Locating the Queer Gesture:

Point and Line to Flesh

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I seek to articulate queerness as an embodied politic and poetic of disorientation I call the gesture, which I locate within the works and my encounters with Agnes Martin, Marlow Moss, and Catherine Opie. Here, through both visual analysis, critical theory, embodied experience and its memory, I illuminate queer aspects and potentialities of encounters with works of art not through indicting the body of viewer (myself), the artists I discuss, nor the particular aesthetics of their works towards the production of a stable archive, but rather through the ephemeral and disorienting encounters of identification both found and challenged in the works of art I discuss. In my methodology, I seek to maintain a poetic posture of opacity and respect the refusal I locate in these works and in myself, as I engage auto theory. My thesis seeks to articulate queerness as a plurality of strategy and embodiment, through describing my experiences and analyses of the works of Agnes Martin, Marlow Moss, and Catherine Opie—three artists who mean a great deal to me, as a queer subject.

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INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly unbearable heat of the summer of 2016 in Venice, Italy, I found myself hopping between churches to find relief both from the summer's sun and to satiate my overpowering hunger to take in as much art as this short vacation celebrating both my parent's 50th birthdays as well as their shared 20 years of marriage, sweetly topped with my own forthcoming sixteenth birthday, would allow. After a long morning oscillating between Medieval and Renaissance works which spoke to the lofty ideals of spirituality, identity, and legibility which resonated with my parents, we came across a glorious gate of wrought iron adorned with sea glass. We had stumbled upon the Peggy Guggenheim museum, and I was able to persuade my parents that, though we knew very little about this place we had found, surely there was something worthwhile inside. It was here that I encountered *Rose* (1966), the mature abstract painting of minimalist Scottish Presbyterian-Canadian artist, Agnes Martin, for the first time. There was something about this work, even in the corner of my eye as I entered the modern wing, which made me lurch forward with an intensity which startled the security guard. I remained (trans)fixed, paradoxically unmoving but utterly changed, with *Rose* until the gallery closed, moving slowly towards and away from the piece as various points composing lines formed a grid plane which came apart and fell together before my very eyes. There was something of a mirror I had found both within this work and this encounter that articulated the multiplicity of selves I was only beginning to understand in myself. I was moved, I believe to the same tears which gripped my mother as she held me before yet another Madonna and Child earlier that morning. I remember *Rose* as the first time I recognized myself, as a queer subject, in a work of art. Black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, mother, warrior, and poet Audrey Lorde reminds us in her biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), that memory is always an act of interpretation. The contours of this encounter, the particulars of this day in Venice are lost, but the texture of what remains of this encounter illuminate a uniquely queer experience with art. Following

the call of American feminist philosopher of science and technology, Donna Haraway (1988), who urges in her feminist formation of objectivity that we "become answerable for what we learn how to see,"[1] my thesis seeks to explore queer embodiment and figuration in service of challenging static interactions of point, line, and plane—or subject, orientation, and space. Indeed, what I seek here is a critical recapitulation of what we understand to be "queer" in art not merely through the content of a work through the use of static symbols, nor what we can locate within the archive through indictments of artist's bodies and companionships, but through our embodied encounters with artworks.

In the years which followed my encounter with Martin's *Rose*, I had again the great fortune of witnessing more works of art which, for me, enabled further sites of recognition in my continuous growth as queer subject. The works were by artists Marlow Moss and Catherine Opie, who respectively articulated and challenged how I understood my own orientations and bodily residency. My thesis, rather than defining a singular action, practice, or aesthetic and how it might be queer by description, will instead investigate queerness as a plurality of strategies—an attitude, a politic that reacts against, and aims to deconstruct and subvert dominant structures of embodiment and engagement—which I call the gesture. Indeed, I will explore queer embodiment as a radical gesture, a sensibility which does not articulate itself opposite dominant culture but forever finds relations which are unexpected yet sustaining. In my discussion of my selected artists, and the works with which I have had profound connection, I seek to illuminate a queer politic of disorientation. In Martin, I discuss how the artist's construction of point activates subjectivity in ways which challenge the contours of the subject. With Moss, I explicate how the artist's unique use of double-line subvert directionality and teleological movement. In Opie, I meditate on the artist's usage of her own body as plane to radiate powerful contradictions which dismantle divisions between space and subject. My

[1] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): pp. 575–99, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203427415-40, pp. 583.

thesis will locate the work of these artists not as queer by virtue of their identity—as reifications or inevitabilities coming from the legibility of the biographical indictments we can charge the artists. Rather, my thesis seeks to dislodge cis heteronormativity as the referent of how we understand queer identities, and will instead articulate queer art as a gesture, shared between queer subjects.

Locating Autotheory

To begin this endeavour, there is a significant amount of theory to unpack, but we must begin with the body. In particular, with my subjective experiences as a queer subject. My thesis employs autotheory as its principle methodology and seeks to articulate a dialogue—a constellation of memoir, philosophy, poetry, and visual analysis—which orbits around the gravitational pull of the queer gestures of my encounters with Martin, Moss, and Opie. Indeed, autotheory, as described by Settler-Canadian writer Lauren Fournier in *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (2021), is a practice which is able to attend generously to experiences which are both critical and embodied. Autotheory, for Fournier, attends to the experiences of individuals "historically overdetermined by their bodies,"[2] such as those marginalised on the basis of their gender identity and performance, race, and sexuality, in contrast to the supposedly neutral standing of white, cisgender men. She writes:

> With the leftover hold of Cartesian dualisms, this tends to lead to the bias (unconscious or otherwise) that women are either intelligent and critical or embodied and sexual; philosophically savvy or naively navel-gazing. This has led to the creation of auto theoretical work by feminists that responds to such oppositions, integrating their "personal" with theory in ways that commingle and transform each; at the same time, feminists have also called out their male contemporaries for working in ways that are just as personal while pretending their subjective work is, in fact, neutral or objective.[3]

Autotheory seeks to recondition the relationship of the body and mind, seeking to eradicate the binaries which demand intelligibility through the vacancy of the identities and positionalities of the subject. Autotheory celebrates that which is living and where, recuperating the production of

[2] Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (United Kingdom: MIT Press, 2021), pp. 54.
[3] Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, pp. 54.

knowledge through the intersection of touch, affect, gesture, memory, and reflection. Within the articulation of queerness as gesture, autotheory grounds the body firmly as the site of encounter and, so, knowledge production. Or, as Cuban American theorist José Esteban Muñoz writes: "Autoethnography is not interested in searching for some lost and essential experience, because it understands the relationship that subjects have with their own pasts as complicated yet necessary fictions."[4]

Further assistive to the work of autotheory is Australian architectural critic Kim Dovey's (2008) articulation of space as a practised place—produced and maintained through spatial syntax, or the spatial acting-out of a place.[5] *Framing Place* works to illuminate the mediation of space on our ability to dwell, and thus connect. In this text, Dovey considers how the realities of subjects are demarcated by the political contours of the spaces they inhabit. For my thesis, Dovey articulates how the construction of space mediates queer gestures—how the gallery encourages particular orientations towards works of arts which engenders said orientations. Indeed, it is important to note that my first experience of a queer gesture existed under the watchful eye of a security guard and my gasps of joy disrupted a silent space. This complex relationship between the space of dwelling and the identity and capacity of the dweller, is containable with Dovey's title's primary verb: framing. Dovey writes, "used as a verb, to 'frame' means to 'shape' things, and also to 'enclose' them in a border — like a mirror or picture."[6] For Dovey, therefore, we can imagine empowerment speaks to the capacity to imagine, construct, and inhabit better *built* spaces.

The power of the queer gesture, as well as its composition, lie in the phenomenological aspects of its encounter. Here, Pakistani-British-Australian Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) is indispensable. Ahmed's text seeks to understand queerness through

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[4] José Esteban Muñoz, "The Autoethnographic Performance: Reading Richard Fung's Queer Hybridity," *Screen* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1995): pp. 83–99, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/36.2.83., pp. 89.
[5] Kim Dovey, *Framing places: Mediating power in built form* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 01.
[6] Dovey, *Framing places: Mediating power in built form*, pp. 01.

orientation, meditating on orientation as a matter of residency characterised by the objects that are reachable or "available within the bodily horizon."[7] For Ahmed, phenomenology offers an urgent resource for queer studies as it emphasises "the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds."[8] In line with autotheory, Ahmed urges queer scholarship to centre the body as a means of critically interrogating the affective dimensions of experience as important sites of knowledge. Indeed, for Ahmed the subject (point) emerges through its orientations (lines) which constitute its realities (planes); or more simply put, the spatial arrangement of social relations shapes the subject. Here, queerness is a politic of disorientation which centres different objects or familiar objects in unfamiliar ways. Ahmed speaks of these divergent proximities, these queer presentations and performances, as desire lines—reflecting on the pathways not built for use but *found through use*. This worldbuilding language of desire lines illuminates the power of the queer gesture as a form of world building with implications extending beyond the subjects—indeed, what does my queer joy, the tears, the gasps, the emphatic embodied connection make available to the others in the gallery with me?

Locating Queer

Before we continue, it is imperative to consider the language which sits at the heart of this thesis. Indeed, what are we talking about when we talk about "queer"? Art historians Erin Silver and Amelia Jones, in their text *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* (2016), locate the 1990 the formation of Queer Nation, a queer activist group based in New York, as a solidification of the burgeoning turn away from "the still binarizing rhetoric of homosexuality or gay/lesbian" which populated artistic and academic discourse as well as activism of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

[7] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 02.
[8] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, pp. 02.

transgender (LGBT) communities through the "embrace of those identified sexually as women, men, and *otherwise* within the queer project."[9] Here, "queer" broke through its past use as pejorative and was reclaimed as an inclusive, political space for those identified and positioned with the LGBT+ community to mobilise. This turn, where the political subject was "no longer *either* homo- or hetero-, no *longer* simply gay or lesbian,"[10] highlights a critical gesture of queerness which insists and embraces the fluidity of identification. Importantly, the subject need not be legible—confinable or confined to strict identifications—to be embraced. The urgency of this gesture cannot be read without reflection on the AIDS crisis, whose horrors "forced the explosive emergence of queer in activism and theory, a term that had circulated within discourses about gay male sexuality since the late nineteenth century but which now became a signal of a new urgency and radical politics."[11] Indeed, "queer" emerged as something of a protective and radical unification of a community violently abandoned during a horrific epidemic which claimed the lives of millions of members—an epidemic which continues to this day,[12] and compounds in its impact of Indigenous, Black, and racialized bodies and communities.[13] Rejecting the institutional silences which marked the death of so many of their kin, at a 1990 Pride march in New York City, the nascent Queer Nation group distributed a passionate leaflet entitled "QUEERS READ THIS" which reflects, remembers, and rages against the violence facing their community. The leaflet also describes the turn towards the language of queer:

> Queer!

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[9] Erin Silver and Amelia Jones, *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 27. Emphasis added.
[10] Silver and Jones, *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, pp. 27. Emphasis added.
[11] Silver and Jones, pp. 27.
[12] "Why the HIV Epidemic Is Not Over," World Health Organization (WHO), accessed February 1, 2024, https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/why-the-hiv-epidemic-is-not-over.
[13] Ciann Larose Wilson et al., "Narratives of Resistance: (Re) Telling the Story of the HIV/AIDS Movement – Because the Lives and Legacies of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour Communities Depend on It," *Health Tomorrow: Interdisciplinarity and Internationality* 4 (2017), https://doi.org/10.25071/2564-4033.40213.

> Ah, do we really have to use that word? It's trouble. Every gay person has his or her own take on it. For some it means strange and eccentric and kind of mysterious. That's okay, we like that. But some gay girls and boys don't. They think they're more normal than strange. And for others "queer" conjures up those awful memories of adolescent suffering. Queer. It's forcibly bittersweet and quaint at best --- weakening and painful at worst. Couldn't we just use "gay" instead? It's a much brighter word and isn't it synonymous with "happy?" When will you militants grow up and get over the novelty of being different?
>
> WHY QUEER
>
> Well, yes, "gay" is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using "queer" is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world. We use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer.
>
> Queer, unlike GAY, doesn't mean MALE.
>
> And when spoken to other gays and lesbians it's a way of suggesting we close ranks, and forget (temporarily) our individual differences because we face a more insidious common enemy. Yeah, QUEER can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe's hands and use against him.[14]

While the formation of Queer Nation precedes a more critical turn towards trans and non-normative gender ethics,[15] present still in their employment of "queer" is a creative and generative *refusal* to clarify oneself or one's position. Indeed, the term is "strange," "eccentric," and "mysterious;" it is an overt rejection of legible and palatable experiences and identities. "Queer" does not demand clarity; "queer" does not care who and how you love, which hormones surge through your body, where you locate your gender presentation; "queer" inherently resists control.

The application of "queer," much like the subjects who identified and/or are positioned with this label, is varied; the term and language of queer finds its employment in a myriad of ways such that its meaning is confounded, frequently contradictory, and critically opaque. Indeed, that which is and those who are queer are not locatable through an essentialist interrogation, or a critical stripping of artifice towards some unspoiled truth or self. Rather, queerness is a performance. Here, Queer Hungarian and Russian-Jewish American philosopher Judith Butler's seminal text *Gender Trouble*

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[14] *QUEERS READ THIS A leaflet distributed at pride march in NY* (New York, NY: published anonymously by Queers, June 1990). Available online as a manifesto, http://www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this (accessed 01 June 2023), pp. 10.

[15] Silver and Jones locate the advent of trans studies as concordant with third wave feminism, taking purchase in the new millennium.

(1990) emerges as an essential theoretical framework for understanding the construction of the queer subject as arising not from abstract cognition but situated embodiment. *Gender Trouble* puts forth Butler's influential performance theory of gender which argues, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."[16] Rebelling against enlightenment ideals stemming from Cartesian dualism, Butler seeks to dissolve the binary between mind and body and instead critically posits the individual as emergent within regulatory matrices of power, of which gender and sexuality are but one manifestation. Indeed, intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class (both past and present), religious beliefs and affiliations shape the individual and the manifestations and possibilities of their queer performance. Here, it is important to highlight that queerness, as an intersectional politic, cannot be understood without reference and reverence to the activism, art, and joy of Black women and queer people. Indeed, the Stonewall riots, a pivot moment of resistance which inspired solidarity and began critical political movements of queer activism and joy,[17] began with the courage of Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender woman. As well, the concept of intersectionality itself was first coined by Black feminist theorist and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," to describe the realities of Blackness and womanness as part of lived experience, neither half exclusive to the other but rather advancing and nuancing the realities of either. For Butler, the subject emerges as a function of action first and cognition second; there is no pure essence or essential self which "preexists the deed"[18] to which axes of identity later affix themselves; and neither is there a discussion of queer experience

[16] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 34.
[17] The first pride parade took place on the first anniversary of the Stonewall riots, as a celebration of resilience. In the ensuing years, this history is sometimes forgotten, but it is urgent to highlight that history is not inevitable, neither is it impassive, but the accumulation of experiences and decisions made by individuals as a cumulative reality. The Stonewall riots, and the ensuing turn in queer culture and activism is a consequence of the resistance of racialized transwomen; a fact we must not forget.
[18] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. 34.

that can be separated from experiences of racialization. Indeed, there is no Eden from which we emerge as unspoiled, unsexed, ungendered, non-racialized subjects, or to which we might hope to return. Moreover, Butler writes: "gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence."[19] Queerness, then, might be understood as a *glitch* within said matrices of coherence.

