

ART OPERATING PROCEDURES AND TRANSFORMATIVE KINETICS:
THE ALTERCATION AND ENERGY OF ART

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Fine Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iii
Abstract	iv
Introduction	1
Artist as Athlete	2
Medium as Evidence	6
Visual Residue	8
Conclusion	12
Works Cited	13

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Matthew Barney, Drawing Restraint 20, 2013	2
Figure 2: Untitled 1 2018.....	3
Figure 3: Untitled 1 2017.....	4
Figure 4: Untitled 2 2018.....	5
Figure 5: Heather Cassils, Reliance of 20	7
Figure 6: Richard Long, A Line Made by Walking 1967.....	9
Figure 7: Richard Long, Waterfall Line, 2000	11
Figure 8: Heather Hansen, Swim Drawings.....	12
Figure 9: Matthew Barney, Drawing Restraint 20, 2013	13
Figure 10: Untitled 3 2018.....	14

ABSTRACT

CLAY IN COLOR

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My body of work and thesis essay investigates the role of the human body and the physical and psychological way it informs meaning on artistic processes. My longstanding interest in kinesiology, sports psychology, and the physical training of the human body are the corner stone of my creative practice. I investigate how to manipulate the body, adopting the model of an athlete in training for improving my physical skills as an artist. And finally, I test the possibility of using the body's reaction to and interaction with materials to reach a creative goal. Challenges I set for myself during art making resemble intentional challenges of an athlete. Makes the opposition to the artist's body, the foremost visual evidence, through which viewers associate their own personal triumphs and struggles. I assert that documenting the art making process, especially the experience of developing and mastering skills and concepts, can potentially have meaning for both the artist and the viewer.

“My work is not for everyone”

-Matthew Barney

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Time, energy and effort are fundamental ingredients of the creative process but are less recognized by or presented to the viewer. In some respects, I believe the work of an artist is akin to the work by athletes. Elite athletes train their whole lives for a competition that may be over in a matter of seconds. Spectators are not privy to the trials and tribulations of their daily training. They do not know the different approaches and changes implemented in training routines to improve methodologies or strategies. While the passion and commitment of an artist is often visible, the methods or systems employed by an artist during creation are invisible and therefore can be poorly understood and undervalued. Akin to a sports competition, the visible moment of triumph and achievement is the tangible product that results from the creative process rather than the evidence for the process itself. My work attempts to document the process involved in making work as a means to better understand the push and pull between the physical and mental aspects of artistic production. My process renders valuable insight for my future artworks, and understanding the world that surrounds me. I think “pulling back the curtain” to expose these aspects of artists’ work can contribute to the viewer’s experience of art as well their understanding of the calculations (materials, time, effort) involved in setting studio practice value, validation of why and how artists make what they do. My artistic practice also implements a system that revolves around repetitive and continual training of artistic mark-making. Seeking the clearest communication between artist and viewer, I establish and carry out training methods similar to athletes. To amplify and supplement the aspects of my process with variances in, intensity, degree of movement, speed of movement through the process of making artworks.



Figure 1: Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint 20*, 2013.

CHAPTER 2: ARTIST AS ATHLETE

My regimen involves training the body for strength and endurance as well as instincts and ability. Training with this regimental method for artistic purpose, allows me to be fully expressive while reaching an encompassing art practice. Rote exercises involved in my work, focus my mind on the actions and responses of my body. The work session becomes both a meditative practice as well as physical exercise. At its core, a meditative, flow or “zone” state can be achieved through the focus on rehearsal. Activation of the body, and mindful focus on the physical self. In this meditative state, the creative process can truly become free flowing. As Matthew Barney’s work shows his state of comfortability with materials and concepts to adapt confrontation with concepts. Barney’s background correlates to my own as an athlete, with the ideology of rehearsing skills for performance in both sport action and art action.

My training regimen involves making large scale drawings to warm up my physical body and initiate creative flow. Stretching and activating muscles serves the purpose of bringing the body into alignment with the artistic mind, thereby preparing art work. I focus on the movement and stability of my body rather than the application of uncontrolled physical strength. By embracing both the physical and technical skills required to apply marks to different materials, I achieve the goal of producing kinesthetic, active, action artwork.



Figure 2: Untitled1 2018

It is imperative for me to control mental and physical aspects of all artwork's production. These aspects can be practiced and carried out as compartmentalized units in order to control the collective whole of the art making experience. Drawing from my past experience in meditation, strength and endurance training, and combative I can control my position to govern the form and design of the materials. The association with mental rehearsal in order to win a wrestling match, the deliberate change of practice to improve skills and physical condition, and the awareness of one's body, all play a role in attaining originality in my artistic process. Similar to conditioning the body in wrestling where certain movements become reflexive and responsive, the critical eye and hand of the maker can also be trained to reflexively manipulate material and create subject matter for artwork. Established art systems and past processes are the foundation that we as artists use to progress. I see that the human body and mind must be controlled in order to determine the trajectory of displayed objects. Personalities and tendencies guide artists toward the most suitable methods and materials.



