorful, complicated, and pleasing surfaces"⁷ in Benglis' work incite visceral pleasure apart from the process of their making.⁸

Indeed, as Benglis recounts in an interview with *Ocular* magazine in 1979,

I was interested in an image that was allowed to form through the knowledge and discipline of the painter, as he or she was thinking. I also was interested in the images' autonomous form, so I decided to pigment the latex rubber and later the polyurethane foam directly. Those early pieces are about painting.⁹

Benglis saw her early works as extending the possibilities of painting without a canvas.

She moved to New York in 1964 after studying painting at Newcomb College in New

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ It also seems that Davis applies a gendered lens to Benglis' works. Benglis would later mock the tendency to read particular artworks as "female." When asked by *Art-Rite* magazine, "Do you think there is a shared female artistic sensibility in the work of female artists?" she responded, "Yes, there is a shared female sensibility. Women want to please." Susan Richmond convincingly argues that this statement must be read as parody, as her video work at the time also addressed the clichés of the sexist assumptions about women artists. See Benglis' response in "Un-Skirting the Issue." *Art-Rite*, Summer 1974 and Chapter Three of Susan Richmond's *Lynda Benglis: Beyond Process*. London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013.

⁹ "Interview: Lynda Benglis," 36.

Orleans. Benglis quickly immersed herself in New York abstraction through the works of Franz Kline, Helen Frankenthaler, and Barnett Newman as well as in the emerging minimalist sculpture of Carl Andre and Robert Morris. Many of her works from 1967-70 make no attempt to conceal their references. The latex pour, *Odalisque (Hey Hey Frankenthaler)* (Figure 18), forces the association of Benglis' work to the titular artist's trademark stained canvases which were also made by pouring. Soon after, her free-standing polyurethane corner sculptures entitled *For Carl Andre* (Figure 19) and *Untitled (King of Flot)* (Figure 9)—a reference to the “stupid” flotsam-and-jetsam felt scraps which Robert Morris used¹⁰—playfully nod to the male-dominated field of sculpture at the time. Benglis removed the serious industrial materials, the streamlined forms, and highly intellectualized systems for which these artists were known and replaced them with messier, more tactile objects that appeared to be melting in the corner of the gallery space.

David Batchelor argues in his 2000 book, *Chromophobia*, that vivid industrial color (which he calls “paint from a can” as opposed to oil paint from a tube) played a role in the shift in painting of the 1960s, when artists were distancing themselves from the rectangular format of the canvas. Batchelor writes, “to use paint from a can rather than from a tube may not seem much, but it carries with the risk—or the promise—of abandoning the entire tradition of easel painting, of painting as representation.”¹¹ Where oil paint maintained the history and specificity of the canvas, the plasticity of industrial

¹⁰ Judith Tannenbaum, “Oral History Interview with Lynda Benglis,” *Oral Histories, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*, November 20, 2009, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-lynda-benglis-15741>.

¹¹ David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 99.

paint offered no precise artistic use, thereby de-specifying the medium—and the act—of painting. This integration of an entirely new material meant that artists would change their habits, approaches, and attitudes toward illusionistic, highly rendered surfaces and forego paint as an expressive and inherently emotional medium.

Benglis' use of latex aligns with this approach. It offered a way out of the confines of the rectangle, and, unlike oil paint, it could become both surface and support. Mixing bright pigments into liquid latex rubber, Benglis poured gallons of this mixture across her studio floor. Wielding a heavy five gallon bucket, Benglis' pouring, rather than application of paint with a brush, intensified the physicality of her work. The resulting objects, often one half to three quarters of an inch thick, took nearly a month to fully cure and would remain displayed on the floor.¹² Although they are often referred to as “fallen paintings,” these works signal her increasingly estranged relationship to the practice. Despite their obvious association to the Abstract Expressionist gesture, the resulting format of their display on the floor breaks from painterly convention. In a 1971 profile in the periodical, *Rubber Developments*, Benglis deflects the typical association of her pours to painting, noting that her working process is both spatial and temporal. She states,

My art is not really a painting. It is a continuation of a spatial idea that has to do with the fluidity of matter...I direct the material through the size of pour, viscosity and the pigments I use. This involvement with the flow of materials is a time experience as well as a spatial one.¹³

Despite the flatness of the objects, Benglis turned the material qualities inherent to painting into a physical procedure for imbuing objects with a physicality that more

¹² S.R. Dubrowin, “Latex: One Artist’s Raw Material,” *Rubber Developments*, 1971, 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

closely aligns with sculpture. Benglis' description of these works come from the effects of the material itself, in which the viscosity and fluidity is easily shaped by gravity. "I suppose I found myself a sculptor," concedes Benglis in an interview in 1982.¹⁴

Recalling her poured latex works, Benglis states,

I've never been a gestural artist in terms of an Expressionist. I think my interest in materials is very contextual and has not so much to do with the expression, but it has really to do with my learning what the materials are and what they can do in relationship to art history and contextually in relation to the environment, the room, the wall, the floor.¹⁵

This assertion that her work forms contextual relationships with site may have started in the poured latex works but are made more explicit in her cantilevered pours that followed. To recall the observation of the MIT exhibition made by Kertess, the dripping black form whose "antenna" occupied both the wall and the floor set off a dynamic relationship between the two distinct viewing sites. Benglis' consideration of the gallery space appears to have come not out of the tradition of painting but instead from spatial and object-oriented sculpture.

There appears to be no official record of Benglis exhibiting prior to 1969. The latex pour at the University of Rhode Island featured in *Life* magazine marks her first and only solo exhibition of that year. However, 1969 also saw nine group exhibitions, ranging from the Bykert Gallery in New York to *Prospect 69* in Düsseldorf. The most high-profile invitation came from curators Marcia Tucker and James Monte for the landmark process art exhibition, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, at the Whitney Museum of

¹⁴ Gumpert, Rifkin, and Tucker, *Early Work: Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner*, 11.

¹⁵ WhitneyFocus, "Whitney Focus Presents Lynda Benglis," *Youtube*, June 4, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq7VklUhY18>.

American Art. The work selected for this exhibition would be, as Tucker writes in the catalog, "...phenomenological in nature, dealing with the appearances and gestural modes by means of which physical things are presented to our consciousness."¹⁶ The seemingly-durable materials in the exhibition appeared to unfold and unravel; none would be confined to a canvas or a pedestal base. As a result, these works were framed as process-based *gestures*, resistant to the modernist categories of both painting and sculpture. Tucker and Monte's catalog text is indebted to the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as it focuses on the increasing presence of the subjective body—both of the artist and viewer—in the experience of art. Unimportant, for the curators, were concerns with style, medium, and predetermined ends. Instead, *Anti-Illusion* signaled a change in the conditions for exhibition-making itself, as "the very nature of the piece may be determined by its location in a particular place in a particular museum."¹⁷ As the curators acknowledged in the catalog, few works in the exhibition would be seen in advance of the show.

Tucker has since noted that the title of the exhibition was intended to be *Anti Form*, a term coined by Robert Morris in a 1968 essay of the same name. This was one of the last in a significant series of essays based on the proposition that, "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."¹⁸ In his essay, Morris describes a recent tendency in art that

¹⁶ Marcia Tucker and James Monte, eds., *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969), 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 15.

aims to reveal, as its finished product, the materials and the means of its production. He writes, “Considerations of ordering are necessarily casual and imprecise and unemphasized. Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to the material.”¹⁹ However, the other artists selected for the exhibition did not share the same enthusiasm for the title, as it didn’t seem to represent the totality of all the artists’ working processes.²⁰ Like his aversion to photography which I outlined in Chapter One, Morris’ anti-form works attempted to avoid the rigidity or stability of a permanent form. Accordingly, Tucker took a cue from yet another crucial voice in art criticism and changed the exhibition title to *Anti-Illusion*, a sly “reference to the critic Clement Greenberg’s theory that paintings should be free of both illusion and representation.”²¹ Tucker and Monte break from Greenberg’s insistence on medium-specificity in a work of art. Where *Anti Form* as a title more broadly described an aesthetic situation devoid of an object, *Anti-Illusion* as a title attempted to free the object from imagery and pictorial representation. Despite the title change, their interest in Morris’ definition of anti-form remains apparent in her selection of artists.

The concepts of anti-illusion and anti-form, which by this point had become a full-fledged visual “trend,”²² resisted any traditional association with painting as a pictorial device. In fact, many of the artists selected alongside Benglis would soon become (or had already been) key figures in post-minimal *sculpture*, including Morris

¹⁹ Robert Morris, “Anti Form,” in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 46.

²⁰ Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble*, 84.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² Lippard, *Six Years*, 25.

himself, along with Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Barry Le Va, and Serra. The fascination with “random piling” and “hanging” is apparent in the exhibition. Since the majority of the works were not produced in the artists’ studios, but instead in situ in the Whitney exhibition spaces, their individual contributions to the exhibition often appeared to be in flux. Rather than deliver finished works, artists opted to use the exhibition space as a site of production one week in advance to the exhibition’s opening. Le Va, for example, spent several days in the exhibition space, sifting flour onto a designated area on the floor, “undermin[ing] the received legacy of sculptural uprightness and permanence.”²³ This sentiment—a decidedly anti-monumental stance—was echoed countless times throughout *Anti-Illusion*, from Robert Rohm’s softened sculptural grid (Figure 20) to Rafael Ferrer’s melting ice block at the museum’s entrance.

