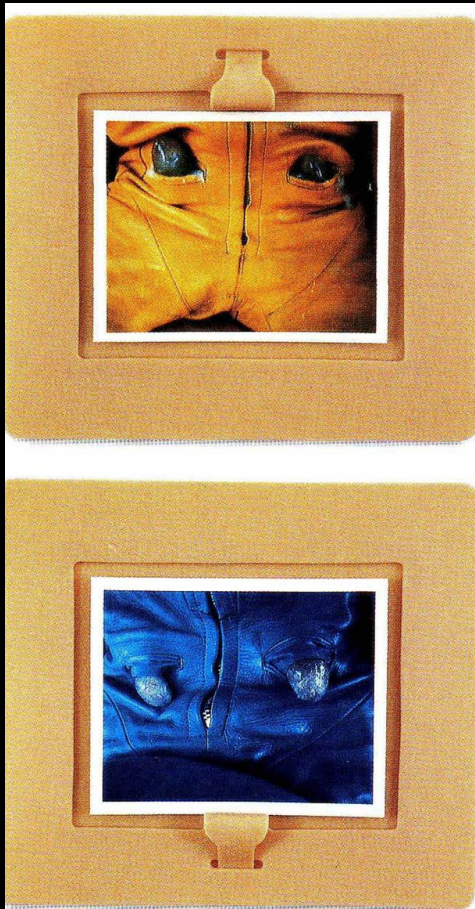**University of Texas at Dallas**
Arts & Humanities
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Contemporary Art History
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Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
11/30/2021

Bodies in Action III: Towards a Progressive Masculinity
Postmodernism and the Image: Pictures Generation

Bodies in Action III:
Towards a Progressive Masculinity

Matthew Barney,
Cremaster 4, 1994

Robert Gober,

Untitled (Bridal
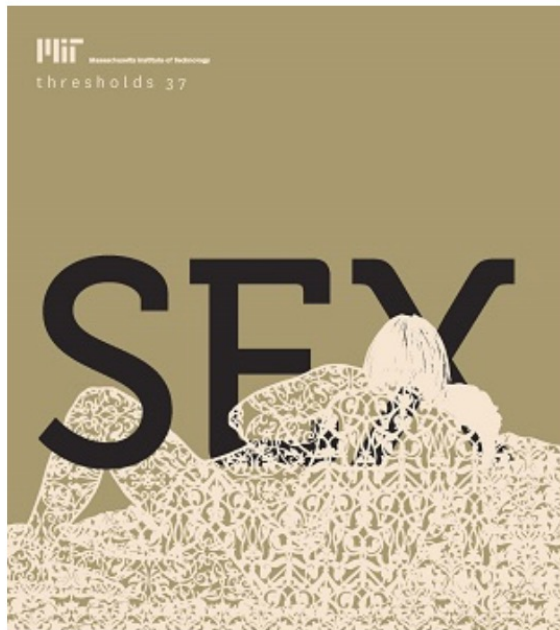Photo), 1996

Paul McCarthy,

Tubbing, 1974

Toxic Masculinity (2015)

Insecure Masculinity (2018)

Progressive Masculinity (2010)

Machismo, Castration, Homophobia: A Progressive Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Gober, Barney and McCarthy

Charissa N. Terranova
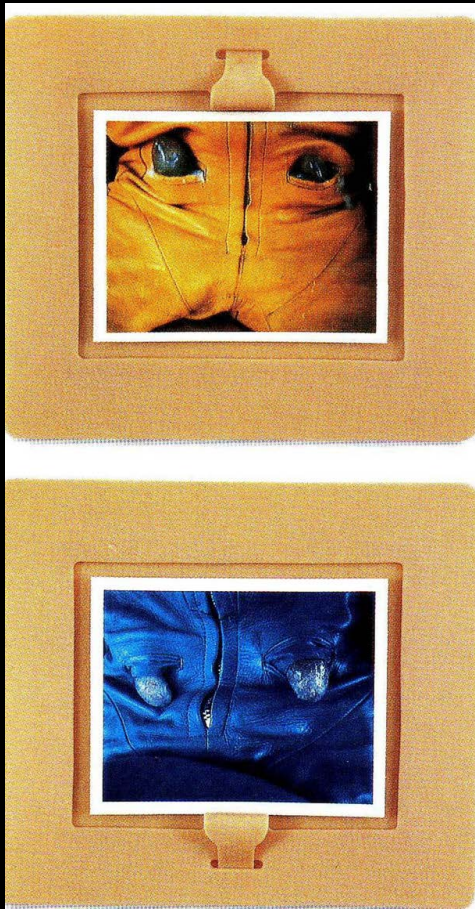
Matthew Barney,
Cremaster 4, 1994

Robert Gober,

Untitled (Bridal
Photo), 1996

Paul McCarthy,

Tubbing, 1974

The work of three contemporary artists – Robert Gober, Paul McCarthy, and Matthew Barney – quietly foments a silent, if not passive, revolution in the realm of the arts by deflating certain norms associated with masculinity, such as sexual prowess, stamina, erection-on-demand, he-man virility, extraordinary member size and clear and legible heterosexuality as the universal norm for men.

It is a passive and weak revolution in thinking and artistic practice based on the body made sexual not so much by "nature" but, and in keeping with Michel Foucault, administration. On first blush, we might interpret an essay on progressive masculinity, moreover an entire issue of an academic journal for architecture and visual studies devoted to the subject of "sex," as a dalliance with the avant-garde or an experimental provocation of sorts. As Foucault states, just speaking about sex "has the appearance of a deliberate transgression." I propose here a dialectical stance-taking further in keeping with Foucault that delivers transgression only insomuch as we understand that the overstepping of boundaries places us only deeper within certain power struggles. Boundary-breaking is but a stirring of trends readymade for the market. One step forward across a boundary is one step further into the realm of someone else's control. Nevertheless we march.

I argue here for a weak sense of agency with no promise of emancipation, but only a creative, productive, and playful meandering through the labyrinths of discourse. We play through the dialectical movements of a paradigm that prima facie delivers transgression only to reinstate our position in the biopolitical campaign of bureaucratic administration. Though not part of any such cohesive avant-garde movement, the work of these three artists constitutes a rising – an inching-along – of a progressive politics of masculinity. And it does so by confronting head on machismo, castration anxiety, and homophobia.

Matthew Barney, Cremaster 5, 1997

Robert Gober, Untitled, 1990

Paul McCarthy, Basement Bunker: Painting Queens in the Red Carpet Hall, 2003

The objects and moving-images of these artists "cannot be theorized apart from the forcible and reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes," as Judith Butler states. Because much of the work symbolically oscillates between and beyond gender dimorphism, that is, the male-vs-female paradigm, we find here a body politic that is gender deviant. This is work that transgresses the age-old ideological as well as biological binary of "man" and "woman." It is work that is in the same vein "degenderist," to use a word from an exhibition at the Setagaya Museum in Tokyo in 1997.