Legacy Russell's Manifesto *Glitch Feminism* (2020) articulates queerness as a politic of critical refusal—as "generating ruptures between the *recognized* and the *recognizable*."[20] In this text, Black queer artist, curator, activist and scholar Russell grapples with the experimental selfhood she was able to explore online, explicating alternative manifestations of the self—in particular, the multiplicity of selves and lives she was able to create online—as not subordinate to the so-called real world of the material body but rather in constant dialogue and dynamic relation *with* it. As a Black queer femme, Russell was able to traverse both within and expand upon the limits of her intersecting identities online, exercising a multiplicity of self which she labels "the glitch." Her manifesto posits "the glitch" as a remarkable and generative failure of identifications vast and unbounded to the body's social positioning which is critically opaque, intangible, but nonetheless remarkably impactful. Russell writes: "[t]he glitch traverses this loop, moving beyond the screen and permeating every corner of our lives."[21] *Glitch Feminism* critically posits that alternative experiences of identification and exploration found in cybernetic space, be they with replications of works of art or articulated through created avatars, are substantial performances of selfhood and sites of refusal. Indeed, this glitch fosters selves which operate through subverting lexicons of classification, enabling subjects to select their identifications and operate through bodies of different ages, races, genders, and

[19] Ibid.
[20] Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2020), pp. 28.
[21] Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, pp. 31.

sexualities—and importantly, to operate with none at all. Russell articulates freedom as multiplicity and glitch as claiming the right to complexity and range both "within and beyond proverbial margins [of normative identifications]."[22] It is here that glitch reveals its queer intentions, arising from what Muñoz described in *Cruising Utopia* (2009) as queerness' ability to "let us feel that this world is not enough."[23] Glitch highlights that, "to exist within a binary system one must assume that our selves are unchangeable, that how we are read in the world must be chosen for us, rather than for us to define—and choose—for ourselves,"[24] and refuses to limit itself to such matrices.

The urgent implications of glitch and performativity theory, with regards to "queer" works of art, is emancipation from indictments of the body. While aesthetics and language follow as a vital aspect of queer performance, that which makes a work or a subject queer cannot be flatly reduced to appearances but rather the movement that belies these actions. Queerness, therefore, is not a sight but the very turning of the normative gaze into something *otherwise*, strange and forever anew. Yet, the trouble, as Butler reminds us, is that "representation is extended only to that which can be acknowledged as a subject."[25] So, the critical question becomes how do we locate the queer performance?

Queer Nation's justification of mobilisation under and through the language of queer showcases a keen acknowledgement and subversion of the violence which characterises both the term's origins as a pejorative and the painful histories of those identifying and/or positioned with the label of queer through reclaiming these histories not as ends, but means through which we can begin to live, to perform, and to *feel backward*. Here, American writer Heather Love's (2007) urgent recapitulation of what it means to live with injury—to stay with the trouble, to refuse to forget such losses—illuminates how a productive use of queer, and indeed the performance of queerness, need

[22] Russell pp. 22.
[23] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), pp. 01.
[24] Russell, pp. 07.
[25] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 02.

not overcome its constitutive history of injury, but rather linger on in a spiral dance of constant continuities and disjunctures between the past and present. For Love, feeling backward is a way of thinking with, or rather feeling through injury as a generative and tender means of articulating new futures. The urgency of Love's scholarship emerges within the tacit parameters of progress, namely that "moving into the future is conditional: one must leave the past,"[26] which Love worries has led to a trend within contemporary LGBT politics to refuse to linger in painful histories. It is therefore necessary, within discussions of queer art, to attend to the particulars of the past as much as the present. Indeed, Love writes, "hope that is achieved at the expense of the past cannot serve the future."[27] The connections felt by the contemporary queer subject stand *alongside* the experiences of queer subjects of the past, and through the act of feeling backward the two are able to meet, to recognize and challenge one another through what I call the queer gesture.

Locating Gesture

In his 1992 essay "Notes on Gesture," a chapter of *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben illuminates a sphere of politics emancipated from forms of teleological determination, which he describes as the gesture. The gesture, for Agamben, operates somewhere between distance and intimacy, as a carrying-out of a work of art. "Notes on Gesture" articulates three distinct spheres of action within the artistic encounter: *faciunt* or "to make," *agere* or "to act," and finally *gerit* "to carry on." Agamben explains that, within the production of a play, for example, the poet can be said to *faucet* or produce the work, thus charged with its structure, whereas the actor *agits* the piece, referring beyond themself to a whole of which they are merely a part. Challenging this binary of action is the role of the viewer, who *gerits* or carries on the work, supporting the burdens of the other spheres. Here, Agamben locates the gesture as that which is

[26] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 09.
[27] Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, pp. 29.

"being neither produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported."[28] This act of carrying on, or engaging with gesture emerges as a complex intimacy which maintains, or endures, both the "reification and obliteration of a gesture,"[29] as a distinctive view from somewhere; it is an embodied gesture.

The language of gesture importantly functions as an articulation of a situated knowledge; it is a way of knowing which celebrates the constituents of its own formation. The gesture speaks to and from embodied identities. This language of situated knowledges comes from Donna Haraway's 1988 essay, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," where she articulates a feminist formulation of objectivity—the situated knowledges which title the essay. Here Haraway seeks to illuminate "how meaning and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life."[30] This objectivity operates through "the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions-of views from somewhere."[31] This is the gesture, speaking always *with* another, without vacating or subsuming either position. Here, my intentions are not to dismiss the urgency of the archive, but rather to posit another way of seeing in dialogue with such readings of Martin, Moss, and Opie and their respective artworks. Within the practice of autotheory, Haraway' reminds us that "[t]he knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another."[32] Haraway's commitment to the subject as partial, as fragmentary and fluid critically aligns with queer theory which understands

[28] Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," essay, in *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis, Minn: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 49–62, pp. 56.
[29] Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," pp. 54.
[30] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," pp. 579.
[31] Haraway, pp. 590.
[32] Haraway, pp. 586.

gender, sexuality, and other aspects of identity not as linear, certainly not as fixed, but as circuitous, as orthogonal and oblique. A situated knowledge does not fragment, or isolate its constituents, but rather is interested in how these particularities and partialities are constituents of the exchange—the gesture. Within dialogue with works of art, Haraway's situated knowledges seek to remove "the suspicion that an 'object' of knowledge is a passive and inert thing."[33] Rather, the gesture feels backwards; the gesture glitches relationships and relationalities; and importantly, the gesture *touches*.

Touch, for Black feminist scholar Nathalie Batraville, emerges at the intersection of the personal and political as a fluid meeting place and site of reaction. In her 2023 article "Touch," itself a reflection on Black Canada author Dionne Brand's exploration of Black identity, oppression, and belonging in a culturally diverse and changing world, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), Batraville offers touch as cartographic practice, a way of coming to know oneself and the surrounding world. Indeed, touch is a site of self formation, as the constitutive parameters of the subject are brought into relief through the cold refreshment of a glass of water, the itch of a mosquito bite, the radiating pleasure of companionship, or the goose pimples of news of yet another legislative violence against one's community. Batraville writes:

> Intimacy, desire and touch require a knowledge of way finding in the broadest sense, to guide and orient us effectively through individual and collective longings, toward and through accessing love, pleasure and more. The numerous pathways of associations and attachments we feel invite mapping to facilitate repetition.[34]

Touch is the purchase of the performance; it is the texture of encounters which guide subjects in their orientations and identities. Touch is the affective dimension of gesture, a wayfinder operating *alongside* performances, glitches, and gestures. Indeed, do we not describe our connection, our movement towards works of art as "being touched" by a piece?

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[33] Haraway, pp. 591.

[34] Nathalie Batraville, ""Touch,"" TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies 46 (2023): pp. 153–63, https://doi.org/10.3138/topia-2022-0030, pp. 155.

Yet, touch, as gesture, is not an unencumbered politics. Indeed, Batraville describes touch as a site of contestment; an orientation found not only through love and recognition but also obscured and misshapen by violence. Touch reaches between subjects as an enduring site of struggle—of connection fragmented through the violent mediation of institutional sites of power which delimit those lines which are reachable, walkable, making it necessary to create Ahmed's desire lines of pathways elsewhere and otherwise.

One such critical example of such sites of queer desire lines can be found in American artist and writer Gordon Hall's 2013 article, "Object Lessons: Thinking Gender Variance through Minimalist Sculpture," where Hall describes being touched—recognized and recognizable in their queerness—by minimalist sculptures without familiar form and function. For Hall, gender-variant embodiment is a matter of reexamining the relationships between the categories of the real and the imaginary, and in the questions about the kinds of bodies conjured in the "useless furniture objects"[35] of American artist Richard Artschwager which prompt queer bodies that might inhabit or use these objects. For Hall, the "noninteractive representation of typically interactive situations [in Artschwager's work] produces [...] a virtual double of my body" through their unique "coexistence of *yes* and *no*, *almost*, *in between*, *not quite*, *both*, and *neither*."[36] This virtual double of their body unmoors Hall from the material and allows them to glitch, to hold a non-oppositional posture between the materiality and immateriality of identity, which critically shifts normative frameworks of identity which indict the body against the mind. In gesture with—when touched by—Artschwager's furniture sculptures, Hall is able to perform their identity in new and expansive ways. Hall writes: "bodies are always also ideas about bodies;"[37] And indeed, for Hall, Artschwager's works expand the imagination, and so expand the body through urgent questions about the kind of dwelling or

[35] Gordon Hall, "Object Lessons: Thinking Gender Variance through Minimalist Sculpture," *Art Journal 72*, no. 4 (2013): pp. 46–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2013.10792863., pp. 56.
[36] Hall, "Object Lessons," pp. 56.
[37] Hall, pp. 52.

dwellers possible. In the absence of more recognizable identification, Hall is able to glitch—to create a line of desire—and find a form of identification which both challenges and amplifies the potential of their own body, as well as Artschwager's furniture objects. Hall's queer reading of Artschwager prompts us to ask how we might transform our experience of the gendered body through not only the possibilities of self we can locate in art, but what these possibilities allow us to see *elsewhere*.

Hall's gesture with Artschwager presents an important framework for how we might locate the queer gesture in art through an affective lens. Here, American literary critic Eve Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), provides critical methodological framing for how we can understand such affects without reducing either constituent of the gesture as subordinate to the other. Sedgwick's text endeavours to present tools and techniques for non dualistic thinking, seeking to address aspects of experience which do not present in propositional or verbal form without reducing these aspects into linguistic form. Indeed, she argues that the line between words and things, linguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena, is "endlessly changeable, permeable, and entirely insusceptible to any definitive articulation"[38] and proposes a relation of *beside* to understand this fluid dynamic between that which we can and cannot articulate. Sedgwick writes:

> Beside is an interesting proposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. Beside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings. Beside comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations.[39]

The world of affect, as a topology of desire, emerges as a critical pedagogy through which the queer—multiple and unending in its glitches—can safely emerge. Indeed, the queer gesture of art offers something of a conversation of the gaze, of the encounter, where the eye is no longer satisfied with

[38] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 06.
[39] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 08.

seeing and is able to listen, the fingers to see, the ears to touch and to smell something like a perfume of a presence which recognizes the body in new and challenging ways. In this aspect of the endeavour, *Touching Feeling* is crucial as Sedgwick similarly seeks to *prompt* recognition in her text; she writes in the introduction "the ideal I'm envisioning here is a mind receptive to thoughts, able to nurture and connect them, and susceptible to happiness in their entertainment."[40] Sedgwick's touching and feeling, a reparative pedagogy, seeks to embrace the surprise of encounter. It fosters the nuances of discursive experiences without enforcing these experiences to become legible by way of reduction.

The final important consideration of the queer gesture is its opacity. As American political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott writes: "legibility is a condition of manipulation,"[41] and as queer subjects continue to be violently attacked on the basis of their queerness, locatable for hate through the visibility and knowledge of our practices and aesthetics, it is therefore urgent to maintain a politic of refusal to be wholly known. Or, as Muñoz reminds us: "leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself open for attack."[42] Indeed, not only is queerness too slippery for definition, but to define certain practices too precisely has the potential to jeopardise the future dwelling potential of queer subjects. Here, Martinique literary critic and philosopher Édouard Glissant's important text *Poetics of Relation* (1997) critically illuminates the danger of transparency and the importance of opacity. Glissant begins his text by insisting that we must "clamor for the right to opacity for everyone."[43] Opacity, for Glissant, stands a critical position of protection, a kind of refusal to be legible, or grasped by institutions of power, thus guarding the cultural production of marginalised and racialized communities who historically were and continue to be over surveilled. Indeed, such calls for transparency through definition and clarification often

[40] Sedgwick, pp. 01.
[41] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 183.
[42] José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 8, no. 2 (June 3, 1996): pp. 05–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/07407709608571228, pp. 06.
[43] Édouard Glissant, "For Opacity," in *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 194.

subsume and erase aspects of the self and experience which are difficult to grasp. Further, the creation of static symbols and practices often endangers those who make such performances. Therefore, understanding queerness through the language of gesture is necessary, as locating our definitions through the body and its encounters can illuminate aspects of queer experience without flat reduction in transparent and stable occasions. This gesture of refusal works to deny intervention, misinterpretation, and misuse of the worlds of marginalised communities whose cultural productions are so frequently used as a tool of manipulation and exploitation.

To this effect, in my thesis I seek to articulate my encounters with Martin, Moss, and Opie in ways which do not sacrifice the sublime and fluid nature of these connections. I employ a poetic and open-ended use of language to maintain an opaque vulnerability of these encounters. As Glissant writes, what I seek is "not merely the right to difference but, carrying further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity."[44] Here, I aim to both protect my own experiences as well as employ the power of poetic writing to engender a politic of disorientation that each reader is responsible to cohere. In this way, I hope to articulate the works I discuss as always in progress as the memory of a gesture and the promise of another. Through this, the queer gesture can forever include the points of Agnes Martin, hazy and assured, and the constellation of selves locatable in such abstractions; the double lines of Marlow Moss, strong and (trans)formative, as orientations which are generative in their failure to form a cohesive whole; and the planes of Catherine Opie's body in her self-portraits/cutting series as life etched on the body, of residencies found through desire.

[44] Glissant, "For Opacity," pp. 190.

COLOUR

This thesis takes its title, in part, from Russian artist and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky's seminal text *Point and Line to Plane* (1926), itself an extension of his earlier text *On Spiritual Art* (1910), which continues the artist's investigations on the emotional effects of the interactions of what he locates as the essential constituents, or basic elements, of compositions. In this text, Kandinsky describes the effects point, line, and surface (or plane) possess over viewers as the basic components of works of art. Though his career, both artistic and academic, centre an adoration and curiosity of the power of colour, Kandinsky located the geometric point as the origin, or "proto-element"[45] of painting. The point, for Kandinsky, is the outcome of the collision of artist, tool, and material plane; yet, this gesture is always also saturated inescapably with colour. The power of how we look and how we see, what is present and what is absent, arrives through the intersection of point, line, and plane through the medium of colour.

Following Indigenous, Black, racialized, and feminist critiques of the concept of objectivity, and in particular Haraway's (1991) call for the proposal of creating localised knowledges which make explicit the researcher's place of enunciation and position within the power relations which saturate intellectual and political inquiry, it is important that I briefly share my own positionality. Indeed, transcendence is not necessary for truth; rather, it is quite the opposite. Transcendence, or the erasure of locality in the (trans)formation of universality is injurious to knowledges which find their purchase, pronunciation, and praxis in the particulars. Given the complexity of queerness as an embodied politic and performance, it is impossible to do justice to the diversity of experiences in a single project, or even still to speak of its possibilities and articulations from a singular voice and perspective. As such, following the urging of scholars like Crenshaw (1989), it is urgent to locate the

[45] Wassily Kandinsky, Point and Line to Plane, trans. Howard Dearstyne and Hilla Rebay (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1947), pp. 21.

various intersections within which I create my scholarship so it can be understood in constellation with other queer scholarships, speaking as but one situated knowledge of many.

I am a third generation white settler on the lands now known as Canada of Micaelense, or from the island of São Miguel, Azorean Portuguese descent who is a nonbinary queer person. Here, I intentionally name my race and relation to the land upon which I live before my gender and sexuality to highlight and challenge what Hong Kong born cultural critic Rey Chow (2002) describes as the "ascendancy of whiteness," or the ways in which white hegemony maintains itself not simply through the exclusion of a racialized "other," but rather through a liberal multiculturalist framework of inclusion which offers minoritized communities a conception of justice and equality based in an ability to enjoy privileges of whiteness. To put it simply, the ascendancy of whiteness is the assumption of whiteness as a nameless, neutral and standard category. Within Queer theory and politics, it is urgent to name the various intersections within which we generate research, activism, and liberation to not assume whiteness as the standard articulation of queerness and subjecthood more broadly. Further, following the work of Indigenous theorists Maile Arvin (Kanaka Maoli), Eve Tuck (Unangax̂), and Angie Morril (Modoc and Klamath) (2013) in their text "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," we must recognize that working towards the liberation of Queer communities and bodies must not require consent to inclusion within larger agendas of whiteness and settler colonialism. Indeed, Queer liberation is only possible through the liberation of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized groups, as well as those that are differently abled and of lower social classes, through the dismantlement of the mutually entangled settler colonial, white supremacist, ableist, capitalist, and cis-heteropatriarchal systems of power.