However, despite being a fundamental working method for most of the artists in *Anti-Illusion*, Benglis did not work on site at the museum. Instead, she made her latex pour in her studio and delivered it to the Whitney upon its completion. By this point, the fourteen-foot pour, *Planet*, that the curators had seen at her studio had been replaced with a thirty-foot pour entitled *Contraband* (Figure 21). Due to its scale, it proved to be impossible to situate anywhere in the exhibition space. Tucker and Monte suggested that Benglis remove it from the floor and place it on a ramp near the museum entrance. Elevating *Contraband*, made and intended to be displayed on the floor, would alter its meaning. Unable to reconcile with the curators, Benglis withdrew from the exhibition.

As Susan Richmond has observed, “The choice to alter *Contraband*’s installation

²³ Michael Maizels, *Barry Le Va: The Aesthetic Aftermath* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 28.

revealed a fundamental difference in how Benglis and the curators perceived the work. Presumably, for Monte and Tucker, the frozen swirls of coloured latex effectively conveyed ‘process’ whether the work was placed on the floor or positioned on a ramp.”²⁴ The curators’ interest in Benglis’ process and the once-fluid nature of the material ultimately caused them to overlook the fact that Benglis’ finished object may have exceeded their own parameters for the exhibition. Moreover, examining this incident in 1974, critic Vivien Raynor notes, “Placed with the other pieces, its bright colors disrupted the gray tone of the exhibition; deposited in any of the building’s open areas, it was a traffic hazard.”²⁵

Raynor’s observation of the “gray tone” of the exhibition is crucial to understand Benglis’ decision, as it articulates the perceived difference between her finished work and those made by the others. Benglis recounted to Carter Ratcliff in 1994 that

I was interested in that black stone floor at the Whitney and having my piece pop up from the floor—having the contrast you get from bright colors against a dark background. But Jim and Marcia said...[w]e can’t put a piece like yours in front of the Robert Ryman paintings, which would be all white on a white wall. We can’t put it near the Richard Serra, which is made of lead.²⁶

The muted palette of the exhibition as a whole was in part due to the other artists’ favoring of industrial or organic materials. Although she had for several years been working with plastics, rubbers, and wax, the acidic Day-Glo pigments boisterously called attention to their artificiality. Benglis was not attempting to discover the material and

²⁴ Richmond, *Lynda Benglis*, 22.

²⁵ Vivien Raynor, “The Art of Survival (And Vice Versa),” *New York Times*, February 17, 1974.

²⁶ Carter Ratcliff, *Out of the Box: The Reinvention of Art: 1965-1975* (New York: Allworth Press, 2000), 151.

contextual limits of white paint, as was Ryman, or to use the raw material to produce ephemeral situations, as was Le Va, but rather to *transform* the latex itself. The swirling colors alluded to planets, oil spills, bayous, and other associations which critics quickly noted. Ultimately, *Contraband* counteracted the curator's assumptions in the catalog that the finished art object is, to a certain extent, unimportant.

Furthermore, that Benglis describes the floor as “background” asserts the pictorial—and, ultimately, photographic—potential of the floor. Very soon after his *Splash* series, Serra wrote in *Arts Magazine* in 1970 that the “lateral spread of materials” could not “avoid arrangement qua figure ground: the pictorial convention.”²⁷ For Serra, the floor becomes the stable, permanent ground—not unlike a stretched canvas—on which the art is ultimately transformed back into an image, disengaging from both the viewer and the conditions of the room in which it is placed. A solution to avoiding the novelties of painterly convention would be found in the spatial and temporal qualities of sculpture.

Tucker and Monte, by the exhibition title alone, were interested in work that defied the expectations of an image. They state in the catalog, “We are offered an art that presents itself as disordered, chaotic, or anarchic. Such an art deprives us of the fulfillment of our aesthetic expectations and offers, instead, an experience which cannot be anticipated nor immediately understood.”²⁸ This observation that the art in *Anti-Illusion* intentionally “deprives” the viewers of a conventional aesthetic experience parallels the relationship between sculpture and photography that I observe in Chapter

²⁷ Richard Serra, “Play It Again, Sam,” *Arts Magazine*, February 1970, 24.

²⁸ Tucker and Monte, *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, 24.

One, as the photograph obscures or alters the experience of sculpture. Critic Emily Wasserman reminds the reader in her review of *Anti-Illusion* that Benglis was absent from the exhibition. She still discusses Benglis extensively, referring to another latex pour titled *Bounce* which was included an exhibition at Bykert Gallery that had opened the same weekend (Figure 22).²⁹ She writes,

The method by which the piece was (non)formed is thus actually objectified, while the events and timing of its process are congealed. But somehow, the piece does not quite manage to justify its own material objectification or procedure—either as an ambivalent kind of object, or as a tangible painting which seeks to establish its own independent field. It is not strong enough as that proto-plasmic mat...nor does it hold its own as a kind of painting entirely freed from an auxiliary ground or armature.³⁰

Wasserman sees Benglis' willingness to make neither painting nor sculpture as a wider ambivalence about the way her work should be perceived. As a sculpture, the latex pour appears arbitrary. As a painting, it is too reliant on the ground to contextualize its position. But Wasserman does not comment on the object's presence in the gallery space nor the effect it produces in relation to the other works.

In his combined review of *Anti-Illusion* and the Bykert show, Peter Schjeldahl also detects a similar ambivalence in *Bounce*. Like Carl Andre, who, as Schjeldahl asserts, was concerned more with the "esthetics of viewing" rather than process, Benglis, was almost unfashionably concerned with making art objects. He observes, "Her use of bravura gesture appears functional rather than expressive, forbidding the eye a precise reading of the work's shape and consistency and thus heightening the confusion of

²⁹ The May 1969 Bykert exhibition can therefore be considered the first public exhibition of her poured latex works.

³⁰ Emily Wasserman, "New York," *Artforum*, September 1969, 59.

painting, sculpture, and ‘other’ to an exquisite pitch.”³¹ Unlike Wasserman, Schjeldahl praises Benglis’ ability to work *between* media. But what, exactly, is the ‘other’ element at work in the poured latex? Based on his complete review, it appears to relate to the specific temporal conditions in which the *Anti-Illusion* artists worked. This work, he asserts, is a “non-style,” a deliberate assault on the seeming stability of formalism.³²

Ultimately, what can be discerned from these two reviews is that Benglis’ poured latex works permit another kind of “deprivation” that counteracts process art’s casual arrangements. Rather than existing as the direct byproduct of an ephemeral action, the latex pours are instead objects that offer no aesthetic resolution. The swirling, congealed surface, by merely *suggesting* movement, was still capable of destabilizing the possibility of the art object’s permanence. Yet for Benglis, it was precisely from her desire to expand the possibilities of pictorial (or painterly) convention that led to her early work in this ‘other’ space. Nevertheless, *Contraband* remains one of the artist’s most overtly process-based works because its shape and scale were strictly defined by the way the liquid spreads across the floor.

What is overlooked in the *Contraband* incident is that Benglis was working, to a certain extent, site-specifically. Even though she did not make the pour at the museum, she was responding to the architectural qualities of the Whitney’s building, as demonstrated by her statement about the Whitney’s black floor. Two years later, by changing the “ground” of her sculptures, moving from the floor to the wall, Benglis would more directly confront the increasingly blurring relationship between sculpture and

³¹ Peter Schjeldahl, “New York Letter,” *Art International*, September 1969, 72.

³² *Ibid.*, 70.

environment. The six installations are implicitly tied to the site of their production, having been poured directly onto the wall and therefore dependent on its support.

Benglis' most high-profile installation, *Adhesive Products*, was made for the 1971 exhibition, *Works for New Spaces*, at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Benglis was one of twenty-two artists invited to install commissioned works for the museum's inaugural exhibition in its new building. Alongside the materially-driven artists such as Morris, Serra, Van Buren, and Benglis, the exhibition presented a broader view of artistic media and intervention that emphasized the phenomenal effects of light, sound and motion.³³ Director Martin Friedman recognized the lack of stylistic unity between the selected artists but nevertheless noted their similar approaches, writing in the catalog that "many artists opted for the experiential rather than the monumental and, by creating works directly in the galleries...they recognized that their art could have only momentary existence, limited by the period of the exhibition."³⁴

Recall that just two years prior, Benglis withdrew *Contraband* from *Anti-Illusion* because it was ultimately too imposing both in scale and color. *Adhesive Products*, on the other hand, was intentionally so. After visiting the museum and speaking with the curators, Benglis was given an entire enclosed segment of a gallery space for *Adhesive Products*. She elected to use the whole length of a seventy-two foot wall, which was across from an enclosed corridor that divided the larger exhibition space and housed a

³³ In fact, both the list of participating artists and the curatorial approach more closely resembles the 1969 exhibition, *Spaces*, at the Museum of Modern Art, which claimed that "human presence and perception of the spatial context have become materials of art." See Jennifer Licht. *Spaces*. New York, N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1969.

³⁴ Martin Friedman, ed., *Works For New Spaces* (Walker Art Center, 1971).

Dan Flavin fluorescent light installation. While she had initially planned to do ten pours, each one a different color,³⁵ Flavin's light cast a harsh blue tone into Benglis' portion of the space (Figure 23). The 250 pounds of colorful pigments required for this project were thus replaced with black iron oxide, which would offset the blue hue of Flavin's lights. Named after the Bronx company that supplied the polyurethane, *Adhesive Products* appears in the documentation photographs to emphasize the long length of the wall. While the MIT exhibition that came afterwards would layer multiple colors in each individual form, the nine black forms poured at the Walker Art Center are relatively evenly spaced across the span of the wall. Eric Sutherland's installation photographs once again show Benglis and a number of assistants wearing respirators and rubber gloves, pouring the black liquid over wide, cascading armatures of plastic and chicken wire (Figure 24). The largest of the pours was nearly fifteen feet long; rather than simply flowing down to the ground, the form undulates, crescendos, and culminates at the very end like the crest of a wave.³⁶

Works for New Spaces received national press coverage in the week leading up to the public opening of the building on May 17, 1971. *Adhesive Products* was across the board the standout piece. Shedding the gaudy Pop Art colors seemed to be a wise choice

³⁵ Lynda Benglis, Letter to Richard Koshalek, March 8, 1971. Lynda Benglis *Works for New Spaces* artist file, Walker Art Center Archives.