- ABJECTION

- SELF-ABASING MANHOOD -- EVIDENCE OF ORGANISMIC SECURITY RATHER THAN ORGANISMIC INSECURITY

- DEGENDERING/REGENDERING

- INTENTIONAL SELF-DEGRADATION OF CISGENDER MANHOOD

- GENDER AGAINST THE CULTURAL GRAIN

Their work recognizes the constructed nature of gendered identity in that it "performs" masculinity. It is work, however, that does not act out maleness, or masculinity, ex nihilo, as though a Promethean act of pure will. Rather, here we find instances of performance in keeping with Judith Butler's gender theory. Gober, Barney, and McCarthy rehearse, ricochet against, and finally reject the limiting rules of male gender as proscribed and repeated by the language and ideologies into which we are born.
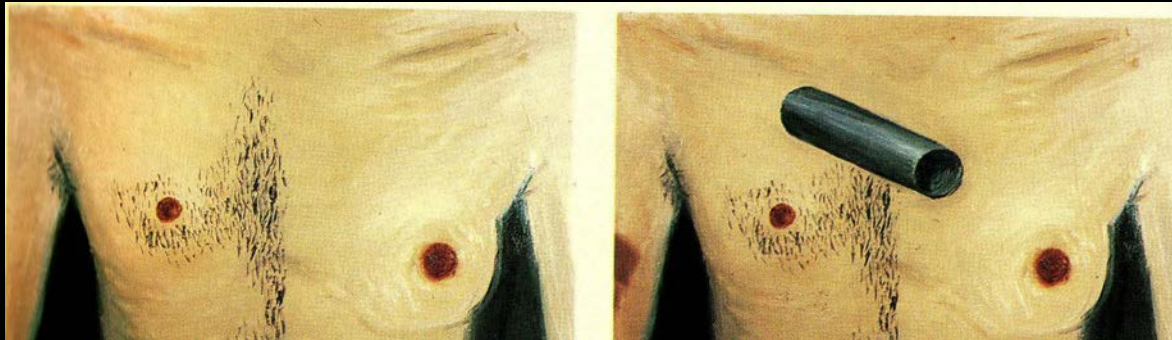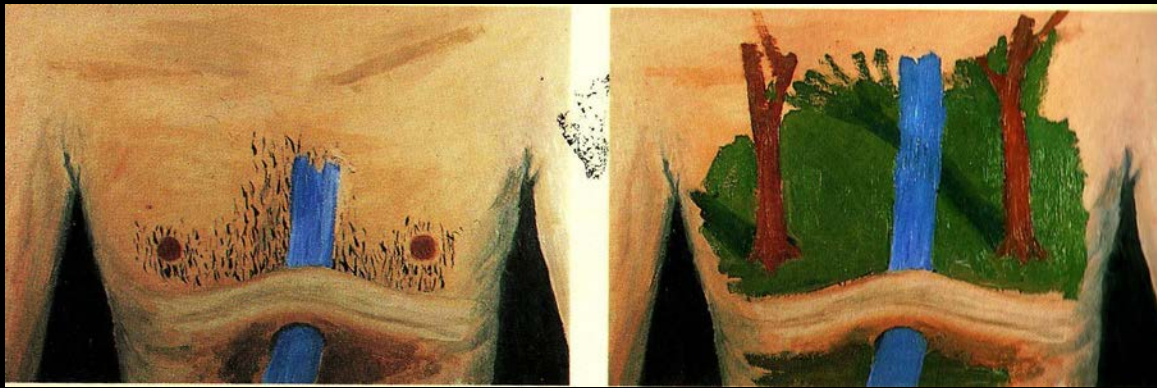

Matthew Barney, Cremaster 3, 2002

Robert Gober,

Man Coming
Out of the
Woman,
1993-94

Paul McCarthy, Hot Dog, 1974

Robert Gober, Chests: Slides of a Changing Painting, 1982-83

Gober, Untitled, 1995-97

Robert Gober, born 1954
- sculptures explore sexuality, relationships, nature, politics, and religion
- based on memories from his childhood or on familiar subject matter from around his home or studio. Sinks, doors, cribs, chairs, and body parts recur in his oeuvre
- large room-sized installations, sometimes incorporating running water and theatrical lighting
- work is made by hand in his studio with painstaking attention to detail

Gober, Chests, 1982-83
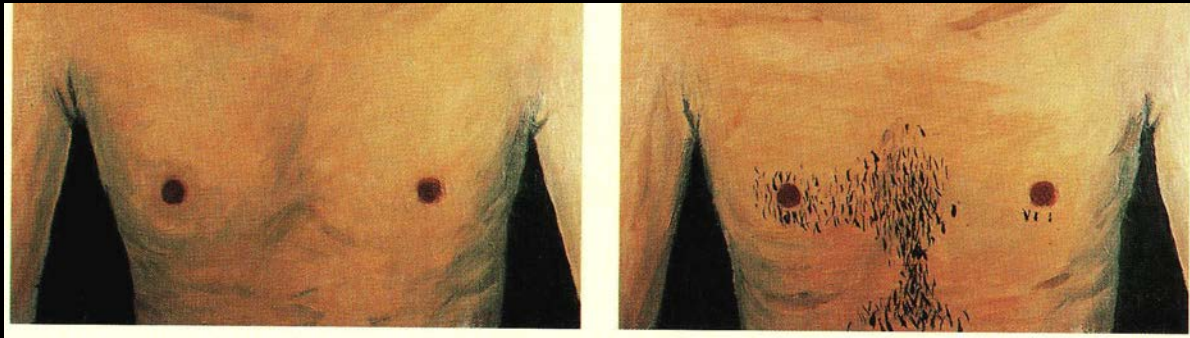
For a period of about a year, Gober repeatedly painted and photographed the same small board. He covered its surface, roughly eleven by fourteen inches, with motifs such as pipes, drains, landscapes, and the human chest. From the thousands of slides he produced, Gober selected eighty-nine to create the "memoir" Slides of a Changing Painting. The images, many of which address the themes of **metamorphosis, indeterminacy, and sexual difference**, record the transformation of his panel and reanimate the process of painting. Slides of a Changing Painting replaces the single finished object with a series of dematerialized images, all absent and none more authoritative than another.

