Serra's Indiscipline:
Neutralization and the Site of *Tilted Arc*

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Abstract

When sculpture affects flows in space as a function of its siting, viewers are potentially dis-placed in the experience of the sculptural object inasmuch as the typically invisible framing of space emerges into vision. Lefebvre's theorization of abstract space, which underpins this idea, is applicable to public arts as a critical tool, enabling us to demonstrate how art may be either neutralized within disciplinary enclosures or brought into active service of state-sponsored ideological agendas. The specific applications in this study concern Richard Serra's large-scale public sculpture, with particular emphasis on the *Tilted Arc* controversy of the 1980s. The discourse surrounding Serra's sculpture was especially complex, demonstrating both the techniques of disciplinary control and the left's willingness to operate within the very space of neutralization bounded by that discipline. Beginning with a theoretical discussion of how space is produced, consumed, and neutralized in the context of public art, this study investigates first of all the pathways by which minimalism brought institutional frames into vision, and subsequently how this framing process was further developed into the notion of site. From this point, site is explored vis-à-vis disciplinary enclosures in order to explain the failure and success of *Tilted Arc* in pointing up the ideological manipulation of space, specifically the space circumscribed by the Federal Plaza where the sculpture once stood. The disappearance of *Tilted Arc*, then, is understood to be coincident with its incompatibility with disciplinary formations, which though ambiguous in the context of the overall process by which it became immaterial, nonetheless contested the surveillance-based disciplinary formation it once fronted by bringing into view, into vision its very objectification and disintegration by the disciplinary gaze.

Keywords

Richard Serra, discipline, space, sculpture, *Tilted Arc*

Introduction

Michael Hardt, in his essay "The Global Society of Control," declares that although the notion of the control society deserves paradigmatic status in the general characterization of postmodernism, Deleuze's remarks on control are more evocative than analytically rigorous, confined as they are to a few pages from his total oeuvre. Furthermore, Deleuze's situating of control societies as the ultimate term in a series commencing with sovereign and disciplinary societies (a series ostensibly derived from Foucault) also deserves attention, since according to Hardt, Foucault never explicitly delineated this process precisely in these terms ("Global" 139). Notwithstanding these constraints, Hardt advocates further theoretical investigation, a call which has produced book-length studies such as Anthony Galloway's analysis of Internet management *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*. Differing from Hardt, Galloway emphasizes that the sequence of sovereignty, discipline, and control need not be understood as thresholds, which once crossed, eclipse its predecessor.[1] Galloway in fact demonstrates that different management techniques can co-exist despite their incompatibility. Thresholds are nonetheless engaging, as suggested by the fact that Foucault, Hardt, and Galloway all situate their analyses in these interstices. This study, too, concerns a region between discipline and control, though unlike Hardt's sociological and Galloway's technological researches, my focus is on the way sculpture engages us in space. The engagement described here concerns American sculptor Richard Serra's large-scale public work from the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the debates surrounding *Tilted Arc*; my analysis, however, is not intended to characterize sculpture generally, nor is it primarily concerned with aesthetics. Rather, my intention is to explore how disciplinary formations are rendered problematic through Serra's work, which, during the two decades just alluded to, I regard as situated, somewhat precariously, between complicity and resistance.

Taken together, neither Serra's statements nor the work under consideration is consistently reducible to a coherent, unified body resulting in clearly defined oppositional relations. If it could be reduced to this consistency, Serra would not be in-between, since, as both Hardt and Galloway note, the organizational principles

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[1] Galloway tabulates and precisely dates these thresholds though he remarks that "in much of the last hundred years, *all three social phases . . . existed at the same time* in the United States and elsewhere" (27). In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault suggests also that different "technologies of power" pertaining to sovereignty and discipline exist simultaneously; he does not, however, use the word "control" (130-31).

characterizing disciplinary and control systems are not necessarily built on overt antagonisms. Fukuyama's "end of history" is the dissolution of dialectical conditions for understanding change (Hardt); what follows history (control societies) is incompatible with certain disciplinary formations, and resistance in the form of an outside is no longer viable. This idea in fact points towards one of the difficult aspects of Serra's art in that his aggressive critiques engage institutions in their so-called classical formation. The rhetoric surrounding *Tilted Arc*, which has been of sustained interest to critics,[2] illustrates the oppositions we expect of the disciplinary frame of reference: public and private; "the people" (however dubiously construed) and the "vision" of the artist; responsibility to community (again, a suspicious formulation) and freedom of speech; art as functional or decorative, in short as beautifying and aesthetically circumscribed within a discourse of calculation and value and art as esoteric, abstruse intellectual discourse (the avant-garde); and not insignificantly, surveillance within the closed site and disruptions of the disciplinary gaze. These oppositions are dependent on a certain understanding of site—a convergence of discernible location and abstract space. Where Serra remained within the purview of his disciplinary opponents was in the presuppositions still underpinning his understanding of that space, particularly as seen in his public remarks during the long legal proceedings with the GSA. The problems of this spatial dimension is none other than the tacit recognition of a frame—reforming the content within those boundaries possibly leaves the limit untouched or un-transgressed because, following Foucault, that limit remains un(re)marked. This recognition of the limit, central to Foucault's argument in his well-known essay, "A Preface to Transgression," raises the idea that transgression brings the limit into vision, without, of course, destroying it. But whether it is recognized or not, framing is a precondition to discursive familiarity, a textualization which in turn defines a limit against which works must position themselves if they are to be sanctioned at all, or if they are to become the objects of art criticism, whose favored medium is obviously textual. Challenging works remain unproblematic if they acknowledge these ground rules; however, as George Yudice points out, if the critical eye is turned towards "dispens[ing] with the frame itself," thereby "opening up aesthetic practice to decisions over which the institution has no control" (216), retaliation can be expected. Hostility towards institutions, therefore, is not necessarily fatal to institutional favor, as long as the dignity of the institution (i.e., its capacity to contain the work) remains substantially intact. This type of struggle, even in the twenty years separating us from

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[2] In the context of this discussion, see particularly Crimp 150-82, Crow 144-50, Deutsche 257-68, Hoffmann, Kwon 72-83, and Weyergraf-Serra 3-17.

the *Tilted Arc* controversy, may now be impossible. Serra's bringing into vision of disciplinary space was a terminal stage in this struggle, and one which, though implicated in its own disappearance, disappeared into incompatibility rather than recuperation into the frame. To say that this disappearance made the subsequent disciplinary fixing of site impossible is both unfounded and problematic—Martha Schwartz's work, which occupies the plaza where *Tilted Arc* once stood, is a reactionary reinvestment in the "popular" notion of public space. Although the work is pastiche, a counter-opposition to Serra's initial critical intervention, it remains pastiche curiously unaware of the irony entailed in its oppositional stance; as an essentially representational and decorative work, which moreover understands itself to be useful, Schwartz's arrangement of benches and mounds need not be rehabilitated since it never left the fold of state sanction. Careful scrutiny of this rescue attempt leads us to believe that the wound opened by Serra's initial laceration remains, and in fact is deepened by that which attempts to cover it over. This is the true irony of Schwartz's work, which, in spite of its reconciliatory gesture, sustains critical attention in the space of this site.

The initial move, however, belongs with Serra. Serra's highly-developed understanding of site directs attention to flows within space, which in turn raises the question as to how space itself is generated. Bringing into vision the production of space (Lefebvre) situates the subject in an other space: the critical questions which follow concern whether this vision reveals the mechanisms by which heterogeneous elements are neutralized and, in a somewhat different line of thinking, how the subject itself is made problematic in this re-vision of space. Serra's work, which is suspended between the institutional space and the consciousness of an other space generated by the work leads to a complicated paradox, most concretely understood in regard to the commission process. The nature of his sculpture since the 1970s, the use of giant pieces of Cor-Ten steel, a cumbersome medium demanding very large sites, teams of engineers and machine operators, safety inspections by government officials, and substantial budgets are quite obviously dependent upon cooperation with, if not patronage from, the very institutions he critiques.[3] Likewise, his close cooperation with galleries (Castelli, Storm King, or Dia) or

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[3] The institutional relations to Serra's work are not all of a type: in addition to being potentially ideologically determined within institutional enclosures (permanent museum installations and retrospectives), some of his work is situated sufficiently far away from institutional interests not to register institutional opposition (*Shift*, *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram, Rights Angles Inverted*, *St. John's Rotary Arc* [relocated], *T.W.U.*); some examples exist in uneasy tension with the environment (*Terminal*, *Slice*); another group has yet to be built, has been re-sited against Serra's wishes, or destroyed (*Sight Point*, *Twain*, *Tilted Arc*).

museums (MOMA or Guggenheim, Bilbao) are potentially problematic, especially given his decades-long association with *October* critics such as Krauss, Crimp, and Michelson. The upshot of this discussion and the problem I propose here is that much of Serra's large-scale public work engages the institutional support on different levels, which are connoted by the sense of the word "support" itself. The question arises, though the terms of the question must be developed to fully understand its implications, as to whether this literal and figurative support defines the points by which power is indexed and flows are directed and measured. This abstract formulation has both disciplinary and control dimensions; it is the object of this essay to bring us to an understanding of this problem.