³⁶ An exchange of letters in the Walker Art Center archives between Benglis and Walker curator Richard Koshalek dated July 9 and July 13, 1971 reveals that one of the forms fell off the wall and had to be reattached with a construction-quality adhesive. There is not a specific record of which of the forms it was, but I would posit that it was in fact the largest form. This attests to how precarious and rather unstable the forms actually were as they clung to the wall with no other support, something that documentation photographs cannot clearly illustrate.

for Benglis, as many reacted favorably to its darker and more ominous tone. Klaus Kertess found the all-black forms to be hostile and “turbulent,” resisting the subtlety of many of the other works in the exhibition.³⁷ Critic Hilton Kramer covered *Works For New Spaces* twice for *The New York Times*, focusing his first review more heavily on the new building. He gave high praise to *Adhesive Products*, describing it as having an almost cinematic presence. He writes, “The most spectacular work in the show is an enormous series of ten macabre black shapes by Lynda Benglis that jut out from the gallery wall—an abstract sculptural environment that looks as if it had been inspired by Alfred Hitchcock in one of his most menacing moods.”³⁸

In his more focused review of the exhibition two weeks later, Kramer challenges Friedman’s assertion that the artists responded in some way to the architectural elements of the building. For the most part, recalling the works of Serra, Larry Bell, Donald Judd, and Robert Rauschenberg he notes, “there is no discernible esthetic relation to the building at all.” This is a valid assessment, as these four artists did not actually make their works on site. However, Benglis is once again the exception, as Kramer confirms, “Miss Benglis has indeed used the space at the Walker as an integral part of her imagery.”³⁹ Kramer does not directly state how, exactly, she has done this. One can infer that, given his attention to the imagery and associations that the forms evoke, the piece succeeded simply by clashing with the starkness of the new white interior. As Kramer notes, the

³⁷ Kertess, “Foam Structures,” 35.

³⁸ Hilton Kramer, “Minneapolis Museum Opens Today,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1971. Kramer is mistaken in identifying ten shapes; on the contrary, Benglis only poured nine.

³⁹ Hilton Kramer, “Grace, Flexibility, Esthetic Tact,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1971.

“arresting” and “macabre” forms appeared as “relics from the natural history of some imaginary planet,”⁴⁰ a far cry from the Walker’s sleek, modern building.

Critic Frederick Appell takes a slightly different approach in his *Minneapolis Star* review. He seems to take seriously Friedman’s premise that the works in the exhibition must be approached experientially. He thoroughly describes *Adhesive Products* as follows:

Various segments are at, above and below the line of normal sight and all embody the ambiguity of being at once unsupported by the space below and at the same time obviously formed by being poured, dripping and oozing, and pulled by gravity on top of something solid. This gives the space a quality of being both there and not there as a mass and is a clear example of three-dimensional sculpture capturing empty space and using it as part of itself.⁴¹

Tracing the phenomenological effects of the forms—and not the imagery itself—Appell hones in on the importance of time in experiencing these exhibitions. From these reviews we can see that *Adhesive Products* prompted two very different responses that were both read through Benglis’ gesture: the first, for Kramer, the transformative and metaphorical significance of her materials, and second, for Appell, the spatial and temporal confusion of the hovering forms as they continuously unfold along the length of the wall.

Benglis’ involvement in both *Anti-Illusion* and *Works for New Spaces* occurred very early in her career, before any semblance of an *oeuvre* could have been produced. In laying out the parameters in works in the exhibition, it is clear to see that “process art” and “anti-form” as sculptural categories were still rather malleable terms. However, one

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Frederick Appell Jr., “Walker Art Center Showcases 20 Artists with Unusual Ideas,” *The Minneapolis Star*, May 14, 1971.

of the earliest attempts to contextualize this time period came from the art critic and senior editor of *Artforum*, Robert Pincus-Witten. In the late 1960s, he began to write about the developments of sculpture, finally publishing his anthology, *Post-Minimalism*, in 1976. Included was his 1974 *Artforum* article, “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture,” which quickly became the canonical text on her work, in part because of the article’s title itself.⁴² Despite the overall laudatory tone of the article, Pincus-Witten begins by expressing reluctance about the Benglis’ emerging status. Describing her as “extravagant,” “capricious,” and “casual,” he detects a lack of commitment to any specific idea in her work, writing, “She appears to toss aside important realizations at the instant of their discovery.”⁴³ For Pincus-Witten, the array of media that Benglis used—including wax, latex, polyurethane, and sprayed aluminum—in combination with the short time frame in which the work was produced further detached itself from sculpture in the 1960s, where, for example, “many of the major Minimalists...built their careers on one idea as an intense and committed demonstration of the continuing validity of a single option.”⁴⁴

⁴² Pincus-Witten’s article on Benglis appeared in the same issue of *Artforum* as what is unquestionably Benglis’ infamous gesture, a two-page “advertisement” that was placed prominently in the first few pages of the magazine. Benglis is pictured on the right side of the page spread, nude and oiled with self-tanner. One hand rests on her hip and the other grips a double-sided dildo between her legs. The ambiguities of this controversial photograph—was it intended to be a statement on the commodification of art, gender inequality in the art world, or a crass form of self-promotion?—polarized the *Artforum* editors, who received many letters expressing either support or distaste for the image. Much has been written about the impact of this image. For a further account of this incident, see Amy Newman, ed., *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*. New York, N.Y.: Soho Press, 2003.

⁴³ Pincus-Witten, “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture,” 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Yet at the same time, Pincus-Witten maintains in a footnote that there are “traceable groups” or formal similarities that Benglis repeats throughout her works.⁴⁵ In this regard, Pincus-Witten uses the term *frozen gesture* as a category in an attempt to bring clarity to her disparate practice.⁴⁶ He writes, “as glamour is Warhol’s message and the star his icon, and the square, circle and triangle are the existential characters in the dramas of Minimalism, so is the frozen gesture—the excised, congealed, colored stroke—Benglis’ prime fascination and essential icon.”⁴⁷ Not only does Pincus-Witten situate Benglis’ own career into the context of the two formerly reigning artistic moments, Pop art and Minimalism, he repeatedly frames Benglis’ practice as a product of the two. Not quite austere and geometric enough to be minimal, but too abstract to be pop, the work is instead defined by how it plays off yet resists any specific category.

Together these frozen gestures—including the Day-Glo floor pieces, the free-standing polyurethane foam sculptures, and finally, her expansive cantilevered installations—all can be seen as distinct traces of her process but ultimately, as Pincus-Witten implies, as an iconic sign of the artist herself. Since Benglis, firmly rooted in abstraction, tended to avoid “specific imagery,”⁴⁸ it is instead fluidity (both of her material and her approach) became the identifying mark of the artist. The term *frozen gesture*, then, describes both the form that the material takes and its visceral impact on the viewer.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁶ Though the term *frozen gesture* is associated with Pincus-Witten’s article, he states that the term was actually first used by Benglis in conversation with him for the article.

⁴⁷ Pincus-Witten, “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture,” 58.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 55.

Pincus-Witten's essay has persisted as an oft-cited authority on her work. This is in part because few others wrote sustained critical essays on Benglis' early work during this time.⁴⁹ I am not suggesting that Benglis was underrepresented in art criticism, as her early bibliography boasts numerous appearances in such influential periodicals such as *Artforum* and *Art International*. But it is unusual, given the amount of writing produced by and about her peers, that by 1974 there were few sustained essays that expanded on the broader implications of her work.⁵⁰ Aside from her remarks in interviews about process art's limitations as "closed systems," Benglis did not often formally comment on the broader practice of sculpture. As a result, Pincus-Witten's essay simultaneously shaped and limited the discourse, as his characterization of the frozen gesture at times too-conveniently groups all of her poured works together. As the article has had as a crucial role in Benglis' career, and also was involved in more broadly defining post-minimal sculpture, it is worth considering Pincus-Witten's essay further.

By immediately establishing Benglis in his introduction as an important, yet idiosyncratic, figure in contemporary art, it is clear that he is attempting to reconcile Benglis with the broader narrative of modernism's unraveling ushered in by Minimalism

⁴⁹ A more sustained critical engagement with her work emerged after Benglis began to experiment with video when she began teaching at the University of Rochester in 1972. This is perhaps because of the newness of the medium and the unexplored territory it offered art historians and critics. As Benglis featured herself prominently in the videos, it prompted a larger conversation on feminism, self-representation, and sexuality.

⁵⁰ Gregoire Müller may be an exception. His 1971 essay in *Arts Magazine*, "Materiality and Painterliness," seems to foreshadow some of Pincus-Witten's concerns as Müller attempts to define a new field of artistic practice that falls between the expressive pictorial concerns of painting and the seeming objectivity of process art. See Gregoire Müller, "Materiality and Painterliness." *Arts Magazine*, October 1971.

and Pop. Benglis' gesture is, unsurprisingly, linked to back to Jackson Pollock but not strictly because of their shared gestural approach. Pincus-Witten also insists on the heightened presence of the artist's bodies in their works. He asserts that both artists are driven by a psychological desire to be "in" their work, which is made visible by the traces of handprints in Pollock's paintings as well as the scale of Benglis' pours, which required her to physically move in and around the space to complete the work. His discussion of Benglis' use of materials thereafter becomes implicitly tied to its associations with the body. For instance, he quotes Benglis, who describes the production of her wax paintings "like masturbating in the studio" and he calls her freestanding polyurethane sculptures "hard crusted aerated bodies."⁵¹ Even her videos, in which she often layered together sounds and images, are related back to her bodily pour.

