

GORDON MATTA-CLARK

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english

The North American artist Gordon Matta-Clark (New York, 1943-1978), son of Chilean surrealist painter Roberto Matta, developed a complex body of work in the course of his short but intense career. After a period of study in architecture and literature, he turned to works based above all on reflection about space —inside and out, full and empty, at the top, at the bottom— and the relationship between urban space and nature.

His concern for ecology led him to the Land Art movement, in his desire to reflect on the various interactions between nature and city. During these early years he became acquainted with Robert Smithson, with whom he shared his interest in art and struck up a lasting friendship.

The idea is more important than the creation of objects in the work of Gordon Matta-Clark. This explains why only drawings and documents now remain of an extensive output. His interventions in buildings, his performances and films were always accompanied by his constant drawing work.

This has left us with collections of drawings which are, in themselves, projects of systematic research into the natural and cultural reality he observed around him.

Matta-Clark's interest in alchemy and organic transformation processes is clearly reflected in the first series of drawings on show in this gallery. The trees he so often drew allow him to reflect on the energy flows which lie behind all change, in both the physical world and the urban environment.

This desire to capture movement arose from an interest in dance which led him to work together with artists such as Laurie Anderson and Bob Wilson, to name just two.

For further information on the series of drawings, see the documentation in the Communication Space and the large cards title.

For Gordon Matta-Clark, the process of cutting was the same on a piece of paper or a wall. In buildings, Matta-Clark used his architectonic skills to cut and intervene to the limit. By cutting through walls, he would deprive the building of its original function, leaving the public to come up with a new meaning for the space. He produced the series of cut drawings alongside these interventions in architecture.

Many of his utopian projects also belong to this phase. This is a series of drawings in which Matta-Clark seeks to reflect on the concept of architecture, taking the human body as his starting point. His idea is to create a space for the body, a place for life, rather than building walls which necessarily isolate us from the outside world.

Gordon Matta-Clark said himself that his work was not architectonic in the strict sense, but that it had architectonic implications. Taking this reflection in the context of the deconstruction of architecture, Matta-Clark created the group Anarchitecture, whose reflections took concrete form in the exhibition Anarchitecture in 1973.

His work developed alongside that of artists such as Sol Lewitt and Dennis Oppenheim, who also sought a new place for art in space.

His interest in urban structure led him to discover the graffiti in the New York subway. He took this given material, which he saw as part of the popular culture of the city, or of a kind of sub-culture, as a basis for his work —interventions on photographs of this graffiti—, which he called Photoglyphs.

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LIST OF FILMS

Monitor 1

1 **Tree Dance, 1971**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
9:32 min, b&w, silent. 16 mm film.

For the exhibition *Twenty-Six by Twenty Six* at the Vassar College of Art in Poughkeepsie, New York, Matta-Clark created a performance inspired by spring fertility rituals. He performed in a structure made of ladders, ropes and other materials, which he built at the top of a large tree.

2 **Open House, 1972**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
41 min, color, silent. Super 8 film.

In May 1972, Matta-Clark installed an industrial waste container between 98 and 112 Greene Street in New York's SoHo district. He collected discarded doors and pieces of timber and divided the interior into three openings. This piece records an opening-day site performance by the artist, Tina Girouard, Keith Sonnier, and other friends.

3 **Fire Child, 1971**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
9:47 min, color, silent. Super 8 film.

In 1971 Matta-Clark produced works for the exhibition Brooklyn Bridge Event. This film records his process of making a sculpture—a small wall made of rubbish, waste paper and tin cans collected from the area.

4 **Fresh Kill, 1972**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
12:48 min, color. 16 mm film.

Camera: Burt Spielvogel and Rudy Burkhardt.
Produced by Holly Solomon and Burt Spielvogel.

This film records the complete process of the destruction of Matt-Clark's truck (which he called "Herman Meydag") by a bulldozer in a rubbish dump. Part of "98.5," a compilation of films by Ed Baynard, George Schneemarm and Charles Simons, this piece was shown in Documenta 5 in Kassel, Germany.

5 **Days End, 1975**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
23:10 min, color, silent. Super 8 film.

Camera: Betsy Susler.

In May 1975, Matta-Clark worked on an abandoned pier in New York for two months, where he cut sections of the door, floor, and roof.

6 **Clockshower, 1973**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
13:05 min, color, silent, 16 mm film.

In this film of one of his most daring performances, Matta-Clark climbed to the top of the Clocktower in New York and washed, shaved and brushed his teeth in front of the clock.

7 **City Slivers, 1976**

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
14:10 min, color, silent. 16 mm film.

This film is a formal investigation of New York's urban architecture. The film was planned to be projected on the exterior façade of a building, and was shown for the first time in the open air exhibition "Arcades" and later in the Holly Solomon Gallery.

8 Automation House, 1972

Video made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
32 min, b&w. Video and 16 mm film.
This tape is an exercise in spatial perception, using mirror reflections of people and their movements.

9 Splitting, 1974

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
10:50 min, b&w and color, silent. Super 8 film.
This film documents the major building cut made by Matta-Clark in a house on Humphrey Street in Englewood, New Jersey.

10 Bingo/Ninths, 1974

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
9:40 min, color, silent. Super 8 film.
In August 1974, Matta-Clark made a cut in a house in Niagara Falls, New York. The artist obtained permission to divide the exterior

façade into nine parts. An hour after he finished, the house was demolished; segments of the façade were taken to Art Park and dumped.

11 Substrait (Underground Dailies), 1976

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
30 min, b&w and color. 16 mm film.
In this film, Matta-Clark explored and documented the underground spaces of New York City. The artist chose a range of sites (New York Central railroad tracks, Grand Central Station, 13th Street, Croton Aqueduct in Highgate, etc.) to show the variety and complexity of the underground spaces and tunnels in the metropolitan area.

Monitor 2

12 Conical Intersect, 1975

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark.
18:40 min, color, silent. 16 mm film.
For the Paris Biennial in 1975, Matta-Clark made a major cut in two houses adjacent to the Centre Georges Pompidou in Les Halles. The cut, shaped like a twisted cone, was inspired by Anthony McCall's film *Line Describing a Cone*.

13 Sous-Sols de Paris (Paris Underground), 1977

Film made by Gordon Matta-Clark
18:40 min, b&w. (in french). Super 8 film.
In this film Matta-Clark explored underground Paris. The artist shows the complexity of underground spaces with scenes of architectural ruins, car parks, tunnels, ossuaries, cellars, crypts and basements in the Opera district.

14 Office Baroque, 1977

A film by Eric Convents and Roger Steylaerts.
Interview with Gordon Matta-Clark in English.
44 min, color. 16 mm film.
Matta-Clark made a cut in a five-story commercial building located in front of the Steen, a tourist spot in Antwerp. (On Matta-Clark's death shortly after, an attempt was made to save the work as a future museum of contemporary art, but the building was demolished). This tape includes an interview with the artist.