The development of this thesis touches upon several interrelated areas. First, the theoretical basis of space demands some comment, particularly the means by which the theoretical components which I develop out of Lefebvre impact the specific socio-political context of *Tilted Arc* [4] and the 1980s art funding disturbances in the United States. From here, we must emphasize an economy of terms which, though presented as a series of problems, are in fact in circulation rather than indicative of linear development. These concerns include the relation of gestalt to space and frame, the way in which site was used by Serra to attack this problem, which in turn led to confrontations with disciplinary-defined space and to a realization of limits. The theoretical complement to these developments is found in Foucault and to a lesser extent in Deleuze, sections of whose relevant texts must be summarily presented as background.

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[4] Images of some of the Serra sculptures referred to in this paper may be accessed on the Internet:

> *House of Cards* <www.moma.org>
> *Prop* <www.guggenheimcollection.org; http://pages.globetrotter.net/pcbcr/art.html>
> *Splashing* (new version) <www.sfmoma.org>
> *Tilted Arc* <www.wirednewyork.com/forum/showthread.php?t=10643>
> *Strike* <www.guggenheimcollection.org>
> *Torqued Ellipses* <www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag99/jan99/serra/sm-serra.shtml>
> *Twain* <stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/parks/parks_div/serra.html>
> *T.W.U.* <railibro.lacab.it/emma/zoom.phtml?ns=784>.

Circuit, *Delineator*, *Shift*, *Sight Point*, *Slice*, *St. John's Rotary Arc*, *Terminal*, *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram, Right Angles Inverted*, and *Twins* may all be viewed in Foster and Hughes' *Richard Serra*. Yahoo's picture website www.flickr.com also contains a large number of public domain photographs of Serra's sculpture. The present state of the Federal Plaza in New York (Martha Schwartz's work) can be viewed at the *Tilted Arc* site referenced above.

Space: Production, Consumption, Neutralization

Henri Lefebvre's densely textured critique *The Production of Space* effectively challenges the idea of neutral space: space is not a container to be filled, whose apparent emptiness is value-free. This idea is not foreign to Serra, who has remarked repeatedly that "there is no neutral site," and that "every context has its frame and its ideological overtones" (*Writings* 170). But as the word "space" demands theoretical assessment, so does the idea of "frame"—the framing or staking out of space in its abstract sense deserves consideration.[5] The act of bringing the frame into focus is suggestive of the projects of conceptual art and certain adherents of minimalism whose preoccupation with the materiality of objects encouraged the viewer to foreground institutional framing, the means by which the work was granted its status as an aesthetic object. But in the context of this discussion, highlighting institutional framing ends up regarding the institution itself as an abstract container, which brings us back to where we began. In contrast, Lefebvre's concern is the unself-conscious appeal to space as a self-evident metaphor which can be fit around any abstraction to function as an unproblematic ground of difference, in short, that space is simply understood as a given space. A confrontation ensues between a certain mode of philosophical thinking about space (Cartesian space) related to mental space and the social space to which it supposedly corresponds and is able to define and describe. This idea has been related both to architecture and to site specificity: Bernard Tschumi, for instance, understands the abstraction of space to be in conflict epistemologically with our empirical relation to that space, what Nick Kaye refers to as "the disjunctive relationship between the concept and experience of space" (43). Lefebvre's concern is "that a particular 'theoretical practice' produces a *mental space* which is apparently, but only apparently, extra-ideological" (Lefebvre 6). Framing and containment, moreover, are accompanied by a "logic," whose chief purpose is "to preserve what has been put in it"—this is the "logic" of ideology. And as such, it should give rise to certain questions: "Who promotes it? Who exploits it? And why do they do so?" (94).

Although these questions arise well into Lefebvre's book, the guiding principles behind them appear near the start. Lefebvre's project, his "science of

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[5] Anthony Vidler gives a concrete historical dimension to this development by tracing the influence of Romanticism and Modernism (particularly psychoanalysis) on modern perceptions of space, which is now viewed "as a product of subjective projection and introjection, as opposed to a stable container of objects and bodies" (1).

space," attempts to demonstrate three points: (1) that space "represents the political . . . use of knowledge"; (2) that "it implies an ideology designed to conceal that use" and furthermore which becomes in practice "indistinguishable from knowledge" itself; and, (3) that it provides a rationale for the "existing mode of production" (8-9). Later, he continues to elaborate his claim that "space serves," that "hegemony makes use of it, in the establishment, on the basis of an underlying logic and with the help of knowledge and technical expertise, of a 'system'" (11). In the mid-1970s, when Lefebvre was writing *The Production of Space*, state power has already achieved its great leveling on a previously undreamt-of scale—the grid of homogeneity encloses all contradictions, which are engulfed as if by an efficient process of phagocytosis. The public aspect of this neutralization, though sometimes noisy, nonetheless transpires on unreflective notions of ground summed up by the idea of a "given space." Oppositional forces may appear to challenge the limits of state hegemony, but transgression becomes the illumination of a limit which itself is either state-sanctioned or regarded as "natural" since identity comes into view as a consequence of resistance within unquestioned space. Suggesting, however, that nefarious forces are at work, manipulated, for instance, by an elite oligarchy of super-rich, is a wrong-headed understanding of state power. If space is a social product, it is not engineered clandestinely in a star chamber, but emerges from the decisions and behaviors of the entire range of positions within state boundaries, to the smallest workings of micro-power. Despite Lefebvre's critical attitude towards Foucault, on this score they invite comparison, since according to Lefebvre, the space which "serves as a tool of thought and of action" is not only "a means of production" but also "a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it" (Lefebvre 26)—in short, identity within this discursive field is requisite to wielding the power that allows participation within the system so defined.

The abstract space subtending the activities of everyday life can be understood to be anchored on an even more sinister footing, namely, the state monopoly on violence. This principle, once questioned, positions the questioner on indefensible terrain, indefensible because characterized as perverse or irrational. In the context of the *Tilted Arc* controversy, sculptural interventions perceived as aggressive are reduced to the deviancy of the sculpture or the imposition of the sculptor's egotistical or monomaniacal attacks on the fabric of the social ground, an attitude voiced or implied at the hearings in most statements for removal (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 111-29). Resorting to contracts and arguments over civil liberties, which were foregrounded in the hearings and legal entanglements over Serra's

attempts to save *Tilted Arc*, seems a questionable, or at least ironic, strategy. Though possibly suggested by Serra's lawyers as a tactic to combat relocation, the theoretical underpinnings of this approach place Serra's work squarely within the discursive boundaries established by the institution. Serra's participation in this discourse concerning civil liberties is in fact backed—is guaranteed as authentic—by the very frame it combats. My economic metaphor is not accidental but is utilized also by Lefebvre. He writes that abstract space

> presupposes the existence of a "spatial economy" closely allied, though not identical, to the verbal economy. This economy valorizes certain relationships between people in particular places [. . .], and thus gives rise to connotative discourses concerning these places; these in turn generate "consensuses" or conventions according to which, for example, such and such a place is supposed to be trouble-free. (56)

