CONCLUSION

ABSTRACTION AND THE UNFORECLOSED

While my aim has been to examine the historical complexity of the practices of the artists in this study, my work has also been motivated by current concerns about gender and art (that themselves find the 1960s as a formative and generative precedent). Ultimately, this book's arguments are directed both at the historical record and at the current artists, critics, viewers, and historians who are grappling with questions of abstraction's usefulness, the politics of transformable personhood, and the recognition of the plurality of gendered inhabitations of the world. To recall Judith Butler's exhortation used in the Preface, my aim has been to offer one "new legitimating lexicon for the gender complexity that we have been living with for a long time."[1] I see abstraction as an especially rich mode through which particularity and difference can be made available, and the four main artists I discuss in this book present historical precedents to those who, more directly, seek to make semantic, cultural, and political space today. In the way of conclusion, I offer two examples of artists who drew on these issues and who speak to the possibilities that Sixties abstraction offered – one near to the time of writing and one immediately following the 1960s. These represent but two of the many and divergent ways in which tactics from abstraction were adapted and used to address more manifestly transgender politics and to call for the need for more pluralistic accounts of persons.

The first comes from the present decade and takes the form of an abstract, seemingly expressionist, sculpture. It appears as a rising mass, about four feet high, covered in indentations, gouges, and extrusions (fig. 139). The dark color of this mottled monolith, a graphite black, flows into the deep shadows created by a surface that is both volcanic and mountainous. Its footprint is regular and rectilinear, three feet wide (90 cm). Along its

OPPOSITE 139 Heather Cassils, *The Resilience of the 20%*, 2013. Poured black concrete cast of clay bash, 122 × 91.5 × 61 cm (48 × 36 × 24 in.).

140 Heather Cassils, *Before* from the performance *Becoming an Image*, 2012–present. (This version: 35th Rhubarb Festival, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto, 2014.) EM-217 (WED) modeling clay, 907 kg (2000 lbs), 129.5 × 91.4 × 91.4 cm (51 × 36 × 36 in.).

141 Heather Cassils, *After* from the performance *Becoming an Image*, 2012–present. (This version: 35th Rhubarb Festival, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto, 2014.) EM-217 (WED) modeling clay, 907 kg (2000 lbs), 103.6 × 91.4 × 91.4 cm (40¾ × 36 × 36 in.).

height, one can see the increasing retreat from this base as the form tapers upward and inward. That retreat (or is it progress?) has been hard-won, and the gouges come into focus as deep impressions of knees, elbows, legs, fingers, and fists that pummeled the material into its present form.

This abstract sculpture by Heather Cassils,* titled *The Resilience of the 20%*, is the result of an intensely physical process involving the transformation of the body and its confrontation with materiality. It is a concrete cast of an object created in relation to Cassils's performance *Becoming an Image* (2011 – present), a multi-stage work involving performance, photography, sound, and sculpture. The starting point for this sculpture and the performance was a particular body – Cassils's body – and its athletic exchanges

* Note to the reader: At the request of the artist at the time of writing, this book incorporated a previously-used name that had, to that point, served as the artist's public name and trademark. This name is no longer in use, and the 2018 eBook edition has been changed to reflect this. Any future citations or discussions should refer to the artist only as "Cassils."

with a rectilinear monolith made of 2000 pounds (some 909 kilos) of modeling clay. Cassils developed this performance in order to speak directly to issues of transgender politics, history, and experience. With this larger project in view, it becomes apparent that *The Resilience of the 20%* uses its final abstraction as a means to evoke the body but leave its visualization open and unforeclosed. It makes explicit the ways in which a non-representational sculptural object in all its physicality can offer a vehicle to realize transgender capacity.

Cassils, who has also competed as a semi-pro boxer, undergoes intense physical training and education for each performance. Much of Cassils's work involves the transformation of their body through athletics and body-building, and they have previously made this a central component of their practice. This is clearest in the work *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture* (2011). *Cuts* involved photographic documentation of a 23-week performance in which Cassils, through nutrition and training, added 23 pounds (10.4 kilos) of muscle.[2] This performance reinterpreted the canonical feminist work by Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1972), aiming instead at the transformation of the female-assigned body into a conventionally masculine form and ideal.

