Laurie Anderson
Trisha Brown
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Laurie Anderson, Viophonograph, 1976

Trisha Brown, Woman Walking Down a Ladder, 1973 (detail)
Performed by Trisha Brown at 130 Greene Street, New York on 25 February
Photograph: Babette Mangolte

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Foreword

Few organisations in the world can rival the Barbican’s capacity to represent the arts across every field and form: from the plastic to the performed, from the classical to the cutting-edge. Our programmes range over not one but four different art forms: film, visual arts, music and theatre. Artists, by instinct, tend to challenge categories and breach boundaries, driven by a desire to define change and to create the new. At Barbican Art Gallery we also pride ourselves on making exhibitions that question established art-historical taxonomies by creating vivid juxtapositions between diverse practices while uncovering meaningful connections between them.

_Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark: Pioneers of the Downtown Scene, New York 1970s_ maps a period of extraordinary vibrancy in late 20th-century culture: a moment in the late 1960s and early 1970s when an informal yet singular group of artists collided in Manhattan and sparked a collective energy that was to drive intense experimentation across the visual and performing arts. Laurie Anderson recalls: ‘New York in the early 1970s was Paris in the 1920s. I was part of a group of artist/pioneers [...]. We often worked on each others’ pieces and boundaries between art forms were loose.’

The exhibition unravels a web of ideas and approaches that connects the work of three of the key protagonists of the downtown milieu: the performer Laurie Anderson, the choreographer Trisha Brown and the sculptor Gordon Matta-Clark. This was a time of radical experiment, and many artists, whatever their chosen art form, found common excitement in displacing their work from traditional contexts – whether the white cube gallery or the classical stage – in order to find new and surprising ways of finding and engaging their audiences. They also rethought current forms, instigating a post-Minimalist tendency that overlaid a sometimes robustly hewn urban aesthetic with a gentle poetics crafted from everyday objects and materials. The emphatic serial formalism of Minimalism and the brash iconicity of Pop were replaced with a more lyrical, more ephemeral and yet arguably more political art which emerged from the very fabric and spaces of the city.

These artists were alert to the cross-fertilisation of ideas between the art forms, and the exhibition itself develops like a three-way conversation, illuminating, for example, the architectural possibilities in music or dance, or the performative qualities in architecture and sculpture. The show charts a moment when the boundaries between ‘plastic’ and ‘performed’ become radically and significantly porous.

The Barbican has a long history of presenting the work of the major figures of the late 20th-century American avant-garde – Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Merce Cunningham, Lucinda Childs, Meredith Monk, John Adams and Robert Wilson among them. _Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark: Pioneers of the Downtown Scene, New York 1970s_ marks another important moment in the history of that engagement and bookends a year of exciting programming across the Barbican which will culminate in 2012 with the first ever British presentation of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson’s landmark 1976 collaboration _Einstein on the Beach: An Opera in Four Acts._

This exhibition would not have been possible without the close involvement of Jane Crawford, director of the Estate
of Gordon Matta-Clark, who shared her deep knowledge of Matta-Clark’s life and work with us. David Zwirner Gallery was instrumental with loans, and we would particularly like to thank Angela Choon and Justine Durrett. At the Trisha Brown Dance Company we are grateful to Barbara Dufty, Tricia Pierson, Rebecca Davis, John Torres and Dorothée Alemany, who have assisted with research and expertise on Trisha Brown’s early performances. Our thanks also go to Michael Jenkins and Matthew Droge at Sikkema Jenkins & Co. for facilitating loans of Brown’s drawings. Lady Anderson’s steadfast studio manager, Brad Hampton, handled numerous tasks, and Maureen Bray at Sean Kelly Gallery ably assisted with loans and logistics.

We are most grateful to the many public collections for their willingness to share their works with our audience in London. Our special thanks go to: Rebecca Clemen and Nick Lesley, Electronic Arts Intermix; João Fernandes, Fundação de Serralves Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto; Sabine Folie and Doris Leutgeb, Generali Foundation, Vienna; Christian Bernard, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain, Geneva; Bartomeu Mari and Mela Dávila Freire, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Jeffrey Deitch, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Glenn Lowry, Ann Temkin and Cora Rosevear, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Neal Benezra and Gary Garrels, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Olga Viso and Darsie Alexander, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

We extend our gratitude to the individuals who have lent works to the exhibition: Harold Berg, Bob Bielecki, Gail and Tony Ganz, Anita Grossman Solomon, Jene Highstein, Lisa Le Feuvre, John and Thomas Solomon, Frederieke Taylor and David and Monica Zwirner.

