

For immediate release

GORDON MATTA-CLARK

Above and Below

April 2 – May 4, 2013

Opening reception: Tuesday, April 2, 6–8 PM

Press preview with the curator: Monday, April 1, 10 AM

Guided public tour with the curator: Saturday, April 20, 11:30 AM

Film screenings at Anthology Film Archives: Sunday, April 21, 7:30 PM



Jacob's Ladder, 1977. Silver dye bleach print
39 ¾ x 30 inches (101 x 76.2 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of late works by Gordon Matta-Clark, focusing in particular on his activities as a filmmaker. Curated by Jessamyn Fiore, the show features the artist's explorations in subterranean New York and Paris alongside building cuts and projects involving aerial elevation. It is on view at the gallery's 519 West 19th Street space in New York.

The exhibition begins above ground with *City Slivers*, Matta-Clark's fragmented portrait of New York City from 1976. Eschewing a clear viewpoint and leaving large parts of the screen black, viewers are offered vertical cuts of bustling streets and skyscrapers interspersed with panoramas taken from atop the World Trade Center. The shifting viewing angles, sometimes shown simultaneously, seem at once celebratory and nervously laden, and contain a poignant, if perhaps subliminal, reference to the artist's twin brother, who fell to his death from a window in their shared apartment that summer. A brief and barely legible text towards the end of the film includes the words "he just hit the pavement...face down."

Made a year earlier, *Conical Intersect* was filmed in and around Matta-Clark's iconic cut through two properties awaiting demolition next to the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (under construction at the time). The film reveals various stages of the elaborate project, whereby a large circular shape was sliced from a heavy masonry, street-facing wall in one building, and a conical space carved out across the other side at an upward angle, piercing a small hole in the roof. The laborious digging through several layers of the buildings' foundations was complemented two years later with *Sous-sols de Paris* (1977), where the camera was taken below ground to multi-level tunnels and structures long abandoned. Through minimal editing, the underground—illuminated only by handheld torches—is contrasted with brief clips from the streets above. Matta-Clark thus creates a dialogue between new and old Paris, the visible and hidden city, both light and sinister. Deep below L'Opera and Les Halles, a neatly arranged

wall composed of thousands of human skulls and bone fragments dating from the days of the Revolution finds a curious match with countless wine bottles, safely stored in the cool temperatures. The film ends, perhaps appropriately, with a wine tasting.

Substrait (Underground Dailies) (1976), Matta-Clark's underground portrait of New York, reveals a view of the American city never seen by most people. Burial chambers underneath the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, tracks running deep below Grand Central Station, and sewage structures with underground rivers streaming through, combine to make up the urban tissue beneath the surface—vividly compared in the explanatory dialogues accompanying the film as "arteries and veins."

Photographs and drawings accompany the films on view, documenting both the metropolitan explorations and contemporaneous projects by the artist. *Jacob's Ladder*, Matta-Clark's ambitious project for Documenta 6 in Kassel, Germany, in 1977, originally included plans to develop an aerial dwelling site suspended some fifteen feet above ground, but ultimately took on the shape of a long woven net attached to a thirty-story-tall chimney, which brave visitors could ascend one thin batten at a time. The title of the installation was chosen by Matta-Clark for its analogy to the Old Testament story of Jacob's dream, of a staircase connecting Heaven and Earth. By implication, it is also a reference to brotherly rivalry, as this vision occurred while he was fleeing from his brother Esau, with whom he had been fighting for inheritance. As such, the project contains perhaps another reference to the loss of artist's twin brother a year earlier.

A series of diagrammatic sketches entitled *Sky Hook (studies for a balloon building)* (1978) are testaments to Matta-Clark's idealistic interest in architecture and urban renewal. Based on vigorous research into the mechanics of ballooning, these drawings outline tent-like towers attached to large inflatable shapes. Balancing somewhere between actual proposals for flexible, economic housing networks and playful fantasies, they map out alternative spaces

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in defiance of existing social environments and even gravity. As such, they match one of the inspirations behind the subterranean expeditions, where the search for the “negative” spaces of the city became part of a broader interest in “mapping...lost foundations: working back into society from beneath.”

Born in New York in 1943, **Gordon Matta-Clark** is widely considered one of the most influential artists working in the 1970s. He was a key contributor to the activity and growth of the New York art world in SoHo from the late 1960s until his untimely death in 1978.

Since 1998, the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark has been represented by David Zwirner, and *Above and Below* marks the fifth solo exhibition of the artist's work at the gallery in New York.

In 1985, the first museum retrospective of the artist's work was presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and traveled until 1989 to over a dozen institutions worldwide, including the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Kunsthalle Basel; Le Nouveau Musée, Villeurbanne, France; Brooklyn Museum; and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure* was the first full-scale retrospective organized twenty years later by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 2007. The exhibition traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. From 2009 to 2010, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Undoing Spaces* toured South America to venues including the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago; Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo; Paco Imperial, Rio de Janeiro; and Museo de Arte de Lima.