The somatic work to which Cassils commits is extended, highly considered, and in collaboration with expert trainers. The body serves as the raw material in these life performances, and it is the medium through which Cassils enacts transformation and transition. For *Becoming an Image*, a new kind of advanced training was necessary to ready their body for maximum effect. The modeling clay offered a great deal of resistance to the hits and kicks, and Cassils underwent combat conditioning in order most effectively and safely to prepare their body for the impact. Training with a Muay Thai master at the world-class Glendale Fight Club in Glendale, California, Cassils spent the months leading up to each performance of *Becoming an Image* involved in extensive planning and exercise in order to avoid injury. As they explained,

> I had to shed mass, as mass slows you down. I had to train towards explosive movement, precise form, aligning the skeleton in such a way that it prepares the bones and tendons for impact. I also had to train my heart and lungs to operate at over 170 beats per minute – serious cardio-vascular training where I expand the size of both my heart and lungs to work at that capacity for the extended period of 20 to 25 minutes.[3]

Such hard-won reshaping and enhancement are directed at the specific needs for each new live performance, relying solely on intense physical

training and nutrition to reorient the body. In this way, the act of sculpting begins with Cassils's own body, which must be remodeled and readied.

Cassils's training and transformation was more than bodily; it was also visual and perceptual. Performances of *Becoming an Image* happen in the dark (figs. 142 and 143). The scene of creation of the final form occurs during a performance in which both Cassils and the audience are together in complete darkness. Light only occurs with the photographer's flash as it documents Cassils's blind combat with the clay form. Visually disorienting for Cassils, the audience, and the photographer, the experience of the performance of 25 minutes is one of retinal burn and glimpses of Cassils's athleticism in an environment of darkness filled with the sounds of exertion. To achieve this performance, Cassils had to incorporate combat training with vertigo, spinning, and extrasensory combat. In addition to being as strong as possible, Cassils also had to establish new ways to deal with the environment.

Such visual disorientation produced by the collective experience of darkness and the flashes of illumination caused by attempts to document the struggle were both ways in which *Becoming an Image* thematized issues from transgender politics and history. The impetus for this work was a commission for a performance work by the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles. To augment the 2011–12 exhibition series *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945–1980*, the ONE Archives created the series "Trans Activation." Rather than draw on the contents of the archives, as others did, Cassils chose to address the omissions of transgender people and the difficulties faced with regard to documentation and archiving. Gay and lesbian communities have a conflicted history of subsuming or ignoring the differences of transgender experience. Consequently, any archive based in gay and lesbian community history will contain partial evidence of transgender history while at the same time appropriating it into narratives of sexual orientation. Cassils recognized that one could speak more strongly by producing a work that complicated the idea of documentation and that embodied transition.

In the *Becoming an Image* performances, the photographer is also blind and unable to frame (and consequently control) the documentary image. While Cassils's photographers have captured some striking pictures of Cassils's process, these were achieved through a struggle between photographer and subject that mirrored the exertion of Cassils's confrontation with the clay. The mastery and objectivity that underwrite the idea of documentation was made more reciprocal and unruly. In this way, the exemplary images that emerged from Cassils's performance remind viewers of their partiality

142 Heather Cassils, *Becoming an Image, Performance Still No. 5*, 2013, from the SPILL Festival, National Theatre Studio, London. C-print, 55.9 × 76.2 cm (22 × 30 in.).

and all that they did not capture. The experience of the audience was primarily one of darkness and sound, and their memories, too, were flashes that fade. In fact, because they were just looking and straining to perceive, their experience of the performance was fuller than that of the photographer who wrestled with the environment to make an image. Allegorizing the problem of trans archival presence, this performance both demanded attention to real-time presence (the communal experience of witnessing in the dark an extreme physical encounter) and recognition of the impossibility of adequately remembering that experience (only recorded in retinal burn and images that explicitly render a single moment of that extended encounter).