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Gill Clarke and Shelley Senter have recruited and trained the talented dancers participating in the gallery-based performances. We thank them and the dancers for their dedication.

This publication, with illuminating contributions from Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Jane Crawford, RoseLee Goldberg, Alanna Heiss, Philip Ursprung and Lydia Yee, is produced in collaboration with Prestel. We appreciate Philippa Hurd’s and Matthew Taylor’s roles in bringing the book to fruition. This elegant publication has been thoughtfully designed by Fraser Muggeridge and Stephen Barrett of Fraser Muggeridge studio. For both the book and the exhibition we were fortunate to secure a number of historically significant photographs by Paula Court, Carol Goodden, Richard Landry, Babette Mangolte, Peter Moore and Cosmos Andrew Sarchiapone.

Many people have provided advice, assistance and information at various stages of the project. They include: Lori Zippay, Renata Gutman, Louise Desy, Gwendolyn Owens, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; Gwen Bitz and Lynn Dierks, Walker Art Center; Tom Foulsham; Tina Girouard; Catherine Morris; Will Pickering; Thierry Prat, Musée d’art contemporain de Lyon; Léa-Catherine Szacka; Limor Tomer, Emily Krell and Kiowa Hammons, Whitney Museum of American Art; and Michelle Yun. We are very grateful for generous funding from the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and The Henry Moore Foundation, as well as in-kind support from Delta Air Lines.

The exhibition was conceived and very thoughtfully developed by Barbican Art Gallery Curator Lydia Yee. Assistant Curator Leila Hasham and Dominik Czechowski have been key collaborators and integral to the realisation of the exhibition and the accompanying publication. Curatorial interns Kari Rittenbach, Samantha Henry and Lauren Wetmore contributed research and provided assistance on a wide range of tasks. Senior Curator Jane Alison and Senior Manager Katrina Crookall have provided guidance and support to the exhibition team.

Rosie Cooper, Public Programme Associate, has developed a programme of talks and events that is in keeping with the spirit of the exhibition. Ann Berni, Media Relations Manager, along with Kate Ballard, Marketing Campaign Manager, and Rachel Taylor, Marketing Assistant, have all worked to promote the exhibition to a broad audience across the art forms. Peter Sutton, Production Manager, and his team have adeptly managed the exhibition’s complex installation requirements.

We have been fortunate to have benefited from close collaboration with our colleagues in other departments across the Barbican, including Angela Dixon, Sean Gregory, Louise Jeffreys, Cathy John, Dan Maggs, Toni Racklin, Chris Sharp and Abi Wood.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown and the late Gordon Matta-Clark for creating an incredibly audacious and poignant body of work that has made a major impact on subsequent generations of artists in all disciplines. They have irrevocably shaped our understanding of contemporary art and performance.

Kate Bush
Head of Art Galleries
Barbican Centre
Fig. 1 Trisha Brown, *Rulegame 5, 1964*
Performed at First New York Theatre Rally on 7 May 1965
Photograph: Peter Moore
When the Sky Was the Limit

Lydia Yee

At the end of the 1960s, while Andy Warhol was churning out silkscreen prints and films and hosting infamous parties for artists, socialites and celebrities at his Factory on Union Square and The Velvet Underground played as the house band at nearby Max’s Kansas City, a very different scene was brewing less than 20 blocks away. A group of artists, dancers, musicians, film-makers and others were pioneering the area just south of Houston Street. This former industrial zone, which would soon be known as SoHo, was previously home to textile factories and other light manufacturing housed in cast-iron buildings, but largely abandoned by the 1950s. In search of large, cheap spaces, artists converted these derelict buildings into live/work lofts. Politicised by the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights, feminist and student movements and distrustful of existing institutions, they actively began to shape their own community, opening galleries and performance spaces in the same rough-and-ready industrial spaces in which they lived. They also fought successfully against the construction of the Lower Manhattan Expressway, an eight-lane elevated highway that would have ripped through the southern end of their neighbourhood and necessitated the demolition of many buildings.