My thesis intends to speak to my community from my positionality, a gesture of networks of my experiences of subjecthood, orientation, and encounters which always arrive through the lens of

my whiteness and settlerhood in the gallery and with art. I am grateful for the opportunity to critically explore and articulate my experiences, but as I do so it is necessary to continue to gesture towards the various intersections through which queerness arises. Queer identities and experiences are not static points, lines, or planes; and neither are they abstract iterations of subject, orientation, and encounter. Rather, the point, the line, the plane, are always saturated with colour, taking form and shape through the textures endowed by their hue. There is always more that queerness can and will be, and become; while I am appreciative for the opportunity to explore and articulate my experiences as a nonbinary queer person I know that my knowledges and flesh are but one fibre of a larger muscle always in the process of forming some unexpected gesture.

POINT

Various delicate points composing assured lines form the exacting grid planes characteristic of the mature works of Agnes Martin. Her restrained yet evocative pieces are the intentional legacy of an artist who destroyed her earlier, more representational pieces, and even those mature works which lacked the harmony Martin desired.[46] Born in 1912 in Macklin, Saskatchewan, Canada on Treaty 6 territory, home of the Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, Chipewyan, and Métis nations, Agnes Martin is best known for her tremendous planes of repetitious points, lines, and passages of pale hues which evoke not simply subjects of nature but states of subjecthood. The works, which are endlessly mutable, and perhaps ambiguous at first glance, entrance viewers in undulating rhythms which gesture in constellations both traced by Martin's hand and found in the mind and body of the viewer. Indeed, in Martin's work neither the immaterial nor the material are privileged or relegated; and neither is allowed to exist without the other. There is no space for the material of the body to become subservient to the subject, or the reverse. Rather, in Martin's works, both subject and object are entangled, enmeshed. This blurriness is well known by queer and other marginalised people, whom queer artist and writer Cole Heinemann describes as "subjects who know their bodies put them at constant risk of delegation to objects (if they were even allowed the state of subject to begin with)."[47] For me, the oscillation of Martin's pieces instantiates a heightened sensory awareness and fluidity which recognises and challenges my subjectivity and identity, a mirror of both harmony and discord.

In this chapter, I locate the works of Martin as queer through the possibilities of self that arise in my encounters, not through indictments of her gender performance and sexual history.

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[46] Jonathan D. Katz, "The Sexuality of Abstraction: Agnes Martin," essay, in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 92–121, pp. 96. He writes: "perhaps she felt that "self-expression" was too naked, too literal."

[47] Caspar Heinemann, "Magic Work: Queerness as Remystification," essay, in *Re-Materialising Feminism*, ed. Alice Brooke et al. (London: Arcadia Missa Publications, 2014), paragraph 2. Accessed via: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-d1RpWJ2nR4iN2BKEwfHdQFgdPqKW-a8q7O1ZAiNltU/

Indeed, a reading of her pieces as queer through a biographical examination would likely disagree with Martin, who refused such categorisations. In *Admission Accomplished: The Lesbian Nation Years (1970-1975)*, British-born American feminist author and cultural critic Jill Johnson, famed for penning the influential text *Lesbian Nation* (1973) and leading the lesbian separatist movement in the 1970s, remembers a conversation with Martin where the artist stated that she was "not a woman, [but] a doorknob, leading a quiet existence."[48] Many scholars have interpreted this assertion to argue the nature of Martin's sexual and gender identity; such as British art historian Roger Cook's (2016) location of Martin's comment as a humorous protest of Monique Wittig's infamous statement that lesbians are not women at the Modem Language Association's annual conference in 1978, or Polish-born Canadian art historian Ela Przybyło's (2021) interpretation of Martin's words in conversation with an analysis her androgynous style to propose the artist was nonbinary or agender. Such readings, however, miss the crux of the statement they employ; namely, that Martin sought to refuse neat categorisations of her identity. She describes herself as a doorknob, an opaque gesture of identity that does not wish to be resolved but rather is always opening toward another possibility. Studies of Martin that seek to define the artist and her work as queer through bibliographic analyses work to foster archives of queer artworks and presence, which is an indispensable task in its own right but cannot be the only way we approach and locate Martin's queerness. Both out of respect for her wish to remain inscrutable, as well as to honour the fluid and performative nature of such a doorknob in the desert, my thesis seeks to describe my experiences with the works of Agnes Martin as a queer subject. Through recollections of my experiences with three works by Martin I have had the privilege to encounter, I will describe the queer nature of *The Rose* (1966), *On a Clear Day* (1973), and *White Flower I* (1985), as embodied gestures.

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[48] Jill Johnston, "Agnes Martin: Surrender and Solitude," essay, in A*dmission Accomplished: The Lesbian Nation Years (1970-75)* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1973), pp. 291–306, pp. 300.

I will also discuss how I find this affect of heightened sensory awareness which Martin's pieces instantiate intensified by the white cube of the gallery spaces where I have had the privilege to encounter her works. Indeed, the poetics and politics of Martin's works transpose expected relations of identity and priority—namely the binary of subject/object within artistic encounters. This is felt especially as such encounters with Martin so often unfold tensely within gallery spaces which demarcate lines between viewer and viewed in coarse boundaries marked on the floor, contrasted with the white of the walls, maintained by alarms, and constantly surveilled by the watchful eyes of fellow guests, security guards, and cameras. Yet the interplay of the viewer, Martin's work, and the walls upon which they hang seem to still evaporate into a most delicate conversation of gestures. It is these queer encounters which are not entirely oppositional but unexpected, and sustaining, that I will explore in this chapter.

The Rose, 1966/2016

At first glance, *The Rose* (1966) was something I could not quite make out. Evidently, neither could the film developer who mistook the gentle white canvas standing before the gallery's white wall as an overexposure and omitted my snapshot of this work from the developed roll—although thankfully I kept the negatives (Figure 01). The summer of 2016, at the Peggy Guggenheim museum in Venice, Italy, I was (trans)fixed upon turning a corner into the modernist wing. There was a work which seemed to be dissolving before my eyes both into and out of the wall that called to me to be known, to take form. Upon closer inspection, I noticed the edges of a grand canvas gently relieve themselves from the wall and a faint grid of tender graphic marks revealed itself. The measurements of Martin's grid were impeccably precise and I lost myself in the work's repetition. As I looked, I noticed each line growing in thickness as they reached either end of the canvas, an articulation of anticipation and weight of relief. I searched ever still for more signs of the artist, seeking Agnes Martin in each trembling texture I could locate—each point which together comprised the lines and grid plane of

The Rose (Figure 02). Something about the delicate composition seemed like a determination not to fetishize the painting as a precious art object. The overwhelming white of the canvas in dialogue with the white wall upon which it hung, aided further by the delicate and near invisible framing, allowed *The Rose* to sink into and emerge from the gallery's walls. Here, something of this visual democracy between the work and the wall allowed me to slip between whatever boundaries may exist between the work and the space into an opaque encounter all my own. This feeling resonates in the film negative I have of this encounter, which is so overwhelming white that it appears like overexposure.

The idiom of Martin's work appeared to me to be a question of subjecthood; a queer gesture of composition which is never finished and is always becoming. To state it another way, the queer subject is like the Argo as described by French essayist and philosopher Roland Barthes: something of a constellational subjecthood forever in the orbit of the Argonaut, the lover, or the beholder.[49] Here, we can understand the gesture as gravitational movement between the constitutive subject of artists, artwork, and viewer which is itself performatively constitutive of these subjects. In admiring Martin's points as they begat lines and planes, I began to reflect on my own subjecthood—the orientations, the lines, the pathways which grew from clusters of performances of self, and now constitute the encounter I was sharing with *The Rose*. In the left corner, seven units from the top and five from the side (a coordinate I memorised that day), there is a small point of extra paint—a bump—which marks the presence of a textured line of paint which underscores, ever briefly, three lines of the grid. In this gesture, this textured mark of the artist's hand and coordination of self, perhaps accidental but nonetheless urgent, I was brought to tears. The texture recalled my own trembling body when I first came out to my closest friend—the mistake of that moment as I spoke the words to her before I knew what I had said, before I let myself know these words and their

[49] Roland Barthes. R*oland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 46.

realities. From this point, this assertion of subjecthood, a line, an orientation blossomed, in dialogue with other points both accidental and intentional which comprise something of the plane of my own existence. Present in *The Rose*, for me, was queer gesture which was somewhat illusory and tantalisingly tangible. This aesthetic encounter articulates the axiom of queer theory, that our realities, our lives, our bodies are cumulative histories, decisions, and performances.

Muñoz writes of queerness as "an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality."[50] Indeed, what may be fixed in histories both personal and political—or on a canvas whose modifications have ceased and is now at rest in a gallery—are still forever fluid in the mind and body. A queer encounter with Martin's *Rose* is an articulation of such a propagation of disturbances, comprised of waves of white gesso and graphite etches in layers which ripple across the canvas in perpetual dialogue—with one another, with Martin, and with the viewer. The work is both tender and prickly; a reminder of memories abrasive and comforting, an instance of goosebumps and of warmth, and a promise of both the thorns and petals conjured by its name, *The Rose*.

I remember reading in the gallery's didactic that Martin had gessoed the canvas, created her grid, and gessoed once more over these first marks, and created the grid again, and again and again. There is an embodied archive here. Each mark was something of a memory of the one it lay on top of, and something of a promise of a forthcoming dimension of composition that unfolds in the minds and bodies of viewers who engage Martin's topology of gestures. Indeed, American art historian Jonathan Katz writes of her work:

> Martin's work is nothing if not an index of her hand, the sensitive response to imperfections in the canvas's weave, the famed "tremolo" that is guarantor of the artist's presence, the tiny, endless variations on a given form and format that reward close attention.[51]

[50] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, pp. 01.
[51] Katz, "The Sexuality of Abstraction: Agnes Martin," pp. 106.

The first, and to date only time, I encountered *The Rose* I stood (trans)fixed for hours, in tears tracing each mark from one end of the canvas to the other, from one nexus of points to another, as my eyes roamed over the gentle valleys and quiet mountains of layers of paint and graphite. I felt my body encounter the possibilities afforded by Martin's hands, something of an eruption of sensory encounter where optical sight and rational thinking were insufficient means of encounter. Rather, here every glance was a new gesture—another aroma of the flower to see, another texture to taste, another sight to feel—and another body to remember, to be and to become.

On a Clear Day, 1973/2023

On a Clear Day (1973) began as a distraction. In the Winter of 2023, at the National Gallery of Canada, I was on a tour with a curator showcasing my research group the gallery's Canadian artworks and artists. Amid his discussions of Canadian identity manifested in the figurative works in the room, I noticed in the corner of my eye three small frames holding drawings clouded by our distance. Yet, I knew the haze of my current vision was less an error—of lack of proximity—but rather an intentional (dis)orientation; I knew they were Martin's. I memorised the steps and turns as the curator led us deeper into the gallery so I could find my centre of the labyrinth on our lunch break. *On a Clear Day* (Figure 03) took my body as both the site of departure and the destination; each step through the gallery on my way back, each step before these too perhaps, and certainly all the steps I took toward and between the three prints were integral gestures of our encounter. On my return, I found the haze to be different variations on meticulously printed geometric compositions of grey perpendicular and parallel lines against a cream paper—their differences were not simply the lines and points present or absent, but the textures created in the vacillation *On a Clear Day* demands. My movement between these grids created the feeling of something of a breeze I remember tasting on a clear day, and I giggled at this feeling like sharing a secret.

The National Gallery houses three of the thirty screenprints which constitute Martin's *On a Clear Day*, the only work she made between 1967 and 1973 (Figure 04). This piece marks a change in her work, which previously centred one image at a time. Now, through her use of seriality, the central gesture emerges as variations of subjects, of points between lines, in dialogue with one another. *On a Clear Day* presents thirty possibilities of a grid; some are closed, others open, each with different numbers of points between lines. Here, Martin's work operates through the juxtaposition of partial views, as you stand ever nearer and farther from *On a Clear Day* in an oscillatory dance which articulates something between distance and intimacy—a promise, perhaps, of the formation of a subject position through ongoing finite embodiment, as each print is torn together and united apart. Martin's hands seem to float patiently, gently on this boundary of reality and fantasy, of memory and daydream, and from eternity to humanity and back again. Her works seem to teach our bodies how to do this dance, to embrace the circumferences of selves—urging us ever nearer and far, slightly to the left and to the right. In this dance, I was four giggling in glee on the swings after being *mistakenly* called a boy; I was seven skipping around the room in my grandfather's shirt; I was nineteen at a club with a pretty girl; I was twenty three admiring a work from a favourite artist; I was all ages at once and becoming something more. *On a Clear Day* articulated for me what Muñoz describes as the queer "anticipatory illumination of certain objects [a]s a kind of potentiality that is open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself."[52] The work and I felt backwards and forwards, ever becoming something else to each other.

The gesture, as Agamben writes, emerges as a critic of the "fallacious psychological distinction between image as psychic reality and movement as physical reality."[53] Indeed, *On a Clear Day*, like so many of Martin's works, makes no accordance between name and form. Rather, it is something of a potentiality of subject, which Muñoz writes is "[u]nlike a possibility, a thing that

[52] Muñoz, pp. 07.
[53] Agamben, pp. 54.

simply might happen, a potentiality is a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense."[54] In this way, her work is able to attend and hold space for that which is *missing*, that which we do not see and are not meant to—of the many identities which lie beyond the twist of a doorknob *On a Clear Day* is critically opaque, a dance whose steps change with each partner. Though many see her works, they remain to evade study or classification. *On a Clear Day*, itself composed of its commutable constituents, retains its meaning only in those who attend to it, in those who dance with it. In this way, it is not static but enveloping, as numerous prints of grids, each with subtle differences, push and pull your attention and conjure identities with every ebb and flow. Our encounter demanded the intimacy of multisensory and synesthetic engagement, embodied connections that only cohere within our shared moment. Here, every step is a new gesture—another blue sky to hear, another ray of sunshine to touch, another breeze to see—and another self to remember, to be and to become.

White Flower I, 1985/2023

White Flower I was like coming up for air. My gasps echoed rather desperately in the atrium, as I again found Martin in the National Gallery, this time in the autumn of 2023 with the same research group on the break of the same research tour of seasons past. The reverberation of the sounds of my encounter were first hidden in the indiscernible ambience of a bustling gallery, but slowly revealed themselves as the space found a moment of near emptiness. I found myself suddenly alone with *White Flower I* (Figure 05) in a lucky encounter which was somewhat comically hostile. Here, the space amplified every step—the creak in the floor, the jingle of my carabiner, the tap of my foot's contact—tenfold, seemingly inditing each contour of this encounter. Eventually, I shook off this self consciousness, realising that as the only person in this gallery room at that time I could perhaps subvert and revel in this exaggerated embodiment. Soon, I began to breathe with *White Flower I*,

[54] Muñoz, pp. 09.

following its repeating striations of white and graphite blocks over its nude canvas. As each breath echoed in the room, I felt each gasp in the texture of etches which formed the composition, feeling myself at once directing and following the work. *White Flower I* articulates a striped grid which does not quite reach the edges of its canvas; it is a series of lines which seem to meditate above the weave of canvas. Yet, between each of the blocks of colour are a series of pencil lines, darken in their effort which seem to excavate the blocks from what one originally takes as the background. Here, what is first taken as the foreground—the solid blocks of white and grey incised into an undulating rhythm—evaporates into a delicate reserve beneath a bare canvas, a tracery ground peeking through an emerging thicket of rough weave.

