An analysis of Gordon Matta-Clark's archives which addresses his concept of the 'fleabite' as suggestive of a 'programmatic experimentation' in architectural discourse

Fleabite: Gordon Matta-Clark and programmatic experimentation

Bahar Beşlioğlu and Ayşen Savaş

> *I didn't know about Matta-Clark until much later. I didn't have any connection with him. I didn't even know, I guess he was doing things around the same time, from the same generation more or less? We didn't know about him till after he died.*[1]
> (Peter Cook)

Gordon Matta-Clark (1943–1978), one of the lesser known architects of the second half of the twentieth century, studied architecture at Cornell University between 1962 and 1968.[2] Although he had always been part of an active circle of artists and architects with whom he shared his radical ideas, Matta-Clark was generally excluded from the architectural milieu since his proposed interventions were thought to be unsuitable for accommodation. His exclusion from the architectural scene was marked; following his *Window-Blow-Out(s)* project in 1976, as Mary Jane Jacob has pointed out, his colleagues – including Peter Eisenman and the members of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) – found it very hard to accept an architect with a BB gun in hand.[3] The removal of the facade in the 1974 *Bingo* project; the elimination of the thresholds in the 1973 *Bronx Floors*; or the cut to a suburban house in the 1974 *Splitting* project were all evaluated as temporary, and destructive in the making; and were thus regarded as artistic actions to transform buildings into objects. As such, his critical architectural productions remained overshadowed behind a series of seemingly violent artistic intrusions.[4]

Based on a reading of the archives of Gordon Matta-Clark (particularly focusing on the unpublished sketches and personal notes in his archives, and the possible connections between them), this research argues that his radical architectural criticism remained hidden behind the popularity of his cuts. This paper suggests that his projects were indeed architectural, and were interconnected and complementary, and were at the heart of his architectural criticism.[5] The critical standpoint in his work is raised here to highlight his spatial reconsiderations and his introduction of an alternative terminology for architecture. His interventions into existing buildings are evaluated here as an early intuitive discovery, and more so as an experimental study sharing parallel aspects with the architectural scene of the 1960s and early 1970s. Matta-Clark may be considered as highly innovative, both in the enrichment of architectural vocabulary through his unconventional terminology, and through the introduction of new criticisms of the architectural programme. The architectural concept of Matta-Clark's 'fleabite' presented here is based on a re-reading of his works, which fell somewhere between art and architecture, from an architectural standpoint. By conceptualising the term 'fleabite', this paper suggests that his work could be described as 'programmatic experimentation'.[6]

The vocabulary of architecture

> *I think it* [criticism of Modern Architecture] *was very much to do with the feeling of frustration in the vocabulary of architecture, which was too limited. We wanted to open it up, open it to other vocabularies.*
> (Peter Cook, interview 2006)[7]

As Peter Cook noted, the 'experimentation' seen during the above-mentioned years pushed the established boundaries of terminology in architecture related to technology and interdisciplinarity. By understanding these two notions, the theorisation of the period – in which was embedded a subversive criticism – becomes possible. There had always been an imbalance between technology and architecture, as developments in technology always came ahead of their architectural applications.[8] Reyner Banham concluded his book, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, in 1960 with a warning to architects:

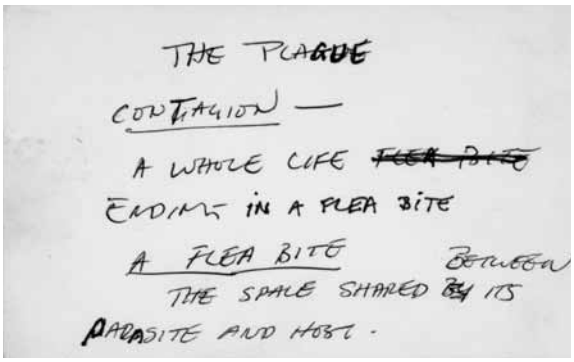
> *It may be that what we have hitherto understood as architecture and what we are beginning to understand of technology are incompatible disciplines. The architect who proposes to run with technology knows now that he will be in fast company, and that, in order to keep up, he may have to emulate the Futurists and discard his whole cultural load, including the professional garments by which he is recognised as an architect. If, on the other hand, he decides not to do this, he may find that a technological culture has decided to go on without him.*[9]

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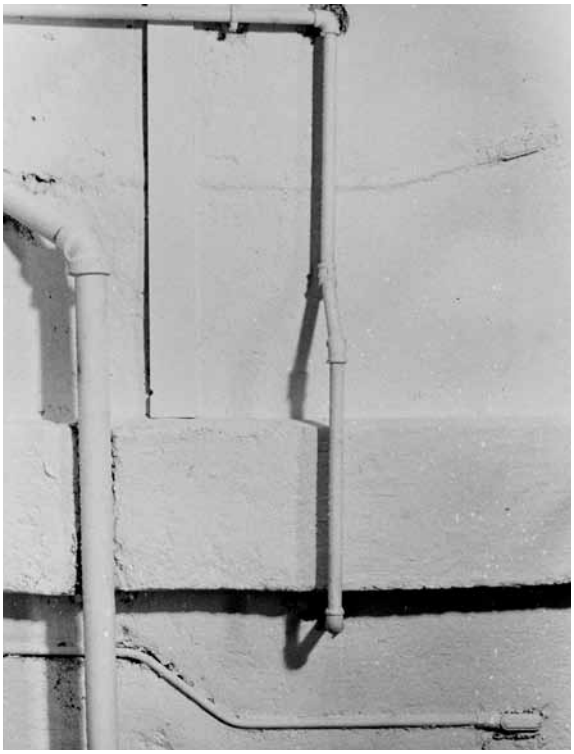
Accordingly, if in the 1930s, the influence of technology on architecture was considered as a tool for the abstraction of the 'machine' and its adaptation to design; by the 1960s and early 1970s, technology was being integrally included in the design itself. This was due not only to technological advances, but also to the intellectual paradigms that had transformed architecture. While changes in philosophy and science were motivating and challenging spatial considerations, technological research was calling for special equipment and new spatial agents. As a result, many of the more inspired architects began taking an active role in applying new programmes to architecture, and this so-called 'de-territorialisation' culminated in the coining of the slogan 'everything is architecture'.[10]