The industrial lofts in SoHo provided large, open spaces, which were ideally suited not only to visual artists but also to dancers and musicians. Three of the artists who inhabited this community – Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark and Laurie Anderson – were in their 20s and 30s at the start of the 1970s but at different points in their lives and artistic development. Brown had lived in New York for a decade and was gaining recognition as a talented young choreographer and dancer. Matta-Clark had just returned from his architectural studies at Cornell University. The youngest of the three, Laurie Anderson, was in graduate school, studying sculpture at Columbia University. Their paths would soon cross and become intertwined in the overlapping network of friendship and collaboration in the burgeoning downtown art scene.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were one of the most vital and artistically diverse periods in post-war American culture. Although Pop and Minimalism had been the dominant art movements of the 1960s, other artistic tendencies, including post-Minimalism, Process art and Conceptual art, were shaping the practice of young artists at the close of the decade. The Fluxus movement centred in SoHo had also played a significant role in fostering an environment in which artists from different disciplines could present their work together.
Arrivals

Trisha Brown

When Trisha Brown moved from the West Coast to New York in 1961, she brought a mix of vernacular and modern training: acrobatics, ballet, jazz and tap from her teen years in Aberdeen, Washington, and later Martha Graham technique and Louis Horst composition methods from Mills College in the San Francisco Bay area. She had also studied with Horst, José Limón and Merce Cunningham during summer courses in Connecticut and with Anna Halprin, who ran an influential dance workshop in Marin County, California. The latter two showed Brown a different path from the established vocabulary of modernist dance, away from conventional narrative and emotional impact and towards improvisation and the inclusion of ordinary actions or tasks.

Having exhausted options for further artistic development on the West Coast, Brown followed the path of Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer, two dancers she had encountered in Halprin’s workshop who had subsequently moved to New York City. Brown joined them in Robert Dunn’s dance composition class. Dunn, a musician and composer, began teaching at Merce Cunningham’s studio at the invitation of John Cage, with whom he studied at the New School. Dunn applied the techniques Cage had developed for music composition to dance: the use of chance, indeterminacy, rules, instructions and scores. The class attracted a mix of dancers, visual artists, musicians and writers. Brown recognised that Dunn’s class gave her ‘permission to go ahead and do what I wanted to do or had to do – to try out an idea of borderline acceptability’.

The group eventually became known as the Judson Dance Theater, after they initiated a series of performances that took place at Judson Memorial Church, beginning in 1962. The church, located on Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village, had been a home for experimental art activity since the late 1950s, most notably happenings and environments by Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg. In addition to participating in pieces choreographed by other Judson members, Brown contributed a solo dance, Trillium (1962), and a duet with Steve Paxton, Lightfall (1963), to these group concerts. In the latter, a structured improvisation, the pair explored gravity and balance while spontaneously responding to each other’s movements. Brown’s Rulegame 5 (1964) developed out of the Cagean hallmark of composing around a set of rules or instructions. In this case the performers had to make adjustments to their height, based on which lane they were in and in relation to those in the adjacent lanes (fig.1). Echoing Cage’s conviction that ‘any sounds may occur in any combination and in any continuity’ in music, Jill Johnston wrote in the weekly newspaper the Village Voice:

One of the good things about the Judson concerts is the indiscriminate attitude of including just about as many dancers and non-dancers (in as many kinds of actions and movement) as seem willing to participate. [...] The possibilities of form and movement have become unlimited. There is no kind of movement that can’t be included in these dances; there is no kind of sound that is not proper for accompaniment.

Beyond Judson, Brown worked with a wider circle of New York artists. She had the opportunity to participate in events organised by Fluxus artists, fellow followers of Cage, many of whom were her neighbours. She performed a structured improvisation with Forti and Dick Levine at one of Yoko Ono’s Chambers Street loft events in 1961 and presented Improvisation on a Chicken Coop Roof with Yvonne Rainer in the Yam Festival, a month-long series of events during May 1963 that took place in various locations in New York City and on George Segal’s farm in New Jersey. Brown also collaborated with multimedia, film and video artists, including Robert Whitman on Homemade (1966), Jud Yalkut on Planes (1968) and Babette Mangolte, who documented Roof and Fire Piece (1973). She met Robert Rauschenberg at the Cunningham studio and remained close to him for over four decades. They both presented their work in Concert of Dance #5, an extension of Judson in the Pop Art Festival in Washington, DC, in 1963, and Rauschenberg participated in her Rulegame 5. By the time she formed the Trisha Brown Company in 1970, Brown was situated at the intersection of the overlapping dance and visual art communities.

Gordon Matta-Clark

The son of the Chilean-born Surrealist painter Roberto Matta Echaurren and the American artist Anne Clark, Matta-Clark was born in New York City and raised along with his twin brother, Batan, by their mother. Although Matta-Clark maintained an intermittent connection with his father, who had abandoned the family within a few months of the birth of his sons and eventually moved back to Europe, he grew up in his father’s social milieu, with Marcel Duchamp as his godfather; other family friends included the painter Robert Motherwell and the sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Moving comfortably between his downtown home in Greenwich Village and the uptown world of his private school and the museums he frequented, he would later travel between New York, Europe and Latin American with the same ease.