The "trouble" in this context refers to tolerated (though actually sanctioned) inequalities, particularly the suppression of the interests of the underclasses. These techniques have been perfected through a state politics which takes on the role of "reducers of contradictions"; thereby, what is really an ideological formation passes as "established knowledge" and therefore remains largely unquestioned, paradigmatic knowledge shoring up the power of the state form generally (Lefebvre 106). That Serra could partake of this discursive practice reveals how spatial politicization can function as the common medium and site of engagement for both liberal and authoritarian state forms (Lefebvre 281-82). This spatial distensibility, encompassing a range of ostensibly incompatible political positions, derives from how space is understood figuratively, instead of as a site where the state's representatives engage in real acts of violence. Concrete examples of this masking technique emerge in the language strategies underpinning the NEA fiascos of the late 1980s, particularly regarding appeals to public decency (aimed at Serrano, Finley, et al.). The homogenization of the "public" was a tacit feature of Orrin Hatch's and Jesse Helms' rhetorical strategy, and a recurring tactic among right-wing extremists from the "silent majority" to the "moral majority." Because the homogenization of the public reduces it to a field that precludes dissension, what might rightly be termed dissension is simply characterized as perversion. Disruptions in space then become analogous to the erotica foisted upon the taxpayer by the likes of Robert Mapplethorpe: they are neither a critique nor the expression

of the other which refuses to take the familiar as its point of reference, but simply irrational since they exist outside the purview of a regularized knowledge. That the left capitulated to this strategy was evident in the way Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio* series was defended by art world advocates—an appeal to technical aesthetic issues which enshrined Mapplethorpe's photography within a tradition whose status as canonical art was incontestable (Crimp 10).

The homoerotic aspects of Mapplethorpe's work may not be regarded as the best example of public art, yet we find that the willingness to work within the enclosure established by disciplinary interests is very much part of public art debates, including the one surrounding Serra. Unsurprisingly, the neutralization of contradictions through a politics of consensus does not eradicate violence or the threat of violence, as Rosalyn Deutsche makes clear in her applications of Lefebvre's thought to the cynical housing policies practiced in New York City during the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, Deutsche's articles in *Evictions* on how gentrification in New York was justified reveal how the threat of violence and insecurity were constantly raised to enhance redevelopment plans. The chameleon-like quality of state control demonstrates its great flexibility in making the most out of confrontations to actually anchor and popularize its own specific notion of public. In the art world, Serra's *Tilted Arc* was a case in point: an affront to the public, an act of aggression, a security threat which literally became a wall between the public and the bureaucratic machinery lodged in the Federal Building that it fronted. Instead of either undermining or pointing up the concept of inaccessibility and opacity that many feel characterize the federal government's operations, the sculpture itself became an obstacle to be overcome; overcoming it literally meant its removal. As an object which confronted the public with its own alienation (Crimp 179; Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 91), its survival was precarious, since, in Crimp's words, "when the work of art refuses to play the prescribed role of falsely reconciling contradictions, it becomes an object of scorn" (180). The complexities pursuant to resisting a false reconciliation are not cut-and-dried; rather, despite state rhetoric directed at *Tilted Arc*, this object lent itself to obvious symbolic readings, perhaps the most reactionary one terming it an "iron (sic) curtain." Such readings delight the managers of state power in that they direct criticism into dramatic, symbol-laden gestures and therefore largely non-threatening channels of action. Yet, if Serra's sculpture is to be understood as revolutionary in Lefebvre's sense, it nonetheless successfully critiqued disciplinary space through its refusal to satisfy its premises, not in the sense of negativity, which speaks the language of discipline and allows the recuperation of hegemony through

neutralization or normalization, but in its fundamental incompatibility. This is so because revolution implies revolutionary concepts of space (Lefebvre) and must do so if there is to be more than a change of masters. Ironically, had Serra's gesture been merely a negation in the sense of antagonism to what the Plaza signified symbolically, its survival might have been more assured, for it would then have not seriously contested the spatial configuration established by state boundaries. Whatever the outcome of that contest, whether a "benevolent" tolerance or a stimulus to reform-minded action, the works would have been neutralized in the process; it would have been integrated as a functional part into the mechanism that it purportedly negated.

Consciously indebted to Lefebvre, Deutsche understands space as produced in order to maintain the modes of production favorable to the dominant class. To maintain this hegemony, disruptive elements and contradictions must be neutralized, an exclusion which extends to the arts inasmuch as they become vehicles, either ideologically or materially, which further the goals of or enable domination. Again in line with Lefebvre, the process of exclusion entails the erasure of the process itself (Deutsche xiii). The careful side-stepping of aesthetics was a smoke-screen which confounded the stakes of the Serra confrontation even as it ironically drew attention to them. The aesthetic issues surrounding *Tilted Arc* were consistently put aside by its institutional detractors, specifically GSA New York Regional Administrator William Diamond and Dwight Ink, a GSA bureaucrat in Washington, D.C., as immaterial to their decisions about the work,[6] but the comically heavy-handed drawing of attention to their non-judgment amounted to a stage wink, especially given Diamond's so-called non-official remarks to the media.[7] Diamond's preference for a tame, functionalized art should not be understood as an anomaly; rather, as Kwon and others have convincingly shown, public art has become either a means to recuperate (or define) the "public" aspect of public art. The non-political "function" of public art, well-illustrated in the NEA witch-hunts of the late 1980s, parallels Hardt's remarks in "The Global Society of Control" that politics is no longer public in that the outside of civil society has in essence "withered" away (142). Sculpture, for instance, has been shamelessly co-opted to serve the "revitalization" of misused space (i.e., space, whose commercial value has not been

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[6] For an extended treatment of the legal process surrounding the *Tilted Arc* controversy, see Barbara Hoffman's "Law for Art's Sake." Hoffman questions the decisions handed down by the judges, wryly commenting that these decisions, avoiding aesthetic entanglements, were deemed "content-neutral" (Hoffman 122).

[7] Diamond publicly stated his hostility nationally in a CNN interview. See Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 226.

sufficiently exploited [Kwon 66-72]), exemplified in the re-development plans for Union Square in New York attacked so effectively by Deutsche (see especially 12-32). In her essay from *Evictions*, "Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection* and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" Deutsche demonstrates that the security issues raised in the *Tilted Arc* debates inform public policy even more pointedly when big money is involved. The revitalization of Union Square, which amounted to incentives for gentrification and the wholesale displacement of poor residents, many into homelessness, was also an opportunity to cater to the new needs (protection from the underclass) of new residents (the upper middle classes and wealthy). The park, which was one of the major attractions for developers, was therefore redesigned to facilitate surveillance, "sanctioned under the auspices of crime prevention and the restoration of order" (Deutsche 27), but the resulting "defensible space" was really premised on a panoptical model to facilitate "state-controlled urban surveillance" (28). This explicit and apparently unproblematic functionalization process is a subtle means of ordering space, and therefore of imposing an ideology whose benefits cannot be contested since to do so would be irrational—surveillance comes to represent the preference operating under the auspices of a generalized knowledge (i.e., that urban life is threatening, crime ridden, etc.).[8] Surveillance meets the needs of the public thus construed and is therefore incontestable.

The nagging question in Serra, however, is whether his work participated in this justification even as it became the focal point of a certain type of dissension. This point arises directly in Deutsche in the sense that artists working in these public spaces end up revealing, participating in, or revealing through participating in fault lines running through the state's understanding of space. In this vein she writes:

> Professions such as urban planning and design—and, now, public art—assume the job of imposing such coherence, order, and rationality on space. They can be regarded as disciplinary technologies in the Foucauldian sense insofar as they attempt to pattern space so that docile and useful bodies are created by and deployed within it. In performing these tasks, such technologies also assume the contradictory functions of the state. Called upon to

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[8] Galloway makes the point that control appears as a logical preference (the convenience of credit over cash, for instance). Within the context of surveillance, see Staples' discussions of how surveillance is justified in his *Everyday Surveillance*, especially 8 and 154.