As the boundaries between disciplines became blurred, not only did the conventions in architectural thinking that resulted from the changing social conditions come under criticism, but also the established boundaries of habitation were challenged, even in the most basic of dwelling units.[11] Sleeping capsules, disposable plug-in eating units, sleeping bags and balloon units were inserted into existing buildings so as to transform the conventional units of a house – such as the living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom – in the most basic sense. So, the late 1960s was a time when the term 'experimentation' was redefined by the likes of Archigram, the Metabolists, Yona Friedman, Cedric Price or Team X.[12]

In addressing the criticism of the imposition of function/use/space relations of Modern Architecture, it is possible to say that there was a critical link between experimentation and architectural programming. Referred to here as 'programmatic experimentation', this criticism was based on breaking the conventions of Modern Architecture, and this resulted in an inescapable criticism of 'programme' in architecture. However, the term 'programme' was not without its own problems, in that it required redefining for each condition encountered. For the Modern Movement, 'programme' suggested a unity of meaning in a building that changed according to the requirements of the occupancy. Established formal considerations and stylistic principles were replaced by the more innovative principles of Modern Architecture. As stated by John Summerson in 1957, the Modernist condition was defined by the shift from the world of form (the antique) to the programme (a local fragment of a social pattern).[13] This led to different readings of the more political, historical and thus temporal configurations of spaces, and as such was a part of the 'conventional' understanding.[14] The discipline of architecture, towards the 1960s and early 1970s, tended to criticise the Modern Movement's aim to evolve towards the perfect condition of optimisation in utility and form, and the interrelation between the two. The new approaches in design tested the limits of the predictable definitions of spaces, thus encouraging the designer to come up with variations to these 'perfect conditions' of optimisation.



1



2

1 Gordon Matta Clark *Art Card*, c. 1973 (black ballpoint pen and black felt tip pen, 7.6 x 12.7 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:001:038.8)

2 Gordon Matta Clark *Pipes*, 1971 (gelatin silver print, 27.9 x 35.6 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:076:002)

Matta-Clark's critical approach is suggested here as having been influenced by the changing ground in philosophy and scientific theory – from positivist thinking to the sceptical, ideological aftermaths.[15] His approach went beyond mere observation and the central interest/axis of his experimentation was in the making. His library contained books about alchemy as well as publications on scientific knowledge and experimentation. One particular book in his library, *The Dymaxion World of Buckminster Fuller*, was marked to indicate the striking *Living Pod* of Archigram in 1967, which took the motto of Le Corbusier's 'a house is a machine to live in' one step further by stating that it was in fact a 'device to plug-in' that was determined by the options related to temporality (depending on daily routines of a domestic space in this case).[16] This issue of temporality was a crucial design strategy in *Living*

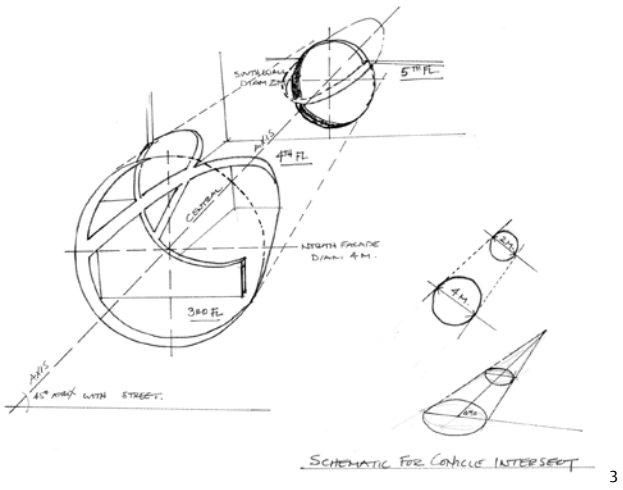
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Pod, in that it was a direct assault on the 'form-function' dilemma of Modern Architecture.[17] Matta-Clark had earlier moved against the norms of Modern Architecture in his own way, believing that temporality was a natural quality of his architectural interventions:

> *I don't work in architecture in the conventional sense. I work in buildings. Although I talk about spatial complexity and employ terms within the common architecture vocabulary, my concerns are non-utilitarian* [...][18]

For Matta-Clark, temporality was embedded in what he revealed through his interventions, and the method he acquired from these experimentations supported the architect's role of being flexible beyond the control of temporality in the programme(s). Archigram, an implicit influence on Matta-Clark, suggested this through the expression of capacity for transformation in design, whereas Matta-Clark searched for flexibility through the experimentation into the concept of 'fleabite' in the programme.

In a major move against convention, Matta-Clark reconsidered the existing urban environment, introducing his insertions or interventions as parasitic conditions, or more simply as 'fleabites' *[1]*.