Following in the footsteps of his father, who had studied architecture and worked for Le Corbusier in Paris, Matta-Clark enrolled in the School of Architecture at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1962. The programme, whose faculty included Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, was known for its strong Corbusian bent. After a difficult first year, during which he was involved in a fatal car accident and took time off to recuperate in Paris, he returned to Cornell to resume his studies. Although Matta-Clark stayed the course and eventually earned a degree in architecture, he was also drawn to studio art, particularly sculpture.

He executed a work titled Rope Bridge (1968), which spanned the Ithaca Reservoir, and volunteered to work on Earth Art, the seminal exhibition curated by Willoughby Sharp in and around Cornell University’s White Museum of Art. Most artists chose to work out of doors around the university’s campus, and Matta-Clark assisted Dennis Oppenheim with Beebe Lake Ice Cut, a section of ice cut out of a frozen lake, and Jan Dibbets with A Trace in the Wood in the Form of an Angle of 30 Degrees Crossing in the Path, which involved overturning soil to create a V-shaped path in the woods. These works and those by Robert Smithson, Hans Haacke and others applied a conceptual approach to the local landscape.
and required significant physical exertion for their realisation. This experience and the contacts he made with fellow artists were formative for Matta-Clark, who drew on both when he moved back to New York a few months later.

Laurie Anderson

Raised in a large family near Chicago, Laurie Anderson describes her early life thus: ‘My childhood was spent listening to other members of the family telling stories about what happened to them. We even have family songs, composed by my twin brothers. Everyone liked playing with words.’ By all accounts her upbringing was wholesome and Midwestern – she read Bible stories in Sunday school, studied violin from a young age and won the Junior Miss Illinois pageant. In 1965 she began studying biology as part of her pre-medical studies at Mills College in Oakland, California. In the following year, however, she shifted course, moved to New York City and took art history at Barnard College. Barbara Novak’s class on American landscape painting and courses in philosophy were particularly influential. She began drawing political cartoons and writing for the Columbia Daily Spectator, the university student newspaper, and taking part in political activities on campus.

After graduating from Barnard in 1969, Anderson began spending time downtown, where she encountered the work of Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris and attended Philip Glass’s rehearsals. She moved into a loft space on Murray Street in Lower Manhattan, and there she produced her first body of work: sculptures made of newspaper, resin and fibreglass that were closely influenced by Process art, particularly that of Eva Hesse. She made drawings as well as her first sound works, inspired by Morris. In 1970 she returned to school to study sculpture at Columbia University and took up Buddhist meditation. She also taught art history classes on evenings and weekends at various colleges and wrote reviews for Art News, Artforum and other art magazines. It was during this period that Anderson began going out with the sculptor Richard Nonas, a friend of both Brown and Matta-Clark.

4 Trisha Brown lived and worked at 80 Wooster Street and 541 Broadway, loft buildings owned by the Fluxus co-founder George Maciunas. See Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo (Vilnius: Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010).
Fig. 2 View of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Open House*, Greene Street, New York, 1972

Fig. 3 Exterior of Food after renovation, 127 Prince Street, New York, 1971–72
Photograph: Richard Landry
How and where did Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown and Gordon Matta-Clark first cross paths? Anderson recalls befriending Matta-Clark through Richard Nonas. Brown remembers meeting Anderson through Nonas and Matta-Clark through Carol Goodden, a dancer in her company who was Matta-Clark’s girlfriend at the time. Although it may not be possible to pinpoint the exact date and location of their initial encounters, they all worked and socialised in the burgeoning artist neighbourhood forming in the cast-iron district that came to be known as SoHo. Laurie Anderson described it thus:

New York in the early ’70s was Paris in the ’20s. I was part of a group of artist/pioneers that included Gordon Matta-Clark, Gene Highstein [sic], Susie Harris, Tina Girouard, Richard Nonas, Dickie Landry, Phil Glass, Keith Sonnier and several other sculptors and musicians. We often worked on each others’ pieces and boundaries between art forms were loose. SoHo was pitch black at night, there were two restaurants (‘Food’ and ‘Fanellis’) one gallery (‘Paula Cooper Gallery’) [...]. We were very aware that we were creating an entirely new scene (later known as ‘Downtown’). Gordon Matta-Clark was the center of this scene, which ended with his death.