> preserve space for the fulfillment of social needs, they must also facilitate the development of an abstract space of exchange and engineer the space of domination. (78)

If Serra's work had survived, it would likely have been positioned by art history into neutral categories (operative under phrases such as "its rightful place in the American tradition . . . "); a number of neutralizing strategies certainly exist—the tradition of a homogenized avant-garde, the evolution of genre, a point in the trajectory of the artist's oeuvre. More likely, it would have passed into indifference, another object to walk past or around. Somewhat pessimistically, Deutsche, speaking from the perspective of several years after the sculpture's removal, reconsiders the debate around *Tilted Arc* as unavoidably elitist as a function of what was not discussed in the hearings. Specifically, the question of uses and functions, which she foregrounds as an important recurring theme, both from supporters and detractors, ends up addressing an idealized and therefore exclusive audience. Missing entirely are the voices which are never heard anyway, those who are not given access, the subalterns of the city, namely, those who lack access to property and thus the status of a true "resident" of lower Manhattan, those who are not employed in the district, who lack the skills, class position, desire, etc. to enter the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, those who lack access to specialized aesthetic and political discourses to make their voices harmonize with the likes of Buchloh, Krauss, Crimp, and other professional academics who gave testimony. Thus, the sculpture defined battle lines in a limited war. Despite Serra's working class posturing,[9] his was still a bourgeois struggle in respect to the discourses he employed to combat the representatives of the state; both discursive formations, however, are enmeshed in hostile confrontation with authority and thus are participatory in the system they contest since they must acknowledge the pre-existing claims to space and its ideological structuring reserved by capitalism in order to make appropriative claims in the first place. By usurping "rights to space" which was a theme in the hearings—taking the site hostage—Serra either participates in or counters by participating in an ideology that views "spatial design as an instrument of social control" (Deutsche 77). Serra's interest in "restructuring the perception of a given space" (Serra, *Writings* 109), is still a

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[9] Serra, with some frequency, highlights his working class background and experiences, an image that does not always correlate with the jet-set persona he projects at other times. See for instance his "Yale Lecture" 1097 and interviews in *Writings, Interviews* 39-40, and in Foster and Hughes' *Richard Serra* 40-41.

"given space" which does not account for the agency which gives. The site is not a site *a priori*.

From Frame to Site

A central concern for Serra is circulation, the chief means by which to engage in his perspective thinking. Perspective, taken in this sense, does not denote the fixed position of a vanishing point which unifies the field of vision or reduces it to some ideal reading, the Pascalian perspective in which "there is just one indivisible point which is the right place" (35). To do justice to Pascal, the purpose of the aphorism cited here is to contrast aesthetic vision in which the human being plays or displaces God, and the question of "truth and morality" whose absolute perspective, he implies, is only answerable to the omnipresent vantage point of God. Serra might be read as the obverse of Pascal, in which the idea of correct perspective gives way to perspectives, partly as a function of the death of God, which analogously here signifies the death of the master perspective and the de-emphasis of the creator-artist's hand (Serra, *Writings* 169-70). The uprooting of perspective as a point is an invitation to a dynamic interaction with the work. An interest in flows and sinks, vectors and the circulation of energy, then informs his concern with site and the situating of his work, sometimes to an almost obsessive degree (Serra, *Writings* 115, 274-75; Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 202-03). It is further amplified in that Serra is clearly responding to how he perceives institutional control to operate. In an interview described by Douglas Crimp, Serra complains about the effect of being denied the original site for *Sight Point*, commissioned for Wesleyan University campus but finally constructed in Amsterdam for the Stedelijk Museum. Crimp analyzes the shift from campus to museum as the removal of the work from one mode of experience (one set of assumptions about space and its functions) to another even though both are institutionally inscribed and both sited out of doors. The museum space, notwithstanding its support of Serra, creates patterns of circulation which threaten to place works on "ideological pedestals" (Crimp 169). The pedestal, under attack in the minimalist period, may disappear physically, but it remains as an abstraction, in that it can be understood as analogous to the economic base subtending the work and determining its investment potential; understood, moreover, within an institutional base that determines its aesthetic value.

With this distinction in mind, understanding the pedestal clearly is not as simple as envisioning a block or plinth, a form essentially separate from the

sculpture itself, which serves as a definite zone to render the work discontinuous with its surroundings. The physicality of the sculptural object may incorporate elements which are not aesthetically prescribed and yet nonetheless are necessary to structural integrity. Daniel Schodek's treatise on the structural aspects of sculpture provides the technical basis for approaching what is essentially an ideological problem. Schodek demonstrates that he is conversant with the critical reasons for the pedestal's disappearance in modern sculpture (58). Yet, indirectly, he suggests that burying a pile in the ground to lend support to a large work, as Serra does (or must do to follow building codes) is a type of pedestal, at least in its function of establishing the base. The reason that it might function this way is that the stability it imparts to the structure, which presumably would be unstable without it, is a form of illusionism, i.e., the perception of instability when no such instability exists. Serra is cognizant of extrinsic influences in both concrete and abstract senses inasmuch as he incorporates force and vector into his work—forces acting upon it in the environment (the elements) as well as potential forces (storms, earthquakes) are paralleled by physical actions (graffiti) and "public" opinion (ideology). Schodek's discussion of equilibrium as a problem of forces may be understood in a figurative sense that he probably did not intend, but which nonetheless seems apt, namely in the sense that interaction with sculpture in space is a distortion of forces within a field. A notion of vectorial force, resolved into a coherent mathematical basis by physicists in the eighteenth century, becomes an essentially ideological problem, one which minimalists were aware of when they engaged the frame of institutional spaces.

If objects within institutional space derive their objecthood partly from their situation, the question arises as to how forms are to be discerned save in relational terms, the gestalt. Sculptor Robert Morris, writing contemporaneously to Serra's experiments with blurring the physical frame of the gallery in his sculpture *Splashing*, represents a commonsensical position on gestalt. Morris understands gestalts to be intuited, particularly with well-recognized forms ("the simpler regular polyhedrons"), so that multiple perspectives still allow us to comprehend the entirety of the form. Objects exist by virtue of a "faith" that arises naturally from experience (6). A problem in Morris' understanding of gestalt, however, is that it presumes a form of mastery, contested by Krauss (*Passages* 4), which conflates mental space with the experience of space—which in effect reduces the experience to a mental abstraction, and one that is not particularly problematic. Sculptors have been aware of the "two reciprocal qualities" of sculpture—ground and time—through relief sculpture, particularly in monumental reliefs that concretize

historical narratives. Through the manipulation of forms and points of view, sculptors evoke the "omniscient narrator" which collapses space and time into a fully understood or mastered, essentially intuited form (*Passages* 14). Krauss indirectly touches upon the problem of control in documenting a shift towards the de-centered, interminably sequenced sculpture, characterizing various avant-gardes from Brancusi to Judd (*Passages* 250).

As early as 1969, Serra was articulating his critique of frames and gestalt readings, in that the slippage between the object and the physical confines of the space, particularly the gallery or museum space, but conceivably other institutional spaces, was understood to be still within the form of a gestalt. Specifically, he questioned floor pieces, epitomized by Andre's work, for which contiguity with the floor did not erase the floor as a framing device (Serra, *Writings* 8), even though in works like *Splashing*, Serra had clearly taken this idea to its limit (Crimp 151).[10] For Serra, *Strike* (1970) is a turning point in that gestalt readings are challenged to the point of being overturned (Peyser 28). The problem, which is illustrated in some photographs of the piece,[11] is that space is rendered ambiguous and to some degree, counter-intuitive. This ambiguity, which gives rise to an illusionism rejected by Serra, may indeed have stimulated the move to the more haptic modes found in work from the last ten years. Although Serra is at this stage still concerned with visual relations, as becomes obvious in an interview with Sylvester largely concerned with the Dia Center's showing of his torqued ellipses (Sylvester 318), gestalt has been forestalled as an aesthetic category insofar as totalizing readings are made physically difficult, perhaps impossible. These giant works (e.g., ellipses, tori, spheres, etc.) cannot be encompassed or reduced to a unified field of vision and hence escape mastery on this level. But neither is some commonsensical intuitive faculty appealed to (Sylvester 298). The size and indeterminacy of some elements (outside while inside, inside while outside, etc.) leads to an experiential configuration that again is not a unified vision; it also (as a consequence of size) leads to encounters with others, but not in the sense of several people standing in front of canvas. Rather, this encounter is face-to-face. Despite considerable differences between *Tilted Arc* and Serra's ellipses, both are understood by Serra to be irreducible to a point; *Tilted Arc* is portrayed by Serra as "something always changing, always in motion" and "the sum of successive perceptions being revealed

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[10] Serra's objection to aerial depictions of his work—discussed in the context of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* which Serra helped to build—essentially falls under the same critique. Bois emphasizes the master-problem by attributing "theological" significance to these elevated views (60).