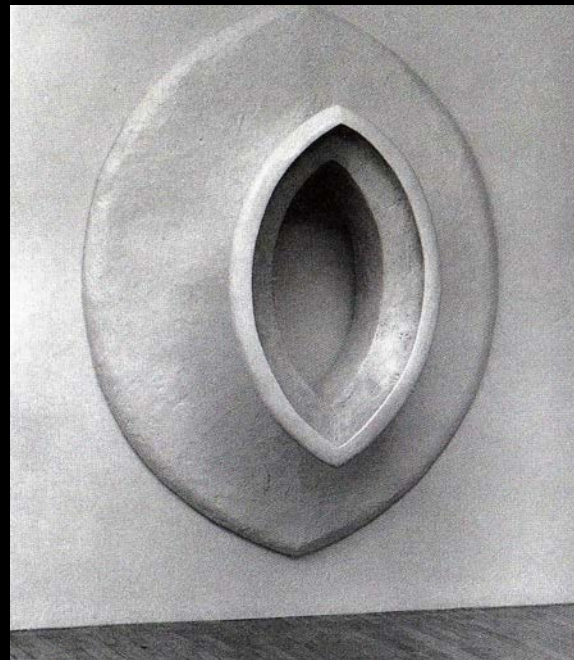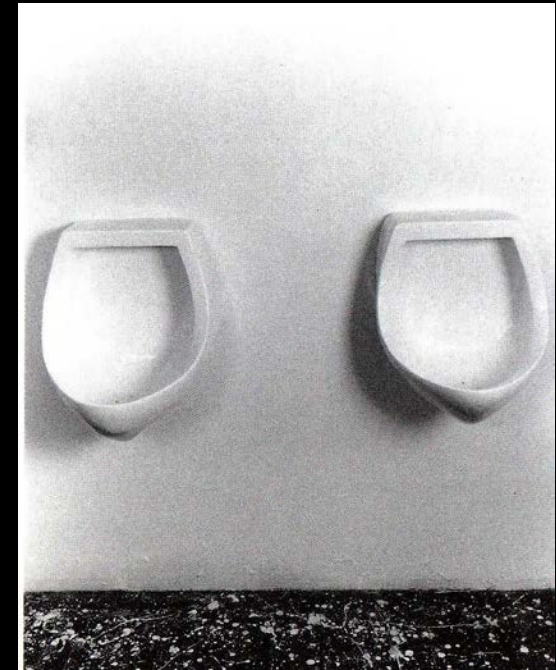https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/689669
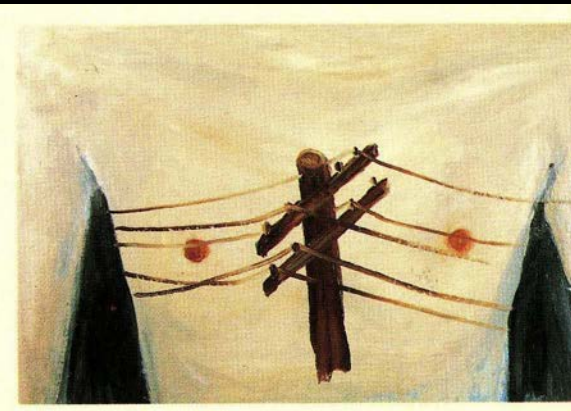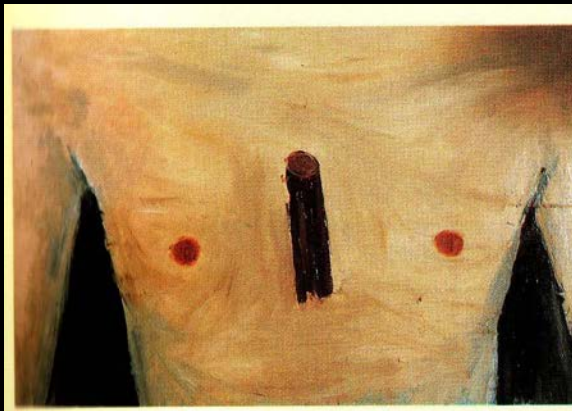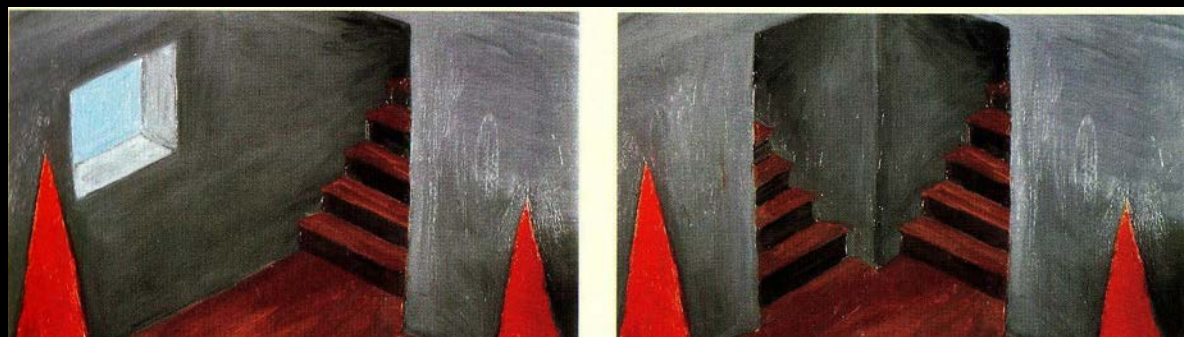
Gober, Subconscious Sinks, 1985

Plaster, wood, wire lath, steel, and enamel

Gober, Two Bent Sinks, 1985

Plaster, wood, wire lath, steel, and enamel,

Gober, Two Urinals, 1986

Plaster, wood, wire lath, steel, and enamel,

Readymade

Duchamp, Fountain, 1917

Robert Gober,

Untitled (Bridal Photo), 1992

Robert Gober, Installation at the Dia Center, 1992

Robert Gober, Newspaper, 1992 Bundle of offset lithographs with twine

Matthew Barney, Drawing Restraint 2, 1988

DRAWING RESTRAINT (1987-present) is a significant and long-term project for Matthew Barney (b. 1967), in which he proposes art-making as parallel to athletic training: the development of form occurs through resistance. The earliest in the series, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1-6* (1987-1989), show simple studio experiments, where Barney attempts to mark the ceiling and the walls while bouncing on a tilted trampoline or tethered at the thighs with bungee cords. From the 1990s onwards, the artist began to introduce the spectacular cinematic narratives for which he is best known. *DRAWING RESTRAINT* 17 (2010) filmed in Switzerland, is a two-channel video bearing Barney's signature high production value and allegorical storytelling. Usually, in this series, Barney subjects his own body to physical tests; here for the first time, the protagonist is an athletic young Swiss woman, while Barney now plays the removed role of the established artist.