The resulting objects from the performance include the photographs, a sound installation made from a recording of the impacts between Cassils and the clay, and the hard-won final form of the sculptures. *Becoming an Image* has been performed a few times, and I illustrate documentation and sculptures from some of the different instances. The resulting sculptures are, by definition, unique though they all started from the same geometric

143 Heather Cassils, *Becoming an Image, Performance Still No. 2*, 2013, from Edgy Woman Festival, Montreal. C-print, 91.5 × 61 cm (36 × 24 in.).

form – which Cassils referred to once in conversation as "Juddian," thus signaling its citation of Minimalism's activation of bodily relations.[4]

The clay chosen by Cassils was EM-217 or WED Clay, which is used in the film industry for stop-motion animation and for making elaborate facial sculptures from which latex masks are cast. Named after the most famous of its adopters, Walter Edward Disney, it is now a favorite among special-effects artists who make unorthodox physiognomies, monsters, and new kinds of figures. Disney clay is dense and workable but it cannot be fired. Because of this, it will erode and vanish, and Cassils's resulting sculpture will transform itself as gravity works on its weight. The sculpture itself is thus ephemeral and always in process. This, too, evokes the body as a site of transformation, growth, and age. Not only does this form bear the evidence of work and effort. It also embeds transition into its material substance and into the process whereby the generic and geometric form was made unique, the history of change embedded in its surface.

Cassils's subsequent cast sculpture, *The Resilience of the 20%*, is a monument to this transformational and ephemeral clay sculpture, and it freezes it in a durable form. This secondary casting is a key part of traditional sculptural practice, and through it statues were made into a material that could stand outside as public monument and enduring figure. Auguste Rodin had, in the nineteenth century, made the capture (in bronze) of the fleeting marks of process a key sign for the presence of the artist as maker in works that were made through casting.[5] Cassils's decision to cast the sculpture in a durable form draws on these traditions of the statue, the monument, and Rodin's assertion of the sculptor's acts of making as central to modern sculpture. Furthermore, this object, cast in concrete, has had its surface worked over by Cassils in order to add more variation and transformation into the final form. Areas have been polished smooth and others made rougher.[6] Like the other stages of the work, it has been transformed as it moves into a new state.

The title of the concrete sculpture, *The Resilience of the 20%*, refers to the violence encountered by transgender communities. In 2012, the murders of transgender individuals increased worldwide by twenty percent, and Cassils offered this sculpture as a monument to those lost and as a testament to the hard-won process of becoming. While the title of the work as a whole is *Becoming an Image*, the final monument to the performance is resolutely abstract and offers no image. It refuses to image any one human form, instead allowing the transformations across its surface to call forth bodies no longer present. They are evoked by the partial evidence left. The refusal to image a single body is important, as it opens this monument up

to larger accounts of transformation and resilience. This allows it to speak to the openness, determination, and mutability that are central to transgender experience without anchoring (and consequently limiting) that narrative in a single body. No one morphology could be offered as exemplary for all transgender lives. Cassils wrestled with the need to document and the problems of evidence, arriving at a work that refused to image the human form but evoked it as an object of work, transformation, and purpose. As an abstract monument, *The Resilience of the 20%* draws on transgender experience and politics while also standing as an allegory of self-determination and resolve.

Coming some five decades after the earliest sculptures discussed in this book, Cassils's work manifests aspects of the potential which I have been arguing that abstraction carries: its capacity to evoke bodily transformation, mutable genders, and successive states of personhood. Rooted in transgender politics and experience, this work expands on the capacities of abstraction and makes its openness with regard to genders and bodies manifest. While the contexts and issues are vastly different, nevertheless I see such work as Cassils's as being presaged by abstract sculpture's struggle with the bodily in the 1960s. What I have argued for David Smith, John Chamberlain, Nancy Grossman, and Dan Flavin is an account that draws from their own art-theoretical priorities but that nevertheless opens up possibilities that they could not have foreseen. During the decade in which the statuary tradition finally dissolved into the expanded field, these artists grappled with how the body must still be invoked by sculpture even if human morphologies could no longer be taken for granted.

