

**Research Plan**  
*Group 2*

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Individual Statement

Interiors, Buildings, Cities,  
MSc 3&4 Graduation Studio  
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# Final Thoughts

## Individual Statement | Craig Furlong

Throughout this research - done through art and architecture focused reading analysis', a case study of Centre Georges Pompidou, and site visits to various contemporary art museums, including De Pont, Van Abbe Museum, The Groninger, and M HKA - I now better understand how an exhibition space functions, and its complex relationship between multiple influences. More traditionally, an art museum is responsible for preserving and storing work for later generations. Second to that, the institution of art (consisting of artists, curators, directors, and collectors) is tasked with identifying valuable art. Today, art museums have evolved into something more closely resembling a cultural center. The public doesn't only come to see art, but to participate in it. This is especially true in a post-covid era where such an importance has been placed on spending quality time outside of the home or office. Ultimately, these roles of the art museum provide important opportunities for decision making that may seem inconsequential, but cause much larger effects.

Questions such as, how does the architecture change between a museum that has a local focus versus an international one - or - does a museum participate in community and public outreach implicitly or explicitly, allude to the core dilemma. Museums define themselves in a plethora of ways, but it's the perception and unconscious biases of the decision makers that further the inequalities in representation and participation in the art world.

From unchecked racial and gender biases to the dated curatorial format of the white cube, many points of tension become apparent when investigating the systems and architecture of these exhibition based palaces. In many cases, fine art is synonymous with the white cube as a method of display. While the white cube was revolutionary, there are institutional inequalities embedded in it. It evolved from historically white, elitist institutions that defined culture through more biased lenses. As seen in "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit", when taken out of context, the white cube can be insensitive and invalidating to cultural artifacts.<sup>1</sup> An equitable era of contemporary art calls for a new model of exhibition that has the flexibility to present multicultural work in authentic and respectful methods.

Pompidou challenged the white cube by creating a museum that seemed wall-less, with glass facades and the building's infrastructure exposed. It became an icon on the urban scale, drawing attention to the art. Instead of being locked inside massive stone buildings, people could see the art from the Pompidou's large public plaza, and the art could look out onto the city. The line between artwork and the exhibition space also blurred. It became unclear if utility objects were works of art, or if they were solely there for practical use. Over the years, the design of Pompidou conformed to the traditional white cube, illustrating how successful it is as an exhibition format, as well as the difficulties designers may face when trying to implement new systems of display. However, utilizing the same methods of curation, without critique, allows systematic injustices to continually fester. As discussed by Orian Brook in "Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege", the subjectivity of the art world creates glass walls for women and minorities, because they differ from the somatic norm.<sup>2</sup> If art is representative of culture, having the authority to give value to cultural artifacts, then underrepresentation and hidden biases are detrimental to representation.

When designing for M HKA, it is important to keep these points of tension in mind. The museum is already balancing many of them. The institution wants to participate on an international level, but keep its Flemish roots and identity. Like the Guggenheim, Bilbao, the new museum is also part of a larger urban transformation.<sup>3</sup> How will this new structure enrich the surrounding environment without promoting gentrification and further marginalization? M HKA has the opportunity to address these issues and lay a new foundation for how a contemporary museum should operate. If successful, the architecture of this space could replace the current standard of the white cube. There is a call for the modern museum to be more aware of the impacts of their choices and like the message of Charles White's *Black Pope (Sandwich Board Man)*, intervention is overdue. It needs to happen "now" (Fig. 1).

1 Darby English and Charlotte Barat, "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit", in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: MoMA, 2019).

2 Laurie Taylor and Orian Brook, "Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege". Podcast. BBC, September 8, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000zdv1>.

3 Intelligence, The Bilbao Effect #1: Bilbao, Spain Guggenheim Bilbao director general discusses the city as world renowned transformation | fDi. (2021, 21 September). <https://play.acast.com/s/fdipodcast/thebilbaoeffect-1-bilbao-spain-guggenheimbilbao-sdirectorgeneraldiscussesthecitey-sworldrenownedtransformation>



Figure 1: White, Charles, *Black Pope (Sandwich Board Man)*, Oil wash on board, 1973, (Richard S. Zeisler Bequest (by exchange), The Friends of Education of The Museum of Modern Art, Committee on Drawings Fund, Dian Woodner, and Agnes Gund. 2013), <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/166557>.

# Gordon Matta-Clark Ensemble

## Individual Statement | Craig Furlong

Gordon Matta-Clark (1943 - 1978), born to a Chilean surrealist painter, grew up in the artisan neighborhoods of New York City. During this time, immense urban development replaced much of the neighborhood charm with commercial offices and faceless residential blocks. Matta-Clark attended university in NYC, studying architecture, and after graduating, he began fusing his architecture knowledge with art. Likely associated with the neighborhood demolition he witnessed growing up, his art took on the form of “interventions”, often on condemned structures. In *Office Baroque* (Fig. 2), Matta-Clark liberated space by cutting through the building. On the contrary, *Jacob’s Ladder* (Fig. 3) liberated space by utilizing free, inaccessible space. In a third piece by Matta-Clark, *Food* (Fig. 4), a team of artists ran a soup-kitchen in NYC for three years. These works, a movement titled An-architecture, “attempted to solve no problems” but critiqued what Gordon called the urban “garage”, while speaking to the power of neighborhood and community.