3



3 Gordon Matta-Clark *Conical Intersect* Sketch, 1975 (CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 073)

4 Gordon Matta-Clark *Conical Intersect*, 1975 (gelatin silver print, 17.1 x 14.5 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2003: 0006: 037: 005-006)

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He sought their possible implications in architecture, claiming that 'a fleabite is the space shared between its parasites and host'.[19] For instance, he considered that the plumbing systems of buildings and the abutment of the building with the ground were locations of parasitic activity, and he conceived such points as being the end products of architecture, suggesting their reconsideration as potential design elements. His photographs of these situations (in this case, the plumbing, which is itself another system organised in the building) offer the best illustration of such parasitic spaces *[2]*. The terms used by Matta-Clark in his index cards from 1973 point to a connection among these parasitic spaces under the term 'fleabite', yet a reading of his terminology offers clues to the components of the term, having particular considerations both in his applied works and unapplied projects. The components of this terminology in the reading of 'fleabite': the 'uselessness' of a building, the created 'voids', 'moment-to-moment' spaces, 'layered' spaces or 'stratifications' in the form of parasitical spaces, 'mutable' space, and 'limitless' space provide evidence of his interpretation of temporality in architecture. In this way, the many connections among the works, drawings and writings of Matta-Clark can be identified as being at the very core of his architectural criticism.

On a larger scale, urban space was full of parasitic environments for Matta-Clark, namely in the many wastelands, left-over spaces, and deserted and abandoned buildings. The buildings he selected for intervention were empty and had been left to neglect, not to say functionless. After intervention, their lack of architectural task was highlighted with the elimination of the boundaries that had previously been identified by walls and floors. By breaking down these boundaries and revealing the 'uselessness' of a building it became possible to benefit from the emptiness of spaces.

'Voids'

Matta-Clark created 'voids' *[3, 4]*, intentionally using these parasitical spaces as something to be inserted into the cuts he made that 'gave freedom to experiment with multiple alternative situations'. His exploration of such situations was never clearer than in his *Conical Intersect* project, produced for the Paris Biennale in September 1975. The original intention was to create a void in the Centre Georges Pompidou, which at the time was still under construction. The site of the building in the well-known Les Halles district in Paris was of particular notoriety in the controversial urban transformation project.[20] As the newly established art centre was deemed too precious for Matta-Clark's intervention, his project was eventually moved to an existing block located behind it, comprising two modest town houses:

> *For two plaster-dusty weeks people watched us measuring, cutting and removing the debris from the truncated conical void. The base of the cone was a circle of four meters in diameter through the north wall. The central axis made an approximately forty-five degree angle with the street below. As the cone diminished in circumference, it twisted up through walls, floors and out the attic roof of the adjoining house. This hollow form became a* Son et Lumière *for passers-by or an extravagant new standard in sun and air for loungers.*[21]

The intervention was indeed a void, both in the literal and metaphorical sense, requiring a trained eye, or better still, an architect-photographer to capture its physical existence, which would otherwise be perceived only as an act of demolition.[22] It was not only an emptied space, but also an architectural criticism of the urban void created for the Pompidou Centre.[23]

5 Gordon Matta-Clark Photograph for Series A (*Bronx Floor*), 2A, c. 1973 (gelatin silver print, 15.9 x 23.2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 033.4 (GMCT 2540))

6 Gordon Matta-Clark Photograph for Series A (*Bronx Floor*), 2A, c. 1973 (gelatin silver print, 15.9 x 23.2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 033.5. (GMCT 2540))

7 Gordon Matta-Clark Photograph for Series A (*Bronx Floor*), 2A, c. 1973 (gelatin silver print, 15.9 x 23.2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 033.9. (GMCT 2540))



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'Moment-to-moment' spaces

Matta-Clark's *Bronx Floors* project in New York was another urban intervention in the form of a series of works, applied in several phases.[24] By cutting into the ceilings and floors, and thus eliminating the boundaries and thresholds, Matta-Clark opened two separate apartments into each other breaking the conventions of the traditional spatial unit. In order to break the geometrical continuity of the reflection of the cuts, they were made at particular angles in relation to the specific situation of the floors, taking into account the locations of windows, doors and structural elements *[5–7]*. Matta-Clark referred to these interventions as 'moment-to-moment' spaces, defining another entity in the traditional spatial relations. By removing the boundaries of the existing spaces they became integrated both vertically and horizontally; vertical integration of the bedroom of the first floor apartment and the living room of the second floor apartment (along the same vertical line) resulted in an alternative togetherness that was not previously considered as together in the functional sense. In this way, Matta-Clark proposed a new vertical relationship between spaces, and as a result the unconsidered or differently established conventional considerations of vertical relations would be abolished. His rectangular cuts to the floors not only challenged the conventional relationship between the floor and architectural use, but also contested the fixed function of the floor.

'Layered' spaces

Besides the 'voids' and the 'moment-to-moment' spaces, Matta-Clark also created 'layered' spaces or 'stratifications' in the form of parasitical spaces. In 1974, one year after the *Bronx* project, he launched another experiment that would become one of his seminal works. Matta-Clark cut a conventional New Jersey suburban house into two halves, from roof to foundation, with the intention of dislocating and 'redefining its center'. The house was laid open in such a subtle way that its privacy was not fully exposed to the outside world, while an unusual glimpse of sunlight was allowed into its interior *[8–10]*. The recognisable form of the house was transformed as it started 'communicating' in a



8 Gordon Matta-Clark *Splitting*, 1974, (gelatin silver print, 50.6 x 40.15 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 088: 003 (GMCT 3010/C19A))



9 Gordon Matta Clark, photographer *Splitting*, 1974 (gelatin silver print, 49.4 x 39.2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:088:001)



10 Gordon Matta Clark *Splitting*, 1974 (gelatin silver print, 49.5 x 39.5 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:088:002)