Cassils offers a twenty-first century engagement with the transgender capacity of abstraction – one that is explicit in its politics. At a closer historical time to this book, another artist also developed the issues and tactics that made the 1960s so formative with regard to open accounts of gender. The performance artist, critic, and sculptor Scott Burton also absorbed and rejected ideas from 1960s sculpture to make a case for difference, particularity, and openness.[7] As with Cassils, his work helps to illuminate the stakes of the transgender capacity that Sixties abstraction exhibited. Whereas Cassils attacked a "Juddian" sculpture to transform it, Burton's critical engagement with Minimalism compelled him to develop a more demotic and accessible mode of practice. Consequently, he became one of the progenitors of public art, and it was in this drive towards accessibility and openness that Burton registered the potential of abstract sculpture.

Burton's sculptural practice involved making useful sculpture as furniture. Self-effacing and functional, this work appropriated Minimalist literalism and made it serve the viewer. At the same time, his sculptures are realist. They both are chairs and represent chairs – despite their obdurate "it is what it is" objecthood. For Burton, this work was created both in relation to the human body (in order to be functional) and in allusion to the human form. He once explained, "The human body is central to my work. A piece of furniture, even without the presence of a body, refers to human presence."[8] In this way, Burton created works that overcame the opposition between literalism and figuration.

Many of the furniture works made by Burton in the 1980s embrace their anthropomorphic valences as a means of catering to the bodies of their users. This offering, however, will have different coordinates and meanings based on the particularity of the person or persons who take a seat. Genders vary with each new coupling produced when a participant occupies the seat. Indeed, Burton later remarked about his works, "They take different poses and suggest different genders."[9] As his practice developed, he increasingly made more diverse and ambitious chair sculptures to be used. For his public works, he often relied on a highly geometric style so that the works could operate more anonymously in social spaces (fig. 144). In this way, they were more accessible and useful to the passerby – who may or may not have known that Burton's work was art (a possibility he embraced). Nevertheless, he explored much invention and variation in his seemingly simple chair sculptures. He explained this by saying: "Any chair is useful but a very striking looking chair, something that isn't like a usual chair, can make people perhaps more flexible in their attitudes to accept more things, to become more democratic about what a chair is. *They may even become more democratic about what a person is.* Art can be a moral example."[10] Burton's aim to make art as a moral example – to be *more democratic about what a person is* – derived from his engagement with abstraction's potential to visualize successive openness. His works are also abstract bodies. Indeed, their functionality relies on their successfully being open enough to relate to each subsequent sitter in a different and unique way. Even though most users of his works might have a preconceived notion of what a chair looks like, nevertheless they find themselves seated on something that equally finds a place for them. If participants can be prompted to ask more broadly what a chair is, what art could be, and how they can relate to it, then they might be, as Burton hoped, more open about how they defined persons.

Burton was an astute critic of the debates of 1960s art, and his work sought to draw from it just such an engaged and social version of abstract sculpture that manifested its capacity for more open accounts of personhood. That is, when he turned from a critic of 1960s abstraction to becom-

144 Scott Burton, *Two-part Chair*, 1986. Lake Superior Green Granite, 101.6 × 58.4 × 91.4 cm (40 × 23 × 36 in.). Installation view, Art Institute of Chicago.

ing a sculptor in the 1970s, he boldly sought to make work that demanded plural accounts of personhood. This same increasing embrace of expansiveness can be seen in such artists as Grossman, Chamberlain, and Flavin as they developed their work in the 1970s to afford more mobile and multiple ways in which bodily metaphors, names, and genders could be located in their practices. Their work, that is, proposed unforeclosed accounts of "what a person is."

THE UNFORECLOSED

As Cassils, Burton, and the artists discussed in this book suggest, abstraction has capacity. It is productive and proliferative. Rather than an avoidance of representation, it must be considered an embrace of potentiality and a positing of the unforeclosed.[11] Abstraction makes room. Because of this

capaciousness, abstraction has emerged as urgent for a growing number of transgender and queer artists in recent years. It offers a position from which to imagine, recognize, or realize new possibilities.