https://ago.ca/exhibitions/matthew-barney-drawing-restraint

Barney, Drawing Restraint 3, 1988
– still from video/film

cast petroleum wax and thermal
plastic olympic weight lifting bar


Barney, Drawing Restraint 7, 1993

Barney, Transexualis, 1991

walk-in cooler, formed and cast petroleum jelly decline bench, human chorionic gonadotropin, speculum, self-lubricating plastic flight blocks with videotapes: "Mile High Threshold: Flight with the Anal Sadistic Warrior" and "Delay of Game"

Begun while still a student at Yale, Barney was influenced by his background as an athlete and sought to foreground the physical body and its tensions in a studio practice. *DRAWING RESTRAINT* comprises drawings, sculpture, photographs and video works emerging from his self-imposed and increasingly complex obstacles and scenarios. Considered together, *DRAWING RESTRAINT* forms an ongoing proposition for the harnessing of one's impulses and drives into a desired output, artistic or otherwise. They demonstrate the underpinnings of Barney's work, in which the body plays a central role, and ritualistic processes of creation are explored through manifold materials, settings, and personas.

https://ago.ca/exhibitions/matthew-barney-drawing-restraint
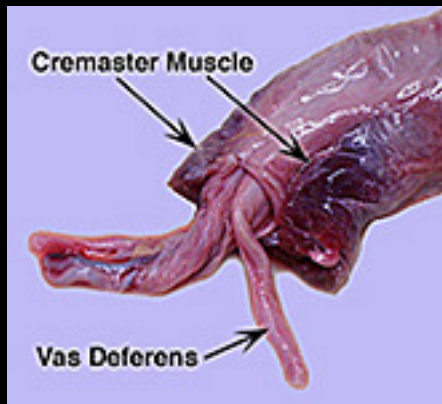
The cremaster develops fully only in males; in females it is only a few muscle loops. The cremaster muscle lowers and raises the testis in order to control its temperature. When a man enters an environment with a colder temperature, the muscle causes the testis to move against the **body**. The more the testis presses against the **body**, the less it is exposed to the cold air.

Matthew Barney, From the *Cremaster Suite*, C-prints in self-lubricating plastic frames, 1994-2002

Cremaster series is made up of five feature-length films
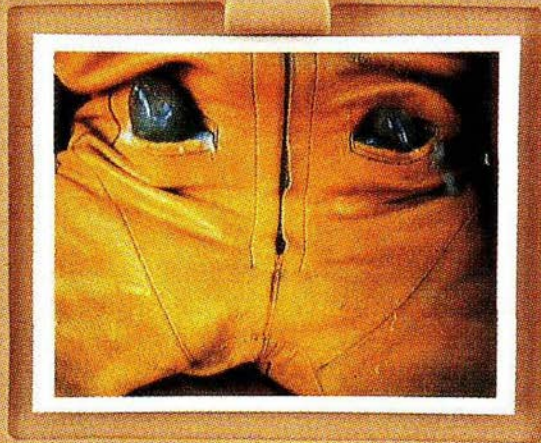
Matthew Barney,
Cremaster 4, 1994

Barney, Cremaster 4, 1994

Viewers see twin actions including a motorcycle sidecar race around the Isle of Man intercut with a satyr tap-dancing a hole through a tile floor. The film includes androgynous fairies who put some oozing goo into the pockets of the satyr, which transports to the racers.

Barney, Cremaster 1, 1995

Barney, Cremaster 5, 1997

Wasp-waisted characters from Matthew
Barney's Cremaster 2, 1999

Barney, Cremaster 2, 1999

Richard Serra, sculptor
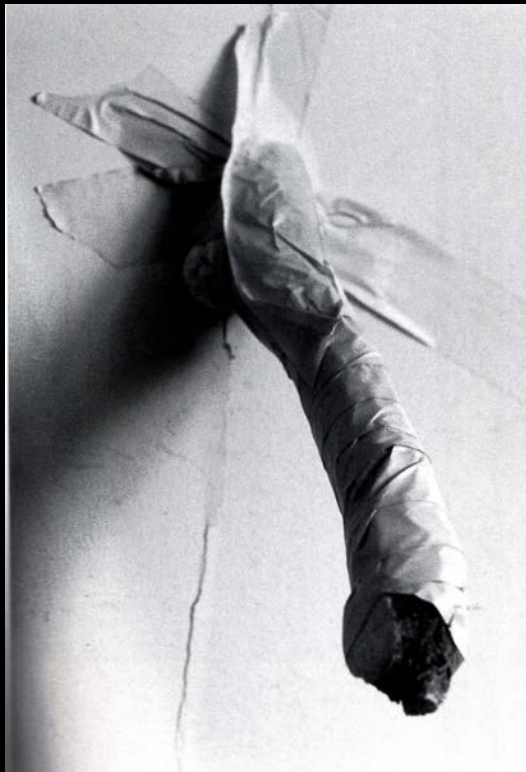
Barney, Cremaster 3, 2002
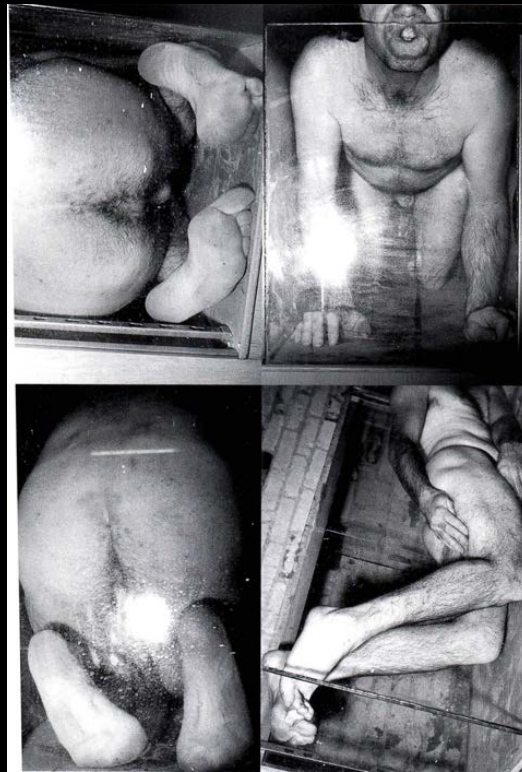
Richard Serra, Tilted Arc, 1981
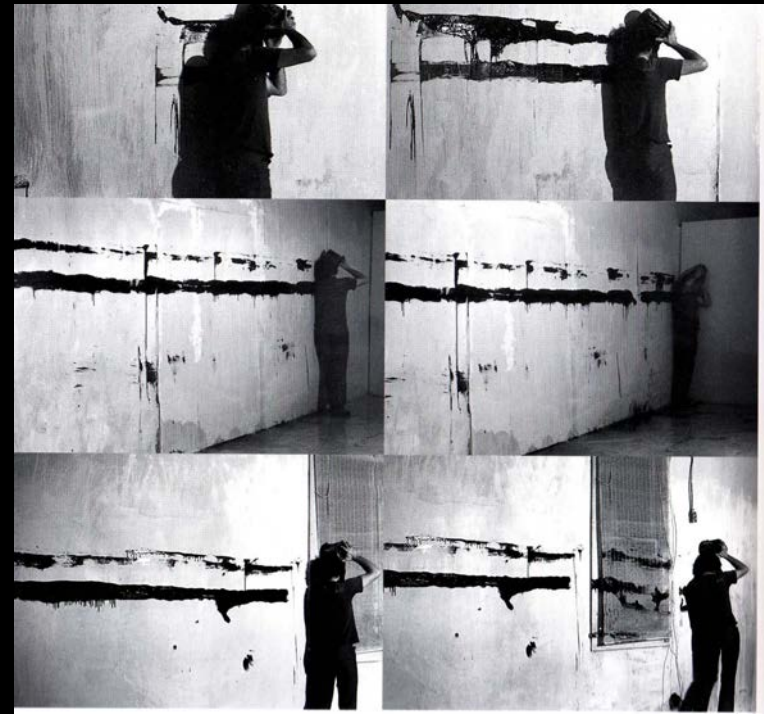
Barney, Cremaster 1, 1995