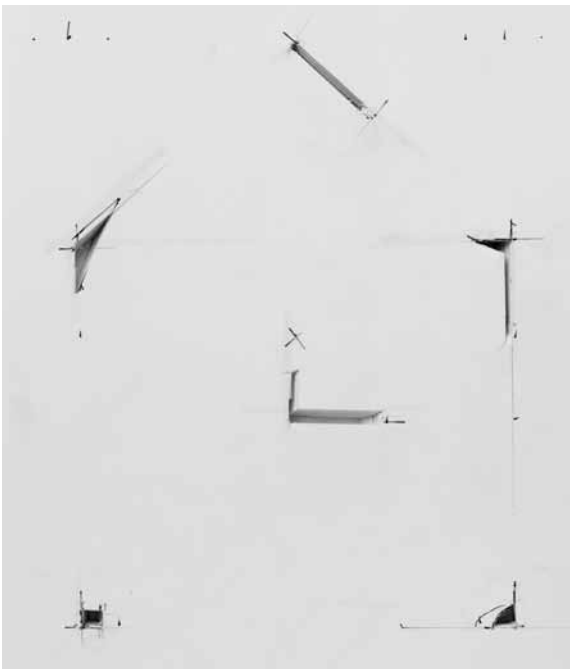
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different manner. The facade, the wall and the floor could no longer be considered as surfaces, as with the aid of the cut they became three-dimensional elements that were detached from each other and freed from the building as a unified entity *[11–13]*. The thickness of each individual layer could be perceived, and thus they became entities in their own right. This project may be interpreted as a re-appreciation of the tectonics of architecture through the rediscovery of structural elements.

> *Aspects of stratification probably interest me more than the unexpected views which are generated by the removals – not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface that reveals the autobiographical process of its making.*[25]



12

'Mutable' space

In the same year, Matta-Clark introduced the 'mutable space' as a different form of fleabite. His criticism of the traditional dwelling unit and his suggestions of 'mutable' space were notable in his intervention entitled *Bingo*. Blurring the relationship between the outside and inside and public and private, Matta-Clark made his criticism of the 'typical' house as a dwelling unit known by 'peeling' a town house in Niagara for this *Bingo* project. He divided the facade into nine equal parts, removing eight of the facade pieces while leaving the centrepiece to show the original depth of the space. Stripping the house of its main facade was a very strong act that challenged the spatial configuration of the house, which he evaluated as being a conventional box to be broken both literally and theoretically. By peeling away the facade, he

11 Gordon Matta Clark *Splitting*, 1974 (gelatin silver print, 39.7 x 49.5 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:088:004)

12 Gordon Matta Clark *Splitting*, 1974 (graphite and cut paper, Page from Sketchbook, 27.8 x 22 x 2.2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:022)

13 Gordon Matta Clark *Splitting*, 1974 (gelatin silver print, 49.7 x 39.3 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016:088:011)

14 Gordon Matta-Clark *Circus* or *The Caribbean Orange*, 1978 Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, IL), creator (77.1 x 51.7 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 085)

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exposed the spatiality of the closeness or privacy to the world outside. As a result, the divisions of space provided by the internal walls, and consequently the activities and separation of the rooms of the house, were left undefined.

Moreover, with the removal of the facade the three-dimensionality of the space was reduced to a two-dimensional frontal view, while the depth was retained.[26] The lack of a third dimension would inevitably exclude the conventional use of the house. Consequently, a radical act was again proposed by Matta-Clark, who rather than turning his interventions into actual 'useful architectural spaces', left them as intervened. His choice to use the term 'actor' instead of 'user' was a questioning of the use value of architectural space, describing his expedition for their generative influence on space as:[27]

> *This idea is rich in personal meaning well beyond my ability to expand here, but one of the needs it would fulfil for me is an an-architectural unbuilder in search of actors, it would bring live occupants to the emptiness. 'Inflict' and help me shape that space in contrast with another generative fantasy.*[28]

The peeled facade brought a detachment and externalisation of the user from the house in the functionalist terms of Modernist neatness. Peeling the facade provided a way of tracking the fleabite process, leaving the building to its own transformation afterwards. The building had undergone an existing transformation, and Matta-Clark was unveiling this quality, pointing out how different intersecting functions and mutable space could be detected if a space is allowed to be viewed in this way. The intervention in the *Bingo* project revealed the sedentary function/space relations of the house, as literal as it was, in the same way as a snapshot of a process of fleabite. Programme and space are not separable parts, being complementary to each other in architecture, yet the consideration of an empty building without use in spatial terms is a matter of suspense. These buildings were a laboratory in which Matta-Clark tested his ideas related to the transformation of space. They had already accumulated spatial archaeology in the form of traces left behind by previous users; and as such cutting them was not only a formal analysis, but also provided insight into the previous programme of the property as well.

Fleabite: metamorphosis of spatial use

A Modern house may be defined as a unit that establishes the living conditions of its subjects in regard to their ongoing social life. Mass housing was part of a programme to build the social and physical requirements of such a system using the process of mass production; providing the optimum conditions for the living units. Whether constructed as small houses or blocks, the architecture of a house includes created conventions based on similar requirement lists – a living room, bedroom(s), kitchen and a bathroom. Matta-Clark considered this situation as taboo and linked the anxiety related to 'mutable space' in a dwelling with the fixed visual language of Modern Architecture that had developed

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as a result of the translation of what he called 'a machinist functionalism'. He believed such a vocabulary was inadequate, because the morality to which it responded still required a stability of space. For this reason, Matta-Clark raised a fundamental question on the notions of mutable space in a dwelling that necessitated an inquiry into its social connections, considering and promoting a 'radical re-appraisal' to challenge this design methodology:

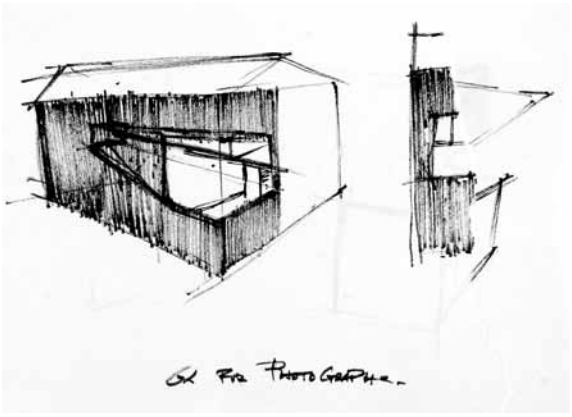
> *The issue for Modern Architecture, the 'International Style', Machine Age; revolutionary architecture, however you want to call it is this: all these various ideologies accept machine functionalism as a kind of visual vocabulary, about which they can moralise in terms of the inevitable needs. The morality that's rooted in such design mentality is valid. The functional issue was chosen because it seemed the most critical break from a lot of Beaux-Arts, historic garbage. It was valid for its time, but how long has it been, 70 years, since any kind of radical re-appraisal has gone-on? And I think that's the crux of the issue.*[29]

Departing from such a determination, it can be stated that Matta-Clark created a corresponding plane on which he placed functionalism, morality, vocabulary and validity in relation to each other, but indicated that the sources of morality were actually to be found in social connections.[30] Matta-Clark's interventions were not only criticisms of Modern Architecture or architectural discourse, which he believed reduced the built environment to a 'machine city', but also an architectural analysis or a 'metamorphosis' of a building before it was subjected to intervention.[31] His confrontation with the static condition of space can be understood from the following statement:

> *But, space, to me should be in perpetual metamorphosis by virtue of people continually acting on space that surrounds them. A house, for instance, is definitely a fixed entity in the minds of most people. It needn't be. So, one of the effects of my work is to dramatise the ways, or stage ways in altering that sense of stasis.*[32]

Recognising this sense of 'stasis' in the consideration of the house as a fixed entity in the minds of most people, Matta-Clark pointed out how he had rather been influenced by the potentials of spatial transformations, which he referred to as 'metamorphosis of use', and was interested in the unexpected opportunities it would generate. He alluded to the togetherness of multiple programmes that coincided with the existing functions of buildings. Rather than the fixing of activities on space, he aimed at the co-occurrence of unexpected activities that inevitably relied upon their temporality.

Hence, Matta-Clark suggested liberating space from the fixed nature of the object and activity relations, and suggested, for instance, the potential of moment-to-moment spaces that emerged in 'fleabite' situations. It was in this way that the two dwellings next to the Pompidou Centre reflected the controversial situation of the togetherness of a house and a cultural centre. This was the 'fleabite', redefined as the togetherness of functions arising out of a criticism of the social and spatial



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discriminations and determinations of architectural space, and a reflection of this criticism can be detected in the void he suggested.

> *Real spaces especially fascinate me, the kinds of spaces people use all the time. In all probability such spaces are terrifically formalized to use, and this triggers in me ways to set them up without any use. Or setting up the functional level so absurdly so as to ridicule the very idea of function.*[33]

Matta-Clark defined metamorphosis as an external pressure to change and release the hidden internal pressures of existing situations in order to highlight space.[34]

> *A cut is very analytical. It's the probe! The essential probe. The scaffold of sharp-eyed inspectors. Initially I also wanted to go beyond visual things. Of course, there are visual consequences to cutting, certainly to removal, but it was kind of the thin edge of what was being seen that interested me as much, if not more than, the views that were being created.*[35]

'Limitless' space

'Limitless' space was the final term introduced by Matta-Clark that could be related with 'fleabite' processes, the best example of which was the ironically titled *Circus* or *Caribbean Orange*. Rather than making de-axial cuts to the surfaces of the building, Matta-Clark's cuts in this case resembled the peeling of an orange, with each circular cut being enlarged on each subsequent floor. This project was the result of an invitation from the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art to renovate three adjacent houses that would be added to the existing museum buildings *[14]*. Matta-Clark, working with architect Larry Booth and his assistant, aimed to create a continuum in the spaces in which they would become intertwined. The manipulation of their conventional horizontality and verticality through simple cuts was replaced with a fluidity through the act of peeling.