Matta-Clark's work is represented in prominent public collections, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp; San Francisco Museum of Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The Gordon Matta-Clark Archive is held at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, and includes the artist's personal correspondence, notebooks, drawings, photographs, slides, films, as well as other archival material documenting his life and work.

Above and Below is curated by **Jessamyn Fiore**, an independent curator and writer. In 2007, she became Director of Thisisnotashop, a not-for-profit gallery space in Dublin, which supported emerging artists. She also co-founded The Writing Workshop in 2007, which functioned as a collaborative forum for writers and artists. Fiore is co-director of the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark with her mother Jane Crawford, Matta-Clark's widow. She received a Masters from The National College of Art and Design, Dublin, in 2010. In 2011, Fiore curated *112 Greene Street: The Early Years (1970–1974)* at David Zwirner in New York, which led to the critically acclaimed, eponymous catalogue, published by David Zwirner and Radius Books in 2012.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

DAVID ZWIRNER | 519 West 19th Street, New York

Saturday, April 20, 11:30 AM

Guided tour of the exhibition by curator Jessamyn Fiore

This event is free and open to the public, but space is limited. For more information and to RSVP, contact Jill Smith at David Zwirner 212-727-2070 x100 or jill@davidzwirner.com.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES | 32 Second Avenue, New York

Sunday, April 21, 7:30 PM

Anthology Film Archives will host a film program exploring the connections between the work of Matta-Clark and a circle of contemporaneous New York artists and filmmakers working with subjects and materials that influenced and inspired one another. This program will feature the very first screening with English subtitles of Matta-Clark's *Sous-sols de Paris* (1977), and will be followed by a Q&A with Jessamyn Fiore and filmmakers Jane Crawford and Robert Fiore.

The program also features Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974); Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt's *Swamp* (1971); *Landscape for Fire* and *Landscape for White Squares* (both 1972), Anthony McCall's sculptural performances in a landscape grid; Ken Jacobs's training in spatial disorientation, *Airshaft* (1967) and *Let There Be Whistleblowers* (2005); and the gravity and entropy of Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed*, as documented by Jane Crawford and Robert Fiore (2004). The program also includes Joseph Cornell's early work, *Gnir Rednow* (1955), whose focus on New York City's elevated train and subway systems (above & below) rhyme with Matta-Clark's investigations. For more information, visit anthologyfilmarchives.org.

FRIEZE PROJECTS AT FRIEZE NEW YORK | Randall's Island, New York

Friday, May 10 – Monday, May 13, 2013

Curated by Cecilia Alemani, Frieze Projects will include a special tribute to FOOD, the legendary SoHo restaurant opened in October 1971 by Matta-Clark and Carol Goodden in collaboration with other artists. This tribute will take the form of a temporary restaurant where the history and legacy of FOOD will be celebrated. A meeting space, a restaurant, and a total work of art, FOOD was driven by the energy of the people that ran it and those who gathered there. In the same spirit, FOOD 1971/2013 will be both a restaurant and performance stage where each day a different artist will be invited to cook in a convivial environment. For more information, visit friezeprojectsny.org.

For information about the exhibition and to attend the press preview, contact

Kim Donica, Press Officer, David Zwirner 212-727-2070 x122 kim@davidzwirner.com

Sky Hook / Balloon Buildings, 1978

These diagrammatic sketches reflect Matta-Clark's idealistic interest in architecture and urban renewal. Based on vigorous research into the mechanics of ballooning, they outline tent-like towers attached to large inflatable shapes. Balancing somewhere between actual proposals for flexible, economic housing networks and playful fantasies, they map out alternative spaces in defiance of existing social environments and even gravity.

James Attlee provides further details of Matta-Clark's intention behind the diagrams: "He imagined a city in which the redundant spaces between high buildings could be used to float canopies of vegetation, providing oxygen and shade to the urban environment, using the waste heat generated by the city as a source of life. He envisaged a balloon tethered to a rooftop, below it a network of rigging giving access to a series of circular platforms on which a person could sit, high above the city, as though on a magic carpet or in the crow's nest of an old-fashioned sailing ship."¹

Matta-Clark envisioned *Sky Hook*—which borrowed its title from Russian constructivist El Lissitzky's plans for an elevated transportation system in 1920s Moscow—during the last year of his life. Abruptly cut short by his death at age 35, the project never advanced beyond the diagrammatic stage and remains, in Attlee's words, "dreams...informed by a potent combination of Russian socialist utopianism, science fiction, and contemporary American ballooning magazines."² With more time and research, it remains anybody's guess whether the dreams would have become concretized, their urgency intensified by advances in technology and the growing pressure on large cities with ever-increasing energy consumptions. As they stand, the drawings cautiously indicate what a second decade in Matta-Clark's career might have encompassed.

¹ James Attlee and Lisa Le Feuvre, *Gordon Matta-Clark: The Space Between*. Exh. cat. (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Art, 2003), p. 65

² *Ibid.*, p. 64