This ensemble design considers the conditions these works were originally produced in. Due to Matta-Clark’s importance in the M HKA collection, a design that is a monument to the artist seems appropriate. The space would be a diner. Customers would eat communally while viewing selections of Matta-Clark’s works. Films would play from projectors onto screens large enough that the figures appear life sized. Additionally, photos of Matta-Clark’s work would be laminated into tables and copies of his letters would appear on the back of menu cards.

This exhibition uses a found condition that reflects the industrial, hard-to-reach sites of the original temporary works. The alleyway is a liminal space that is ubiquitous around the world. Entry directly from the street blurs the transition between the city and this unorthodox site. The design ultimately adopts a parasitic architecture that provides practical viewing and protective environments for the art. A balance is also found between an industrial site and cafe space. Material choices such as shipping containers and brick walls with canvas screens tie together characteristics of the port city of Antwerp and a contemporary art exhibit.



Figure 2: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977, Film, M HKA, Antwerp, <http://ensembles.mhka.be/items/3329>.



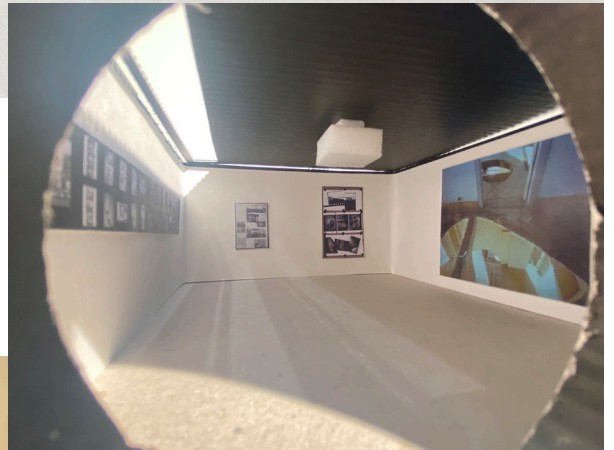
Figure 3: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Jacob’s Ladder*, 1977, Photograph, M HKA, Antwerp, <http://ensembles.mhka.be/items/prints-from-the-35-mm-negatives-from-icc-archive-about-gordon-matta-clark-jacobs-ladder>.



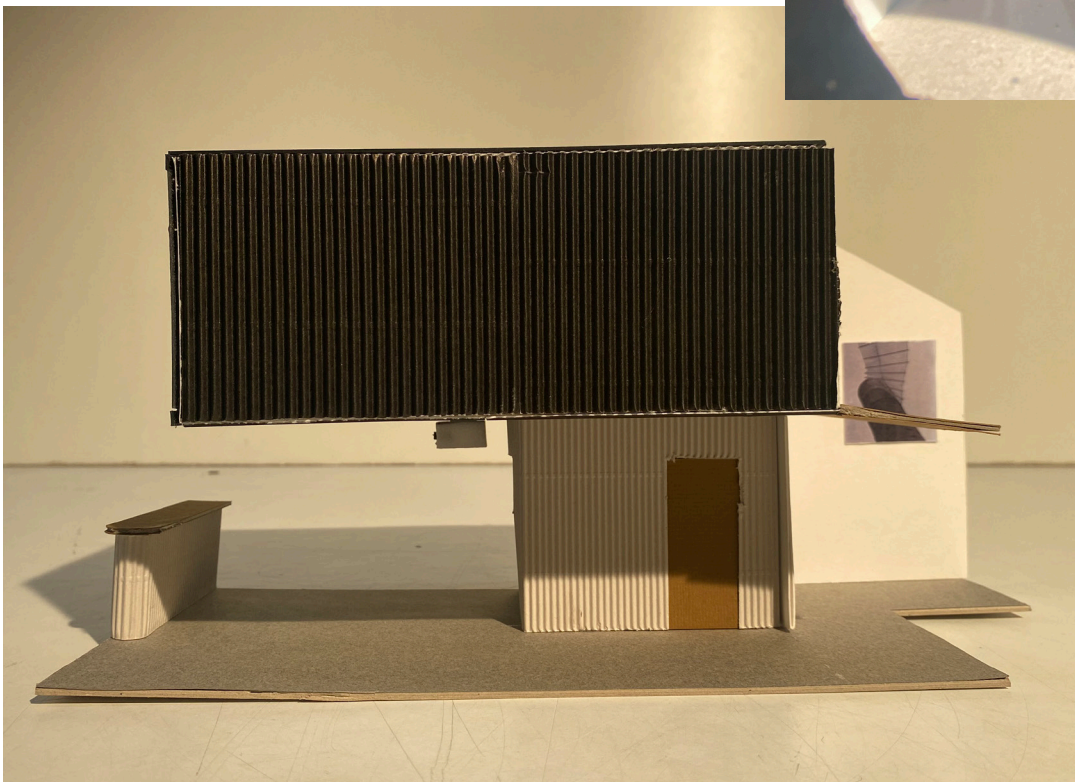
Figure 4: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Food*, 1972, Film, M HKA, Antwerp, <http://ensembles.mhka.be/items/5172>.



Ensemble Model: The Site



Ensemble Model:  
Inside the Container,  
Office Baroque



Ensemble Model: Dining Space, Food, & the Storage Container

## Bibliography

English, Darby and Charlotte Barat. "Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit", In *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: MoMA, 2019).

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