A photograph taken for a 1974 exhibition announcement was included among the numerous images of these *frozen gestures* that illustrate the article (Figure 25). In this image, Benglis posed nude in the manner of a Betty Grable pin-up, her denim jeans pushed down to her ankles. Stills from Benglis' 1974 video, *Female Sensibility*, adorn the final page of the article. The stills capture close-ups of the mouths and hands of the artist and her friend, Marilyn Lenkowsky, who in the video kiss and caress each other over a collaged soundtrack of talk radio. These more overtly erotic works, for Pincus-Witten, perform an "ironic self-parody of sexuality"⁵² that match the high-key "tawdry" color and anti-formalist approach of her sculpture. Though made *after* most of the works discussed in the article, these images give the earlier sculptures an irresistibly vulgar, Pop-derived

⁵¹ Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," 55.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 59.

charge. As Pincus-Witten concludes in his article, “She is fascinated with substance and eccentric materials as a function of Expressionist sensibility and she takes pleasure in vulgarity, which is central to Pop.”⁵³ Now shedding any potential association with Minimalism, Pincus-Witten returns to the *frozen gesture* as not only part of her material procedures but also as something that is inseparable from her own modes of self-representation. In this regard, Pincus-Witten’s description of the *frozen gesture* assimilates to the conventional painterly brushstroke. The brushstroke, as critic Craig Owens would later remark, was, after all, once a “modernist sign for the artist’s ‘presence.’”⁵⁴

However, it is possible that gesture can be read in another way. Jacques Lacan’s “What is a Picture?” of 1964 is one out of a series of lectures that attempted to lay out the conditions of the Gaze, defined as the anxious awareness that one simultaneously sees and can be seen.⁵⁵ This extends beyond the function of sight and vision. Rather, that one exists in a space external, unknown, to their own is Lacan’s concern. These lectures are complex and encompass a much broader set of issues than is necessary here. What concerns me is how gesture operates within this space of the Gaze. Lacan conceives

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Craig Owens, “From Work to Frame, Or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author’?,” in *Beyond Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 123.

⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 106. Lacan’s lecture begins with the poignant statement, “I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture.”

gesture as a “displayed movement” that is frozen upon the moment of its recognition.⁵⁶

Using painting as an apt example, Lacan explains that its illusionistic surface might work to captivate or put the subject at ease. However, the more elusive “expressive painting”—here, quite literally a painting with visible brushstrokes—does not satisfy the viewer.

Instead, the brushstrokes are a reminder of the Gaze, which provokes a desire, left unsatisfied, to see what lies beneath the canvas. Gesture, then, is not a transparent index of the artist, but rather a much less perceptible indicator of presence that the viewer cannot access.⁵⁷ As a press release for the MIT exhibition trenchantly observes, the pours function “not by surrounding the spectator and structuring his own physical space, but by threatening his claim to that space.”⁵⁸ The pours are perceived as yet another body in space, imposing themselves on the viewer. However, while Lacan’s explanation of gesture might productively allow one to understand how “presence” is manifested more obliquely in the cantilevered pours, it says little about how the viewer navigates now-uncomfortable condition of the gallery space.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 118. Lacan’s lecture, in part, addresses Merleau-Ponty’s “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence,” where the French phenomenologist discusses the relationship between language and art. Of particular interest to Lacan is Merleau-Ponty’s brief discussion of a film of Matisse painting. Lacan notes that the Matisse film was altered to play in slow motion, producing a temporal disparity in the gesture, “enlarged by the distension of time, [which] enables us to imagine the most perfect deliberation in each of these brush strokes.” For Merleau-Ponty, it is a mistake to think that the painted image was in anyway formulated prior to the exact moment in which he placed his paintbrush onto the canvas. For Lacan, it is precisely these arresting moments of recognition that lead to the Gaze.

⁵⁷ Sean Carney, *Brecht and Critical Theory: Dialectics and Contemporary Aesthetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 42.

⁵⁸ “Press Release, Lynda Benglis at the MIT Hayden Gallery” (News Office, MIT, October 28, 1971), Lynda Benglis Artist File, Archives of the Walker Art Center.

In his *Artforum* article, Pincus-Witten continually refers to the installations not merely as sculpture, but as *environments*, which, to him, function theatrically as “a site awaiting a Happening” or an “unconscious anticipation of such an event.”⁵⁹ Of course, no such event would actually occur. The “anticipation” he perceives is initiated by the theatricality of the material itself. His mention of “Happenings” and “environments,” is likely a reference to the work of Allan Kaprow, who in the late 1950s began to make immersive installations using mass-produced and found objects. These environments privileged the viewer’s interaction and eventually turned into full-fledged “Happenings,” which shifted the role of the passive viewer to an active participant involved in “scored” events and environments.⁶⁰

Alongside the role of the audience, the gallery space was also called into question. In his 1968 essay, “The Shape of the Art Environment,” Kaprow takes issue with Robert Morris’s claim that his anti-form works are a radical revolt from formal sculpture. No matter how random his arrangements of materials might be, Kaprow asserts, Morris is still working within conventional frameworks of composing and viewing sculpture. He remarks, “Morris’s new work...was made in a rectangular studio, to be shown in a rectangular gallery, reproduced in a rectangular magazine, in rectangular photographs, all aligned according to rectangular axes, for rectangular reading movements and rectangular thought patterns.”⁶¹ Furthermore, as Claire Bishop points out, “Kaprow did not consider a conventional art gallery a suitable location for the transformative potential of aesthetic

⁵⁹ Pincus-Witten, “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture,” 57.

⁶⁰ Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

⁶¹ Allan Kaprow, “The Shape of the Art Environment: How Anti Form is “Anti Form”?” *Artforum*, Summer 1968, 32.

experience: there, the viewing of art was too inhibited by ingrained responses.”⁶² Both the physical and ideological structure of the gallery, in other words, conditions the viewer, even choreographing one’s movement through the space. Furthermore, Kaprow’s critique of the rectangularity of Morris’ anti-form works renders the once-chaotic gestures photographic, an act which counters Morris’ very intentions to make work that evades photography.

While my discussion of Kaprow may seem to be a digression, it is necessary to unpack what Pincus-Witten may have meant by calling the wall pours “environments.” While it is compelling to imagine a vast, interactive environment where her cavernous pours completely overtake the gallery space, Benglis’ cantilevered pours maintain a strict allegiance to the gallery wall. A question, then, arises. Is Benglis defying or assimilating to the “rectangular thought patterns” of the gallery space?

Artist and critic Brian O’Doherty’s 1976 series of essays for *Artforum*, “Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space,” is a fitting response to the shifting conditions for exhibiting post-minimal sculpture and ephemeral installation so prevalent during this time. In this series, O’Doherty argues that the structure of the twentieth-century gallery changed alongside shifting theories about perception and illusion in art. Like Morris, O’Doherty was concerned with what it means to experience art as it exists in actual, not illusionistic, space. Paradoxically, as the gallery attempted to make itself invisible with its white walls and starkly undecorated interior, the more noticeable it became. He declares in the first essay of the series, “We have now reached a point where we see not

⁶² Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, 24.

the art but the space first.”⁶³ The gallery space effectively functions as a Derridean *parergon*, where that which is outside the work “comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation...Neither simply outside nor simply inside.”⁶⁴ The *parergon* establishes that one cannot see the work apart from its display and the context for its presentation.

O’Doherty observes that this effect ultimately turns the viewer from a detached seeing “Eye” only concerned with the optical to an embodied “Spectator” which must now physically navigate the gallery space. However, the Spectator is also disoriented and alienated by this new perceptual position; the gallery space becomes a tableaux in which “the spectator...feels he shouldn’t be there.”⁶⁵ Art situated within this context does not give instructions on, for instance, where to stand or where to hold one’s attention. Indeed, the notion of an ideal vantage point, which might be enforced through the photograph, disappears. O’Doherty’s essays clearly show that the modern gallery became a highly charged space.

His 1981 “The Gallery as Gesture,” describes the way artists confronted its structure. Beginning with Yves Klein’s *Le Vide* of 1958, in which the artist literally presented the empty white space of Galerie Iris Clert, O’Doherty argues that the installations that led into 1970s would “reduce the placelessness and timelessness of the

⁶³ Brian O’Doherty, “Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space Part 1,” *Artforum*, March 1976, 24.

⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Parergon,” in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1987), 54.

⁶⁵ Brian O’Doherty, “Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space Part 2: The Eye and the Spectator,” *Artforum*, April 1976, 32.

gallery's hysterical cell."⁶⁶ Though O'Doherty's essay focuses on large-scale works of, for example, Daniel Buren and Christo, who physically blocked access into the gallery, I would claim that his assertions could extend to sculptural and painterly practices. With the gallery as a site which contextualizes art, it becomes a place of negotiation between the artwork, the artist, and the viewer. In this sense, Benglis' cantilevered pours, placed conventionally on the wall, seem to play off the associations of the gallery wall as the container of once-timeless painting. In bringing the painterly surface into the exhibition space, the polyurethane pours reflect the Spectator's desire to be fully present within the works, despite the fact that their placement on the wall deprives one of a complete movement around the objects. In this regard, there is much more to experience than the objects themselves.