As well as being very much at the centre of this scene, Matta-Clark often had a hand in constructing it, physically as well as socially. Shortly after moving back to New York in 1969, he helped Holly and Horace Solomon design and build 98 Greene Street, a loft space for art and performance. Creating a space for artists, dancers, musicians and poets to present their work had political implications for the Solomons:

[O]pening the space was a political statement. We felt we couldn’t change the world, but that privately we could do something. Individually, we could take responsibility, act with a sense of dignity, at a time when as privileged people we felt robbed of the dignity of our convictions – in this instance of the right of people to express themselves without fear or political implications.

The following year, Matta-Clark became involved in 112 Greene Street, the space opened by the artist Jeffrey Lew in October 1970 on the ground floor and basement of his loft building. Over the course of several months he made a series of works exploring his interest in process with spatial interventions in the basement. Lew also understood that opening a space for like-minded artists grew out of a sense of political engagement: ‘I’m doing this because it’s time for action and clear thinking […]. The things which make you an artist can make you a revolutionary, can make you change your own environment.’

He operated 112 Greene Street in a playful and informal way:

A piece would go up and a piece would come down and another piece would come in and some other pieces would stay and then finally those pieces would go and more pieces would come. There was something very beautiful about that. It was like a dance floor where you get tapped...
on the opening of 112 Greene Street, he met Carol Goodden, a dancer in Trisha Brown’s company, who later recalled:

Gordon loved to dance. He had performed for Bob Wilson, he went to all the dance performances, he loved to dance at parties. More and more, whenever he danced, he would try to involve masses of people. [...] He would start a group dance and then tangle and drag people to the floor in a writhing loving heap until he had immobilized them.14

Matta-Clark’s personal interest in dance developed into an artistic concern when he started dating Goodden, and together they organised a series of events at 112 Greene Street at the end of June 1971 featuring films by artists and film-makers and dances by dancers and sculptors in order to explore their different approaches. ‘As soon as dance got off the stage and onto the floor’, Goodden explained, ‘it became more interesting to artists’.15 She continues:

[Gordon] was also fascinated by the idea of comparison – what an artist’s mind puts out and what an artist’s mind puts out when you ask them both to present something photographic; or what a dancer’s mind produces and what a sculptor’s mind produced when you ask them to put out something to do with dance.16

Whether consciously or intuitively, Matta-Clark was continuing the exploration of the relationship between Minimalist sculpture and dance initiated in the early 1960s by Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris.17

Matta-Clark also explored the relationship between sculpture and performance in Open House (1972) (fig.2), an industrial waste container installed between 98 Greene Street and 112 Greene Street, in which Matta-Clark built narrow corridors out of salvaged doors and wood. He invited Dilley, Girouard, Richard Landry, Suzanne Harris, Robert Prado and passersby to perform. On a rainy day in May, documented on film by Matta-Clark, the performers moved through the narrow passages with their umbrellas held above the container signalling their movements to those in the street. Ted Greenwald contributed an audio piece recorded on his newspaper delivery route, and Matta-Clark barbecued a pig for performers and audience. Matta-Clark reprised Open House, also known as Dumpster Duplex, in October. ‘Gordon had free rein of imagination to work the full scale of the city’, Brown recalled; I think I did stand back and look at the barbeque he was making besides the house he built in a waste container. Setting a suburban activity beside an urban garbage container – and placing the symbol of the good life in a symbol of the bad life, the city’s waste – there was a cataclysmic resonance in putting together those kinds of images.18

While they were busy making and presenting work at 112 Greene Street, Goodden and Matta-Clark, along with their friends Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris and Rachel Lew, opened the restaurant-cum-art project Food at 127 Prince Street (fig.3). If 112 Greene Street was the place to show one’s work and to see the work of other artists in the downtown art community, then Food, located just around the corner, was the place to eat and gather. Goodden had pragmatic reasons for opening the restaurant:

My goals were multiple: I wanted ‘the crowd’ out of my home, I wanted to show off my/our cooking to ‘the world,’ I wanted to have a place to eat with food that I liked that was open when I needed it to be, and I wanted to create a work place for artists that had no restriction on how many hours a day or days a week the artist worked so that they could be free to suddenly drop out as needed to produce their shows and still have a job when they were through. It was successful on all counts. Food supported 300 artists during our reign.19