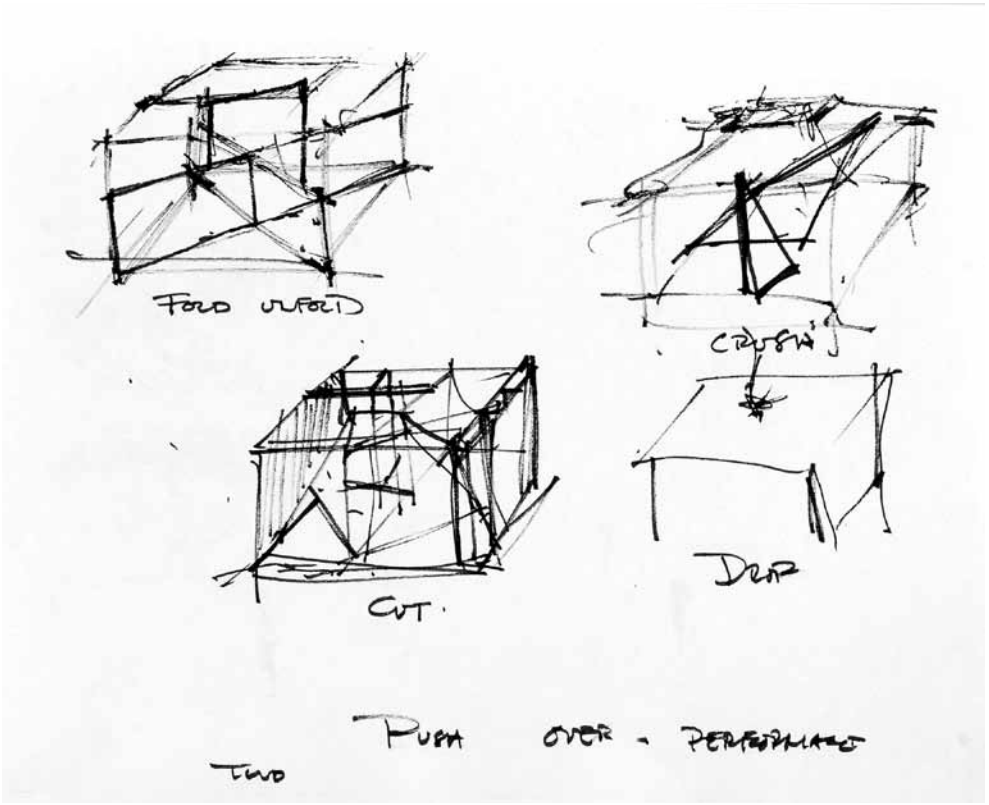
Matta-Clark not only demolished the boundaries of the separated spaces of the existing building, but also challenged the architectural terminology that differentiated the wall from the floor. The cuts in this case were neither horizontal nor vertical, and thus produced a three-dimensionality that satisfied his exploration of 'limitless' spaces. The depth in spatial configuration achieved through these interventions could be described as a special metamorphosis,

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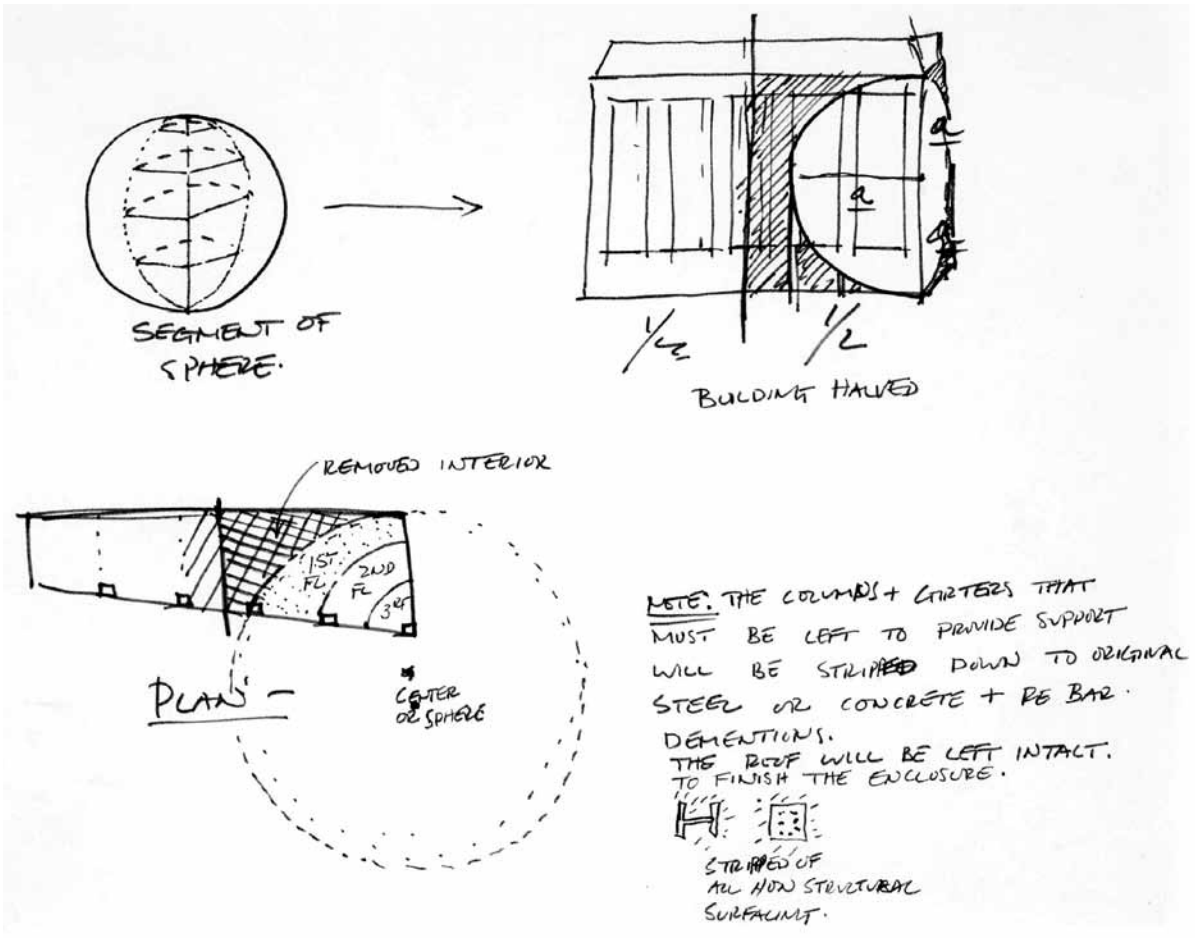
15 Gordon Matta-Clark Sketchbook with Various Architectural Proposals, c. 1974–1976, (marker, felt-tip pen, 27.9 x 21.9 x 2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 027_E (GMCT 1264))

16 Gordon Matta-Clark Sketchbook with Various Architectural Proposals, ca. 1974–1976 (marker, felt-tip pen, 27.9 x 21.9 x 2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 027_G (GMCT 1264))

17 Gordon Matta-Clark Sketchbook with Various Architectural Proposals, c. 1974–1976 (marker, felt-tip pen, 27.9 x 21.9 x 2 cm, CCA Archive, PHCON2002: 0016: 074 (GMCT 1264))



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which as a result were integrated and deepened, one into another, through the transformation of conventional elements.