White Flower I asserts multiple perspectives; it inhales and exhales with the viewer, without fixity or resolve into a cohesive whole, relinquishing the tension of holding its points and viewer in a particular place or state, because either and all formations are necessary and true. The foreground and background respire in patterns which invite the eye to breathe in a rhythmic manner. Despite its gentle and minimal composition, *White Flower I* is somewhat playfully maximalist—an outpouring of gestures articulated through textured trembles, echoed in the ineffable composition charged with a simple title (Figure 06). Indeed, dichotomies and definitions of image, object, past, and present, are at odds with *White Flower I* which seeks to (re)construct itself at every turn. As Katz writes:

> [T]here is no resolution in Martin's art. Indeed, she works to achieve not a resolution but an equilibrium between opposing forces, and in so doing supplants a model of dialectical progress with a tense stasis, or perhaps better, supplants resolution with repetition. In this model, as in Martin's art generally, each instance of dialectical opposition is not resolved—cannot be resolved—so much as modelled again and again.[55]

In *White Flower I*, each half of the binary seems to transform into the other, as you move closer and farther and foreground becomes background; grid becomes surface; point becomes line becomes plane. Here, each distinction between components is never settled, but in perpetual dialogue

[55] Katz, pp. 112.

nourished by the breath, by the flow between subject and object as background and foreground. With each inhale, I smell the flowers of my youth and of my future; I remember and anticipate articulations of selves gone and forthcoming; I prepare myself to once again come out of yet another closet built around me. Here, the subject formation of Martin's work resonates not simply with the fluid nature of queer identity as we continue to grow into ourselves, but the imperative to continuously assert one's identity. The processing of "coming out," or sharing one's queer sexual and/or identity, is not a singular declaration, but a continuous effort as cis heteronormative assumptions typically articulate one's assumed gender and sexual identity. Like *White Flower I*, queer subjects must constantly assert their presence. Indeed, the work is performatively constituted with the breath as much as the artist's hand, not a sedentary object but a living gesture articulated in each encounter. In *White Flower I*, tensions of strength and fragility, of gestures which inhale and exhale like bodies which shift, unfold in our queer encounter.

The performative, for Butler, operates "to counter a certain metaphysical presumption about culturally constructed categories and to draw our attention to the diverse mechanisms of that construction."[56] Encounters with *White Flower I* articulate gestures with ontological effects, working to bring into being certain kinds of realities which make space for certain kinds of bodies. Here, the body, and too the artwork, cannot be read as passive mediums or instruments which "await the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will,"[57] but rather articulates the flesh and the canvas in relation beside one another. *White Flower I* transforms our experience of our selves through not only what one we are able *to see* in the work but also what it enables us to see *in everything else*. As Muñoz writes, "Queerness is also performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward

[56] Judith Butler, "Performative Agency," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3, no. 2 (September 4, 2010): pp. 147–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.494117., pp. 147.
[57] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 12.

the future."[58] Here, every breath is a new gesture—another bloom to feel, another petal to hear, another sight to taste—and another identity to remember, to be and to become.

A Queer Phenomenology of Point

My consideration of the works of Agnes Martin illuminates an assemblage of gestures, a process of gathering that seeks to foreclose notions of access by grounding its considerations in situated knowledges. This critical translation is always interpretive and partial. My encounters with Martin's works become desire lines, traces and forages of articulations of self through a queer politic of disorientation. This worldbuilding language of desire lines illuminates the power of the queer gesture as a form of world building with implications extending beyond the subjects. As Ahmed writes, "the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions [is] in shaping bodies and worlds."[59] Indeed, as queer American artist and writer David Wojnarowicz notes in his essay, "Postcards from America: X-rays from Hell," a meditation on the importance of embodied resistance and arts during the beginning of the AIDS crisis:

> I find that when I witness diverse representations of "Reality" on a gallery wall or in a book or a movie or in the spoken word or performance, that the more diverse the representations, the more I feel there is room in the environment for my existence; that not the entire environment is hostile.[60]

Here, the urgency of queering is a challenge to normative institutions which seek to erase or destroy the living queer body. As a politic of disorientation, Ahmed reminds us that institutions such as the gallery will never be queer, but can be queered.

For me, the works of Agnes Martin are not static, neither mere object nor subject, no more ends in themselves or a means towards one, and neither still an unmovable beginning. Rather, they

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[58] Muñoz, pp. 01.
[59] Ahmed, pp. 02.
[60] David Wojnarowicz, "Post Cards from America: X-rays from Hell," in *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing,* comp. by Nan Goldin (New York: Artists Space, 1989), pp. 06-11, pp. 10.

are gestures, desire lines, circumspect processes of engagement. They are a negotiation, a way to feel backwards and embrace the circumference of encounter. Indeed, when these hazy points, the nexus of etches, the atoms of graphite, of paint, of flesh, are indeed understood and expressed as a gesture, then we enable the work to remain unresolved and its queerness to remain fluid. Here, encounters are simultaneous acts of identification both found and challenged, of separation and unification, of subject and object. Therefore, this gesture can forever include the arms of Agnes Martin, exacting and tender; the potential prickle of thorns, velvet of petals, aroma of bloom, softness of breeze and hue of cloudless sky; the tears of connection of that have and will caress my cheeks; even still the reverberations of breath and step which echo in a white cube; and all which still stirs today as we engage these works, and more still that always hides from our eyes. The queer point, the queer subject, is always in progress as the memory of a gesture and the promise of another. This language of gesture opens a multitude of propositions not only in ways of seeing art but also envisions possibilities of belonging.

LINE

Numerous lines, intersecting at precise points, form the neoplastic grid planes characteristic of the work of Marlow Moss.[61] Perhaps the contribution for which Moss is best known is the Constructivist element of the double-line—parallel lines in a close proximity, something of two orientations, two pathways that will never meet but will forever echo one another. Here, the lines of Moss' compositions dwell between tensions of orientations, reaching for the ends of the canvas not to surrender but to challenge that which is reachable within the composition's plane. Indeed, Moss' compositions articulate a lively exchange between lines in a residency of canvas which unmoors viewers from linear relations of material and immaterial. Such tensions of orientations are found in the dynamic relationship of the familiar and unfamiliar housed in the space between parallels. This transgressive articulation of line, a gesture of disorienting teleology, fosters a perpetually renegotiated orientation which embraces the experiences of queer bodies, whom Ahmed describes as confronting "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: towards a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not home yet."[62] Indeed, the set of parallels spans infinity without beginning or end; the parallel lines perpetually locate and exceed assigned spots on the grid, and also assigned subjectivities within its encounters. Moss' compositions, found in the artist's unique manifestation of line, implode allocations of a determined teleology of the body, instead providing numerous unresolved orientations with which the viewer can both identify and reject. Here, Moss'

[61] In this chapter I abstain from using gendered pronouns for Marlow Moss. Moss' gender identity is much speculated, as the artist adopted a gender-ambiguous name and a masculine persona. However, in published writing and film footage, Moss' partner, Dutch author Netty Nijhoff, used she/her pronouns when referring to the artist. The majority of publications discussing Moss follow this archive and use feminine pronouns, even while discussing the queer and transgender potential of Moss' work. Scholar Lucy Howard notes there are arguments that gender-neutral pronouns might be more appropriate, as Moss' presentation could now be described as trans-masculine, but the scholar and many others maintain their use of feminine pronouns in discussions of Moss. While I find arguments that Moss would employ nonbinary pronouns if the artist were practising today persuasive, this terminology was not available during the artist's lifetime and we cannot know what language the artist would prefer and adopt. As well, while gender neutral pronouns are a useful tool for speaking of subjects whose gender we do not or are not sure, non-binary identities are an orientation in their own right and are not a default setting from which one is later gendered. In this chapter, I abstain from using gendered pronouns in deference to Marlow Moss's queer experience.

[62] Ahmed, pp. 10.

double parallel articulates a politic of queer disorientation where the body of the viewer is entangled with the artwork, allowing for identification accessible to non-normative bodies for whom geometry and colour articulate more reliable categories than teleologies and determinate genders and signs. Indeed, for queer subjects such as myself, it is easier to recognize ourselves in the formal tension of compositions—in the lush of hues and the contours of shapes—than in figurative and prescriptive images and rendering of gendered bodies.

Born Marjorie Jewel, in Kilburn, Britain in 1889, Moss' adoption of the name Marlow as well as a masculine appearance continues to prompt many scholars to consider Moss' work from the perspective of so-called "identity politics." Yet, the importance and queer legacy of Marlow Moss is not reducible to that which can be made legible in the archives—to indictments of the artist's body which continue to locate cis heteronormative performance as the referent that Moss, and indeed other queer artists, fail to achieve. Yet, this is how most scholars locate, articulate and so limit the queer legacy of the artist. Most notably, British art historian Lucy Howarth, who authored the most exhaustive biography of Moss to date, writes:

> Moss's adoption of 'Marlow' in preference to 'Marjorie Jewel' was not motivated by a wish to fool either direct associates or the art world into thinking she was a man, but rather was symbolic of her transgender identity. This is signified by the fact that 'Marlow' is an ambiguously gendered name, not a specifically masculine one.[63]

Indeed, photographs of Moss most frequently find the artist in dapper suits, with short, slicked-back hair, and often with a half-smoked cigar in hand. Howard observes these portraits to "invoke the country gentleman, the sportsman, and the aristocratic dandy."[64] Such insights and the resulting location of Moss into an archive of queer artworks and artists serve to celebrate the often erased contributions of the artist, and indeed such efforts make queer artists such as Moss easily locatable to queer subjects such as myself, which is important in its own right. However, it is urgent that we

[63] Lucy Howarth, *Marlow Moss a Forgotten Maverick*, ed. Sabine Schaschl, Ankie de Jongh-Vermeulen, and Sabine Schaschl (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2017), pp. 33.
[64] Lucy Howarth, *Marlow Moss a Forgotten Maverick*, pp. 109.

locate the queerness of Moss' work outside of judgments born from indictment of Moss' body and the resulting performances and aesthetics we can define. Indeed, such a biographical perspective, which populates most discussions of Moss' work, are complicated not only by the lack of primary sources documenting the artist's life,[65] but the refusal in both Moss' own work and character to such neat categorisation. In reducing the queer possibilities of Moss' works to the judgements we hold over the artist's presentation and performances we limit the queer possibilities and connections of not only Moss' work, but the work of other queer artists. We must not reduce the queer gestures of Moss' work simply to the artist's masculine presentation *despite* the artist's assigned sex, for to do so would maintain cis heteropatriarchy as the referent by which we understand queer. Instead, it is urgent we take up queerness earnestly as a politic in its own right. Indeed, the perpetual motion conjured in between Moss' double-line presents something of a refuge for queer subjects such as myself, where we can come to understand our bodies and orientations in divergent and disorienting ways which are forever anew, and critically dislodge cis heteronormative bodies as the referent for our identities.

This chapter takes up Marlow Moss' double-line through a phenomenological lens guided by Sara Ahmed to articulate the unique and queer tensions present in Moss' compositions. While I have not yet had the pleasure of encountering Moss' works in person, Legacy Russell (2020) reminds us that encounters and identifications of self found online are not subordinate to expressions of identity in the so-called "real world," but are rather in perpetual dialogue and dynamic relation—similar to how Moss' articulation of lines are not separable from the artist's identity or flatly reducible to it. Moreover, the challenge of describing the impact of Moss' work through encounters with digital reproductions further challenges the binary notions of the body through

[65] Jessica Schouela, "Marlow Moss: Transgender and the Double Line," *Woman's Art Journal* 2 (2018): pp. 34–42, pp. 34.

such glitches, or ruptures between the recognized and the recognizable, which reveal bodies as normative social and cultural signifiers.

My explorations of Moss maintain an auto theoretical posture, as I traverse the queer tensions of orientations housed beside the lines of Moss' composition. Here, I seek to challenge popular discussions of Moss' constructivism which tend to understand the artist's work as queer only through first addressing the divergence of the artist's presentation, and rather seek to describe the opaque gestures of refusal and resistance present in Moss' unique use of line. Far from what Harworth describes of Moss' "Constructivism as an artistic lingua franca that overrides both personality and biography,"[66] this chapter articulates Moss' double line as a particular and embodied site of queer (dis)orientation which challenges binary conceptions of the body.

Black and White, 1930/2021

Black and White (1930) arrived before me through a computer screen (Figure 07, Figure 08). Dynamic lines in unceasing mobility transcended the pixels through which they arrived, seemingly expanding beyond the screen where I first encountered Moss in the autumn of 2021. A perpendicular set of double-lines sat in tension between the pixels and the mess of my room. Seemingly caught between the tension of Moss' double-horizontal were numerous tabs open on my computer screen, perhaps not unlike the numerous works of art which hang together in dialogue in a gallery, including incriminating google search tutorials and shopping carts, poetic correspondences, academic letters of reference, and design-your-own-avatars websites with characters I had made which were devoid of any and sometimes replete with all sexual characteristics. Simultaneously, captured within the affective expanse of the vertical double-line was the topology of my material existence, including thongs, boxers, a heavily annotated copy of Maggie Nelson's *Argonauts*, and a drying flower gifted

[66] Lucy Howarth, "Queering Constructivism: The Legacy of Marlow Moss," Art UK, February 17, 2021, https://artuk.org/discover/stories/queering-constructivism-the-legacy-of-marlow-moss.

from a previous date squished between the pages of Paul B. Preciado's *Testojunkie*. Here, numerous possibilities of self, of gender and sexuality, were caught in the space between the parallels. The meeting of the sets of double-lines, the site of perpendicularity, occurred to me as this moment of encounter. Here, curated by the unemployed post undergraduate curiosity of a weekday evening and the personal and intimate refuge of a bedroom not expecting guests, both my digital and corporeal self were caught between the double-line, with neither allowed to take presence in Moss' linear gestures. Instead, the parallel lines tethered together a site of contestation without resolve, disorienting my embodiment from a binary of past/present and on/offline. As Moss' parallel lines stretched beyond the length of my screen, the circumference of my mind, the history and potential of my digital explorations, and the mess of my room, the idiom of the work seemed to articulate a state of perpetual becoming unmoored by the dichotomies which separate the perceived, the imagined, and the digital from *the real*. Here, a linear teleology, an understanding of the body and the composition based on fixed ends, was untenable to describe or articulate this identification, queer by virtue of its unsettlement.

Black and White firmly grasps and abstracts space (Figure 09). Two pairs of double-lines simultaneously divide and unite Moss' canvas in a gesture of figurability in motion. Here, orientations found both in the lines drawn by Moss' hand, as well as the residential possibilities of my queer body, articulate desires which exceed the constitutive limits of the canvas, my body, and the encounter. Moss' parallel lines both bind to, and detach themselves from, the canvas, reaching towards a capacious presence which establishes the viewer as a primary constituent within the composition.

Indeed, the parallel line exists as much before the viewer as it does within the viewer, much like queer identities and orientations which are always operating otherwise and beyond the limitations of physical material. As Muñoz writes: "Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of

desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present."[67] My encounter with *Black and White* reveals the radically embodied potentiality of compositions of flesh and frame, questioning the constitutive boundaries of either. In Moss' composition, a thick line traces the length of the canvas, paralleled closely by a thinner line centimetres to the right which similarly emerges before the canvas' plane but ceases at the intersection of a moderately dense horizontal line, itself running perpendicular to the vertical parallels and residing on the lower third of the composition. This horizontal line traces the width of the canvas, paralleled above with less intimacy than the vertical pair by a slightly thicker line which ends at its intersection with the left side of the thick vertical line. The principle gesture of the work is both the visible and invisible tension of two sets of parallels, themselves perpendicular to another infinity of possibilities which meet only through the hand of the artist and the eyes of the viewer. Here, Moss' lines are queer in the Muñozian sense—in their ability to lambast the divisional assumption of the composition's border, extending the presence of the work beyond the frame into a gesture which embraces the presence of the viewer.