I will end this chapter with a consideration of the iteration of the cantilevered pours that stands curiously apart from the others. The one installation that comes closest to an immersive "environment," the glow-in-the-dark phosphorescent installation at the Milwaukee Art Center titled *For Darkness: Situation and Circumstance*, is given only a brief mention in Pincus-Witten's article (Figures 26 and 27). Benglis had already used glow-in-the-dark phosphorescent salts for her Kansas State Union installation, but she wasn't able to adequately control the lighting for the entire run of the exhibition.⁶⁷ In Milwaukee, however, she was able to rig the lights to turn on and off every three

⁶⁶ Brian O'Doherty, "The Gallery as Gesture," *Artforum*, December 1981, 34.

⁶⁷ Benglis, *Lynda Benglis: Dialogues*. The documentation photographs of this exhibition are a little misleading, as images of both lighting conditions have been circulated as documentation of the exhibition. However, Benglis' own accounts suggest that they were not consistently on view in the dark.

minutes.⁶⁸ In an attempt to more thoroughly surround the viewer, Benglis used three of the gallery walls, opting for dramatic variation and scale between each pour. The decision to show *For Darkness* both in the dark and in standard gallery lighting conditions is curious. It seems that if Benglis wanted to maintain the illusion of the floating, glowing forms, she would have left the lights off, as the darkness effectively conceals the space surrounding them. When the lights turn back on, the forms ultimately resituate themselves in the gallery, revealing, per Derrida, the space which touches and exists alongside the forms.

What may be written off as a crude theatrical display might actually go furthest to establish the effect of the six installations as a whole. The phosphorescent pours, as Benglis describes, appeared to “[defy] gravity”⁶⁹ and “rise in space”⁷⁰ in a way that was unmatched by the installations displayed in regular lighting. Klaus Kertess viewed the pours as a phenomena that shift “from material to immaterial, from white swamp to glowing grotto—changing the weight and extending the piece in time.”⁷¹ The work is not supposed to be seen merely in stable gallery light and darkness, but instead, during the extremely brief moment of transition between these two conditions, a melding of the more metaphorical cinematic space with the structured, rectangular gallery space.

This moment of transition is not simply illustrative of process, like her other iterations, but it actually involves time and motion as the work discloses itself in the

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Gumpert, Rifkin, and Tucker, *Early Work: Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner*, 13.

⁷⁰ Benglis, *Lynda Benglis: Dialogues*.

⁷¹ Kertess, “Foam Structures,” 35.

space. It also evades or otherwise resists the stability of both documentation and the gallery space. This transitory phenomena also cannot be fixed in place by the photograph; it could only capture the 'before' and 'after' state. While one could presumably capture the moment with video, *For Darkness (Situation and Circumstance)* ultimately privileges the haptic experience of sculptural presence.

Conclusion

In 1971, Lynda Benglis made a series of poured polyurethane installations that raise questions about the stability of sculptural objects, photographic documentation, and the gallery space. These large-scale works, often discussed alongside her other sculptural investigations of poured polyurethane and latex, necessitate further study as spatial and ephemeral installations. As this project should illustrate, her early exhibition history—from solo exhibitions at Paula Cooper Gallery, to her short-lived invitation to *Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials*, and her high-profile participation in *Works for New Spaces*—invited ambivalence as to how the works should be read. Critics did not quite know how to discuss objects that were seemingly process-based yet illusionistic, painterly yet imbued with the physicality of sculpture.

In June of 2009, Benglis' first major retrospective since 1991 opened at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.¹ As the most comprehensive exhibition to date, it brought together works made from every decade between the 1960s through the 2000s. The retrospective's stop at the New Museum in 2011 marked two significant moments of Benglis' career. First, forty-six years after her arrival, it was the artist's first ever solo museum exhibition in New York City. Second, after sitting in storage since 1971, all five of the surviving polyurethane pours from *Phantom* at Kansas State University were

¹ It then travelled to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, Le Consortium in Dijon, the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design, the New Museum in New York, and, finally, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

shown (Figure 28).² Rather than install the works with lighting that would regularly turn on and off, the museum left the lights off, allowing the objects to rest in their most theatrical state. The wall supporting the objects in their original configuration in 1971 contained traces of Benglis' pour—residual drips and splatters—that in a subtle way confirmed to the viewer that the process actually occurred on-site. However, cleanly reinstalled on the wall behind a wire rope, *Phantom's* appearance was decidedly sleeker, less spontaneous, and a far cry from its original context.

In a 2010 interview with *Frieze*, Benglis discusses the difference between the display at the New Museum and the original presentation in 1971. She maintains that the 2010 installation would only be a “relic” as it is not shown “within the context of the space that [she] created it in.”³ This affirms, first, that the installations maintain a certain site-specificity, an association to the sites in which they are made. Second, by reinstalling the work, Benglis' process-based gesture—the very means of their production—is even further obscured. To avoid this disparity, why wouldn't the artist instead make a brand-new iteration of her cantilevered installations at the New Museum?

Reflecting on the cantilevered pours in *Artforum* two years prior, Benglis demonstrates that she has clearly moved on from site-specific installation. “In 1971, after several early installation pieces all over the country,” she states, “I didn't want to make art in situ within a museum context. I felt like I couldn't wear art on my sleeve and do

² Kirsten Swenson, “Lynda Benglis,” *CAA Reviews*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1723>. This was the only case in which all of the objects were saved.

³ Vivian Rehberg and Lynda Benglis, “Time & Tide,” *Frieze*, October 1, 2010, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/time-tide/>.

installations anymore that were meant to be permanent in idea and form.”⁴ Throughout the 1970s, Benglis made lead and bronze casts of her polyurethane sculptures, such as *Quartered Meteor* and *Wing* (Figure 29). The seeming freedom of the loose pour became fixed by the more permanent materials that would likely guarantee their preservation. Accordingly, the ensuing casts are aligned less with process and more with notions of serial repetition and reproduction.⁵ Benglis also has, since the 1980s, been making large-scale fountains (Figure 30). She has found a way to translate her signature pour into a new environmental context—the outdoors—making bronze casts from poured polyurethane foam (Figure 31).

With the newfound “material turn” in many fields of scholarship, it is not far-fetched to assume that Benglis, whose entire career has been defined by her use of materials, would invite renewed scholarship on her work.⁶ However, in this project, my aim was to offer a more specific view of the cantilevered pours through the various frameworks—namely, documentation and site—that intersected with Benglis’ sculptural production. The act of disclosing—whether through the photograph, video, or exhibition space—is central to the cantilevered pours. In this way, Benglis’ brief installation

⁴ Lynda Benglis and Lauren O’Neill-Butler, “500 Words: Lynda Benglis,” *Artforum.com*, November 15, 2009, <http://artforum.com/words/id=24179>.

⁵ Benglis continues to cast her polyurethane pours in open editions. A 2012 feature in *The Financial Times* follows Benglis to the Bedi-Makky Art Foundry, where she has a French sand casting made of *Eat Meat* (which was cast several times between 1969-1975). See Julie L. Belcove, “I Keep Arriving.” *Financial Times*, February 3, 2012. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/57fa0484-4d13-11e1-8741-00144feabdc0.html>.

⁶ See, for example, Petra Lange-Berndt, ed., *Materiality*. Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015. <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/materiality>.

practice serves as a significant precedent for a theory of contemporary sculpture that activates, and often, transforms a space by the nature of its materials and ephemerality. For instance, the German artist Katharina Grosse's large-scale spray-painted interventions in gallery spaces suddenly appear to be in line with Benglis' approach (Figure 32). Grosse's electric colors (on par with Benglis' latex pours) appear at once completely spontaneous and highly composed, rendering an ambiguous situation that is entirely foreign to the spaces in which they are made.

Future directions that this research could take would be to further consider both the political and aesthetic implications of these installations on contemporary practice. How might Benglis' pours differ from ephemeral works that were produced outside the confines of the gallery? What is the relationship between abstraction and site? How does "gesture," manifested visually and temporally, structure or impact the public display and circulation of art? This project in future iterations could also further consider the role of the photographic image. While I discuss its specific intersection with sculpture in Chapter One, I do not acknowledge to the fullest extent the "life" of the image after the installation closes. How and where do images of sculpture circulate, and how does this alter the meaning of the original work? Further, how might one theorize this now-transitory nature of the medium? Additionally, can one recover the haptic experience of sculpture today through the rapidly circulating (digital) image?

Because of Benglis' emphatic departure from ephemeral installation and fragile materials, it is tempting to simply write the six cantilevered installations off as a brief, inconsequential experiment carried out very early in the artist's career. However, to do so

would deprive the installations of a much-needed closer examination. While an artist's career retrospective might imply her entrance into the canon, rendering a tidy and ossified history, this is hardly the case with Benglis' early work. At this point, we are both critically and chronologically distanced from the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s. Documentation has become, of course, a necessary but nevertheless unresolved issue in both ephemeral and permanent sculpture. By combining and playing off the continued associations of the authorial gesture of the artist, the installations might also imply that process art and ephemeral installation of the 1970s are not situated between painting and sculpture, a view initiated by the assumed legacy of Abstract Expressionism, but among site, presence, and the photographic image.