In its earlier moments, abstraction was sometimes characterized as flight – a flight from representation, from narrative, from figuration, from the world, from the mundane, and from the recognizable. In these accounts, abstraction was cast as either distillation or enervation, ghosting the observable world of the everyday that it refuses. Abstraction's early defenders buttressed its flight by declaring its superiority over that which it rejects and purges, be that "literary" content, recognizable representation, or the decorative. That is, whether the argument was spiritual or conceptual, abstraction's "purification" was often defined negatively and oppositionally. Erasure and negation underwrote its rhetorics. Today, about a century beyond when abstraction became an option, such defenses of abstraction's negation ring increasingly hollow. Abstraction and figuration rub shoulders in contemporary art, and many younger artists simply do not understand (or care to understand) the antagonistic rhetoric of the twentieth century that cast them as mutually exclusive opponents. Rather than seeing abstraction as erasure, it appears to many as plenitude. Increasingly, what is called for are more accounts of abstraction that are positively defined, not negatively cast – accounts that ask how abstraction can perform and what it produces.

This is not to say that abstraction is not needful. Abstract art must be motivated by concerns outside of itself, and viewers and artists identify with and engage with abstraction because of the ways in which it spirals out to other associations and allusions. A primary way this happens is with the syntax created by the abstract work of art or practice. What, in other words, are the relations and patterns put forth by an abstract work? These can be internal, spatial, experiential, or otherwise, but the key question is how units establish relationality and organize themselves into iteration. While abstraction does sometimes have an iconography (x form stands for y idea/thing), most abstract artists would never rely on such easy routes as one-to-one symbolizations, decoder rings, map legends, or keys. Instead, investment is put into the relations, where priorities can be played out among forms and materials. Relations are meaningful, ethical, and political, and it is in its syntactical staging of relations that abstract art produces its engagements.

One of the most important of these relations is extrinsic: the embodied presence of the viewer who looks (or the artist who makes and also looks). Abstraction is produced in relation to the bodies of its beholders and creators. Everything has a scale, and we gauge scale through the proprioceptive

knowledge of our own bodies and their particularity. Abstraction often accesses bodily scale and suggests memories of corporeal relations through its marshaling of non-depicting form and materials. This is especially the case with abstract sculpture, which even in its most rigorously minimal and unitary versions incites bodily response. In Michael Fried's infamous 1967 critique of Minimalism, he put forth an idea that has proven enduring and infectious when he criticized Tony Smith's *Die* (1962): "One way of describing what Smith was making might be something like a surrogate person – that is, a kind of *statue*."[12] This observation is newly relevant today as artists pursue geometric and reductive abstraction but direct it at bodily evocations and ethical relations. In particular, artists who identify their practice as transgender or queer use this capacity of abstraction to invoke the body without imaging it, offering the abstract form as a receptor to the viewer's own identifications and empathies.[13] Such a practice is generous, as it allows for each viewer to find their own analogies differently and anew. This is one of the lessons that the history of transgender experience teaches: to value mutability, to embrace successive states, and to cultivate both particularity and plurality.

Mobilized by transgender and queer priorities, abstraction has appeared to many today as newly compelling and capacious. It has come to be an important position from which to visualize the unforeclosed. It is for this reason that, in their shift from performance art to sculpture, abstraction became Cassils's mode for evoking the complexity, mutability, and variability of bodies and genders. It is also why Burton, in adapting and superseding Minimalism, played with objecthood to increase the ways in which viewers engaged with his work, in hopes that they would be "more democratic about what a person is."

Abstraction is not the only way to enact or to visualize transgender capacity, but I have attempted to show how it provides a historically rich enabling ground from which to rethink gender's multiplicity and mutability. In its retreat from resemblance and the conventional figure, abstraction offers a position from which to reconsider or to visualize anew the body and personhood. Art-historical debates about the status of the figure or explorations of the evocations of non-figuration both contribute to a history of human morphology's arbitrations and to transgender critique. Again, I have been emboldened by Butler's thinking in my recasting of abstraction in this way. As she has argued, "There is a certain departure from the human that takes place in order to start the process of remaking the human."[14] Abstraction is one such departure, and the artists discussed in this book used non-representational objects to evoke people and bodies in such a way that accounts of remaking and openness were produced.[15]