Through this queer compositional gesture of double parallel and perpendicular lines, Moss creates a site to (re)present and challenge the invisible, the illusory, the intangible nature of orientations. Ahmed writes of orientations as "a matter of how we reside in space,"[68] understanding one's sexuality through the relationship of proximity between bodies and objects through actions. Taking up Austrian-German philosopher Edmund Husserl's metaphor of table, Ahmed critiques canonic phenomenology to illuminates how one's space makes "certain things, not other, available"[69] to us. The objects before Husserl's desk: the writing table, the lamp, the pen and paper, engage Husserl in a particular type of work facilitated through the sightline of the objects within his grasp. Here, actions and intentions create lines of direction, or orientations, which shape our perceptions

[67] Muñoz, pp. 01.
[68] Ahmed, pp. 01.
[69] Ibid., pp. 14.

and how we orient ourselves towards objects and how others fall invisible when out of our reach. Importantly, Ahmed illuminates Husserl's writing desk as not simply generating certain realities but concealing others; namely, the invisibilized the labour which operates *behind* the desk—for example the labour of Husserl's wife—which privileges and maintains his position as writer *at his desk*. For Ahmed, orientations, therefore, are often invisible, until the subject is able to translate them into being or action.

Black and White's double-lines, orientations always beside, illuminate alternative realities and directions. Diverting yet maintaining relation, the parallels render a space of desire, of possibility which sits in inscrutable tension between two orientations. This queering of visual space asks us to think between the lines, or perhaps behind the desk, to challenge the necessary origins or telos of one's orientation and the realities it belies. Indeed, Moss' parallels elucidate other modes of relation in time and space, felt both on- and offline. In my encounter, *Black and White* indexed the multiplicity of points where I live my life, reaching into the invisible to elucidate the possible—housed always between known pathways. Moss' work turns toward the curiosity and capacity to recognize ourselves and, more, to ask after modes of visuality that are critical of expected orientations. Indeed, if the line traces a pathway for the eye, what becomes of such bearings when a parallel is added? Which line can be said to be the antecedent and which subsequent? And which are we to follow but the intercession—that interventional space of tension between the two lines that echo one another in perpetuity?

White and Yellow, 1935/2022

The next time I saw Moss I was more careful. Fragile lines disrupted precisely by a section of overlay canvas illuminated my screen, freshly cleared of internet debris, as I searched for further work from the artist. The blanket attempting to shield me from the winter draft from my desk windows paralleled the texture of canvas Moss used to cover a section of the compositions' double-lines. I felt

my body rigid with cold, stiff in layers which sought to both articulate and obscure my form. The double lines of *White and Yellow* (1935) (Figure 10) are fragile and tense, pieces of string which bind the piece, carving the composition into nine sections, with a tenth added by a portion of relief of canvas which evaded capture. This demand for spaces in between, both made in relief and erasure, articulates orientations as active and mobile, similar to the complex system of binding and slack fabric which contoured my own body. Here, form finds purchase in the firm grasp of components which do not precede their gathering, but rather are made through every shallow breath gestured within their binding. Here, orientations are both hidden and revealed in texture, double-lines simultaneously protected and terminated in their dynamic and mobile composition where residencies of canvas and body can be both displaced and naturalised.

White and Yellow is a textured interplay of forces. Three vertical and three horizontal lines made of rope caress a creamy canvas, appearing to both grasp and release an overlaid panel of canvas. This panel simultaneously interrupts, accentuates, and creates parallels through Moss' dynamic composition. Of the first set of vertical parallels, the leftmost line both emerges before and continues beyond the edge of the canvas, echoing or echoed by another thin vertical line which also begins before the canvas' horizon with the wall, and ceases in tandem with a horizontal line which arrives from the right side of the canvas, a fifth from the bottom of the composition. This horizontal finds its double at the top of the composition, a rope which holds and is held by the left doubleline and ceases at their triple, which stands a fourth from the right edge of the composition. This third vertical stands alongside the overlaid panel of canvas, which raises the rightmost fourth of the composition. This canvas panel, itself of the same soft white of the composition, rises, or perhaps submerges, from the composition in the shape of an asymmetrical "t", with its arms spanning the outer right length of the canvas and its body extending off centre to the other edge of the composition. The arms of the canvas panel both articulate and disrupt this third vertical, which

traces the arms of the canvas panel until it meets the torso, where it briefly ceases only to return in meeting a horizontal line which creates a square on the lower arm of the canvas panel in the bottom right corner of the composition, and continues until the outermost rope of the left double-line. The torso of the panel covers the upper two thirds of the lower section of the composition, in place beside by the rope of the left double-line. The underbelly of the panel torso is the most charged section of the composition, as here the rope ceases their (co)incidence with the canvas. The lower horizontal rope stands centimetres from the lower ribs of the canvas, where another horizontal emerges from the shadow of the panel neither exemplified nor obscured by the presence of rope. This parallel glitches before the eye, seeming both above and below the composition, to question the contour of the panel's torso. Finally, in the lower left corner—the shape of the union of the leftmost vertical and the middle horizontal rope—there is a yellow rectangle which acts as a referent of rational linear relations, against the irrational, intangible, illusory rectangle made between an imaged and material line. Here, Moss showcases and challenges linear relations, orientations and demarcations of shapes and bodies through articulating the possibilities of relations which exist alongside one another.

Eve Sedgwick describes the urgency of the preposition of "beside" relations as its ability to help us resist the ease with which descriptions of spatial relations—such as beneath, beyond, above, below—become teleological imperatives. In *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick seeks to address aspects of experience and relation which do not present themselves in propositional or linear form alongside others which do, and seeks not to submit the former to the grammar of the latter. Indeed, Sedgwick asks how we can describe bodies, forms, and experiences which resist and reject linear orientations and their ontological myths. For Moss, the double line reveals the facility of separating components within compositions, like orientations and identities from bodies. Here, the tension which unfolds in their shared inhabitation is precisely the point. For Sedgwick, the "beside" emerges as a nondualistic,

nonlinear, ineffable relation which embraces a dynamic circumference of experience and relation. She writes that the possibilities of "relations alongside" embrace "desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, *paralleling*, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other[s]."[70] Here, the lines of *White and Yellow*, Moss' dynamic double-parallels embrace a queer ethic of fluidity.

The narrow strip of white space, activated between contour and rope, operates as a question of body, similar to the space between fabric and flesh. Here, the binding of the rope attracts mechanisms of (re)figuration, of warping mechanisms which engender changes to contour through restriction. As I encountered Moss, I felt my topology yielding against tight layers of unflinching material as my torso too was warped by rope. Concurrently, the bagginess of my shirt, the extra covering of my blanket, harmonised the (trans)formative ability of the course material in a soft parallel. Here, the recognition of the beside of rope and canvas, of fabric and flesh, maintains a non-oppositional orientation between the materiality and immateriality of identity, which critically shifts normative frameworks of identity which indict the body against the mind. These linear relations, these gestures, do not make artefacts of their sensations, or suppose tangible or teleological ends, but rather activates a desire based site of identity formation which is fluid—always between two lines. Each valence, each possibility of this gesture is not separate or separable from the other; but rather echos, doubles, or parallels the other as a twin possibility. Indeed, if the line demarks an orientation for the body, what becomes of such residency when another line both mimics and withdraws? If the line is always in relation to the ground to which it finds relief, how might a parallel change the relationship between the figure and the ground, the subject and their bearings? And how are we to situate ourselves if not between—*alongside* in resistance and spacious agnosticism?

[70] Sedgwick, pp. 08. Emphasis added.

A Queer Phenomenology of Line

My consideration of the works of Marlow Moss articulates an assemblage of gestures, a dynamic process of orientation which anchors itself in embodied knowledges locatable both on and off-line. This critical manifestation of line, of the direction one faces, is always parallel to other possibilities. My encounters with Moss seek to illuminate the queer intercession between orientations, or the desire lines which emerge alongside our encounters. Here, the import of Ahmed's notion of desire lines articulate Butler's politics of the language of queer, as a fluid site of possibility. Butler writes:

> if the term queer is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes.[71]

Indeed, the deployment of queer must seek not to discover or articulate an unflinching root of orientation, but rather to commit itself to the dissolution of such exercises. Instead, we must locate queerness as that "collective contestation," or gesture, to embrace that which queerness is, was, and will be.

For me, the double-lines of Marlow Moss are not fixed, not signalling one form of embodiment or directionality but, rather, tracing the circumference of encounter and engagement. These parallels, abstract and fixed, are a complex negotiation of space, orientation, and subjectivity. Indeed, when the double-line, the orientations of infinities simultaneously linear, backwards, and oblique, are indeed perceived and communicated as a gesture, we disorient and disallow fixed understandings of the work and of queerness. Here, encounters with Moss are simultaneous processes of both the hidden and the revealed, of lines torn together and binded apart, of tension between futurities, memories, and immediacies both found and challenged. Therefore, this gesture can forever include the arms of Marlow Moss, exacting and tender; the texture and figurative

[71] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," essay, in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 223–42, pp. 228.

possibilities of rope, canvas and flesh; the expanse of the parallel into digital, corporeal, and imaginary spaces; and all which still activates today as we encounter these pieces, and more still that always evades visuality. The queer line, the queer orientation, is always beside and between both the memory of a gesture and promise of another. Here, the language of gesture seeks to activate the fluidity of orientations, illuminating a multitude of propositions not only in the way we engage compositions but also envision space and our motion within it.

PLANE

Precise lines carved on trembling flesh, adorned with points of blood which threaten to fall from the depths of injury, compose some of best known planes of portraiture by American photographer Catherine Opie. The artist's works traverse domestic scenes to dildos and freeways to fake moustaches, seeking to document and explore the impact of personal, social, and physical architectures over the construction of our identities and orientations. Here, the addition or subtraction of appendages, facial hair, framed images of personal and popular icons, lanes on a highway, or the still bleeding shapes of desire incised onto one's own flesh all condition the possibilities and manifestations of the subject through these contours of encounters. As knife meets skin, wheels meet freeway. Or, as framed images of family portraits confront us over dinner as Ahmed recounts, these gatherings articulate a "sensuous certainty"[72] of the matrices within which we encounter ourselves and others. Indeed, Opie's work articulates the performative nature of identity through a keen illumination of the various layers of sociocultural structures that inform our gendered and sexual performances both in the possibilities of flesh and its various frames and adornments. In particular, Opie's Self-Portrait/Cutting series, where the artist uses her own flesh as both canvas and pigment, foundation and furnishing, exudes powerful contestations which dismantle divisions between space and subject.

In Opie's work, planes of bodies, of homes, of infrastructure are occasions of critical encounters not with essences, but with documented articulations of subject and orientation housed in particular manifestations of identities. Here, there is no sublimation of the subject into an object of concrete identity. Rather, Opie's work articulates queerness as neither purely material nor immaterial, nor simply a condition of being or having, but rather as a gesture—a critical nexus of subject and orientation conditioned by the contour of their encounters, which function to create our

[72] Ahmed, pp. 89.

comprehension of identity. Such gestures resonate powerfully for queer subjects such as myself who encounter Opie's photography and are able to locate themselves not simply in the documentation of articulations of habitation of body or of place, but in shared residencies of desire. Here, the gesture articulates not simply the production but, critically, the affect of identity. As Ahmed reminds us, queerness emerges as such "a matter of residence, of how we inhabit spaces as well as 'who' or 'what' we inhabit spaces with."[73] Opie's work is both a critical documentation and occasion of such inhabitations, simultaneously a site of memorial and provocation of queer identification.

Born in 1961 in Sandusky, Ohio, United States, the historic territory of the Erie, Myaamia, Kaskaskia, and Wyandot nations, Catherine Opie first picked up a camera at age nine. She began documenting the streets and fields of her youth, curious to capture the planes that housed her burgeoning identity. This passion evolved into an exploration of the queer and fetish communities which endeared Opie's interest and the further creative possibilities of subject and orientation articulated in performances of play and pleasure. Opie describes her oeuvre as a "twisted social documentary photography" that is "unapologetically queer."[74] This charge is indeed easily locatable in the plethora of queer, lesbian, gay, and transgender subjects, as well as fetish aesthetics, which largely comprise Opie's venerated body of work. Indeed, much of Opie's photography is iconoclastic by way of bedazzlement—film portraiture which puts Queer communities and subjects in conversation with the decadence of Old Master portraiture. Here, stoic backgrounds of lush hues relieve subjects donned in the regalia of their sexual and/or gender performances; such as the deliberate lambast of outwards signs of masculinity in Opie's breakout series *Being and Having* (1991), where the artist and her lesbian community don fake moustaches under the label of their sardonic pseudonyms. Such direct assertions of queer presences critique notions of gender identification as stable, unified, and natural. However, Opie's work does not limit itself to representations and

[73] Ahmed, pp. 01.
[74] *Photographers In Focus: Catherine Opie* (NOWNESS, 2019), https://youtu.be/XqvRoh4c3gY?si=Xx_hYW9EGB49_4A6.

documentations of queer bodies, posing a challenge for many scholars who remain puzzled by Opie's simultaneous interest in domestic architecture and landscape. Yet, in as far as we locate the former as queer, and celebrate Opie as a bastion of representation, we must also critically contend with the opaque, at times inscrutable, but nonetheless urgent queerness of the later. Indeed, the significance of Opie's larger oeuvre, replete with platinum prints of freeways and film portraits of Elizabeth Taylor's home, is the multitudes of residencies the works conjure.

For Opie, queerness is not and must not be confined to that which is legible or definable within clear parameters. She notes in a conversation with American queer genre-defying author Maggie Nelson (2017), that the evolution of her photography—this movement from landscape to portraiture and back again—was both a continuation of her interest in the conditions within which subjects and their communities are defined, as well as an intentional means of escaping the reductive label of "the leather dyke artist,"[75] which she feels limits her work and its reach. Indeed, while this label and others like it make the artist's work available to subjects, such as myself, seeking representation and community, they also function to affix the queerness of the artist's work to legible articulations of queerness which operate through the creation of static symbols and signifiers. While such practices can be useful, they often fail to address the residential contours—both social and affective—through which such aesthetics operate and so fail to wholly embrace the communities they seek to identify. Butler articulates this problem with regards to gender performance:

> gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.[76]

Such intersections, or residential planes, are slippery by virtue of their embodied nature. It is impossible to isolate a particular aesthetic, sexual behaviour, or gender performance from the

[75] Catherine Opie and Maggie Nelson, "Burning Down the House," Aperture 299 (2017): pp. 104–11, pp. 109.
[76] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 04.

contours of the lived, within which they find purchase. Such modalities, or, constellations of identity and orientation caught within the rotating canopy of sociocultural residency, are precisely the interest of Opie; and where we can critically locate the queerness of her oeuvre.

In this chapter, maintaining a phenomenological posture guided by Sara Ahmed, I articulate the Self-Portrait/Cutting series of Catherine Opie as queer through the affective identifications that I, as a queer subject, share with the work. Such personal and embodied encounters serve to critically locate queerness as a situated gesture always between subjects. Similar to Moss, my encounters with Opie to date remain mediated through reproductions found online. Here, Russell's *Glitch Feminism* is again instructive in illuminating digital encounters of art and articulations of self as critical and tangible sites of identification. Such queer gestures disorient the binaries which operate to separate mind from body, and critically explicate the digital realm as an extension of the conditions in which subjects and their communities form, as well as the terms within which they find definition. Here, through an auto-theoretical methodology, I seek to describe the work of Catherine Opie as queer through identification of shared residencies of desire.

Self-Portrait/Cutting, 1993/2022

My left wrist was still bleeding when I first encountered *Self-Portrait/Cutting* (1993). The sting of my first semi-professional tattoo sang in the late summer heat of July 2022, prompting me to seek distraction and refuge in works of art. Catherine Opie, a much famed photographer whose name I was familiar with but with whom's works I had yet to become acquainted, came to mind; prompted by her presence in Nelson's *The Argonauts*, which I had read before the tattoo appointment. In *Self-Portrait/Cutting,* I saw the practice of ordinary devotion reflecting back at me from the small phone screen where I first saw the work. Opie and I shared delicate incisions of points and lines designed in the shapes of our desires. In Opie's piece (Figure 11), the artist positions herself away from the viewer, her back laid vulnerable and bare, yet firm as something of a shield denying us her

face. Upon this plane of flesh is a vision of home, made with like-child simplicity but through the use of knife instead of crayon. Here, the composition of two women, hand in hand, standing before a home under a sun, finds residency on Opie's back. Her now-excised flesh and blood illuminate a politic of pleasure between the tensions of desire and violence which articulate queer experiences. The artist's body stood before me as a sociocultural matrix, a site of inhabitation which illuminates the complex queer politic of categorisation under the mutually reinforcing systems and violences of cis heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism. Here, desires operating outside of *straight* discourses of the body, their companions and companionships, are hidden to maintain the skin of the social, and frequently found in a painful articulation which must cut through these matrices. This strikingly arresting and beautiful image materialises in the interstices of discourses around pride and marginalisation, insisting on the representation of erotics that dominant culture deems abject. Yet, Opie's work extends beyond this act of witnessing. Perhaps even more urgently, for me, *Self-Portrait/Cutting* labours to articulate a residency of disorientation where I am able to locate my own identity and desires.