Figure 3: Untitled1 2017



Figure 4: Untitled 2, 2018

CHAPTER 3: MEDIUM AS EVIDENCE

I work with clay because of the many entry points, or opportunities to explore the material. My knowledge of historical and contemporary creations in the ceramics are transferable and central to my creative process. This makes my relationship between process and creating a residual object (that conveys the physicality of the process apparently allowing viewers more entry points into the work. The physical and mental involvement in what is being created is more important to me than displayed aesthetics or physical functionality. The malleability of clay and ability to enact changes at will allow for greater creativity in my work. It allows me to impact clay, like Heather Cassils, by simply punching continually with energy as a way to inform the object with some kind of distinctive language. These procedural steps and physical engagements help to create an artist's own voice, which is an intention central to my work.



Figure 5: Heather Cassils, *Reliance of 20%*, 2012.

In Heather Cassils' piece "Reliance of the 20%", (Figure) the display of extreme exertion through boxing on a monolithic mound of clay corresponds directly to my personal application of energy against the material. The human impressions made on the material form recordings of direct engagement as shock is sent through the entire mass. The shifting of material through physical impact and the relationship between force and opposition directly correlate to my conceptual ideology. This is the act of art making purposefully placed bodily movements utilized for a medium to be acted upon. Cassils' use of clay as a vehicle, acts not only as a way to display a recording of force or will, but also speaks to the transcendence of material through

story and intent. Knowledge of one's physical body allows an individual to harness all available strength and provides the physical endurance and mental focus to create fully realized work. What are the correlations between large and small controlled movements as it pertains to the making of art? Macro muscle recruitment activates large muscle groups within the body which, makes it possible to achieve an explosive movement but with less control and grace. Micro muscle recruitment allows for meticulous control of motor skills to complete tasks. The recruitment is done mentally and carried out physically. This macro and micro ideology requires investment of time and energy into rehearsing skills to help me achieve my creative goals.

Keeping the art maker or element of action and the material as the two variables, my practice supports through multiple mediums, systems or creation methods as long as the ideology and mentality is maintained in each undertaking. In the case of the works shown in (untitled 2 2018), I created a plaster form in which to compress the clay. These techniques are not new in any fashion nor is the medium of clay, however; I use common tools to manipulate this familiar material. For example, a dead blow hammer, rubber mallet, ball peen hammer, scrapers and specialty auto body tools best suit my performance. The clay hammering serves important functions. It proves to be very cathartic because it is physically demanding, and a responsive process, that creates a feeling of release through physical activity. It is evidence of physical force, time and energy, made available to an audience. Although as Matthew Barney states, "My work is not for everyone", but as he does, I too offer audiences glimpses of the event of creation. Holding myself in a steady position hammering so as not to vary the texture or thickness of the material, which is evidence of micro, macro and control of artistic practice. This is a mentally rehearsed and practiced skill. Practice translates into process, cultivating organic and inspired art making.