For the artists in the present study, this often involved the translation of non-representational artworks into words, and I have given weight to the words that were used by the artists themselves, by their critics, and by their viewers. In many ways, the capacity of these works to offer new accounts of the human becomes most immediately evident through the frictions and synergies created when language (especially a language based on a binary gendering) is applied to non-representational artworks. The correlation between abstract objects and the metaphors of the body, implications of sexual coupling, or personifying titles given by the artists all served to produce unruly and expansive capacities. A recurring pattern in the book has been the scene in which artists re-view their work in dialogic situations with others. Seeing the work through others' eyes prompts a reconsideration of the abstract sculpture's openness to multiple identifications. Most evident in the Smith–O'Hara interview, it was also key to Grossman's exchange with the art students and Chamberlain's with Henry Geldzahler. In none of these situations was there a correct way of seeing the works. Far more interesting are the ways in which the works facilitated plurality, prompting even the artists themselves to consider their own productions anew when they saw their abstractions as bodies or persons.[16] As Chamberlain once remarked, "art is the only place left where a person can go discover something and not have to be told by somebody else whether they discovered it or not."[17]

One of the central questions of this book has been how to visualize transformation and its potential. In other words, when we question the limitations of dimorphism or of binaries and when we recognize that personhood is not static, how do we look? The abstract, three-dimensional art object offers an arena in which to work out visualizations and imaginations of new morphologies and successive states. The particular mix of sculpture's physicality, the viewer's three-dimensional engagements, and the refusal to depict simply the human form combine to produce a field in which nominations of the human are dynamic, generative, ongoing, and plural. The collision of abstraction with metaphors of the body or personhood is proliferative, and the four artists discussed in this book each staged such an imbrication between non-reference or non-depiction and allusions to bodies and persons. From their own art-theoretical priorities and concerns, they created works that called for open and unlimited accounts of the body and of personhood. Gender, as the recurring predicate for nominating the human, played a central role in these accounts, and it is in tracking the

successive states and plurality of genders that one can begin to grasp the expansiveness of their practices. The perspective of transgender politics and theory not only allows for a more precise articulation of the terms and implications of these artists' output. It also provides a key to understanding how these accounts and these artworks speak directly to broader concerns. From David Smith's anxious realization of his own success in pursuing abstraction's capaciousness to Dan Flavin's fidelity to personalization and naming, an analysis of these four artists also emphatically points to the ways in which we must revise the binary and dimorphic assumptions with which we have heretofore understood the history of figuration and abstraction, the Sixties emphasis on the bodily, and the ways in which the human is nominated.

he was then old and arthritic, and I couldn't do it"; Flavin in Tuchman, "Flavin Interviewed," 194. On the exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, see Alexandra Whitney, "An Illuminating Paradox: Dan Flavin's *alternating pink and 'gold,'* 1967," in Bell, Bell, and Whitney, *Dan Flavin: Series and Progressions*, 17–23.

107 Tuchman, "Flavin Interviewed," 194.

108 John C. Welchman, *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 43.

109 Ibid., 1.

110 Brenda Richardson, *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976), 3.

111 I am grateful to Lisa Lee for prompting me to think deeply about the effects of the "to" when she acted as respondent to my presentation of this material in the 30 October 2013 Weissbourd Seminar of the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts at the University of Chicago.

112 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987), trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11–12. Both my usage of "performative" and Genette's refer to speech act theory and its foundational definition in J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962).

113 Genette, *Paratexts*, 134.

114 Joan Lowndes, "Flavin's 'Mystical' Aura" (1969), in *It Is What It Is: Writings on Dan Flavin since 1964*, ed. Paula Feldman and Karsten Schubert (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 65.

115 Genette, *Paratexts*, 134.

116 Ibid., 136.

117 Andrea Rosen, "'Untitled' (The Neverending Portrait)," in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, ed. Dietmar Elger (Hannover and Ostfildern-Ruit: Sprengel Museum Hannover and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1997), 57.

118 Grégoire Müller, *The New Avant-garde: Issues for the Art of the Seventies* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), 10.