The expression of Opie's work confronted me as a disruption of the residential plane; a queer gesture of inhabitation that excavates desire and makes visible dimensions of identity and orientation otherwise unseen, and so often unthinkable. In *Self-Portrait/Cutting*, Opie's skin parts in slashes of desire as droplets of blood furnish a domestic scene populated with queer subjects. This violence is simultaneously tender, a provocation of queer futurity and possibility. The two triangle skirts—the artist's stylistic choice of stick figures—serves to highlight how cisgender heterosexual unions are established as the norm early in life. Here, Opie viscerally cuts through these boundaries engrained in her own flesh to create queer possibilities of domesticity and companionship. Indeed, for Opie, the very notion of the body is, as Butler writes, "not as a ready surface awaiting

signification, but as a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained."[77] Here, the body and our encounters with and through it, are inseparable from matrices of regulated behaviour. Opie's gesture therefore is that of Ahmed's desire lines, "unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow."[78] Such deviations, Ahmed continues, leave their own marks, which "can even help generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire; where people have taken different routes to get to this point or to that point."[79] It is certainly desire that generates the queer plane, both in bodies and in encounters, found in the paths we create and follow in deviating from the *straight* line. Yet, *Self-Portrait/Cutting* reminds us of the difficulty of such queer embodiment.

Opie's gestures do not extend the contours of her body, but each cut does function to disorient the social code it resides within. The flesh does not entirely yield to the desire line, but it does glitch the plane. Indeed, *Self-Portrait/Cutting* does not physically exceed the contours of my phone, but it does come into critical contact with my identity. I felt this in the throbbing of my wrist in empathy with Opie's back. This encounter is more than coincidence; it is a moment of shared residency where injury accompanies identification. Here, as the blood falls from the shapes of Opie's desires I think of makeup brushes as sharp as knives, as high school friends carve my face into feminine forms that ache me more than my wrist did. This injury of identification—the sharp knowledge that I was dysphoric in femme presentations—was invisible like the euphoric kinship I found in Opie. No one walking down the street knew that my heart sang at the new possibilities of residency, of desires, *Self-Portrait/Cutting* illuminated for me. Here, I imagined those same creams and

[77] Butler, pp. 46.
[78] Ahmed, pp. 19.
[79] Ibid., pp. 20.

colours from years past now carving a second triangle—envisioning a masculinizing or phantasmagoric application of makeup.

Legacy Russell reminds us that the power of such queer identifications are their dual motion to reveal and to protect; she writes: "the glitch moves, but the glitch also blocks. It incites movement while simultaneously creating an obstacle."[80] The blood of my fresh tattoo congeals and in this gesture there is healing and also refusal—the forming scab denying passers-by the shape of my design as it insulates me from infection. Indeed, Opie presents her back to us, her flesh laid bare and bleeding but critically and defiantly turned away. The queerness of this gesture is not merely the figures which inhabit Opie's flesh, but their means of residency; namely, the cut, ever bleeding and giving new form to the artist's desires and illuminating my own; and the back ever turning, opaque in its protection of queer identifications.

Self-Portrait/Pervert, 1994/2022

Self-Portrait/Pervert (1994) accompanied me as I soon returned to my friend's studio for a matching tattoo. The manual deposits of points which begat lines upon the plane of my right wrist, the tattoo a recombination of the design now healed on my left side. In echo of this harmony, I sought alleviation from my discomfort again with Opie. In *Self-Portrait/Pervert* (Figure 12), needle for needle, I saw a similar recombination and denial of static language of identification. Here, the artist sits facing the camera, naked from the waist up. Vulnerable yet opaque, Opie wears a leather fetish mask fitted with additional pieces which cover her eyes—equally obstructing the possibility of a gaze. Her arms, placed dutifully on her lap, are symmetrically pierced by twenty-six needles which face towards the artist's torso as a kind of radiance. At the centre of this glory, Opie's blood escapes from sliced calligraphically which adorns her chest in letters spelling "Pervert," as well as a decorative underline which scores the label with urgency. Her engraved flesh echoes the floral wallpaper she stands

[80] Russell, pp. 30.

before, suggesting rather that her body is inseparable from, or perhaps an extension of its context. The artist's body sat before me as a sociocultural plane, a site of inhabitation which illuminates the complex queer politic of categorisation under the mutually reinforcing systems and violences of cis heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, and colonial structures. *Self-Portrait/Pervert* challenges liberal politics of queerness which seek assimilation as their primary instrument of equality. Here, Opie's aesthetic affliction articulates a complex relationship with one's surrounds, explicating queer presence and habitation of social planes through the mutual identification and rejection of labels. Such a residency of desire resides in my wrist, and indeed is known by the flesh of other queer subjects, whose flesh is furnished both with their own marks of pride and scars made by others.

Self-Portrait/Pervert both revels in and rejects the labels that mark the artist's body; the letters of "pervert" threaten to distort their contours as Opie's blood congeals. The artist interrupts a tacit identificatory process that would reduce the image, the body, the subject to the confines a label. Here, Opie conjures the tension of naming, where identities simultaneously demarcate and delimit performances. In the artist's stiff posture, I recall my month of strict androgyny in anticipation of sharing my gender identity with my friends—the self-inflicted confinement of denying aspects and articulations of myself in anxiety that the presence of earrings, skirts, or even my invisible and potentially frilly selection of underwear might dissuade others from the new label I would soon ask them to understand me through. This social pressure resides in the needles which hold Opie's arms firm, perhaps threatening a scratch which might distort the label on her chest. As Ahmed writes:

> We can recall [...] the different meanings of the word "pressure": the social pressure to follow a certain course, to live a certain life, and even to reproduce that life can feel like a physical "press" on the surface of the body, which creates its own impressions. We are pressed into lines, just as lines are the accumulation of such moments of pressure or what I call "stress points."[81]

[81] Ahmed, pp. 17.

Such pressure functions to affix the subject, condemning them to the label which holds them capture. Yet, the needles do not simply hold Opie capture, but are also her means of escape. In *Self-Portrait/Cutting* Opie, (re)charges the body, refusing to present a benign object—she articulates not a nude, a form, or an archetype—but rather carries forth a living site, an occasion, a tension, a dynamic.

The gesture of *Self-Portrait/Cutting* is an embrace of the multiplicity of desires, both past, present, and emerging which characterise queer experience. Heather Love reminds us of the urgency of Opie's embrace of fluid residencies, expounding the critical implications of stiff identificatory practices, which in their fixity seek to make queer identities palatable. She notes that such genealogical ties in practice often distance themselves from painful or abject subjects such as abject histories and bodies, in an attempt to claim progress in the employment of their labels. Love warns:

> The emphasis on progress in contemporary gay and lesbian politics has meant that today we must, like Odysseus, steel ourselves against close encounters with the queer past. This refusal to be held back or turned around has made it difficult to approach the past as something living-as something dissonant, beyond our control, and capable of touching us in the present.[82]

Namely, such pressures enable one to enter the so-called mainstream, or straight plane, on the condition that one breaks ties with all those who are unable or denied entrance. Love continues:

> "Advances" such as gay marriage and the increasing media visibility of well-heeled gays and lesbians threaten to obscure the continuing denigration and dismissal of queer existence. One may enter the mainstream on the condition that one breaks ties with all those who cannot make it—the nonwhite and nonmonogamous, the poor and the gender deviant, the fat, the disabled, the unemployed, the infected, and a host of unmentionable others"[83]

Here, Love describes how shame clings to those before "liberation" and to those who are still waiting for such acknowledgement. Such practices of highlighting only those who are legible and palatable for the straight world seek to erase the foundation of queer experience; namely, that is a politic of subjugation, a created category under the mutually reinforcing systems of cis

[82] Love, pp. 09
[83] Ibid., pp. 10.

heteropatriarchal, white supremacist and colonial structures. *Self-Portrait/Cutting* embraces the wounds of labels, refusing the losses as droplets of blood escape the capture of language and reach beyond. Here, Opie, far from grounding a recovery of identity or a sanitised embrace of the pejorative of pervert, or indeed other queer labels as a means of securing our sense of ourselves into eternity, rather illuminates identities as the names we give and are given to the different ways we are position by, and position ourselves within, narratives of the past and desires of the future. The queerness of this gesture is not merely the words etched upon Opie's flesh, but their means of residency; namely, the needle ever awaiting the capture and release of the next point or combination of letters; and the flesh ever and always gesturing beyond its enclosure.

A Queer Phenomenology of Plane

My consideration of the works of Catherine Opie articulates an assemblage of gestures, a fluid process of identification which seeks to deny notions of static residency through grounding its considerations in embodied knowledge. This critical interpretation is always partial, seeking to articulate and engender desires. Such instances with Opie's work are desire lines, explorations and excavations of embodiment through a queer politic of disorientation. Such gestures seek to communicate what Russell describes as the queer nature of becoming. She writes:

> *Becoming* prompts questions of who we are, who we would like to be, and triggers a spatial interrogation of boundaries and how we might break through them. It brings us as well to explore the experience of touch in ways that might transform us.[84]

Indeed, touch is the foothold of experience, both performances and interpretations of identity and identification; and indeed Opie's work touches me. As Batraville writes, the affect of touch is a radical cartographic practice which "will necessarily mean facing brutality while remaking beauty, love and desire" that "embrace principled rebellion and destruction might offer a future that heals, that rewrites revolution"[85] through our fleshy desires.

[84] Russell, pp. 68.
[85] Batraville, "'Touch,'" pp. 162.

For me, the works of Catherine Opie are not invariable, permanent scars but the dynamic of flesh heeding to and healing from injury, and also exceeding the contours of wound into occasions of euphoria. My encounters with her works are a constant arbitration, reaching ever past, present, and towards futurities which glitch the plane of encounter. Indeed, when the plane of flesh, such carvings of desire and ink, shapes and words of identities ever to change, are indeed understood and expressed as a gesture, then we embrace the embodied nature of queerness. Here, residencies of desire are both lost and embraced. As such, this gesture can forever include the skin of Catherine Opie, resilient and wounded; the sharp incisions of desire; the ordinary bliss of domesticity; the embrace of selves, companions, and companionships yet unseen; and all which still trembles today as we encounter these pieces, and more still that always waits behind the skin. The queer plane, queer residency, is always in progress as the cut of a gesture as it bleeds into the promise of another. Here, gesture articulates such a postulation of embodiment and also offers itself in the proposition of innumerable residencies.

CONCLUSION

My encounters with the works of Agnes Martin, Marlow Moss, and Catherine Opie emerge as intercessions with points, lines, and planes; with identities, orientations, and residencies; with selves, memories, and lives intertwined and intertwining within these exchanges. An auto-theoretical and embodied examination of our encounters illuminates a critical queer encounter of disorientation which articulates something of a conversion of the gaze; a possibility offered to remember, forget, interpret, and reclaim. In my thesis, I locate the queerness of Martin, Moss, and Opie, as with my own, as not a statement of fact but an exercise in embodiment, in relationalities and relationships. Here, I am reminded of Haraway's mediation on the nature of situated knowledges. She writes:

> Like "poems," which are sites of literary production where language too is an actor independent of intentions and authors, bodies as objects of knowledges are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their *boundaries* materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; "objects" do not preexist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies.[86]

Here, Haraway articulates lived experience as the criterion of knowledge production and so meaning generation. Indeed, gestures, art and words, change depending on who performs them, where they are performed, and for whom; there is no cure. What horror; what bliss. My thesis sought to articulate various potentialities of connection while participating in larger ecologies of possibilities and responsibilities. Such encounters are not necessarily determined but rather are processes of entanglement, belonging in the same category with each other in such a way that has consequences. It is a politics generative of politics, a disorienting way of engaging art renewed in every encounter. The very task of this thesis is to celebrate queer aesthetic encounter's ability to formulate inflections forever new in the discourse of queerness. Indeed, such is the critical power of the gesture of art: to make material the immaterial, to give shape to the formless, to give to pathways to desire, and more that always hides from our eyes.

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[86] Haraway, pp. 595.