Figures



Figure 1: Lynda Benglis, *Excess*, 1972, purified beeswax, damar resin and pigments on masonite and wood, 36 x 5 x 4 inches. Image source: <http://visualarts.walkerart.org/oracles/details.wac?id=4670&title=Lexicon&style=images> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 2: Lynda Benglis, *Element from Adhesive Products*, 1971, pigment and polyurethane, 80 x 36x 12 inches. Image source: <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artworks/element-from-adhesive-products> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 3: (Left to right) Rachel Harrison, *Huffy Howler*, 2004, *Al Gore*, 2007, *Chicken*, 2008, Lynda Benglis, *Element from Adhesive Products*, 1971. Still image from “Abstract Resistance,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyOrGaj382o> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 4: Lynda Benglis, *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 5: Lynda Benglis, *Phantom*, Kansas State University Union Art Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/nathan/lynda-benglis-new-museum-2-11-11_detail.asp?picnum=3 (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 6: Lynda Benglis, *Pinto*, Paula Cooper Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 7: Lynda Benglis installing armatures for *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 8: Lynda Benglis, *Brunhilde*, 1970. Image source: <http://www.paris-art.com/exposition-art-contemporain/lynda-benglis/benglis-lynda/10409.html> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 9: Lynda Benglis, *Quartered Meteor*, 1969, cast 1975. Lead and steel on steel base, 59 x 66 x 62 inches. *Quartered Meteor* is a lead cast of *Untitled (King of Flot)*. The original polyurethane sculpture no longer exists. Image source: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/benglis-quartered-meteor-t13353> (Accessed May 2016)

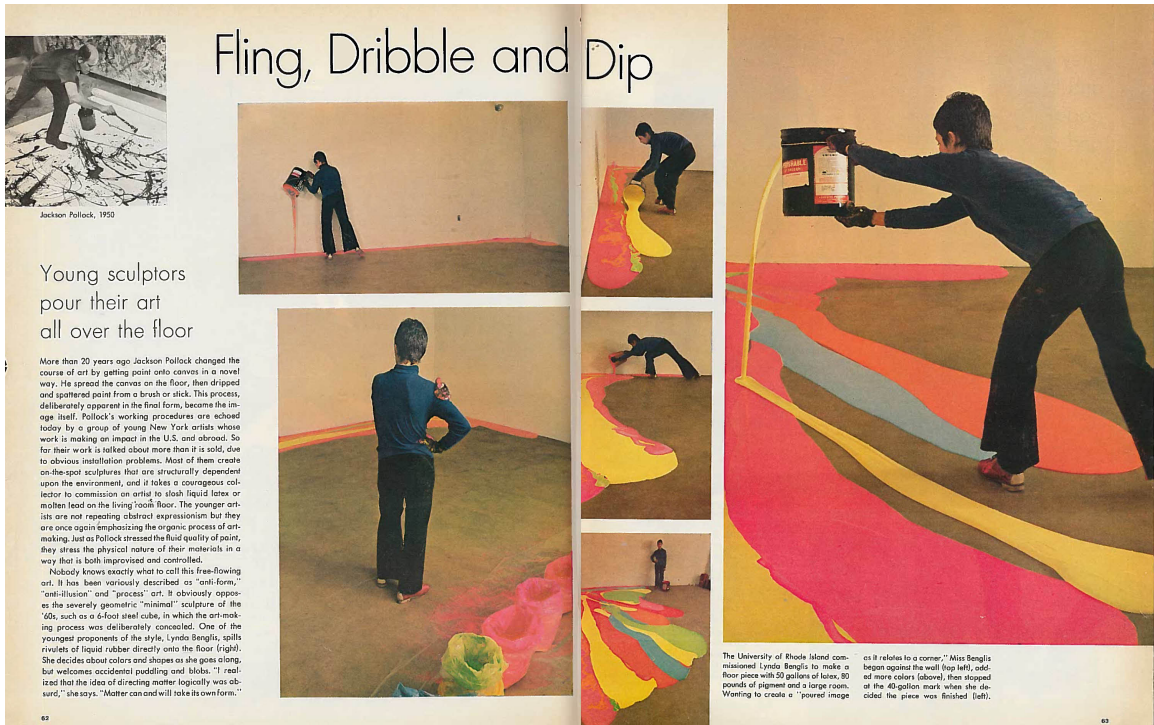


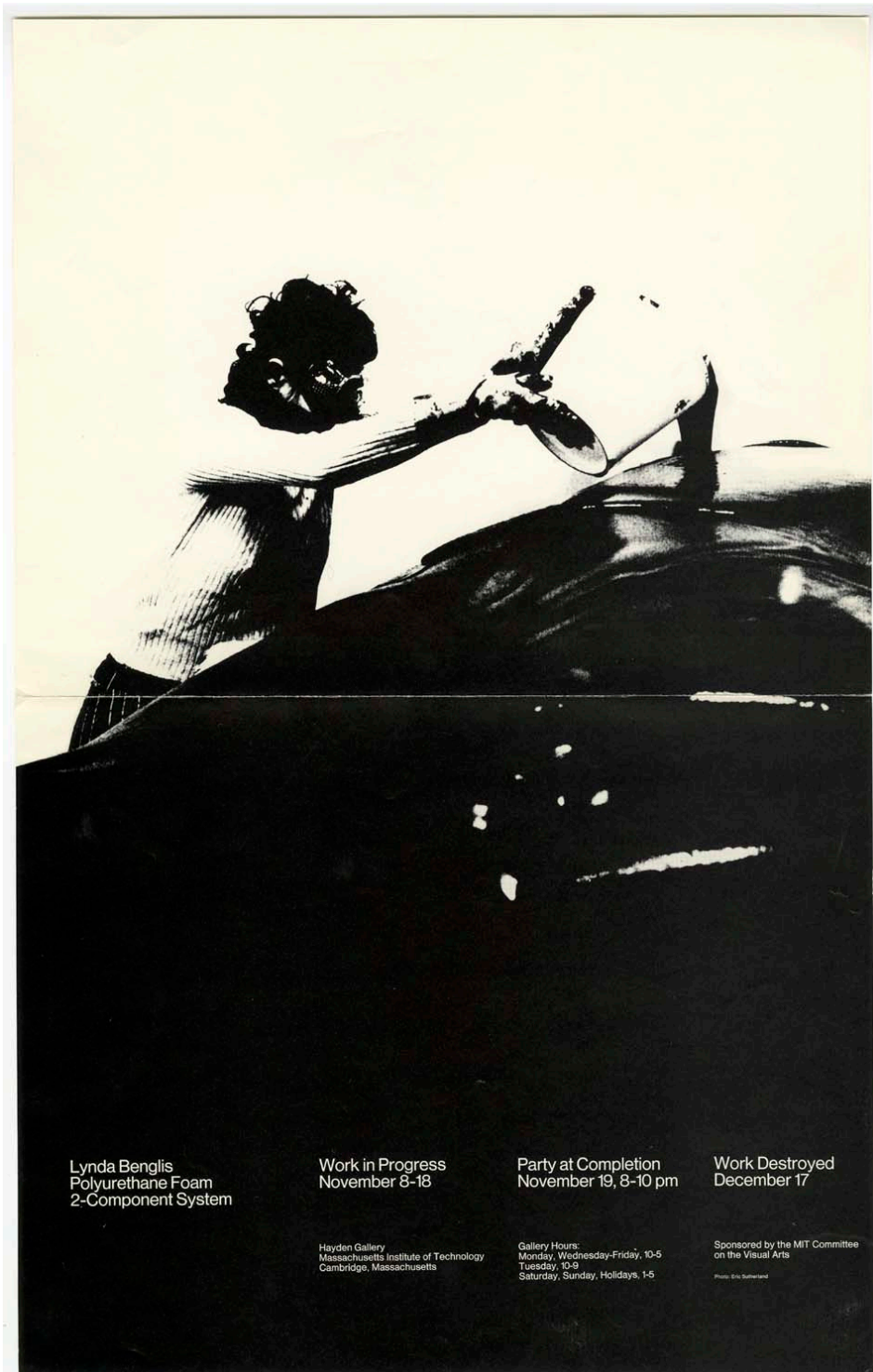
Figure 10: *Life* magazine spread, "Fling, Dribble, and Dip," 1970. Image source: *Life* magazine, volume 68, no. 7, February, 1970, pages 62-63.



Figure 11: Lynda Benglis, *Totem*, MIT Hayden Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/lynda-benglis/totem-1971> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 12: Lynda Benglis, *Totem*, MIT Hayden Gallery, 1971. Installation view. Image source: *Lynda Benglis*, edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.



Lynda Benglis
Polyurethane Foam
2-Component System

Work in Progress
November 8-18

Party at Completion
November 19, 8-10 pm

Work Destroyed
December 17

Hayden Gallery
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Gallery Hours:
Monday, Wednesday-Friday, 10-6
Tuesday, 12-9
Saturday, Sunday, Holidays, 1-5

Sponsored by the MIT Committee
on the Visual Arts

Photo: Eric Sutherland

Figure 13: "Lynda Benglis: Polyurethane Foam 2-Component System" promotional poster, 1971. Image source: Archives of the Walker Art Center, Lynda Benglis artist file.



Figure 14: Richard Serra, *Verb List*, 1967-68, graphite on paper, 2 sheets, each 10 x 8 inches. Image source: http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/10/20/to-collect (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 15: Richard Serra throwing lead for *Splashing*, 1968. Photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni. Image source: <http://www.gianfrancogorgoni.it/en/gallery/category/51-richard-serra.html> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 16: Lynda Benglis, *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (accessed March 2016)



Figure 17: Lynda Benglis pouring polyurethane for *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Photograph by Eric Sutherland. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016) (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 18: Lynda Benglis, *Odalisque (Hey Hey Frankenthaler)*, 1969, pigment and latex, 165 x 34 1/2 inches. Image source: <https://www.dma.org/collection/artwork/lynda-benglis/odalisque-hey-hey-frankenthaler> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 19: Lynda Benglis, *For Carl Andre*, 1970, acrylic foam, 56 1/4 x 53 1/2 x 46 3/16 inches. Image source: <http://themodern.org/collection/for-carl-andre/1169> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 20: Installation view, *Anti-Illusion* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969. Image source: <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/anti-illusion-proceduresmaterials/> (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 21: Lynda Benglis, *Contraband*, 1969, pigment and latex, 3 x 116 1/4 x 398 1/4 inches. Image source: *Lynda Benglis*, edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.