Barney, Cremaster 3, 2002
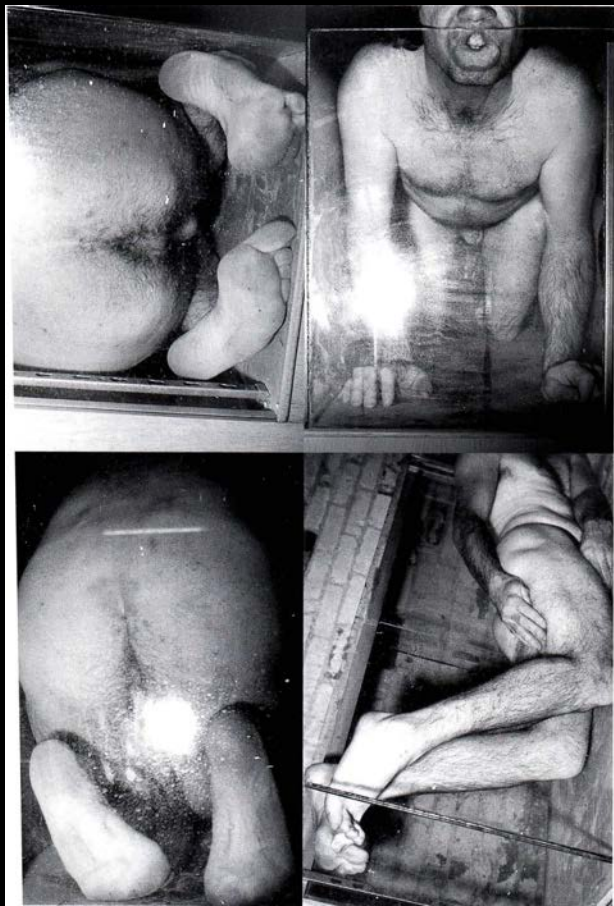
Paul McCarthy, Stick Dick, 1971

Paul McCarthy, Glass Case, 1974

Paul McCarthy, Face, Head, Shoulders Painting-Wall, Black Line, 1972

Paul McCarthy, b. 1945

- LA-based
- Makes work that is intentionally alienating to viewer
- performance, sculpture, and film
- Influenced by popular culture
- Influenced by lewd sexual innuendo

Paul McCarthy, Glass Case, 1974
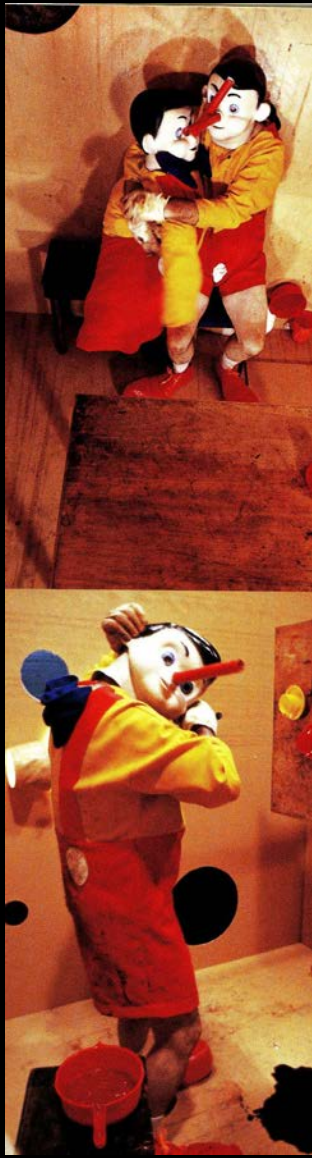

Pipilotti Rist, Open My Glade, 2000-2017

McCarthy, Meat Cake #1, 1974   McCarthy, Meat Cake #3, 1974 McCarthy, Hot Dog, 1974