For Matta-Clark, Food was an extension of his artistic practice. He had already created several works exploring the alchemical properties of food substances and roasted a pig for the neighbourhood denizens as part of the Brooklyn Bridge Event organised by Alanna Heiss in 1971. He also explored the processes of consumption, waste and recycling in works such as Garbage Wall (1970), Jacks (1971), Glass Plant: Garbage Bricks (1971) and Fresh Kill (1972). Food provided sustenance for Matta-Clark’s experiments; he designed and constructed its interior and, in the process, extracted a section of the wall and a door, thus making his first building cut. At one of the guest chef dinners, he created a meal around bones, serving them five different ways, and at another, titled Live, he surprised diners with live brine shrimp swimming in half a hard-boiled egg that had been decorated with parsley.20 He also shot a film documenting a typical day at Food from the early morning shopping trip to the Fulton Street fish market to lunchtime preparations to the dinner service and finally a worker arriving to bake bread for the following day.

The buildings that Matta-Clark worked on – 98 Greene Street, 112 Greene Street and Food, as well as his own lofts – shaped his ideas about space, which he further developed as part of Anarchitecture. This loose group of artists, including Matta-Clark, Harris, Highstein, Girouard, Landry, Lew, Nonas, Anderson and Bernard Kirschenbaum, met periodically in 1973 at Food, 112 Greene Street and each other’s lofts to share their ideas on topics such as metaphorical gaps and leftover spaces. Jean Dupuy, Ree Morton, Keith Sonnier and others occasionally attended. The centrality of Anarchitectural ideas is clearly evident in Matta-Clark’s building cuts and other interventions, such as Bronx Floors (1972–73), Graffiti Truck (1973) and Reality Properties: Fake Estates (1973) (pp.94–99, 104, 126–29). Similar ideas can also be seen in the work of Anderson and Brown.
For Anderson, Anarchitecture was ‘a completely literary thing and didn’t have a lot to do with the structures we eventually came up with’. She was interested in language and made associations between Italian architectural and musical terms:

The first Italian words I ever saw were written on scores. […] Later, when I began to learn Italian, I found that many of these words were architectural terms as well, double timing to describe place and sound [...] words with a built in sense of time defining music and buildings sometimes through history (canto or ’song’ used to be ’corner’ too) […] sometimes through translation (scala as ’stairway’ and ’scale’ […] stanza as ’room’ and ’stanza’).22

In a number of works, such as Chord for a Room (1972) and The Window, The Wind, Oh (1976), Anderson incorporates architectural elements to produce sound. In her Duet for Door Jamb and Violin (1976) (p.169), a doorway serves both as a source of sound and as a switch controlling the sound mix:

This duet is performed on the threshold. The length of the bow stroke is determined by the width of the door. Contact microphones are attached to the jambs at the impact points, amplifying the staccato, knocking sound as the bow bangs back and forth. When the violin is electric, the violin speakers are located in one room and the door jamb speakers in the adjoining room. During the performance, tonal and percussive are alternately separated and mixed by kicking the door open and shut.23

As a choreographer, Brown had been addressing spatial relationships from the inception of her practice. In Roof Piece (1971), for example, she sited a performance across a ten-block area in SoHo, in which a dozen dancers were positioned in a sequence on different rooftops so they could transmit improvised gestures from one to the next. In the mid-1970s she addressed this issue more directly in Locus (1975), a work for four dancers whose movements are graphed on to an imaginary cube. Brown derived the movements by assigning a number to each letter of the alphabet and then using a short biographical phrase to determine the sequence.

12 Lew, in Alternatives in Retrospect; cited in Brentano and Savitt (eds.), 112 Workshop/112 Greene Street, p. 2.
15 Carol Goodden, quoted in Brentano and Savitt (eds.), 112 Workshop / 112 Greene Street, pp. 19–20.
16 Ibid.
18 Quoted in Jacob (ed.), Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective, p. 43.
19 Carol Goodden, in Catherine Morris, Food (Münster: Westälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte; and Cologne: Walther König, 1999), pp. 46–47.
21 Quoted in Jacob (ed.), Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective, p. 18.
23 Ibid.
Performance