Figure 22: Lynda Benglis, *Bounce*, 1969, pigment and latex. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 23: Lynda Benglis, *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Installation view. The light from Flavin's installation can be seen in the right corner. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 24: Lynda Benglis and assistants installing *Adhesive Products*, Walker Art Center, 1971. Image source: http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/working_in_space (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 25: Lynda Benglis, invitation for an exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, 1974. Image source: <http://www.flashartonline.it/article/lynda-benglis/> (Accessed March 2016)

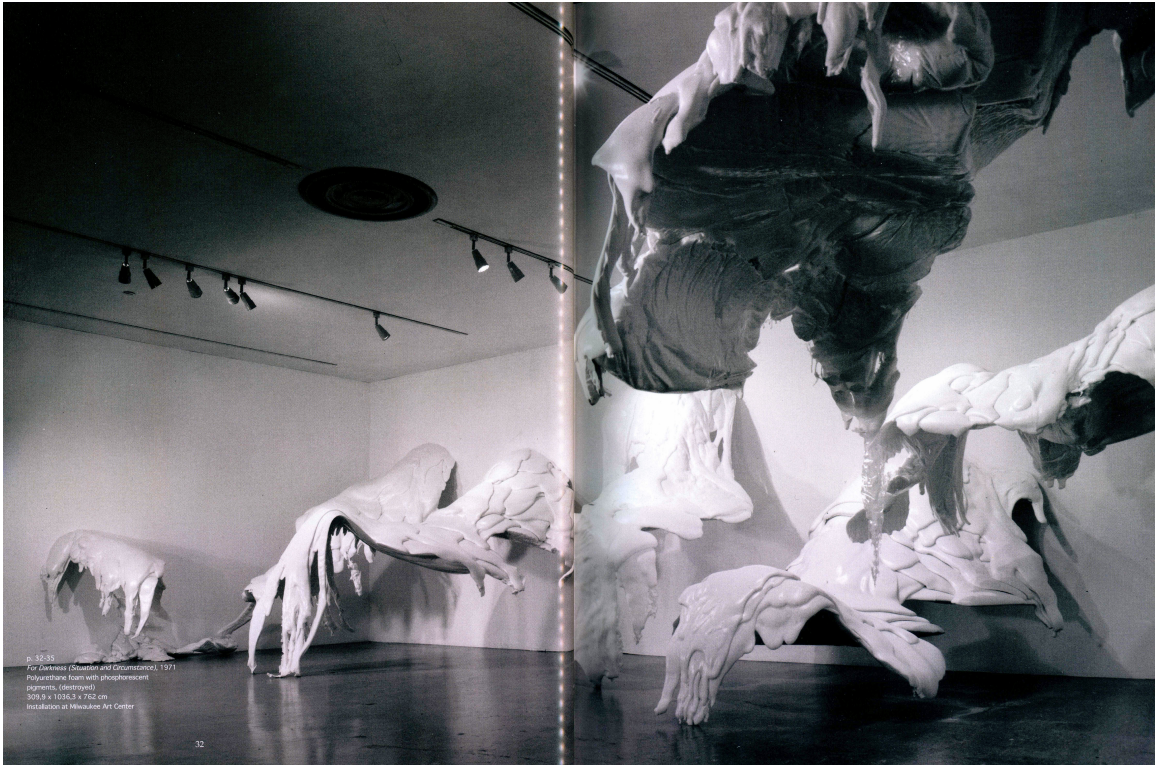


Figure 26: Lynda Benglis, *For Darkness (Situation and Circumstance)*, Milwaukee Art Center, 1971. Installation view. Image source: *Lynda Benglis*, edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.

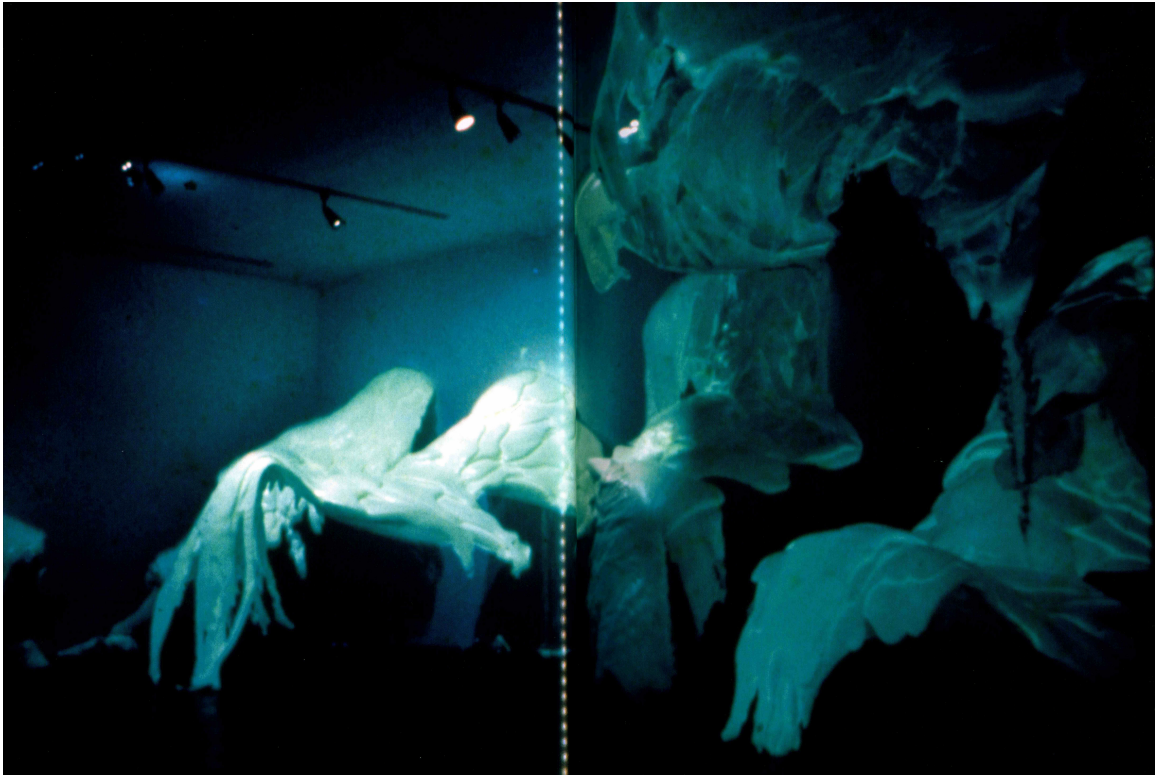


Figure 27: Lynda Benglis, *For Darkness (Situation and Circumstance)*, Milwaukee Art Center, 1971. Image source: *Lynda Benglis*, edited by Franck Gautherot, Caroline Hancock, and Seung-Duk Kim, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.



Figure 28: Lynda Benglis, *Phantom*, 1971. Reinstallation at the New Museum retrospective in 2011. Image source: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/arts/design/18benglis.html?_r=0 (Accessed June 2016)



Figure 29: Lynda Benglis, *Wing*, 1970, cast aluminum, 67 x 59 1/4 x 60 inches. Image source: library.artstor.org (Accessed March 2016)



Figure 30: Lynda Benglis, *Crescendo*, 1983-84/2014-15. Cast bronze, 111 x 82 x 186 inches. Image source: benglis.stormking.org/crescendoetc.html (Accessed June 2016)



Figure 31: Lynda Benglis pouring polyurethane for *Crescendo* at Modern Art Foundry, New York, 2015. Photo by Sebastian Kim. Image source: Lawrence, Nora R., ed. *Lynda Benglis: Water Sources*. Mountainville, N.Y.: Storm King Art Center, 2015.

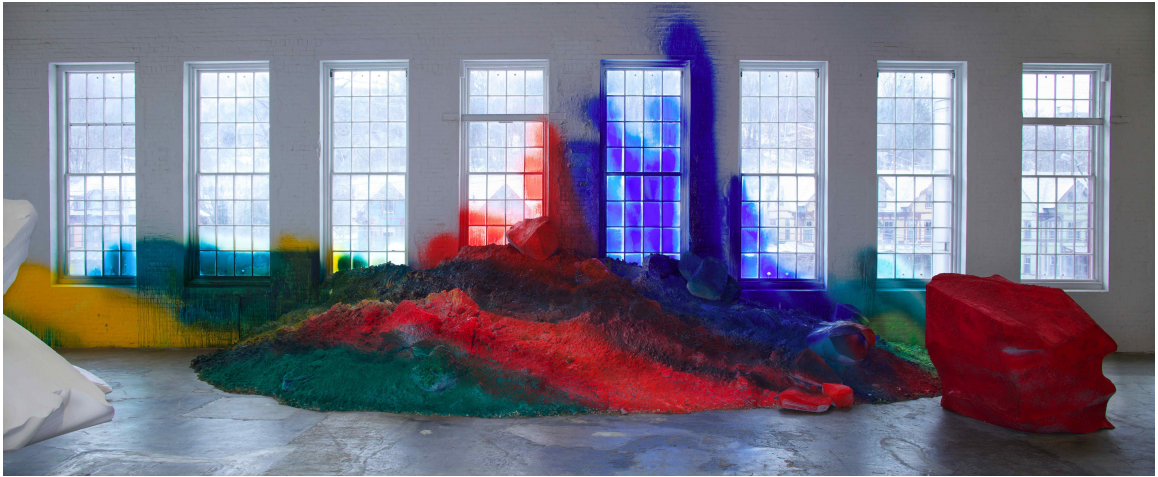


Figure 32: Katharina Grosse, *One Floor Up More Highly*, installation view. Image source: <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2011/02/katharina-grosse-at-mass-moca/> (Accessed June 2016)