McCarthy, Pinocchio
Pipenose
Householddilemma, 1994
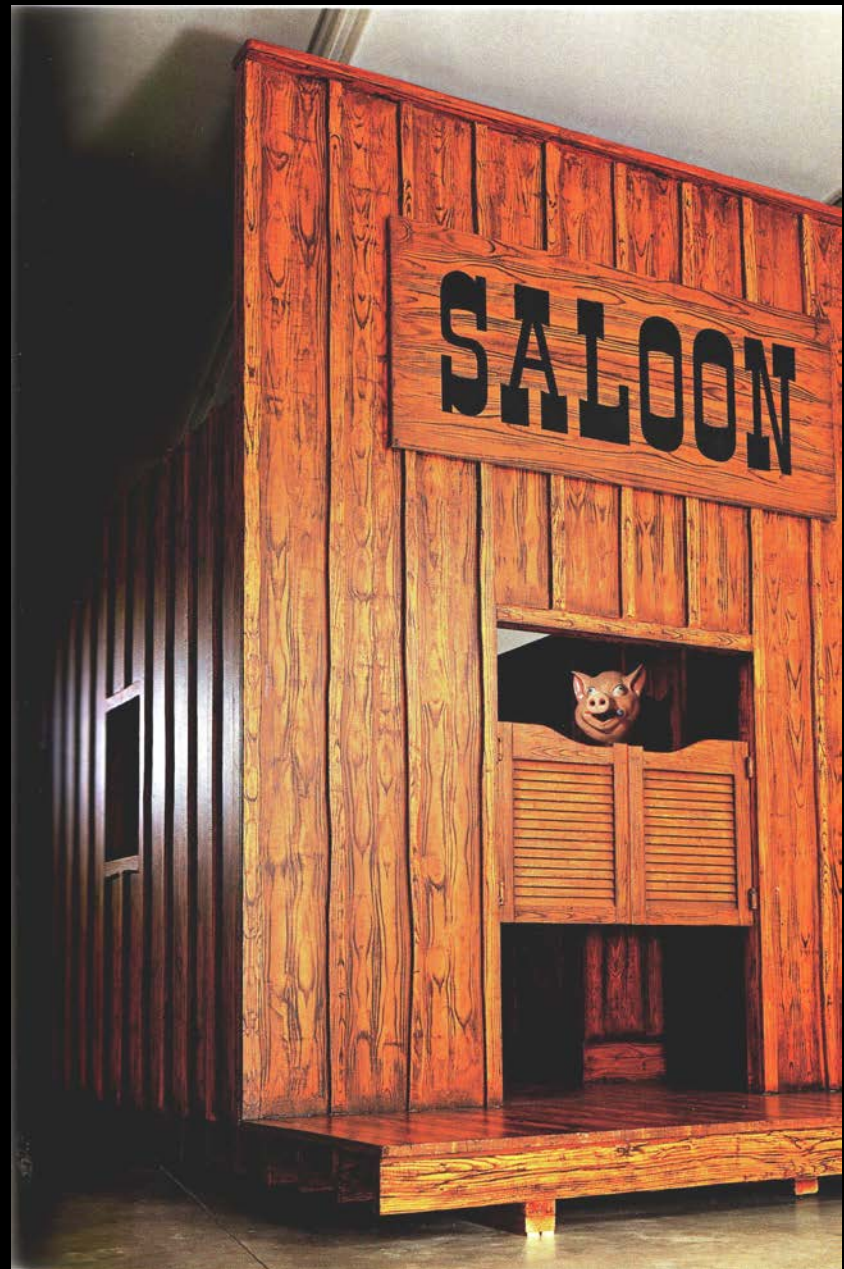
McCarthy, Yaa Hoo Town, Saloon, 1996

McCarthy, Pinocchio Pipenose
Householddilemma, 1994

McCarthy, Yaa Hoo Town, Saloon, 1996

McCarthy, Spaghetti Man, 1993

McCarthy, Apple Heads on Swiss Cheese, 1997-99

Postmodernism and the Image: Pictures Generation

POSTMODERNISM
FRAGMENTATION
MULTICULTURALISM
REPRODUCTION
SIMULACRA
SIMULATION
HYPERREAL

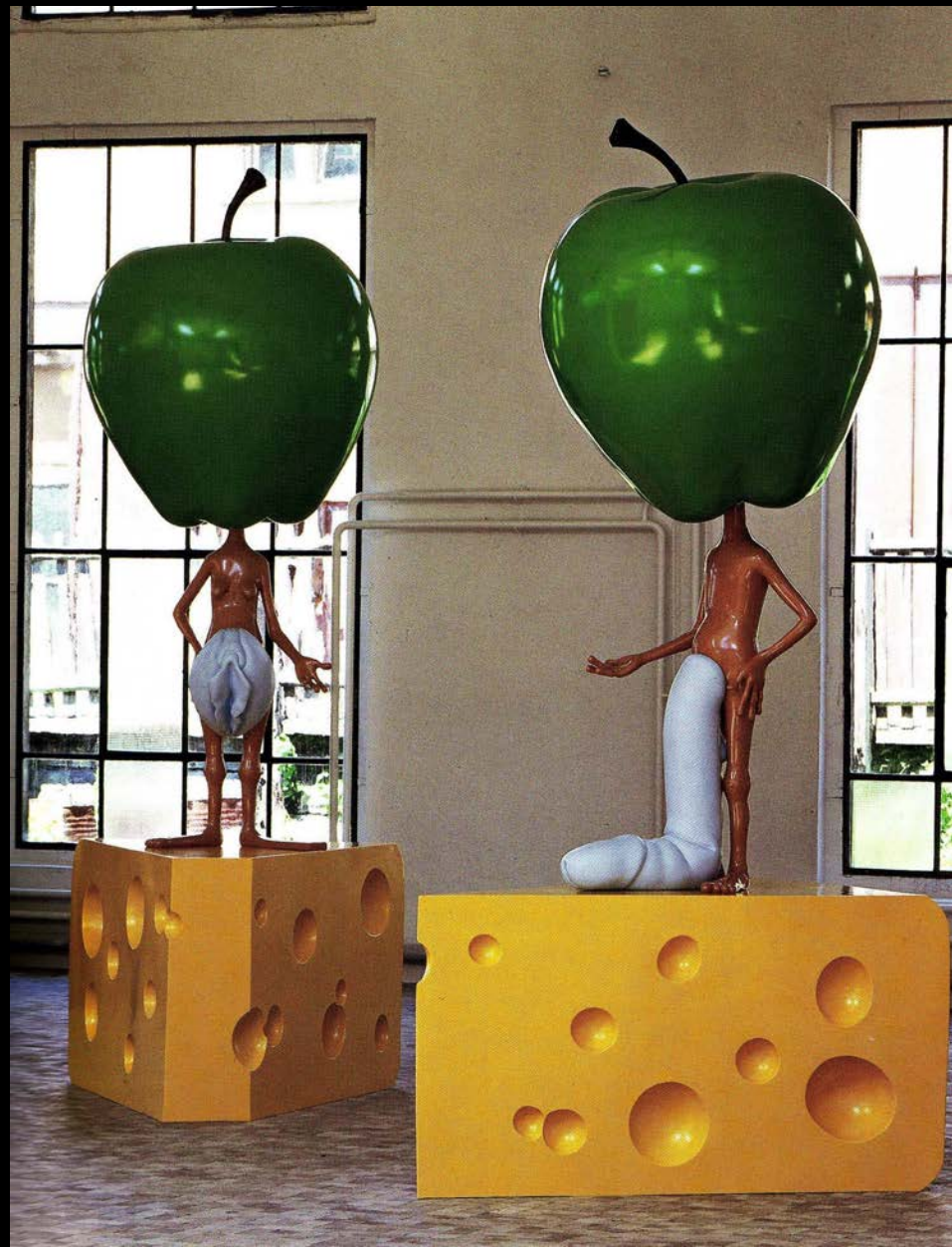"Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (L. Marin did it very well in Utopiques, jeux d'espace [Utopias, play of space]): digest of the American way of life, panegyric of American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. Certainly. But this masks something else and this "ideological" blanket functions as a cover for a simulation of the third order: Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America that is Disneyland (a bit like prisons are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle."
— Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981)

"Holography, the latest technical miracle of laser rays, was invented back in the '50's by Dennis Gabor; it achieves a full-color photographic representation that is more than three dimensional. You look into a magic box and a miniature train or horse appears; as you shift your gaze you can see those parts of the object that you were prevented from glimpsing by the laws of perspective. If the box is circular you can see the object from all sides. If the object was filmed, thanks to various devices, in motion, then it moves before your eyes, or else you move, and as you change position, you can see the girl wink or the fisherman drain the can of beer in his hand. It isn't cinema, but rather a kind of virtual object in three dimensions that exists even where you don't see it, and if you move you can see it there, too."

-- Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (1973)

ENLIGHTENED FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS

Peter Sloterdijk

Jeff Koons, Advertisement, *Art Forum*, 27 November, 1988

Jeff Koons, Three Ball 50-50
Tank, 1985

Jeff Koons, New Hoover Convertibles, Green Red, Brown, New Hoover Deluxe Shampoo Polishers Yellow, Brown Doubledecker, 1981/87

Jeff Koons, Rabbit, 1986

Jeff Koons, Michael Jackson and Bubbles, 1988

Jeff Koons, Made in Heaven (Koons and Cicciolina), 1990

Jeff Koons, Puppy, 1992

Pictures by Douglas Crimp
Pictures Generation
Artist's Space 1977 and Metro Pictures

"Pictures Generation"
Artists Space 1977 and Metro Pictures

What then are these new aesthetic activities? Simply to enumerate a list of mediums to which "painters" and "sculptors" have increasingly turned – film, photography, video, performance – will not locate them precisely, since it is not merely a question of shifting conventions of one medium to those of another. The ease with which many artists managed, some ten years ago, to change mediums – from sculpture, say, to film (Serra, Morris, et. al.) or from dance to film (Rainer) – or were willing to "corrupt" one medium with another – to present a work of sculpture, for example, in the form of a photograph (Smithson, Long) – or abjured any physical manifestation of the work (Barry, Weiner) makes it clear that the actual characteristics of the medium, per se, cannot any longer tell us much about an artist's activity.

In choosing the word pictures for this show, I hoped to convey the work's most salient characteristic-recognizable images-but also and importantly the ambiguities it sustains. As is typical of what has come to be called postmodernism, this new work is not confined to any particular medium; instead, it makes use of photography, film, performance, as well as traditional modes of painting, drawing, and sculpture. Picture, used colloquially, is also nonspecific: a picture book might be a book of drawings or photographs, and in common speech a painting, drawing, or print is often called, simply, a picture. Equally important for my purposes, picture, in its verb form, can refer to a mental process as well as the production of an aesthetic object.

Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October,* Vol. 8 (Spring, 1979), pp. 75-88

Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39

REPHOTOGRAPHY and APPROPRIATION
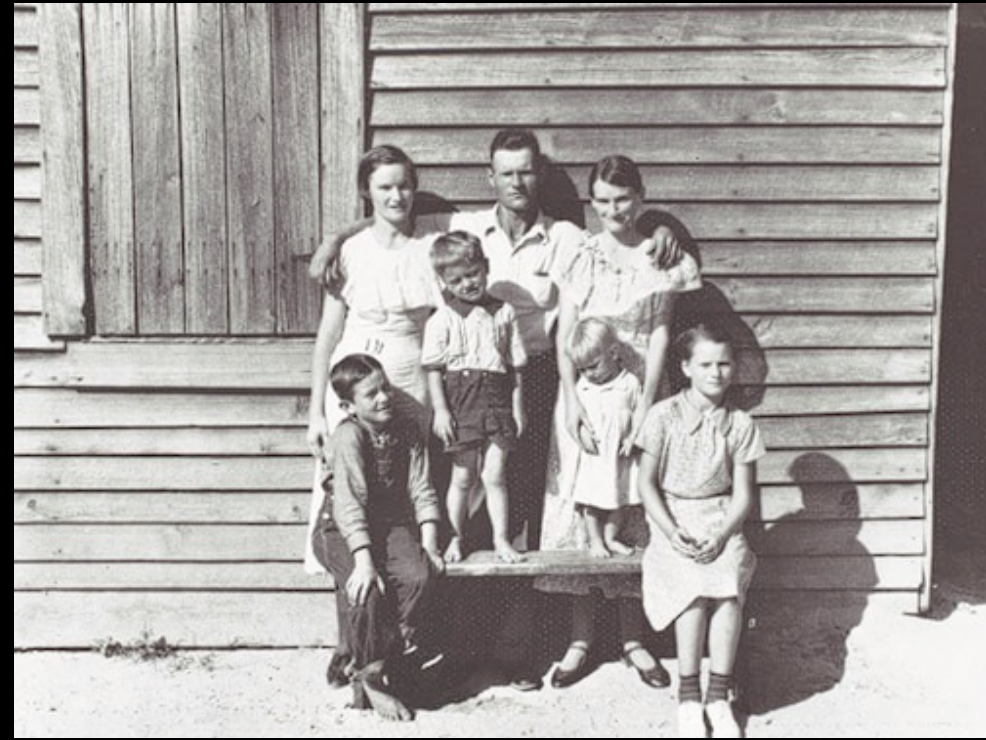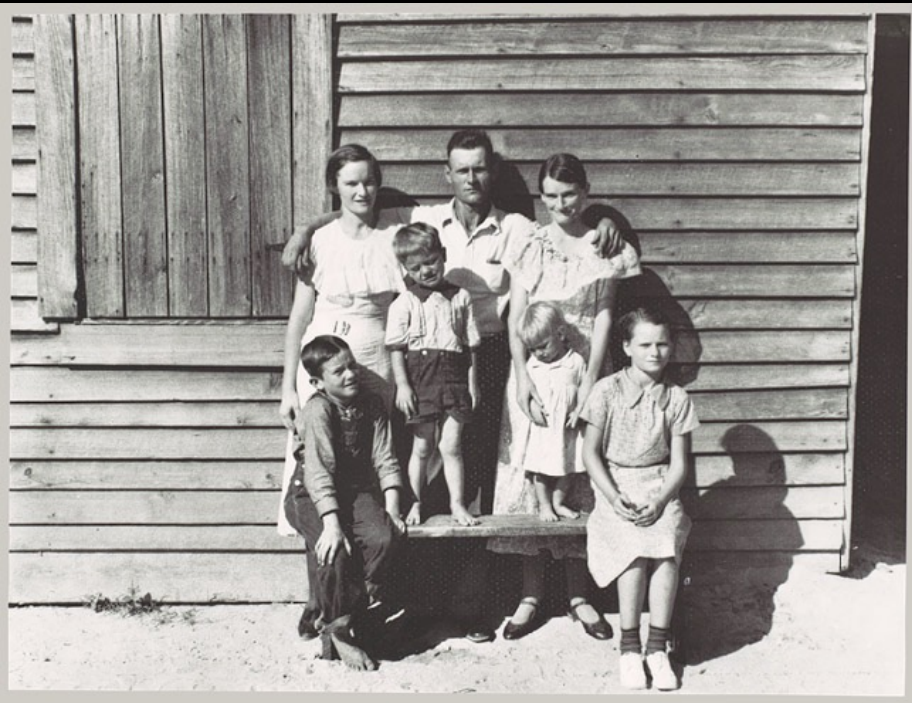
L: Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39
R: Sherrie Levine, Untitled (After Walker Evans: 2), 1981