[11] An example of this illusionistic distortion is found in the photograph of *Strike* in Foster 120.

only to a moving observer" (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 65, 186). The shift from point to line is the introduction of the vectorial element—point is recuperated not as an identity but only as a register of flows in space.

Despite this characterization of *Tilted Arc*—as an object which resists reduction to an object inasmuch as it cannot be understood as a singularity in its gestalt dimension—the sculpture was at the same time fixed within the enclosure of an institutional framework. Certain arts of the 1960s, especially minimalist sculpture, played down the "hand"—prefabricated, "unartistic" materials assembled through purely mechanical processes—to place the focus on the spectator's perception of the work deployed within a site. The re-vision of the site was as much at stake as the materiality of the work; the minimalist work, counter to the aims of some Modernists, denied both "transhistorical meaning" and "placelessness" (Crimp 16), attacking the transparent acceptance of the artwork as an object with aesthetic and market value (both in a sense valorized by the institutional frame). The circular argument which potentially results from drawing attention to the wall is rendered more complex through the addition of spatial vectors. Possibly, the logical outcome of motion is, to use an ironic term, planned obsolescence. The question becomes then whether the preservation of *Tilted Arc* is in fact its re-framing under the auspices of toleration or artistic license, in short its neutralization, or whether programming a radically entropic dimension into the work is a liberation, or, alternatively, a reduction of the work to a use (i.e., raising of social consciousness). Any way it is played, there is a slippage. Nonetheless, it seems certain that the argument for retention undermines the object's heterogeneity, an idea unconsciously voiced by Joel Kovel at the *Tilted Arc* hearings when he claimed that "Serra's work challenges that homogenization of contemporary bureaucracy ['a total administration which tries to deny all oppositions']. It stands outside of the homogenization of bureaucracy, forcing an active relationship between the passerby and the space of the plaza, and necessarily the space of the building behind the plaza" (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 94). My contention is that it could not be read as oppositional in the way Kovel imagines if it were really outside of this discursive space; opposition, in fact, is the very means by which the work is neutralized. Thus, Kovel is more correct than he knows when he continues by noting that "this opposition reflects the true oppositions in our society which bureaucracies work to deny"; however, the "critical function" that he attributes to it, I would claim, is dubious (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 94). To understand why this is the case, we must first investigate how disciplinary enclosures derive strength from identity.

The Site of Discipline

Institutional space depends upon a ground of difference brought into vision through representation; bodies which traverse space as understood in these terms cannot overcome the gravity coincident with this ground; they derive and attribute identities from and to this ground of difference itself. They are therefore implicated in the structures that they may wish, in some idealized or mental space, to counter. Again, this thought presumes a representation-based understanding of difference to be operating in the subject. The problem raised in Lefebvre, then, of the neutralization of conflict through the "normalizing" of practices in the guise of knowledge, takes place on very small scales, or what Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, terms "a micro-physics of power" (26). The power in question is not concretely determinate; instead, it only becomes visible in "network relations" which are "in tension, in activity" (26). But the extension of power relations, whether understood as complicity or as resistance, underlines the incorporeity that Foucault claims later on in his book:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance. (202-03)

We would go too far to attribute consciousness to the institutions, to personify them, as if they were corporations cognizant and self-consciously manipulative. They are, rather, impersonal mechanisms in which operations regulate flows within framed space.

To address flows we turn to how disciplinary space is thought in its economic dimension, how it seems to rely upon the homogenizing and leveling of points within a field or plane with discernible boundaries. Although the relations within this space are not value free, to characterize all relations in this field as oppressive is a misconception. If characterized in terms of systems, historical change reveals leveling to be more complex than either a teleological process or the abandonment of values; thus, in respect to Foucault, penal reform was not premised on detached

concepts of justice, but instead "set up a new 'economy' of the power to punish, to assure its better distribution, so that it should be neither too concentrated at certain privileged points, nor too divided between opposing authorities" (80). The practice of discipline, already suggested here in spatial metaphors, was indeed related to real space, particularly in the configuring of architectural space and enclosure.

The disciplining of bodies concerns the ways individuals are controlled as a function of space. This control, however, should not be conflated specifically with enclosure itself, understood as "a place heterogeneous to all others and closed upon itself" (Foucault 141), though this type of space is a starting point since it is easy to envision. A disciplinary space as a literally enclosed space is a type of functional site, which makes space determinate (Foucault 143). The articulation of space in terms of use is a commonplace, though the notion of use is obviously more than the pragmatic ascription to or association with specific tasks (i.e., work); rather, use extends to aesthetic "use" or ideological formulations. The use of architecture in the interests of discipline allows "an internal, articulated and detailed control," which "render[s] visible those who are inside it" and which "transform[s] individuals" with the ultimate purpose of applying power to bodies (Foucault 172). Architecture, in this sense, frames the enactment of power and signifies, visually, the limit of the law, a literal, physical barrier in extreme cases, such as the prison.[12]

But as the frame might "determine" the limit of the work, literally, in the sense of a painting hanging in the museum, and more figuratively in what is validated through scholarship, the suspicion arises that the determination of limits is a classificatory strategy which sustains its own conceptual conditions of possibility. That is what is meant by "useful illegality" (Foucault 278), which at first seems contradictory to the stated aims of disciplinary modification. The enclosure renders visible the categories of illegality while the agency which subtends enclosure retreats into the background, becomes part of the normative framework which is self-evident in the very enclosure of the delinquent. The naming of delinquency is, in the sense of Lefebvre, linked to the production of a space designed to guarantee its own survival; to achieve this result, it reproduces the very conditions to maintain the distinctions it creates.[13] At the same time, struggle is an intrinsic feature of

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[12] To illustrate this abstract notion of enclosure while staying within the theme of an economy, consider how Bataille disrupts the boundedness of economic enclosures by dissolving the frame of scarcity as a foundational, and largely invisible, principle.

[13] In the context of Foucault's work, Thomas Dumm remarks that the same criticisms extend to the left and that "revolutionary subjects get into trouble when the terms through which their constitution as such subjects are unveiled as the contingent products of forces that shape the very terms of their subjecthood." Positions on the left, as on the right, are defined "by a teleology of

these sites (Foucault 285), despite its liberal or reformist face. Thomas Dumm, in his *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*, rightly evinces skepticism at liberal projects of clearing a site (in the sense of evacuating or emptying) under the aegis of a neutral meeting space. For Foucault, the death of God is the key factor in overturning these illusions since it emphasizes the erecting of limits which belie conceptual perspectives (Dumm 42-43). In short, the clearing, the prerequisite of building, is not understood in itself to be an act of production, one which is already deeply entangled in the forces it hopes to contest. And so the conclusion is perhaps unsurprising: in Dumm's terms, "Discipline is the inevitable accompaniment of liberal strategies for establishing a ground" (103).[14] Proposing that this ground could be cleared would be to suggest that ideology is suspiciously inoperative or even absent.

The "emptiness" of the Federal Building Plaza should not therefore denote an unformed space awaiting determination, either by sinister agents of the State or through the contingent coalescence of the People. Rather, this space was already under intense scrutiny and its boundaries clearly formulated, despite being described by Serra and others as "essentially used only as a place of transit through which people passed from street to building" (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 65; see also 83 and 98).[15] The themes of control and surveillance are in fact repeatedly entwined in the documents comprising *The Destruction of Tilted Arc*; often enough these issue are voiced by government representatives. The initial driving force behind removal, Judge Edward Re, complained in a letter to the GSA that the sculpture entailed a "loss of efficient security surveillance" inasmuch as "the placement of this wall [i.e. *Tilted Arc*] across the plaza obscures the view of security personnel" (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 28). Interestingly, the control aspect extends to aesthetic considerations of the space, emphasized in one of GSA Regional Administrator William Diamond's letters advocating removal. Twice Diamond refers to the "visual perspective" which is "distorted" by the work

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positive freedom" which ultimately defines identity (6).