The terminological explorations of spaces being 'mutable', 'moment-to-moment', 'layered' or 'limitless' were the inspiration behind the architectural interventions introduced by Matta-Clark; and the embodiment of 'programmatic experimentation' in the form of his 'fleabite' can be determined from his works and writings. These terms were not only used to define a kind of enriching error in domestic and urban space in a critical way, but could also be interpreted as a design strategy or a means of opening up new perspectives for design and architectural discourse in general. His strategy was clear and his methods were extremely radical – the cutting, splitting, peeling, intersecting and folding or unfolding of existing buildings with the intention of replacing or displacing 'the box'.

> *The box must be replaced – our needs can be more perfectly flexible if a space doesn't need to be used it should be stored away, sold or traded for other needs.*[36]

Matta-Clark criticised the 'box' and chose to reveal the living parts of these boxes by cutting, extracting and bringing revitalisation. In this way he revealed that the layers contained the archaeology of the buildings themselves *[15–17]*. He believed that the accumulated spatial codes revealed by his cuts could provide an alternative spatial configuration in response to new terminology, claiming that the concrete functionalism that had been defined by Modern Architecture had reached a point of fixed notions in spaces:

> *The notion of mutable space is especially taboo in one's own home. People live in their space with a temerity that is frightening.*[37]

Standing against the permanency of buildings and suggesting a new temporality, Matta-Clark launched a discussion into the reconsideration of architectural space and its use in time. If walls, floors, ceilings and facades are elements that create boundaries in architectural space, by cutting them, Matta-Clark speculated their transgression both in space and time. In this respect, his works should be evaluated as supporting the critical aspect of 'experimentation', or in his own words:

> *My work directly reflects this in its attempt to open up to get deeper into the concrete unconscious. There's nothing special in this: an attribute of being human is man's desire to probe limits, isn't it? I think, however, that the difference between something scientific and something artistic lies partly in fantasy.*[38]

Notes

1. Peter Cook, personal interview (by Bahar Beşlioğlu), London, 10 April 2006.
2. His works have been registered under 'architecture' at the archival collections of the Canadian Centre for Architecture since 2002.
3. He was invited to the *Idea as Model* exhibition, organised by the IAUS, to create his work *Window-Blow-Out*, which was a 'display of photographs of buildings in the South Bronx whose windows had been broken by the residents'. He completed his installation by shooting out the windows in the exhibition space with a BB gun (a gun that uses air pressure to shoot small round metal balls, an airgun) borrowed from Dennis Oppenheim before the opening. Jacob evaluated this act as 'disturbing the elitist attitude of architects, who saw the problem of decaying buildings only as structures to be removed for the sake of renewal projects and their replacement with constructions'. Mary Jane Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985), p. 96.
4. Rather than his architectural assessments, it was his demolitions of buildings that were cited in comparison to the so-called 'Deconstructivist Architecture', Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson, *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York: MOMA, 1988), p. 10.
5. The archival study of Gordon Matta-Clark for this research was carried out in the archives of the CCA, Montreal, in the summer of 2003.
6. For detailed discussions that include the theoretical framework of this subject: Bahar Beşlioğlu, 'The Programmatic Experimentation in the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark' (Ph.D. Thesis supervised by Prof. Dr Ayşen Savaş, METU, 2008).
7. Peter Cook, personal interview (by Bahar Beşlioğlu), London, 10 April 2006.
8. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), p. 329.
9. Ibid., p. 329.
10. Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 361.
11. Felicity D. Scott, 'Architecture or Techno-Utopia', in *Grey Room*, 03 (Spring, 2001), 112–26.
12. Peggy Deamer strengthens the suggestion of this experimentation as being more than mere technological insertions by perceiving the architecture of the 1960s not only as futuristic machines, but also as comments and critiques on everyday life programmes. (Peggy Deamer, 'The Everyday and The Utopian', in *Architecture of the Everyday*, ed. by Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (New York: Princeton Publications, 1997), pp. 195–216 (p. 195). Anthony Vidler describes architectural education at Cornell at the time in this context when Matta-Clark was a student there: 'Of all the American schools, Cornell had emerged as the bastion of a heritage that joined the modernism of Le Corbusier to the abstraction of Albers, and these in a historicist reformulation concocted by painter Robert Slutzky, architect John Hejduk, and British critic Colin Rowe while the three were teaching together in Texas in the mid-1950s. Rowe, who had followed John Shaw and others to Cornell in 1963, was the intellectual descendent of German art historian Rudolf Wittkower, with whom he had written his thesis on Inigo Jones, and had applied Wittkower's analysis of Mannerism in architecture to the work of Le Corbusier.' (Anthony Vidler, 'Splitting the Difference: Anthony Vidler on Gordon Matta-Clark', *Artforum* (June 2003), 35–36 (p. 35). In this context, it is also essential to mention that, responding to Matta-Clark's criticisms, studies and questions about architecture while at Cornell, his father Roberto Matta (who was trained as an architect as well and worked for a while at Le Corbusier's studio in Paris) recommended him to contact his architect friends, in particular to hear of their critical

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approaches to Modern Architecture through intersection with art. These included Friedrich Kiesler, the architect of the *Endless House*, or Philip Johnson in New York.