On 18 April 1970 Trisha Brown sent Joseph Schlichter, her husband and a fellow dancer, over the edge of the roof and down the side of 80 Wooster Street, the seven-storey building where they lived. Brown’s artist friends Richard Nonas and Jared Bark helped her adapt mountain-climbing gear for the piece. The performance took place at the back of the building, and a small crowd watched directly below in a courtyard. Captured by the photographer Peter Moore, the tight vantage point obscured the harness attached at the back of Schlichter’s waist, although the excess rope is clearly visible from the front. The title, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (p. 28), and a description of the piece Brown formulated in the 1970s – ‘A natural activity under the stress of an unnatural setting. Gravity reneged. Vast scale. Clear order. You start at the top, walk straight down, stop at the bottom’ – are straightforward and akin to statements by Conceptual artists such as Lawrence Weiner.24 ‘I think that concept rests in the visual art world’, Brown later recalled; ‘It was a matter of going from the performance site back to the page in some way. And being thrilled by the art work that I was seeing in the community of downtown Manhattan in those years, a real concurrence of conceptual and performance art.’25 Going back to the page, for Brown, was a return in some ways to the Cagean tradition of scores and instructions, but in a more pared-down manner that belied the influence of both Minimalism and Conceptual art. Echoing Sol LeWitt’s description of Conceptual art, in which ‘the idea becomes a machine that makes the art’, Brown has suggested that ‘the act of walking down the side of a building is actually a kind of dance machine. It tells you: 1) when to start, 2) where you go, and 3) where you finish.’26

A year later Brown presented a related dance, *Walking on the Wall* (1971) (fig. 4), at the Whitney Museum of American Art as part of ‘Another Fearless Dance Concert’. This work combines elements from *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* – the use of ‘equipment’ and the body to counter gravity – with the illusionism of *Planes* (1968), a work that shifts the audience’s perspective to the wall where three performers use hand- and foot-holds to climb the vertical surface. The latter work also includes a film projection by Jud Yalkut of aerial footage of New York City along with other original and found footage – views overhead and below, micro- and macroscopic images, giving the illusion that the performers are free-falling and changing scale (pp. 190–91). In *Walking on the Wall*, performers are held perpendicular to the gallery walls with the aid of harnesses and two parallel tracks, which are mounted to the ceiling along two adjacent walls. Deborah Jowitt described the performance in the *Village Voice*:

The illusion is uncanny. Their shirts are brown like the slings, for camouflage, and some of them are excellent wall-walkers (no falling hair, drooping head or legs betray them). For dizzying moments at a time, you seem to be in a tower looking down on the foreshortened bodies of people promenading endlessly on two intersecting streets.27

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**Fig. 4** Trisha Brown, *Walking on the Wall*, 1971
Performed at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York on 2 October 2010
Photograph: Paula Court
Fig. 5 Gordon Matta-Clark, still from Clockshower, 1973

Fig. 6 Still from film of a bus trip to see Splitting, 1974
Film: John Solomon

Shifting performance from a horizontal to vertical surface is akin to Rauschenberg’s Bed (1958), which alters our perspective on an everyday object by aligning it with the vertical picture plane. After performing on walls, Brown stated, ‘I knew the ceiling was next, but I couldn’t bring myself to enter into that kind of physical training with that kind of danger below. I sent words up there instead.’ The resulting ‘dance’, Skymap (1969), is a recording of Brown instructing viewers on how to construct their own overhead map of the United States (pp.186–87).

Matta-Clark executed a couple of performances recorded on film that owed a debt to Brown’s daring, gravity-defying works. For an exhibition at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, in the spring of 1971 he enlisted his partner, Carol Goodden, and friends Carmen Beuchat, Rachel Lew, Suzanne Harris, Richard Nonas, Jene Highstein and Fernando Torm to take a ‘vacation in a tree’. For this work, known as Tree Dance (1971) (p.159), Matta-Clark and his friends equipped a tree with rope ladders and pods made of netting and parachute cloth and performed on May Day, a celebration of springtime fertility rituals as well as International Workers’ Day. The performance closed with the release of a ‘growth module filled with migrating weeds’ for ‘another explosive spring’. His solo performance Clockshower (1973) (fig.6) was closer in spirit to Brown’s Man Walking Down the Side of a Building. He performed the morning ritual of washing, shaving and brushing his teeth while suspended in front of the clock face atop a 13-storey building in Lower Manhattan.

As Matta-Clark’s building cuts grew more complex and spatial, an element of performance became integral to their execution. For his work Splitting (1974) (fig.6), Matta-Clark sought a house from the Solomons that he could cut in two. They offered him a two-storey house on a piece of property they owned on Humphrey Street in Englewood, New Jersey, and he emptied the rooms of their contents, storing everything in the basement. In an interview he explained:

This piece was obviously a private performance. There were times when the rigging was setting a very real stage for something, for getting some work done. When we moved that corner the hoist was a prop right? The way that I experienced it as a performance was through my interest in hanging out, or hanging on.