REPHOTOGRAPHY and APPROPRIATION

Robert Mapplethorpe, from the Black Book, 1986

Glenn Ligon, Notes on the Margin of the Black Book, 1991–93

Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39

L: Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39
R: Sherrie Levine, Untitled (After Walker Evans: 2), 1981

Sherrie Levine, Untitled (President 4), 1979   Sherrie Levine, President Collage 1, 1979

Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #6, 1978

Cindy Sherman, Untitled D 1975

Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #10, 1978

Cindy Sherman, Untitled (No. 264 Woman with Mask), 1992

Robert Longo, Men in the Cities Series, 1979
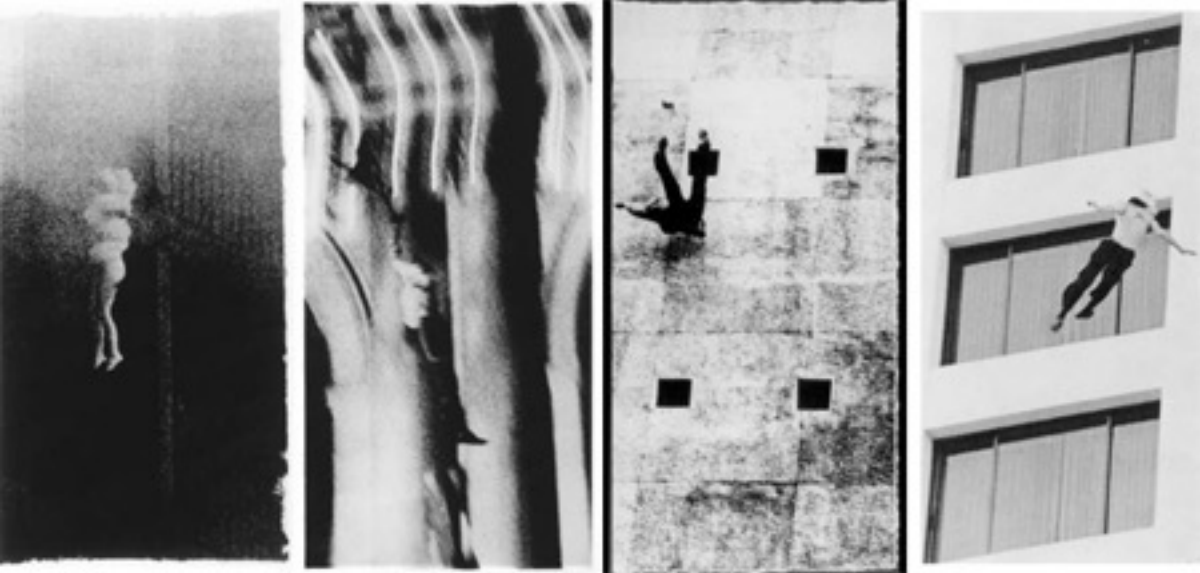Charcoal, graphite on paper

Robert Longo, Untitled, 1981

Robert Longo, Men in the Cities Series, 1979

The photographs behind Robert Longo's iconic charcoal drawings -- the images were projected on to paper, and Longo drew over them in great detail...

Sarah Charlesworth, Stills, 1980

Carolee Schneeman, Terminal Velocity, 2001

Jack Goldstein, Still from The Jump, 1978
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3m0vxs-Ovs8

- post-production manipulation of footage of a gymnast
- using rotoscoping technique
- Here, Goldstein used rotoscoping to strip the image of all identifying references.
- A red, gleaming, slowed-down body that appears and disappears from the black screen with graceful, spectacular agility remains for viewers to watch.
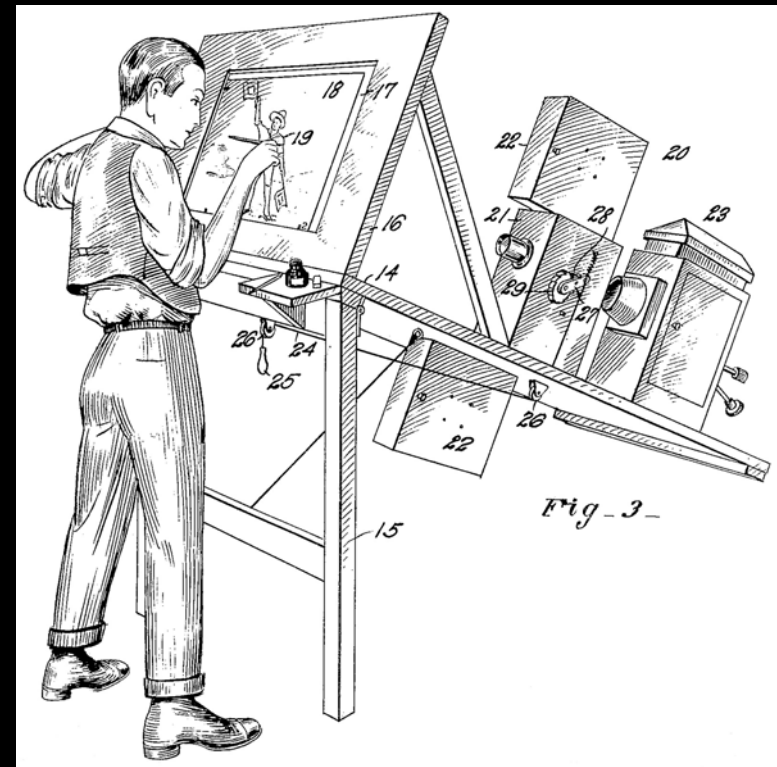
Patent drawing for Max Fleischer's original rotoscope. The artist is drawing on a transparent easel, onto which the movie projector at the right is beaming an image of a single movie frame.

Richard Prince, Untitled (Three Men), 1978
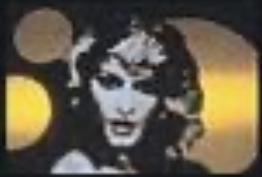
Richard Prince, Entertainers, 1982

Richard Prince, Untitled (Kool-Aid), 1982-84

Richard Prince, Untitled (Cowboy), 1989

Richard Prince, Untitled (Cowboy), 1991-92

Richard Prince, American Sex Drive, 2008

From SHE: Images of Women by Wallace Berman and Richard Prince at
the Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, 2009

Louise Lawler, Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut, 1984

Louise Lawler, Living Room Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut, 1984