[14] Bernard Tschumi raises this issue from another perspective when he asks "if space is an extension of matter, can one part of space be distinguished from another?" (56). The answer is that it can be if the differentiation of space is defined in disciplinary terms.

[15] The problem of emptiness and transit invites comparison with Martha Rosler's photography, which Vidler describes as depicting "empty, sterile non-places, determined more by mathematical calculation of times of arrival and departure than by any regard for the human subjects subjected to this version of total control and surveillance" (180). See also Beatriz Colomina's essay "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," 74-79, in which she uncovers the dynamics or more properly the economics of control as it defines vectors in architectural interiors. The currency of this economy is the gaze, manifested in "the controlling look, the look of control, the controlled look" (74).

(Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 145). The contrast with Serra's aesthetic aims is obvious in that both Re's and Diamond's views are enunciated from fixed points—from the fixity of the security guard's office or the ideal point of aesthetic appreciation (Pascal's problem as noted above). This is the aesthetic crux of incompatibility since Serra is well-known for the phenomenological readings his work engenders, readings which if anything have become even more obviously solicited by his more recent work.[16]

The downplayed subtext in the official government position, that of *Tilted Arc*'s unaesthetic qualities, was not confined simply to a subjective lack of appeal; rather, the work offended also in its materiality, a point referred to so frequently by detractors, that specific references are unnecessary. We should note that Lefebvre's understanding of the work of art is at odds with the foregrounding of materiality in the sculptural object in that he understands genuine works to be both "irreplaceable" and "unique" (70), suggesting that they must rise up within the field of vision. If certain boundaries of the work are effaced, such as its disappearance into the collective work of the team which erected it, in short, if it does not privilege the conceptual work of artistic genius, do we then hesitate to call it art? This essentially Modernist understanding, which reached its endpoint in Greenberg's and Fried's formalism, nonetheless points up a difficulty in Serra's oeuvre, namely that the inscription within the site reintroduces the work since it renders this work unique; it cannot be a product insofar as it cannot be reproduced since the site itself is essentially irreproducible. At the same time, Serra wants to claim for his work its status as a material confrontation, to foreground process and materials in a way to render the work completely anti-illusionistic, transparent. The first part of this endeavor is only possible with the closing of the site, which incidentally antedates the work, the fundamental immobility or permanence of the work as well as the immutable legibility of authorship. The inspired hand therefore disappears only to be resurrected in the inviolability of the sanctioned work.

More recent theoretical understandings of site, such as that developed by Miwon Kwon, view the site in flux, though not reducible to evolutionary or teleological schema. The idea of site as it is inherited from the 1960s and 1970s registers today as the invocation of anti-authoritarian aims whose acknowledged radicalism, from a contemporary perspective, has been successfully integrated into

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[16] Foster remarks how even in the 1960s Serra's sculptural language "focus[ed] on the body in movement through a space carved out by the sculpture" (8)—and in this sense, we move on to the critique of institutions, not through confrontations within the institutional frame (Diamond's Pascalian point), but through the incompatibility of the sedentary institutional formation with forces in motion.

the canon of twentieth-century art. Thus understood, Richard Serra's remarks on site specificity from twenty or thirty years ago are no longer aesthetically or politically viable (Kwon 1); we may go further to say that new strategies of control have permeated the site, that the work's relation to the site and to its ability to affect flows through the site, have been remade. Serra's struggle over *Tilted Arc* stimulated our conceptual understanding of this development away from Modernist categories. The theoretical contribution of Kwon's expansion of site specificity from "artistic genre" to "problem-idea" is important since it leads us to a broader problem of "spatial politics" (Kwon 2). Kwon describes a movement in the understanding of site away from raw materiality, the arrangement of physical objects and their interaction with changing environmental conditions (namely, a topographic and dynamic understanding)—to ideological frames which bracket spaces (the economic understanding—both in its sense of markets and in its descriptive sense of flows and energy). Within this broad division, Kwon distinguishes three paradigms (phenomenological, social/institutional, and discursive), all of which are understood to coexist (Kwon 4). We should note that the upshot of this re-definition is to throw Serra's insistence on permanence into a suspicious light since it is rooted in topographic concerns that have been reified. In this light, site no longer refers exclusively to a physical place (Kwon 11), one which insures that the authority and authorization of the author is legible in the work.

Serra's connection to place—the "topography of the site"—serves as a conceptual point of reference and stimulus to the creative process. But topography is more than a purely physical set of coordinates inasmuch as symbolic associations generally striate the site as a result of the placement of *Tilted Arc* in lower Manhattan (a federal government enclave, the financial district, and close to Soho galleries). Although it might seem self-evident that Serra wishes to play off these pre-existing forces, our review of Foucault suggests that this engagement is already decided before the work intervenes, for the reason that it doesn't contest the "given-ness" of space. Kwon reads Serra's problematic attachment to space (in the sense that it is differentiated through the effects of discipline) as participating and invested in the operations that it ostensibly takes to task. This point is hard to decide since Serra's insistence on "this place" emerges from his understanding, shared by others, that site is not so much physical as "a *cultural* framework defined by the institutions of art" (Kwon 13). And therefore, if the site is to be revealed through the work, the convergence of the forces ("social, economic, and political pressures" [Kwon 14]) acting on that space must be acknowledged and brought into visibility.

During our period of inquiry, notions of the contemplated object rooted within topographic boundaries shifted to the ideologies informing this topography and thus, not surprisingly, into immateriality—artists like Haacke and Ukele come to mind. In most of the examples given by Kwon, however, the shift necessitates performance and thus becomes self-consciously dramatic or theatrical. Notwithstanding how one reads Michael Fried on this point, the site is no longer connected with place in de Certeau's sense as much as it is related to space—the activities framed within some place. These activities range from the capacity to determine the boundaries of the object or to ascribe objecthood to all the transactions within an institutional purview. Since these activities are temporally bound, in fact are constituted in moments and subsequently disappear, the site also cannot be thought only in physical terms. Kwon characterizes Serra's concern with physical spaces as an interest in permanence.

In this light, Kwon rethinks the site as "[having] been transformed from a physical location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual" (29-30). The Deleuzian sense of this shift is not accidental, as Kwon notes in her conclusion how this change is an abandonment of the phenomenological understanding of site, which now becomes "predominantly an intertextually coordinated, multiply located, discursive field of operation" (Kwon 159). Kwon therefore rightly emphasizes a possible incongruity in Serra's understanding of site—or, less an incongruence, perhaps, than simply different modes of apprehending the site. The first is a physical relation between work and place; the second is an ideological construction more closely aligned with space ("the site is imagined as a social and political construct as well as a physical one" [Kwon 74]). Serra refused to integrate his work into the site so that the so-called unity of the Plaza was enhanced and highlighted, but he did not do so exclusively because of his own personal antagonisms, even though he clearly is a critic of the U.S. federal government. Rather, the hostility in this corner arose from Serra's display of the site as intrinsically fragmented and divided. A similar situation had arisen earlier in Bochum, Germany (a steel producing area) concerning the use of steel for *Terminal*—the anger in this context arising among politicians who saw the work as undignified and ugly; the subtext, noted by Crimp, is that the true ugliness of the work was the fact that it confronted steelworkers with their own alienated labor (173). Whether the critical acumen Serra hoped to unlock in his audience is possible is a hard question though the critical voices tended to read Serra's "wall" as a divisive and ultimately egotistic gesture which permanently imposed its creator's vision on a powerless body of common people.