119 Rosen, "'Untitled' (The Neverending Portrait)," 55.

120 Tuchman, "Flavin Interviewed," 194.

121 *Gypsy* is, in fact, all about acts of naming and renaming, from the repeated "My name's June! What's yours?" to the "gimmick" stage names to Gypsy's declaration: "I am Gypsy Rose Lee! I love her – and if you don't you can clear out now!" Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, and Jule Styne, *Gypsy: A Musical* (New York: Theater Communications Group, 1960), 101. Furthermore, D. A. Miller has examined the mobility of gender in the book, as when Rose says about her daughter, "Louise can be a boy" (9); Miller, *Place for Us.*

122 Such naming is rife in the personal correspondence of the 1960s into the early 1970s in the Robert Rosenblum Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

123 Mac McGinnes said of Rosenblum's list: "A lot of it was compiled on a trip he made to Chicago on an afternoon with me and Dennis Adrian. What you may not know is that its genesis was a list of drag names for American presidents. Bobby went through his copy of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and scratched out all the real names. It was a long time ago, but some that I remember are: Cherry Washington, Babe Lincoln, Dawn Adams and Dawn Quincy Adams, Anne of Cleveland, Dot Polk, Liz Tyler, and Tokyo Roosevelt. Name magic was important in those days"; email from Mac McGinnes to the author, 15 August 2012. He expanded on this history in my interview with him on 2 November 2012.

124 The copy of the typewritten transcription of the list with Rosenblum's handwritten annotations (including the addition of Flavin) was sent to Michael Harwood, who generously provided it to me; email from Harwood, 12 August 2012.

125 Flavin, "Some Remarks," 27.

CONCLUSION: ABSTRACTION AND THE UNFORECLOSED

1 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 51.

2 For *Cuts*, Cassils trained with the fitness legend Charles Glass at the famous Venice Muscle Beach in California. As with all of Cassils's preparatory work, a precise regimen of advanced training was developed in consultation with experts such as Glass in order to achieve the transformation required for each performance.

3 Heather Cassils, email to the author, 26 September 2014.

4 Heather Cassils, interview with the author, 1 August 2014.

5 I have discussed at length the implications of Rodin's performative mark-making and its relationship to the multistage process of casting in *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

6 At the time of writing, Cassils has plans to cast the work in bronze with the aim that, when displayed in public, the cumulative caresses of its viewers will bring shine to certain areas, allowing for a work that is like a durable monument but also bears evidence of repeated bodily engagements.

7 Burton will be the subject of a future book. For an overview of his relationship to the 1960s, however, see the introduction to my volume of his art criticism and writings, David Getsy, ed., *Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art and Performance, 1965–1975* (Chicago: Soberscove Press, 2012), 1–32.

8 Scott Burton, interview of 10 October 1979, in Michael Auping, *30 Years: Interviews and Outtakes* (Fort Worth, Tex: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007), 79.

9 Ibid., 81.

10 Audio recording of interview between Scott Burton and Edward Brooks de Celle, March 1980; Edward Brooks de Celle Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Emphases mine.

11 Much of this section first appeared in the folio published to accompany the exhibition *FLEX* curated by Orlando Tirando at Kent Fine Art, New York, in 2014.

12 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 19.

13 There are many artists both established and emerging who are, today, exploring abstraction as a resource for engaging with transgender and queer experience. Artists such as Jonah Groeneboer, Math Bass, Gordon Hall, Linda Besemer, Amy Sillman, Ulrike Müller, Sadie Benning, Carrie Moyer, Harmony Hammond, Sheila Pepe, Elijah Burgher, Edie Fake, Prem Sahib, Tom Burr, and Shahryar Nashat have all (very differently) incorporated abstraction of varying degrees into their practices for its capacities and openness.