13. John Summerson, 'The Case for a Theory of Modern Architecture', in *Architecture Culture 1943–1968*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 226–36 (p. 232).
14. Stanford Anderson, 'Architectural Design as a System of Research Programs', in *Design Studies* 5, no. 3 (July 1984), 146–50 (p. 146).
15. Matta-Clark's interest in post-positivism may be associated with his interest in alchemy. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, 'Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul', Archival Books, PHCON2002:0016:093:003: Gordon Matta-Clark's Library. Other books in his library related to post-positivism, science and philosophy include: 'The Major Achievements of Science (McKenzie, A. E. E., 1960)'; 'Sense and Non-Sense (Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1948)' and 'A New Model of the Universe (Ouspensky, P. D., 1931)'. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PHCON2002:0016:093:003: Gordon Matta-Clark's Library.
16. Matta-Clark had a criticism of Le Corbusier's comment in a note in his archive saying: 'A Machine for not living with an extract from Corbusier's vers un architec (edge of paper destroyed) showing the virgin machine he wants us all to live in'. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PHCON2002:0016:006:107.
17. Réjean Legault and Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Post-War Architectural Culture* (Montreal: CCA, 2000), pp. 11-25.
18. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, 'Interview with Donald Wall', Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 005: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77.
19. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings.
20. Julio Gonzalez, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Exhibition Catalogue* (Valencia: IVAM Centre, 1992), p. 384.
21. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77.
22. Lisa Le Feuvre described this intervention as a 'negative space – a void through the building'. Lisa Le Feuvre, 'A W-Hole House: Gordon Matta-Clark re-viewed', in *Art Monthly* 255, 4 (2002), pp. 12–15.
23. 'Matta-Clark's perverse statement was a beautiful contrast to the overzealous technological extravaganza across the street. He burrowed his way through the old building with subversive determination, intent upon creating a confrontation of what he called "non-umental" that is an expression of the commonplace that might encounter the grandeur and pomp of architectural structures and their self-glorifying clients.' James Wines, *De-Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), p. 139.
24. Matta-Clark gave the *Bronx Floors* works separate names: 'Treshole', 'Double Doors', 'Floor Above', 'Ceiling Below'and '4 Way Walls'. Julio Gonzalez, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Exhibition Catalogue* (Valencia: IVAM Centre, 1992), pp. 371–72.
25. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Notebooks, PH CON 2002: 0016: 022: GMCT 1069, Cat # 816, 1974, Splitting.
26. *Bingo* was the final title of a work in progress called *Been-Gone by Ninth*, which was the facade of a 'typical' American small town home that was to be demolished for an urban renewal project. 'So, for future one of my goals is to delay the loss of the actual spatial experience and structural alterations by working in buildings where demolition could either be forestalled or be commissioned for occupied space.' Matta-Clark Archive, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings, CCA Archives, Montreal.
27. This may have parallels in contemporary discussions of generative architecture, bearing in mind one of its dynamic agents, 'the user', and the an-architectural role of the architect in the process. Matta-Clark, however, meant the 'fleabite' to be an alternative/controversial generative process, meaning that he differentiated the architectural process from his way of thinking, and referred to architecture using the term 'an-architecture' and the togetherness of both processes as a form of 'fleabite'. In an analysis of the *Bingo* project, Anthony Vidler noted two specific points that were influenced by Colin Rowe, who was teaching at Cornell University at that time. One is the term 'surface formalism', coming from 'Rowe's formalist analysis of surface' as introduced in Pamela Lee's *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*; and the second is 'the nine-square gridding of the cuts in the façade of Bingo', influenced by 'a grid that was more commonly seen in the 1960s as an invention of Hejduk', as mentioned in Thomas Crow's *Gordon Matta-Clark*, Anthony Vidler, 'Splitting the Difference: Anthony Vidler on Gordon Matta-Clark', *Artforum*, 2003.
28. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77.
29. Ibid.
30. Stanford Anderson, 'The Fiction of Function', in *Assemblage*, 2 (February 1987), 19–32 (p. 20). Anderson examines precisely the establishment of conventions in his theories, whereas Matta-Clark links them to the notion of 'validity'.
31. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77. The term 'metamorphosis' was also used by Archigram in the 1967 Paris Biennale with the 'Control or Choice' project where 'a conglomeration of systems, organisations and technical apparatus that permit the choice of *one* response out of a number of alternatives; and exploit the different natures of (say) the physical limitation of a piece of hardware against the unlimited atmospheric power of an ephemeral medium (such as projected pictures)'. Peter Cook, *Archigram*, p. 68.
32. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016:005: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77.
33. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings.
34. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings.
35. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Notebooks, PH CON 2002: 0016: 022: GMCT 1069, Cat # 816, 1974, Splitting.
36. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings.
37. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016: 001: Matta-Clark Writings.
38. 'Gordon Matta-Clark Archive', CCA, Montreal, 'Interview with Donald Wall', Archival Books, PH CON 2002: 0016:005: Reviews, Announcements, Catalogues 1970–77.

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Biographies
Bahar Beşlioğlu graduated from Department of Architecture of (YTU), Istanbul in 2000; receiving M.Arch degree from Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL), in London in 2001; and a Ph.D degree from the Department of Architecture of Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara in 2008.

Ayşen Savaş completed her masters' degrees at METU and UCL, Bartlett School of Architecture in London, and received her Ph. D. degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). For the last ten years, she has been teaching courses on architectural theory and representation; has published extensively on museum space and exhibition design; and has organised and curated both national and international exhibitions.

Authors' Addresses
Dr Bahar Beşlioğlu
Meclisi Mebusan Cad.
Ali Kaptan Sok.
Melis Apt. No: 10–10
Findikli
Istanbul
Turkey

Prof. Ayşen Savaş
Middle East Technical University
Faculty Of Architecture
Universiteler Mah.
Dumlupinar Bulvari, No:1
06800 Ankara
Turkey

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