This reaction, fostered by the institutional representatives who opposed the sculpture, might simply have been a parody of the very conditions Serra hoped to reveal had he not argued extensively that he was granted the right to permanency, that his "mark" on New York City would be ensured. This point of permanence and authorship—connected quite concretely to the way that site is defined—ends up being the point where Crimp and Kwon part ways. In terms of Kwon's rethinking of site, Crimp's position conceivably leads to inconsistency in that the site-specific work comes into vision as a work only within stable and predictable parameters. One might argue that stability is an obvious prerequisite for engagement, but this engagement is contrived in that it relies upon the stability not of the work (which in a number of instances is designed to be impermanent), but of the boundaries, either physical or conceptual, established by the institution, something that the work may well have been designed to critique. The emphasis on the work-site relation vis-à-vis the spectator's subjectivity is, at the same time, an anti-idealist gesture aimed at deflating the mystique of the artist-creator on the one hand and the bombast of institutional prerogatives on the other (Crimp 17); in this sense, it is in line with the aims of many minimalist artists emerging from the 1960s. And in this spirit Crimp's investment in this aim, which underscores the essentially colloidal relation between work and site, is intended to combat the evacuation of art's revolutionary potential through its reification, that is, its reduction to a commodity in circulation. To accomplish this, again, the artist's signature as well as institutional control must be effaced. Crimp implies that attachment to place de-emphasizes authorship to the point where the spectator's subjectivity becomes dominant. Whether this is true would lead to a lengthy discussion of the subject and would depart somewhat from this essay's aims. The point concerning the evasion of institutional control, however, is certainly contestable since the reification of the site itself proceeds from the type of relation established between the ideological framing of space and the work's complicity with or resistance to this space. The connectedness of work to site, then, is possibly in itself tantamount to reification, which is certainly contrary to what Crimp has in mind. The mobility of the work, then, is indicative of a shift from disciplinary boundaries to the consciousness of the fluidity of control, which, as remarked at the beginning of this essay, does not rely upon the *enfermement*.

Crimp's notion of authorship, too, for other less theoretical reasons, has not fared so well. Kwon shows that claims of authorship have been resurrected more recently in the efforts of Judd and Andre to shut down unauthorized replication of their work (what in essence amounts to forging their signatures). Crimp claims that

when the artist is understood as "the sole generator of the artwork's formal relationships" (154), we are dealing with Modernism, a position he presumably would not ascribe to the artists mentioned here. The question underpinning this part of the problem is whether the site is necessarily connected to place in such a way that authorship is an inescapable assumption—boundedness of place with its concomitant discursive limits. The problem Crimp raises repeatedly in "Redefining Site Specificity" is that uprooting the work from place constitutes the precondition for its reification (155). Conversely, Kwon seems to suggest that the same thing happens with a more rigid notion of site. Deciding this point hinges upon distinguishing between discipline and control.

Control

The enclosure of space, symptomatic of Foucault's disciplinary formations, is no less the abstracted enclosure of thought. Deleuze suggests that Foucault was aware of disciplinary society's demise, attested to in the crises pervading its institutions. We would be mistaken, though, to believe that by demolishing discipline's "Cyclopean towers" we embark on a new era of freedom; rather, what Hardt, alluding to Deleuze and Guattari, terms the "disciplinary striations" of social space "have been generalized across society" ("Withering" 31). I understand Deleuze's claim that Foucault is aware of this development, not in the sense that he uses this particular vocabulary, but in his interest in the conceptual diagram subtending certain representative institutions. As deserving of study as they are, the prison, the hospital, and the school are epiphenomena which are subsumed under a diagram epitomized by the panoptical model. The fact that we can abstract these configurations of power is the strength of Foucault's thought, its seemingly inexhaustible capacity for application, i.e. content.

Satisfactorily explaining why this understanding of the world has buckled demands sustained effort, particularly since we are on Deleuze's "moving platform" (*Difference and Repetition* 26). Motion, movement, vectors, and flows indeed characterize our problem more than the "disciplinary diagrammatics" referenced by Hardt, which "functioned in terms of positions, fixed points, and identities . . . as fundamental to the functions of rule in disciplinary societies" ("Withering" 32). Ironically, the disappearance of the enclosure at once makes social life more difficult to think (apprehending a moving multiplicity from a perspective thinking) and easier to manage, since, as Deleuze notes, the open site is a matter of codes that allow or deny access far more effectively than any door or wall (*Negotiations* 180).

Activity within this unframed frame of reference (openness) is therefore not the definition of the system, such that, for instance, we should see this development as a clever capitalist ploy. Capitalism is not the code of codes, but the difference subtending codes themselves, the space in which coding emerges and dissipates. This is not to say that capitalism does not engage in territorializations, deterritorializations, and reterritorializations, which are according to Holland "the fundamental form of social control under capitalism" (67), but we would be mistaken to look for independent meaning in these manipulations since there is none. Again, we do not confuse the site of play with the game.

To return to Serra, our understanding of *Tilted Arc* as an object to be grasped in motion must be conditioned by the idea, which should be obvious by now, that Serra is resisting thinking that object as self-sufficient (the Modernist art object), but as itself in movement, engaged in relations with the ideological structure circumscribed by the Federal Plaza—an institutional enclosure surveilled by a tower[17]—in short, a snake in the garden of the Federal Plaza. This position places him in proximity to Crimp and its potential shortcomings. Added to this, we have Serra's own ideological confrontation which understands power (resistance) as bound up with manipulating, measuring, directing, encouraging consciousness of flows, particularly within a certain type of manufactured space taken as common knowledge, as the everyday. We are, in short, confronted with suspension between ways of thinking this site: Serra speaks a sculptural language which shares enough with its disciplinary host to be understandable and thus risks the neutralization entailed by this relation; at the same time, he launches that critique in a new language.[18] I intend to show in the remainder of this essay how Serra's critical moment was to engage discipline in disciplinary terms, and that his failure was the point that the critique became most obvious.

The classificatory demarcations of discipline sustain critique through Deleuze's putting into question of identity. The English introduction to *Difference and Repetition* addresses how identity, served by the handmaiden of representation, constitutes the precondition of a certain type of difference (xix). Difference, as Todd May concisely expresses the problem, is not "simply the distinction between two

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[17] The very shape of Serra's wall contrasts with the "arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings" decried by Lefebvre, buildings whose purpose is a "need to impress . . . to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power" (98).

[18] See, for example, Serra's remarks in "The Yale Lecture" (1098), "Introduction" to *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 12), and his "Interview with Peter Eisenman" (*Writings* 146).

identities (which would subordinate them to identity) or the negation of one of them (which would think of difference only negatively)." Instead, Deleuze is after "a pure difference that forms the soil for all identities, all distinctions, and all negations" (21), difference outside the philosophical tradition stemming from Aristotle, which understands difference oppositionly.[19] The structure that we've been turning around in thought remains, however, so that thought itself, in a Kantian worldview, is conflated with knowledge. Deleuze rejects what May terms the "superior," that which transcends the world ("the infinite, the nonphysical, the unlimited, and the unity of self-identity" [May 31]), to open up areas of experience which have been eyed suspiciously by philosophy. Here, we are in concert with James Williams, who understands the "irresolvable problems" (2) engaging Deleuze as stemming from the perspectivism of experience, further complicated by the notion that what we take to be consciousness may instead by the site of thought, but not a unified field reducible to something called a Subject.[20] Williams concludes his study of *Difference and Repetition* by remarking that our difference from others is a matter of flows rather than fixable quantities, "the self and subject [are situated] as moments in the processes associated with the individual" (202). Individuality, not subjectivity, is the true universal, though in line with what we have been developing here, "individuality is only universal as a structure and not as the content of that structure"; rather, "we are the same because our difference fits into the same structure" (Williams 206). The paradox confronting a critical public art is the overcoming of transcendence since it is this philosophical error, posited for the other as well as the self and unified in a self that achieves a teleological consistency, which undermines the project from the start. Politicized definitions of space are ideological in the sense that they presuppose a normative base coupled with an assumption that cultural others want to define themselves and wield some measure of power. The position of the other is already inscribed in the limits of discourse, or, more pointedly, "difference is always difference within some common terrain" (Colebrook 66). The question concerns how resistance arises within networks of control in light of the changing notion of identity, a change from "a fixed social identity" to "a whatever identity," or as Hardt continues, "an infinitely flexible placeholder for identity" (*Gilles Deleuze* 36). Again, the empty container, the neutralized mass-produced space is filled or appealed to as the case may be by whatever today may bring. The open-endedness of what amounts to an indeterminate

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[19] For more detailed treatment of Aristotelian difference in the context of Deleuze, see Williams 60-61 and Massumi 4.

[20] McMahon treats this problem in her chapter "Difference, repetition." See specifically 42-45.

concept disrupts the classificatory function of disciplinary surveillance, not through overt antagonism, but, as Galloway says of protocols, through entering into relations of control which not only appear logical, but also desirable.