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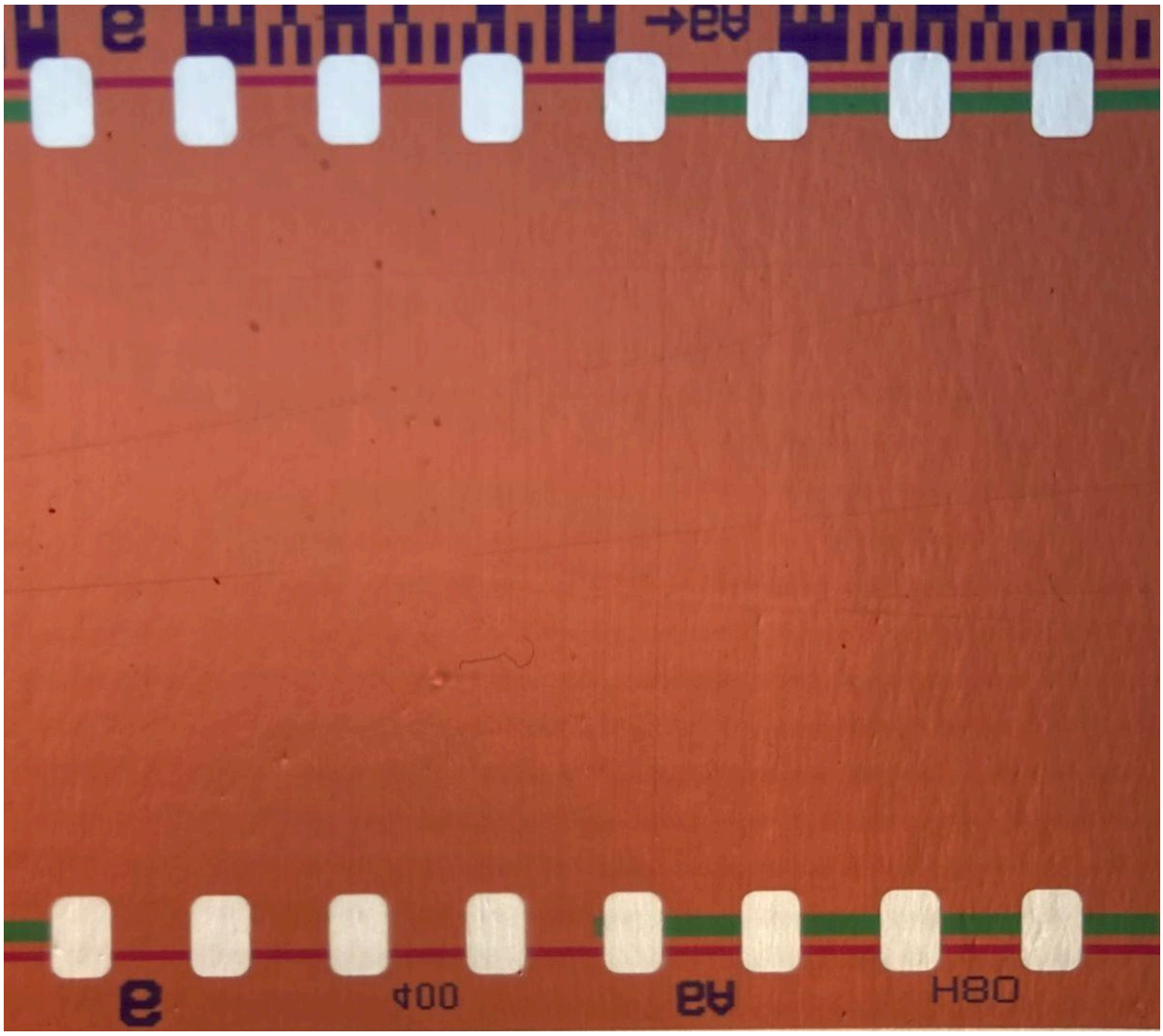
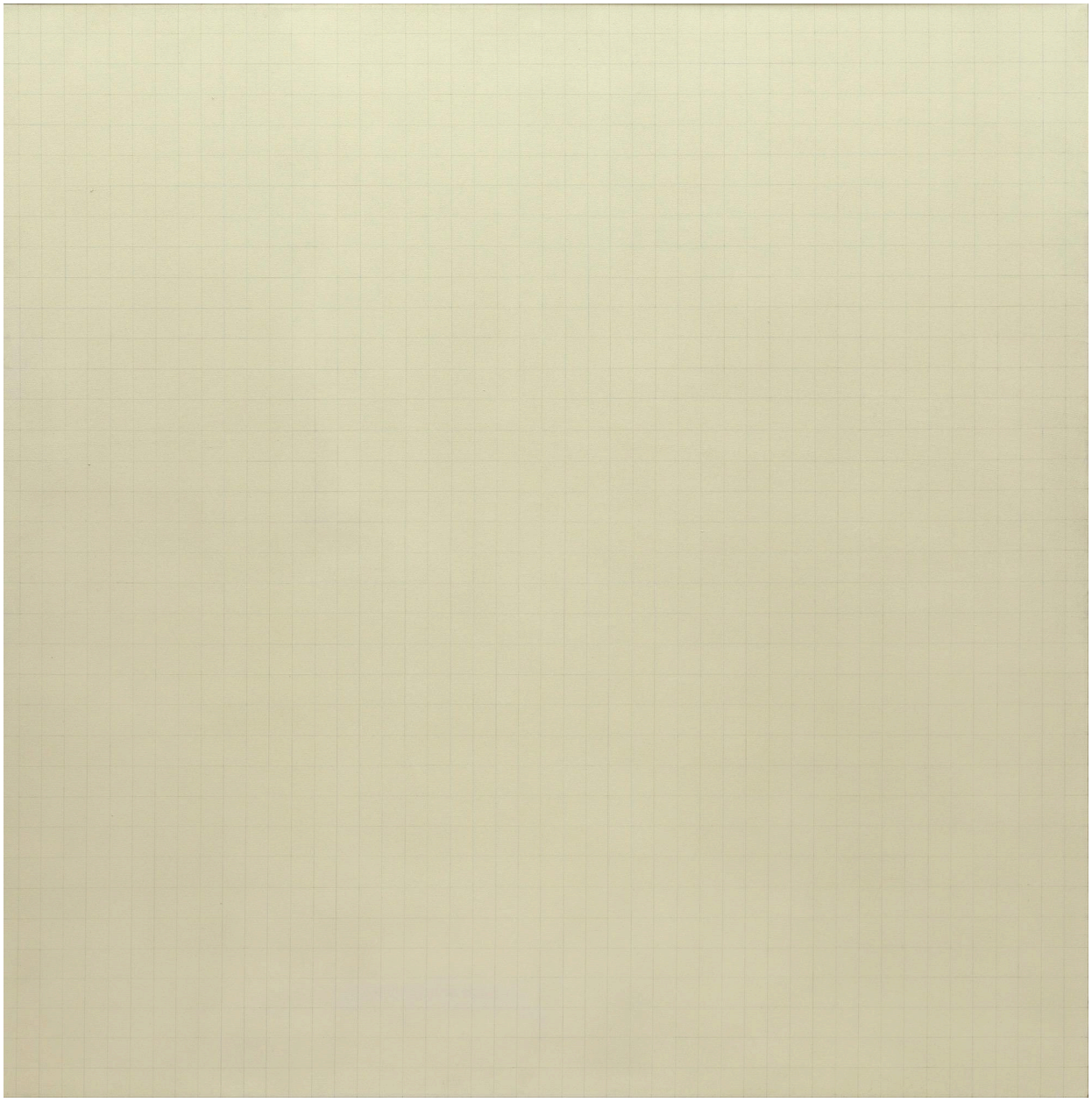
Illustrations

Figure 01:
The Rose 1966/2019



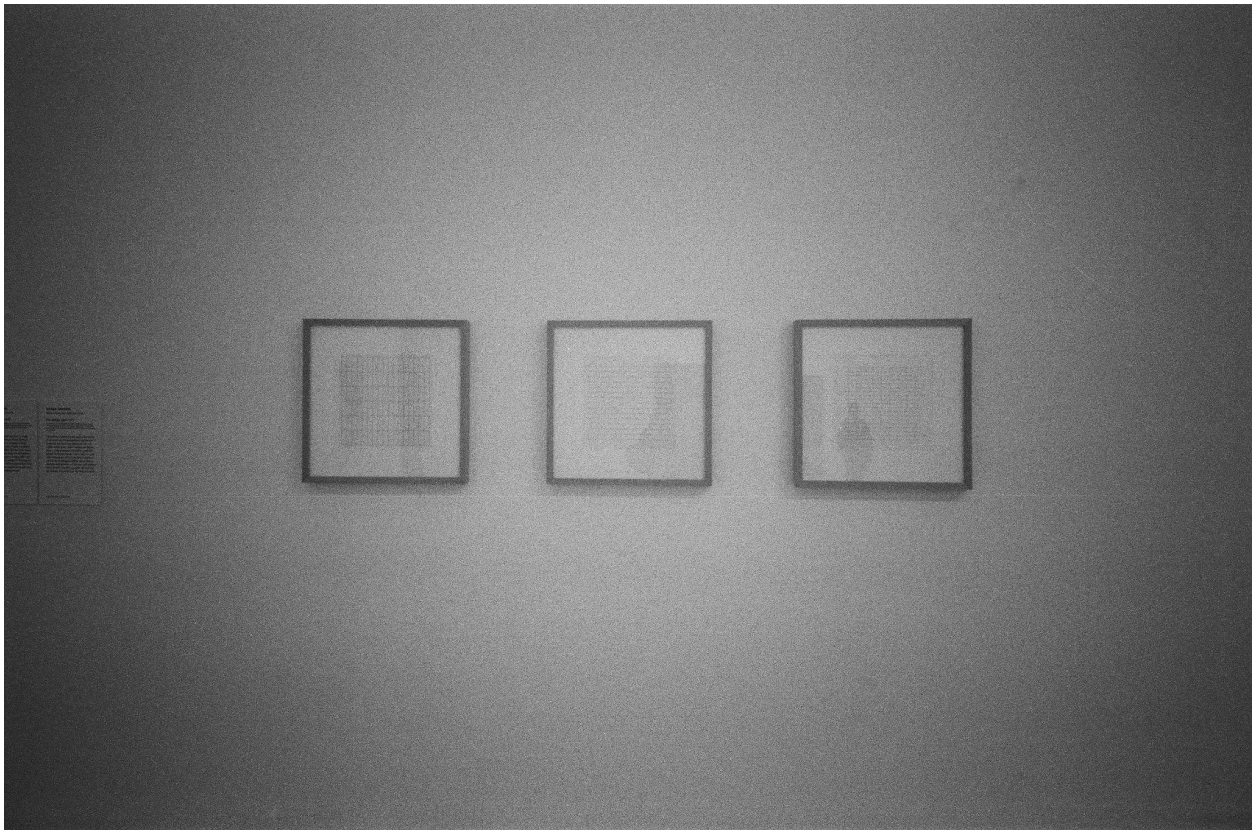
Caroline DeFrias. *The Rose, 1966/2019*, 2019. Photo negative.

Figure 02:
The Rose



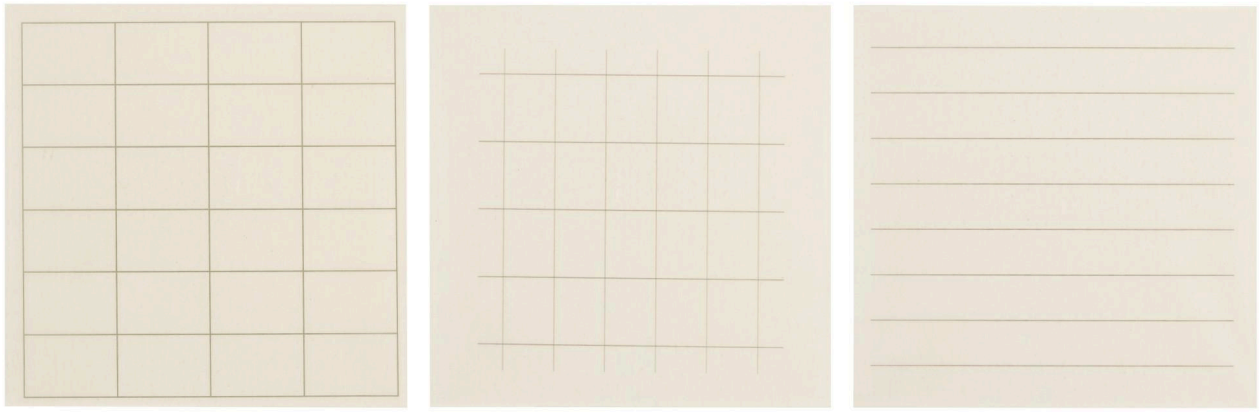
Agnes Martin. *The Rose*, 1966. Acrylic on canvas. Venice, Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

Figure 03:
On a Clear Day 1973/2023



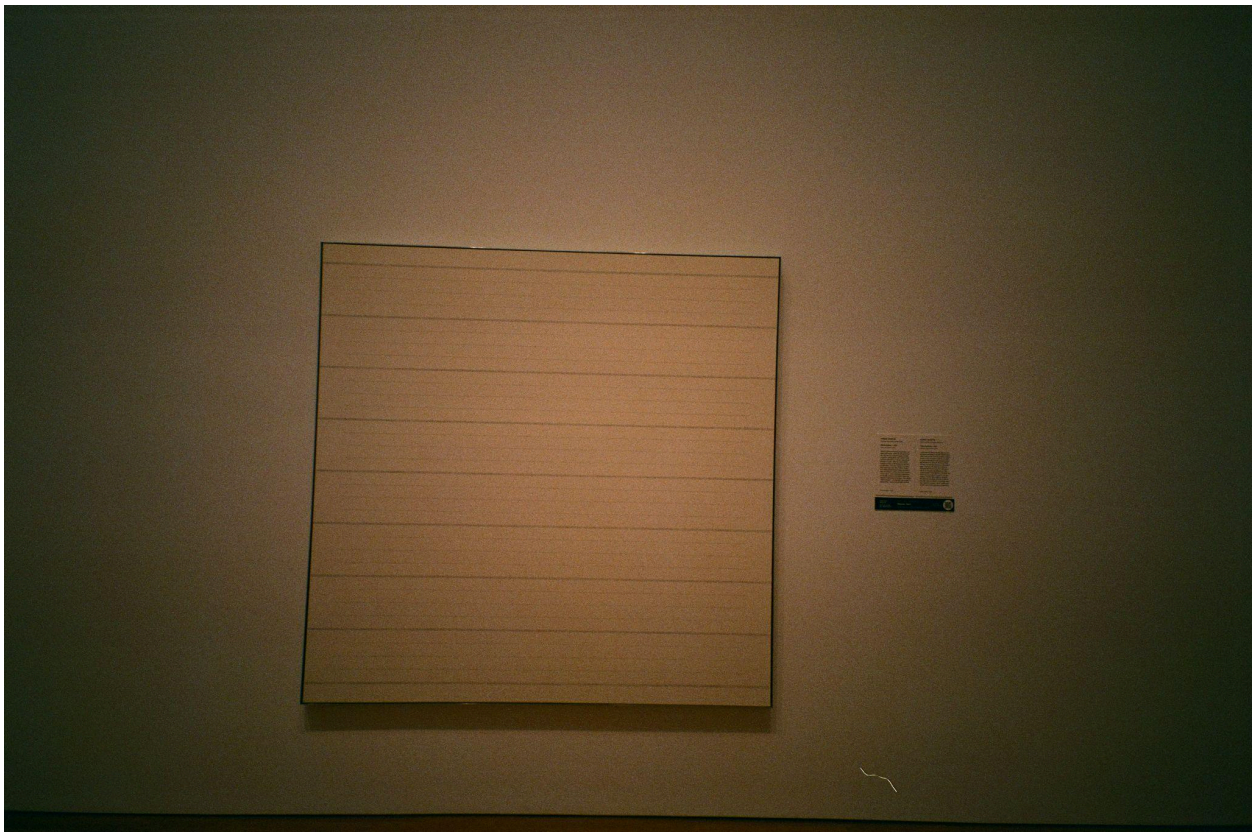
Caroline DeFrias. *On a Clear Day, 1973/2023*, 2023. Photograph.

Figure 04:
On a Clear Day



Agnes Martin. *On a Clear Day*, 1973. Print. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

Figure 05:
White Flower I, 1985/2023

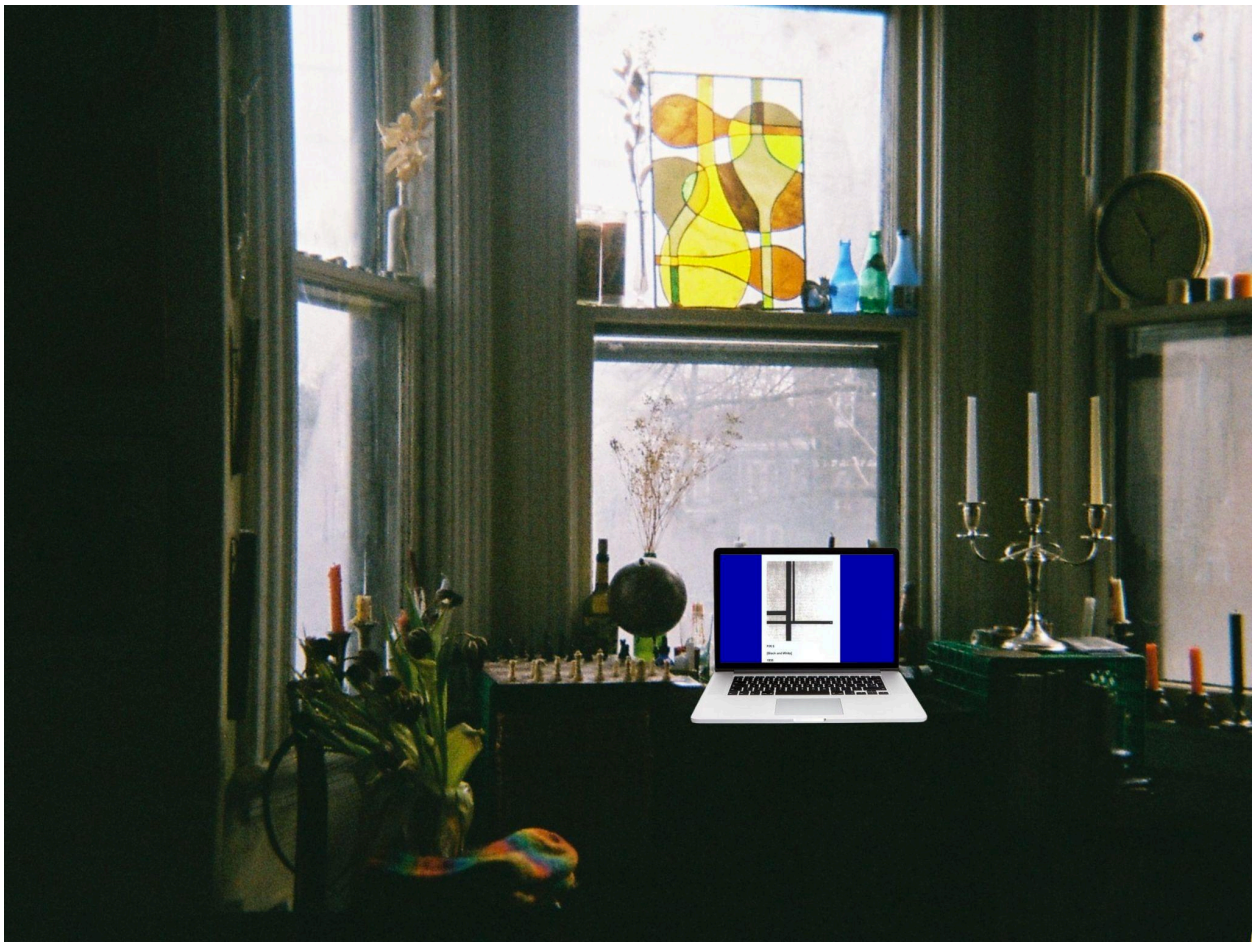


Caroline DeFrias. *White Flower I, 1985/2023*, 2023. Photograph.