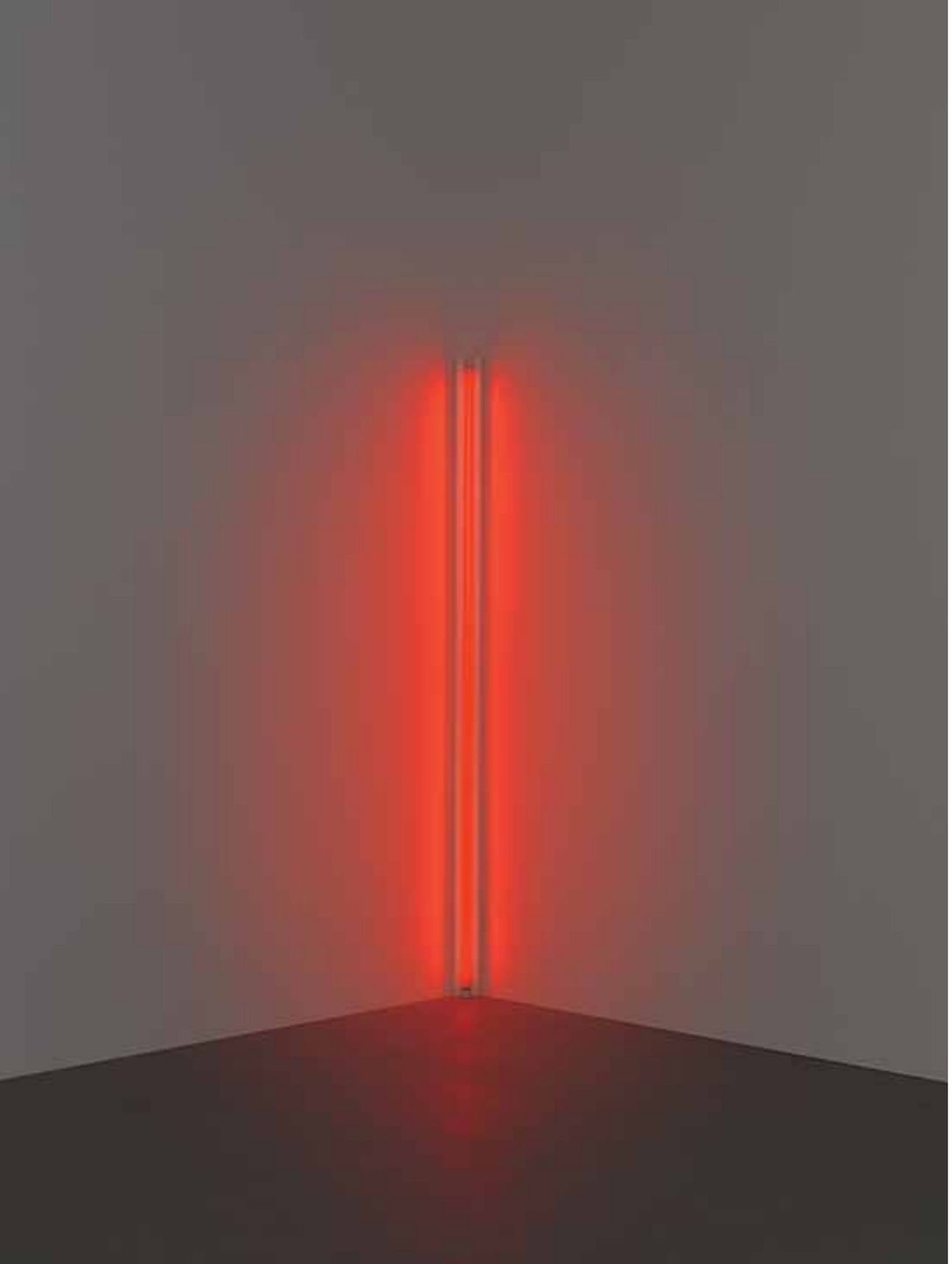
14 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 3–4.

15 For a survey of other practices in art since 1960 that have taken gender's mutability and multiplicity as a theme, see Frank Wagner, Kasper König, and Julia Friedrich, eds., *Das achte Feld: Geschlechter, Leben und Begehren in der Kunst seit 1960* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz and Museum Ludwig, 2006).

16 In this regard, such scenes turned on the attempt to establish gender agreements, in the sense proposed in Whitney Davis, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 220–33. While Davis's analysis primarily

deals with representation, the method of tracking agreement classes with regard to gender is also suggestive when dealing with abstraction and other forms of non-representational art. The sculptors I have chosen for analysis, from this perspective, are particularly interesting for the ways in which they confound or defer agreements and invite non-agreements and contestations, as in the dialogic situations discussed in the chapters.

17 Bonnie Clearwater, "John Chamberlain interview, 1991 Jan. 29–30," Oral History Archives, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 16.



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Frontispiece: Dan Flavin, *red out of a corner (to Annina)*, 1963/70 (detail of fig. 116).
Page vi: Detail of Nancy Grossman, *For David Smith*, 1965 (fig. 82).

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