Bibliography

- “Abstract Resistance.” *Walker Art Center*. Accessed February 29, 2016.
<http://www.walkerart.org/calendar/2010/abstract-resistance>.
- Alexander, Darsie. “Reluctant Witness: Photography and the Documentation of 1960s and 1970s Art.” In *Work Ethic*, edited by Helen Molesworth, 53–64. Baltimore; University Park: Baltimore Museum of Art; Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.
- Alloway, Lawrence. “Artists and Photographs.” *Studio International*, April 1970.
- Appell Jr., Frederick. “Walker Art Center Showcases 20 Artists with Unusual Ideas.” *The Minneapolis Star*. May 14, 1971.
- Auslander, Philip. “The Performativity of Performance Documentation.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (September 2006): 1–10.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010.
- Batchelor, David. *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.
- Benglis, Lynda. *Lynda Benglis: Dialogues*. Cassette tape. Walker Art Center, 1983. Archives of the Walker Art Center.
- . “Un-Skirting the Issue.” *Art-Rite*, Summer 1974.
- Benglis, Lynda, and Phong Bui. “Lynda Benglis with Phong Bui.” *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 11, 2009. <http://brooklynrail.org/2009/12/art/lynda-benglis-with-phong-bui>.
- Benglis, Lynda, and Lauren O’Neill-Butler. “500 Words: Lynda Benglis.” *Artforum.com*, November 15, 2009. <http://artforum.com/words/id=24179>.
- Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 217–51. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.
- Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Bourdon, David. “Fling, Dribble and Dip.” *Life*, February 27, 1970.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia. “Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970.” *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 2 (June 2007): 333–59.

- Carney, Sean. *Brecht and Critical Theory: Dialectics and Contemporary Aesthetics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Coad, Robert James. "Between Painting and Sculpture: A Study of the Work and Working Process of Lynda Benglis, Elizabeth Murray, Judy Pfaff and Gary Stephan." New York University, 1983.
- Crosby, Eric. "Adhesive Products: Lynda Benglis at the Walker." *Walker Art Center Living Collections Catalogue*, 2015.
<http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/art-expanded/adhesive-products/#/introduction>.
- Davis, Douglas M. "This Is the Loose Paint Generation." *The National Observer*. August 4, 1969.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Parergon." In *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, 15–147. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Domingo, Willis. "Reviews: In the Galleries." *Arts Magazine*, March 1970.
- Dubrowin, S.R. "Latex: One Artist's Raw Material." *Rubber Developments*, 1971.
- Friedman, Martin, ed. *Works For New Spaces*. Walker Art Center, 1971.
- . "Up Against the Wall with Lynda Benglis." *Art in America*, December 2009.
- Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Glueck, Grace. "Artists at Work Subject of Finch Show." *The New York Times*. March 13, 1971.
- . "New York." *Art in America*, September 1971.
- . "Process Art and the New Disorder." *The New York Times*. April 11, 1970.
- Gumpert, Lynn, Ned Rifkin, and Marcia Tucker. *Early Work: Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner*. New York, NY: The New Museum, 1982.
- Hamill, Sarah. *David Smith in Two Dimensions: Photography and the Matter of Sculpture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.
- Hancock, Caroline, Franck Gautherot, and Seung-Duk Kim, eds. *Lynda Benglis*. Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2009.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1962.
- Hudson, Suzanne P. *Robert Ryman: Used Paint*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2009.
- “Installation Instructions for Projected Art: Artists at Work.” The Finch College Museum of Art, 1972. Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Correspondence, Projected Art: Artists at Work. The Archives of American Art.
- “Interview: Lynda Benglis.” *Ocular*, Summer 1979.
- Jones, Amelia. *Body Art/Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Jones, Caroline A. *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Kaizen, William. “Framed Space: Allan Kaprow and the Spread of Painting.” *Grey Room* 13 (Autumn 2003): 80–107.
- Kaprow, Allan. “The Shape of the Art Environment: How Anti Form is 'Anti Form'?” *Artforum*, Summer 1968.
- Kertess, Klaus. “Foam Structures.” *Art and Artists*, May 1972.
- Kozloff, Max. “9 in a Warehouse: ‘An Attack on the Status of the Object.’” *Artforum*, February 1969.
- Kramer, Hilton. “Grace, Flexibility, Esthetic Tact.” *New York Times*, May 30, 1971.
- . “Minneapolis Museum Opens Today.” *New York Times*, May 18, 1971.
- Krane, Susan. *Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures*. Atlanta, Ga. : Seattle: High Museum of Art, 1991.
- Krauss, Rosalind. “Richard Serra/Sculpture.” In *Richard Serra/Sculpture*, edited by Laura Rosenstock, 14–39. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986.
- . “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973.

- Lange-Berndt, Petra, ed. *Materiality*. Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015. <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/materiality>.
- Lawrence, Nora R., ed. *Lynda Benglis: Water Sources*. Mountainville, N.Y.: Storm King Art Center, 2015.
- Leider, Philip. "New York: Art in Process IV, Finch College." *Artforum*, February 1970.
- "Letter to Elayne Varian from Robert Braiterman." The Finch College Museum of Art, 1972. Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Correspondence, Projected Art: Artists at Work. The Archives of American Art.
- Licht, Jennifer. *Spaces*. New York, N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1969.
- Lippard, Lucy R. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Maizels, Michael. *Barry Le Va: The Aesthetic Aftermath*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Marcoci, Roxana, ed. *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010.
- Morris, Robert. "Anti Form." In *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 41–49. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- . "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2." In *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, 11–21. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- . "The Present Tense of Space." *Art in America*, February 1978.
- Müller, Gregoire. "Materiality and Painterliness." *Arts Magazine*, October 1971.
- . *The New Avant-Garde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies*. New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972.
- . "Robert Morris Presents Anti-Form, The Castelli Warehouse Show." *Arts Magazine*, February 1969.
- Newman, Amy. *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974*. New York, N.Y.: Soho Press, 2003.
- O'Doherty, Brian. "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space Part 1." *Artforum*, March 1976.

- . “Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space Part 2: The Eye and the Spectator.” *Artforum*, April 1976.
- . “Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space Part 3: Context Is Content.” *Artforum*, November 1976.
- . “The Gallery as Gesture.” *Artforum*, December 1981.
- Owens, Craig. “From Work to Frame, Or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author’?” In *Beyond Recognition*, 122–39. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Petersen, Anne Ring. *Installation Art: Between Image and Stage*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015.
- Pfeiffer, Günter. “Lynda Benglis.” *Das Kunstwerk*, November 1969.
- Pincus-Witten, Robert. “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture.” *Artforum*, November 1974.
- “Press Release for Art In Process IV.” The Finch College Museum of Art, 1969. Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art, Exhibition Files, Art in Process IV. The Archives of American Art.
- “Press Release, Lynda Benglis at the MIT Hayden Gallery.” News Office, MIT, October 28, 1971. Lynda Benglis Artist File. Archives of the Walker Art Center.
- Ratcliff, Carter. *Out of the Box: The Reinvention of Art: 1965-1975*. New York: Allworth Press, 2000.
- Raymond, Yasmil. *Abstract Resistance*. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Postscript/Walker Art Center, 2011.
- Raynor, Vivien. “The Art of Survival (And Vice Versa).” *New York Times*, February 17, 1974.
- Rehberg, Vivian, and Lynda Benglis. “Time & Tide.” *Frieze*, October 1, 2010. <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/time-tide/>.
- Richmond, Susan. *Lynda Benglis: Beyond Process*. London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Rose, Barbara. *Pollock Painting*. New York: Agrinde Publications, 1980.
- Rosenberg, Harold. “The American Action Painters.” *ARTnews*, December 1952.

- . “The Art Objects and the Esthetics of Impermanence.” In *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience*, 88–96. Horizon Press, 1964.
- Schaeffer, Don, and Ann McIntosh. *Totem (Lynda Benglis Paints with Foam)*. VHS. Hayden Gallery, MIT, 1971.
- Schjeldahl, Peter. “New York Letter.” *Art International*, September 1969.
- Serra, Richard. “Play It Again, Sam.” *Arts Magazine*, February 1970.
- Smithson, Robert. “Art Through the Camera’s Eye.” In *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam, 371–75. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.
- Stiles, Kristine, and Peter Selz, eds. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists’ Writings*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Swenson, Kirsten. “Lynda Benglis.” *CAA Reviews*, December 1, 2011. <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1723>.
- Tannenbaum, Judith. “Oral History Interview with Lynda Benglis.” *Oral Histories, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*, November 20, 2009. <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-lynda-benglis-15741>.
- Tucker, Marcia. *A Short Life of Trouble: Forty Years in the New York Art World*. Edited by Liza Lou. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Tucker, Marcia, and James Monte, eds. *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969.
- Varian, Elayne H. *Art in Process IV*. New York: Finch College Museum of Art, 1969.
- Vinkler, Bitite. “New York.” *Art International*, March 1970.
- Wasserman, Emily. “New York.” *Artforum*, September 1969.
- WhitneyFocus. “Whitney Focus Presents Lynda Benglis.” *Youtube*, June 4, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq7VklUhY18>.
- Archives Visited
- Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.
- Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.