Figure 06:
White Flower I

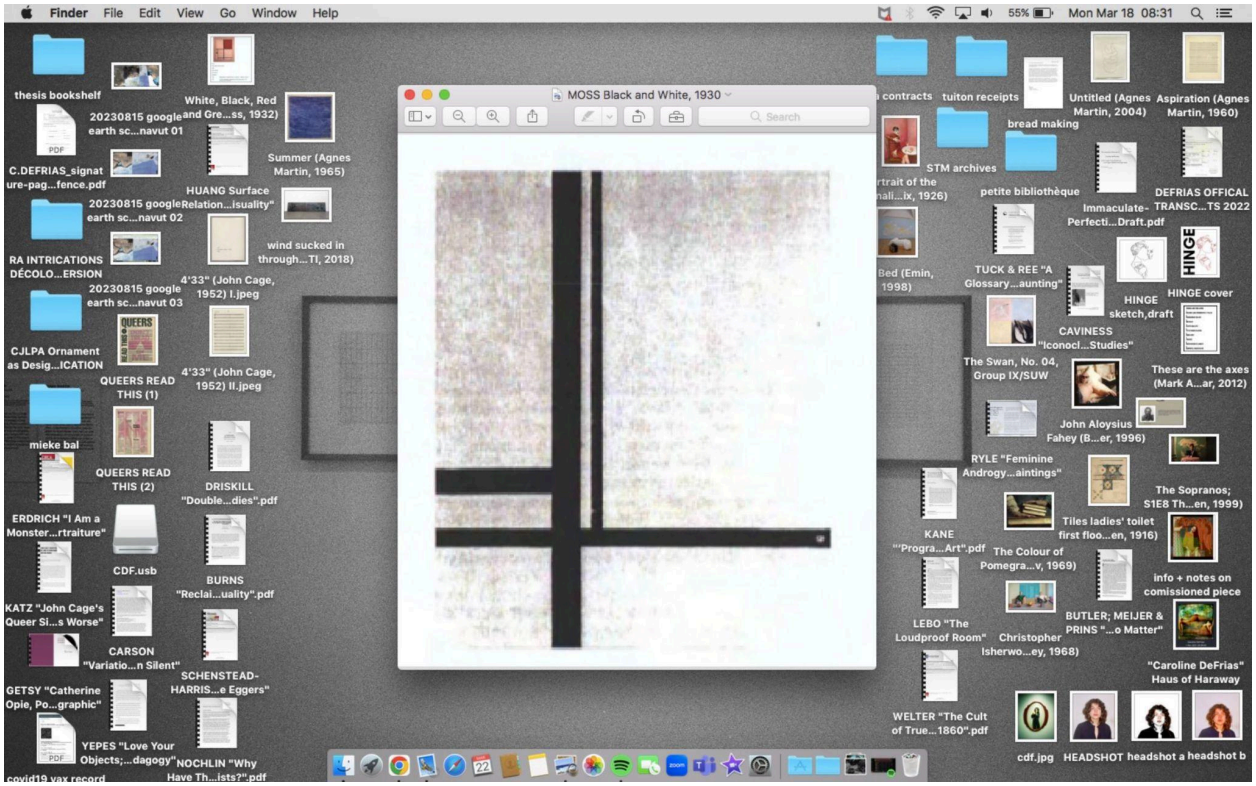
Agnes Martin. *White Flower I*, 1985. Acrylic and graphite on canvas. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada.

Figure 07:
Black and White, 1930/2021(1)



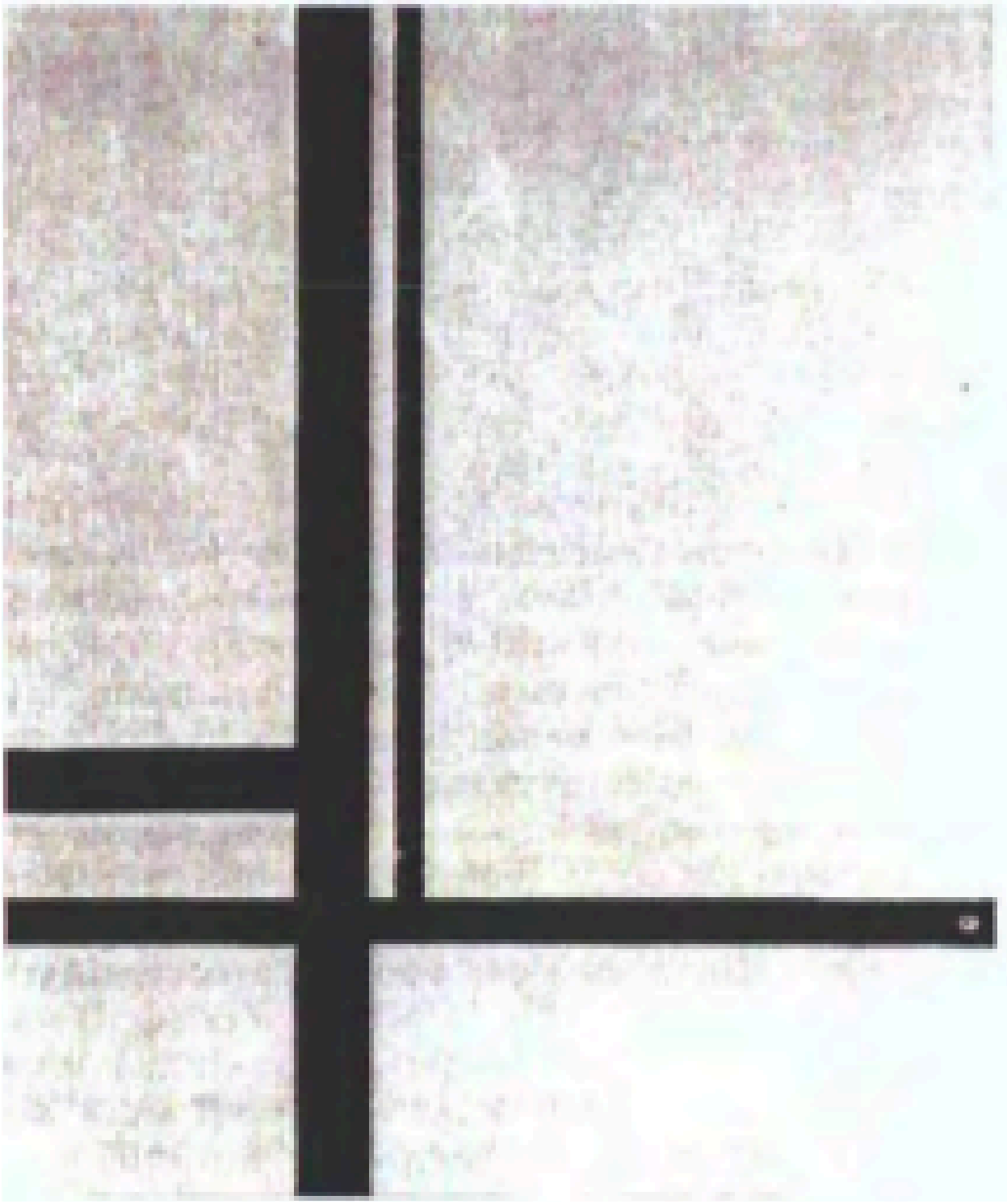
Caroline DeFrias. *Black and White, 1930/2021(1)*, 2024. Digital collage recreation.

Figure 08:
Black and White, 1930/2021(2)



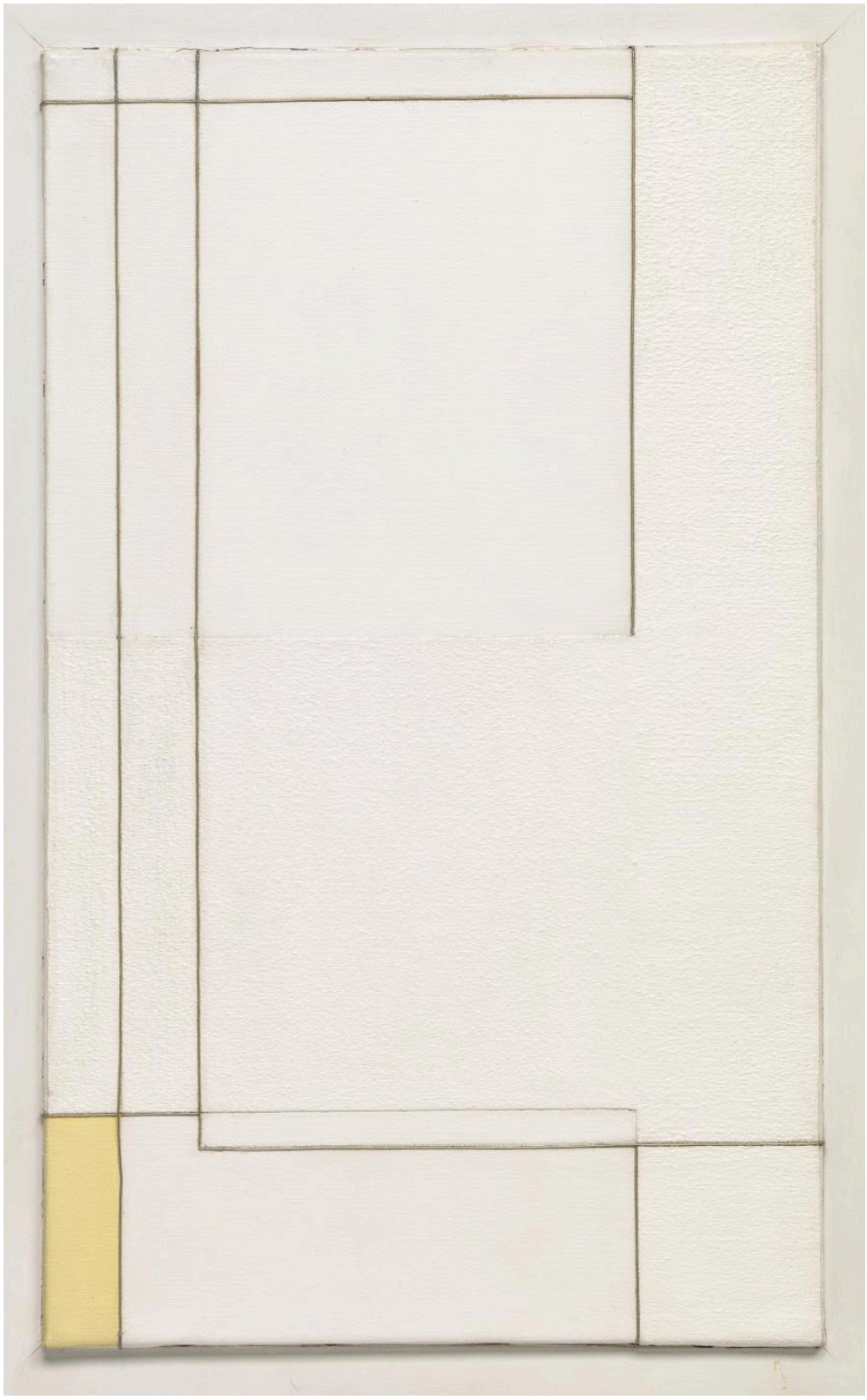
Caroline DeFrias. *Black and White, 1930/2021(2)*, 2024. Digital collage recreation.

Figure 09:
Black and White



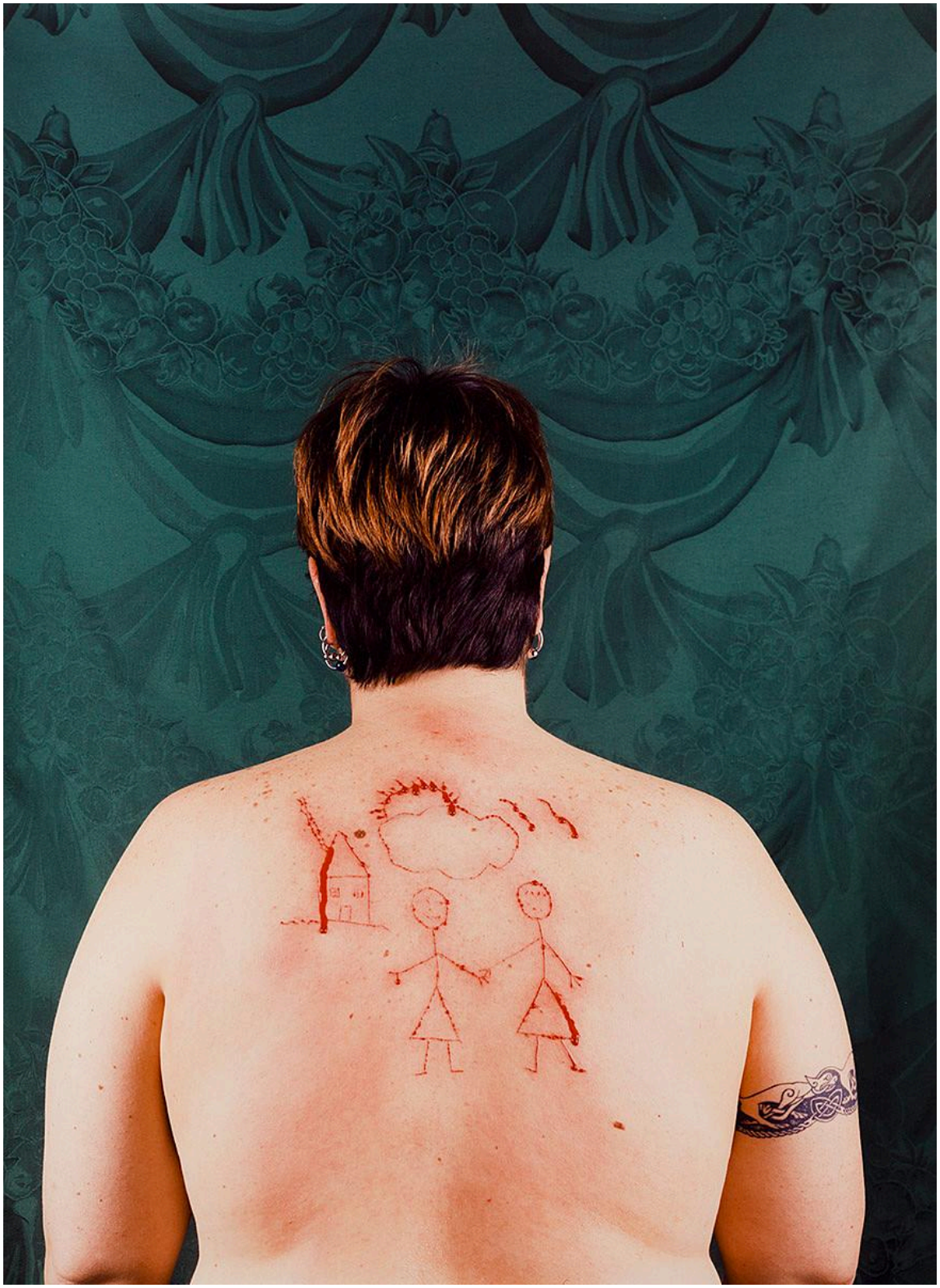
Marlow Moss. *Black and White*, 1930. Oil on canvas. Whereabouts unknown, likely to be in Nijhoff/Oostheok Collection.

Figure 10:
White and Yellow



Marlow Moss. *White and Yellow*, 1935. Oil paint, string and canvas on canvas. London, Tate Modern.

Figure 11:
Self-Portrait/Cutting



Catherine Opie. *Self-Portrait/Cutting*, 1993. Chromogenic print. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Figure 12:
Self-Portrait/Pervert

Catherine Opie. *Self-Portrait/Pervert*, 1994. Chromogenic print. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.