With assistance from Manfred Hecht, with whom he had worked on loft construction jobs, Matta-Clark scaled the side of the house, using a seat attached to a block and tackle in order to make a vertical cut through the exterior of the house, and then sliced through the interior walls, floors and even a staircase. One half of the building was tipped back on to its foundation, which had been bevelled down by one foot, thus splitting open the house. ‘The whole event gave me insight into what a house is,’ Matta-Clark stated, ‘how solidly built something in the basement. In an interview he explained:

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works such as *Bronx Floors: Threshold* (1973), a fragment of flooring removed from both sides of a doorway. The title, a clever pun merging ‘threshold’ and ‘hole’, exemplifies Matta-Clark’s inventive use of language and wordplay.

Some of Anderson’s earliest works took place in the streets of New York City and were informed by Fluxus, Conceptual and street performance antecedents. As in the work of Brown and Matta-Clark, New York City was an important setting for a number of works that involved an element of risk. For the series *Institutional Dream* (1972–73) (fig. 7) she put herself in the vulnerable position of sleeping in public places, such as the beach in Coney Island on a cold January afternoon or in a courtroom late at night, in an attempt to determine whether specific sites influenced her dreams. Photographs document Anderson sleeping in different locations and are accompanied by a record of her dreams, introducing the combination of image and text that remains a constant narrative device throughout her work. In another photo- and text-based work, *Fully Automated Nikon (Object/Objection/Objectivity)* (1973) (pp. 42–45), Anderson turned the camera on men in the street who directed cat-calls or other unsolicited comments at her, but in the accompanying text she relates that they ‘seemed flattered, like taking their pictures was the least I could do’.

Anderson’s *Duets on Ice* (p. 40) was performed in five locations in New York City (including on First Avenue, the Upper East Side and the Bronx Zoo) in the summer of 1974 and three locations in Genoa, Italy, the following year. She played violin live and was accompanied by a recording of a violin that was hidden in her instrument and by the ambient sounds of the street. The blades of the ice skates she wore were encased in blocks of ice. When the ice melted, the concert was over. As with a number of Fluxus performances, an external factor served as a timing device that determined the duration of the performance. Between songs Anderson chatted with onlookers about ‘the parallels between ice skating and violin-playing: blades over a surface, balance, simultaneity’.33

In her downtown solo début at Artists Space, Anderson presented *As: If* (1974), a performance in which language and storytelling appear as key elements. She enters the gallery wearing skates, again with their blades frozen in blocks of ice, takes a seat on a bench with her violin and begins her performance, combining multimedia – violin, slide projection and recordings on tape – with personal anecdotes about her Midwestern upbringing, her speech and voice, skating, baptism and violin-playing.

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Drawing

If photography and film were the media for documenting a performance or other temporal works, then drawing was the chosen medium for conveying ideas. Anderson, Brown and Matta-Clark all made drawings for a variety of purposes. Portable and inexpensive, drawing is an apt medium for recording and transmitting ideas for new pieces and performances in the form of plans, scores and instructions.

Drawing, for Brown, served to generate choreography.34 She kept sketchbooks, detailing plans for works such as The Dance with the Duck’s Head (1968) (p.144) including costume, action and sound. In another series of drawings she attempted to devise an alphabet that would correspond to gestures: continuous lines evoke a sequence of movements; geometric forms derived from squares, triangles and arcs suggest repetition. Many of Brown’s drawings emerge directly out of a Minimalist aesthetic and an interest in process (fig.8).

A pair of drawings, *Untitled* (1975) (p.154), record the process of accumulation and de-accumulation that are the basis for her cycle of ‘Mathematical’ dances, such as *Group Primary Accumulation* (1973) (p.146). Others, such as *Spanish Dance* (1973) (p.156), function more didactically to communicate the elements of a dance.

A prolific draughtsman, Matta-Clark employed drawing to many ends, including sketches for actual projects, visionary proposals, schematic diagrams, fantastical imagery and three-dimensional cut drawings that approximated his sculptures. He began with a series of studies of the way energy flowed through structures, such as trees. The tree, in which he saw the potential for architecture as well as movement or dance, was an evolving motif that Matta-Clark developed from 1971 onwards. Some of the early tree drawings relate to his performance *Tree Dance* (p.161 top), spare pencil or ink drawings of pictographic characters interlaced with ropes and nets. Another group (p.163) features colourful, inventive

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Fig. 8 Trisha Brown, *Untitled (Locus)*, 1975
Fig. 9 Trisha Brown, *Glacial Decoy*, 1979
Performed at Marymount Manhattan College, New York on 1 June
Photograph: Babette Mangolte
Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark
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