Opposition within disciplinary sites risks cooptation inasmuch as resistance is identified in the sense of a granted identity. In contrast, from a disciplinary perspective coded access (control) is the absent enemy. Hence, Galloway emphasizes that Internet protocols, operating through strategies of distributed management, undermine the disciplinary game simply by not adhering to the rules, in essence, by making moves which are not allowed on the disciplinary gameboard (30-32). Galloway shows that although this incompatibility seems to overthrow disciplinary constraints, it is in fact, potentially just a change of masters—in the Hegelian sense. The reason is that the frame of reference thought of as a frame is not broken apart to allow the emergence of any real multiplicity but is set up as a false relation. In his book on Deleuze, Hardt expresses a related idea in Hegelian language, namely that "to attack the dialectical unity of the One and the Multiple, then, is to attack the primacy of the State in the formation of society" (13). We return, then, to Lefebvre, in that the homogenization of space remains normative since only the content is in flux. In fact, "the dialectic of the One and the Multiple sets up a false image of multiplicity that is easily recuperable in the unity of the One" (Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze* 47)—a statement which very effectively characterizes the so-called public debates over Serra's work. The destruction of art nonetheless is a calculated risk in that it brings into focus the medium in which the work of art emerges and remains suspended, namely, the "benevolence" of the institution, in this case, the state, which sustains but also frames it. At the same time, we can postulate that this destruction engenders other challenges. Serra's challenge to the public, in the sense of the undifferentiated mass of individuals, is their becoming differentiated beings (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 91); this act, however, is questionable from the state's point of view since it is overtly political, the confrontation with the conditions of alienation to which both Buchloh (Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk 91) and Crimp (173) attest.

Thinking *Tilted Arc*

Serra says generally of his work that "the site is redefined not re-presented" (*Writings* 172); instead of reform, a fatal concession to differentiated space, we find a revolutionary (Lefebvre's sense) aspiration to recreate space itself. The risk posed by the museum is therefore obvious, though I imagine that if the museum were

rejected altogether, Serra would actually appear more elitist that he is already taken to be, since it would imply that his public simply is incapable of grasping the difficulties inherent in institutional critiques as inscribed within the boundaries of institutional space. This tortuous problem, though, is not my concern; neither does it seem profitable to pursue it on account of its artificiality, which is as much to say, it has become an entirely neutral question.

The more interesting interrogation of power resides in the uses of so-called public space in which art is potentially a register of power. The idea that power demands these registers is in line with both Foucault and Deleuze, the latter who tells us in the context of writing about Foucault that "power is not homogeneous but can be defined only by the particular points through which it passes" (*Foucault* 25). The distribution of points becomes key to the strategies or tactics that might inform control—or resistance, since these techniques are not the property of the State per se. We have in fact seen how pliable *Tilted Arc* can be—reduced to a certain discursive status by hostile institutional forces, but equally objectified within the same terrain in the academic discourse that surrounded the sculpture's defense.

We can take up this problem by contrasting the situation surrounding *Tilted Arc* with the elusive work of Gordon Matta-Clark. Thomas Crow understands Serra and Matta-Clark as embodying what he calls weak and strong senses of site, respectively. Matta-Clark's work (or what might be called his actions), essentially were like miraculous wounds which opened and then closed again, or more accurately, were closed by the retaliatory action of institutions (police, museums, academic institutes). These works were so effectively eradicated that the only traces we have of some of them are pictures, or in some cases, hearsay accounts. The "strength" of these exhibits, Crow implies, is that their completion or bringing to fruition coincided with their disappearance, clearly a bringing-into-focus of the temporal fragility of the work and its inevitable erasure. On top of this, and ironically, these works are performative critiques which depend upon the predictability of institutions and their representatives to fulfill their reactionary roles. Matta-Clark, Crow indicates, certainly did this better than his contemporaries associated with minimalism, no matter how adept they were at generating self-consciousness of the materiality of the gallery or its more abstract ideological frame. Although those associated with minimalism were intent on bringing consciousness around not only to space and place but to the timeframes in which that space was experienced, particularly institutional spaces, "no actual trajectory of time was built into the installation of a Dan Flavin or a Carl Andre, in that their conception did not presuppose any necessary ending" (Crow 135). Matta-Clark, on

the other hand, through choosing sites which transgressed the State's laws and regulations pertaining to property, showed what happened when institutions extended no sanction to the work. The withholding of sanction, in fact, is the chief reason that these works no longer exist in any form, save memory. Crow uses this understanding of the relation of work to site to measure the strength of the work since, according to him, the work's presence "is in terminal contradiction to the nature of the space it occupies," that in fact "if the piece could persist indefinitely, the contradiction is illusory" (Crow 135-36). These remarks are pertinent reminders of the shift in Serra's work away from the balanced and propped pieces of the late 1960s, works whose temporal element was much easier to see. As noted earlier, his experiments in works like *House of Cards*, *Prop*, or *Twins* were undercut by Serra's own concern about how the sculpture was read against the "canvas" of the museum space. Instead of melting into the institutional frame, the works became gestalts vis-à-vis that frame. Crow's criticism is not leveled at this aspect of Serra's development, but rather obliquely draws a comparison between the clearly unstable propped works and the "mimicking" of these works in much larger public sculpture, whose potential imbalance is illusionary. The illusion derives from the extensive anchoring required beneath the surface. At the same time, this anchoring process (described at some length by Serra's engineer in the *Tilted Arc* hearings), puts Serra on the other side of a divide from artists like Matta-Clark or Michael Asher. Permanence is central. What brings him back into the arena of these last two artists was *Tilted Arc*'s "physical extinction," and "by refusing—albeit involuntarily—traditional forms of permanence and monumentality" (Crow 150). Of course, as Crow underscores, the disappearance of Matta-Clark's actions or Asher's sculptures or, we could add, the programmed entropy of Smithson's earthworks, were in fact voluntary whereas Serra's inclusion in this list is somewhat by default.

Serra's intervention, in his positioning of *Tilted Arc*, brought into critical perspective what typically remains unthought, namely a notion of public space which posits an unproblematic conjunction of form and use. This proposition, of course, was premised on pleasure and distraction, not surveillance and security issues. But the effectiveness of Serra's disruption was from the first precarious, suspended between a re-presentation (or worse, a mere decoration) of the site in which the work would "harmonize" with its institutional support, or, alternately, to openly negate, a hostile gesture which would simply engender mindless animosity. Both of these tendencies in fact are neutralizations, in that the contours of the site as a produced space remain out of sight. In the end, the work's detractors tended

towards unreflective aggression, turning at times to ugly denunciation. But Serra's success was to lay bare a basic fact, that the Plaza was never a relaxing place, notwithstanding the claims of detractors who waxed nostalgically over the public functions once held there, a fantasy unsupported by statistical evidence. Serra's criminal action was the blockage of flows, not, as some claimed in a disruption of pedestrian traffic from street to building, but in the disruption of the surveilling gaze. *Tilted Arc* accentuated the non-hierarchical potential of the Plaza through its horizontal thrust, the cut-through space being a contestation, a form of ideological resistance.

The limit of Serra's work is the tenacity with which it held on to life, and to confine ourselves to sculpture, we must not be surprised, since one of the operative frames of sculpture has long been its permanency, either in terms of time or its materiality. This understanding has, of course, been seriously contested in the twentieth century, first in experiments with dynamism and later with the incorporation of entropy, defined either physically or ideologically, into the work. But the final point to make is that the ideological formation, within the paradigmatic limits of disciplinary thought, is itself contested by a mobile ideology, one which is best thought through the disappearance of the object, a dematerialization which favors an abstract economy ungrounded in materiality. In doing so, we risk taking that absent ground as a reference point which determines new limits, in the sense that a Newtonian mechanics is a frame of reference subtending the difference proclaimed by quantum mechanics. The becoming-immaterial of Serra's massive, and possibly "monumental" (Buchloh 10), objects is then more than illusionism (its purely visual/haptic dimension based on the body); it is, as the word "immaterial" suggests the risk of cooptation and the promise of lacerating space to leave wounds that signify differently from what are the new invisible enclosures of control.

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