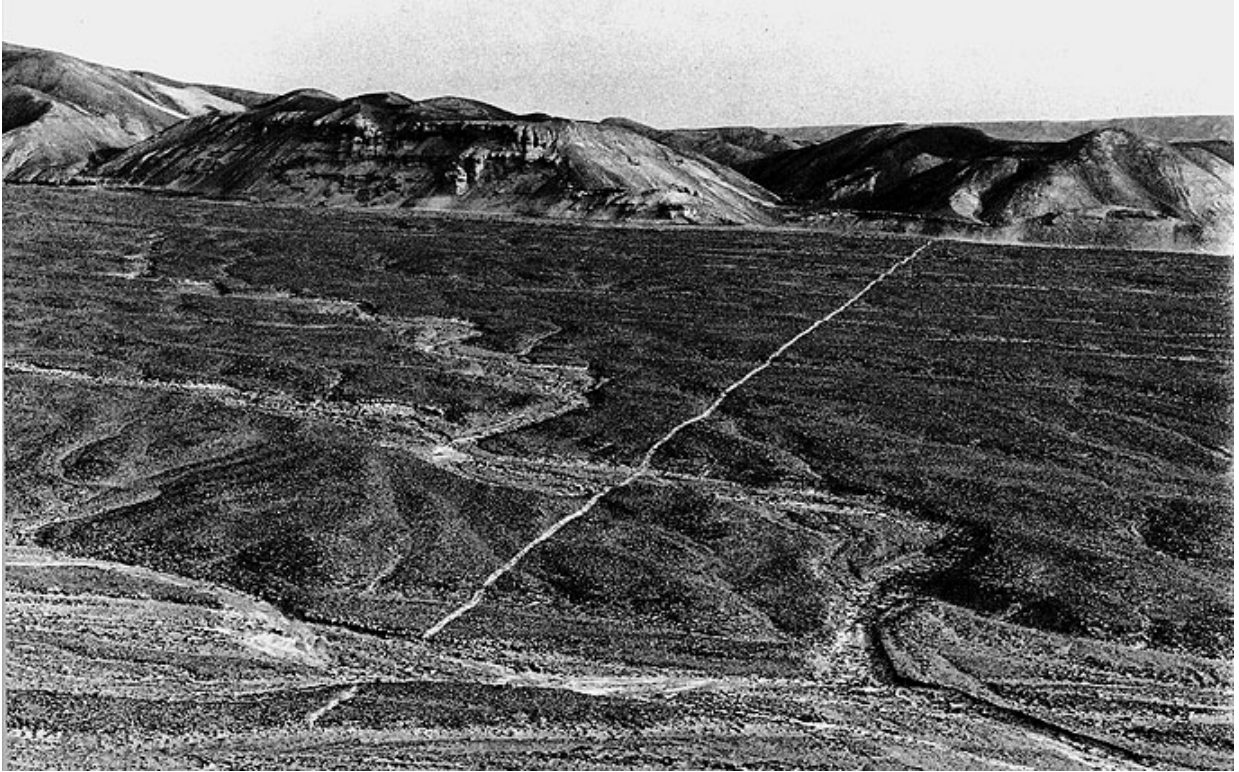


Figure 6: Richard long, *A Line Made By Walking*, 1967.

CHAPTER 4: VISUAL RESIDUE

Cross mediums stimulate the artist as cross training does for athletes. Athletic competitions create participation between the viewer and athlete because of spectacle. Richard Long's earth walks, are an example that creates the same vicarious feelings of walking lines created in the visual residue presented in his work. Evidence of human interaction, the documentation of time, repetition, pattern, and approach to working in a gallery space are similarities that my work shares with Long's. He translates these events into objects, installations, and drawings through a material exchange and performative actions. Long creates entry points in multiple mediums and materials that ultimately make his work accessible to audiences.



Figure 7: Richard Long, *Waterfall Line*, 2000.

I see my two-dimensional works as serving a dual purpose. They continuously train my body and give me an ability similar to Long's to translate a concept in multiple ways. My interest in monumental sized work began with large outdoor ground drawings made with soapstone. (Untitled 2017), While making the ground drawings I lunge, spin and twist my body. This gave me the feeling that I was preparing for interaction with an opposing force or for a competition. I believe scale of my artwork has allowed me to use my full body in a similar way to Heather Hanson's swim drawings, as a calculated routine, and as Richard Long does in his cathartic repetitive wall drawings seen in (figure) Using my body in relation to the scale and intensity of

the work allows viewers to vicariously connect with the creative experience and my command of the materials.



Figure 8: Heather Hansen, *Swim Drawings*, 2014.



Figure 9: Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint*, 2007.



Figure 10. Untitled 3 2018

The physical body is my focus, I impose limitations on my movement to create guidelines for the marks I make and overall visual pattern. These patterns draw ties to the artists referred to in this essay. There is a pattern of movement and exertion during my mark making that is best exemplified through my work (Untitled 2018). Laborious layers of marks overlap and merge together as they span the surface on which I work. The physical line constraint of my body in relation to the surface becomes evident through the density of each mark.

Placing a piece of artwork on a pedestal or podium in a gallery for all to see is no different than placing oneself on a podium to receive acknowledgment in sport competition. The artwork becomes the surrogate for the athlete in dynamic practice methods, leading to greater fluidity. The knowledge that the accomplishment is visually recorded offers a sense of pride in both sport and art event which validates efforts and energy invested to produce artwork or athletic exertion. Art accomplishments and the journey of making has more longevity than sporting events as the spectacle can be viewed as art creation at any frame of the process.

I train within my artistic practice similar to an elite athlete would train, developing skills and endurance through my training process. When successful outcomes are linked to an aesthetically pleasing end, new techniques and processes are made available. When the end result of an art object is less imperative, it proves easier to retain a mental framework open to discovery.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Decision making, and development is paramount in the progression of my art practice, carrying over into process of actions used to create. Fluidity and amenability of original ideas and outcomes are important as they aid in the development and assessment of my work. New information about the subject, medium, material, the artist's self, and inspiration, factor into deviations toward discovery. Embracing mental and physical rehearsal as I did as a wrestler, visualizing and recreating action is central to my process as an artist. It is this conscious monitoring of the physiological status of my body that has portrayed the physicality of my artwork. Practicing or training as an art athlete I have created and overcome obstacles, proving and disproving ideas of making through this system of testing. Confines and limitations of artwork are imposed by my bodily limitations, and by pushing my bodies limitations the transcendence of material interface is evident. This evidence of physical altercations with material and process is confirmation for artists and audiences of the residual products worth.

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