ACTS OF STILLNESS: STATUES, PERFORMATIVITY, AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

David J. Getsy

The idea for this essay was sparked by reading Barbara Johnson's "Muteness Envy" (1998), in which she interrogated the canon of Western poetry and its persistent idealization of female silence.[1] Muteness, she argued, became a "repository of aesthetic value" in poems such as John Keats's "Ode On a Grecian Urn" (1819) because of the ways that the inability to speak served to facilitate patriarchal power.[2] In the tradition she critiques, a lack of access to speech is upheld as a precursor to the judgment of beauty. When reading through Johnson's many cases of the ways in which muteness incited the desire to control, to ravish, or to protect, I was struck by an analogous feature in the history of sculpture. If, in Johnson's formulation, muteness becomes the condition that both sparks and authorizes rape, paternalism, and objectification, then how does muteness operate in relation to surrogates for human beings that stand before us and do not speak? *Muteness* is a special feature of poetry and prose because of those media's direct relation to language, and I began to question how, for sculpture, the related and more fundamental term is *stillness*.

What follows is a proposition for reassessing the history of sculpture with a view toward characterizing a wider range of viewers' reactions to statues. In this, I consider the sculptural encounter as a theater of power relations between active viewers and passive statues. This dynamic is fueled by the bodily and spatial engagements of the viewer or artist with the three-dimensional representation of the human body, most pointedly at a one-to-one scale, that stands before them. My emphasis will be on statues in the post-Enlightenment tradition of European and American art, with an emphasis on the history of modern sculpture, but one could ask analogous, if differently inflected, questions of other times and places. I have pitched my argument toward recurring patterns in the history of sculpture, and I have avoided in-depth case studies in preference for a more wide-ranging and general assessment of the effects of statues acting

on us by standing there, motionless. The performativity of statues' passive resistance has underwritten the aesthetics of sculpture, and a focus on stillness can illuminate the ethical contours and recurring historical themes of the sculptural encounter.

* * *

A three-dimensional figurative image—that is, a statue—both depicts a body in space and is a body-in-space. I can look at a statue of an athlete, of Apollo, of a fieldworker, of a politician, of a heroine, or of a fawn and see it in its representational distance. I am confronted by an image of something not actually present, perhaps never seen in everyday life, or maybe recognized as a character from books, poems, dreams, or the televised news. At the same time that it functions in this way as a three-dimensional image, the statue is also present for me as a physical object displacing space with its volume. It stands, sits, or lies in front of me. I can touch it. I do touch it. I walk around it. I move up to it. I walk away from it.

Sculpture differs fundamentally from the vast majority of two-dimensional, pictorial media in its coextensiveness as depicted image and depicting object. A statue can be equivalent in volume to the represented body, sharing its proportions and construction. Jean-Paul Sartre saw this as the paradox of the statue: "I have *real* relations with an illusion; or, if you prefer, my true distance from the block of marble has been confused with my imaginary distance from [the image it represents]."[3] Because of this paradox, the address of a statue is necessarily corporeal, spatial, and relational. Sartre saw the statue as "depend[ing] on the relativity of the angles from which it is viewed. As for the spectator, he takes the imaginary for the real and the real for the imaginary."[4] The situation the statue presents is more akin to an encounter with another person than any two-dimensional representation could offer. In the present essay, I will be speaking mainly about life-size, freestanding statues out of efficiency, but analogous spatial-representational activations are varyingly present in different scales from the handheld to the gigantic. That is, even if the statue is monumental or miniscule, the bodily sense of scale becomes a corporeal link between the viewer and the actual presence of the three-dimensional image made from such materials as marble, bronze, or wood.

Space is shared with statues, and there is rarely a background to a statue other than the room in which we encounter it and the ground on which we stand with it. There is no visible and physical boundary as there is with a two-dimensional image. The pictorial involves a translation of the

three-dimensional world to a new world untouchable behind the picture plane. By contrast, the condition of sculptural representation is boundary-less in its physical proximity and real tactility. Despite this activation of the sculptural body and its corporeal relationality, the statue nevertheless refuses to act like, move like, or respond to us as though it actually were the human body it represents.[5] The statue stands before us, confronting us with its immotility, its muteness, and its obdurate copresence. As the poet Frank O'Hara once wrote in reference to the work of the sculptor David Smith, "It is the nature of sculpture to be there. If you don't like it, you wish it would get out of the way, because it occupies space which your body could occupy."[6]

This quality of statues to be in bodies in space with us is always balanced by their stillness and silence. Perhaps the central theme in the history and theory of sculpture has been the struggle with animation and movement. Of course, there have been examples of poseable, motile, and animatronic sculptures for centuries, but these represent a very small proportion of the history of sculpture. In general, the history of writing about sculpture has focused on static, immotile objects. This history registers the presumption of stillness in its literature with such organizing tropes as the dream of the moving statue or the recurring metaphor of the cold statue haunted by deathliness. In other words, even though statues take on the shape and, often, size of humans, they are seen as false and inferior in the incompleteness of their approximation. Their stillness is taken as a lack of life.

One could point to an abundance of examples of this in the aesthetic and critical writing about sculpture in the Western tradition. Perhaps one of the most forthright of such statements is also one of the earliest. The second-century Christian polemicist Clement of Alexandria railed against the worship of statues, and in so doing he concluded that their stillness was proof of their deathliness and their duplicity:

> There is not a single living creature that is not more worthy of honour than these statues; and how it comes to pass that senseless things have been deified I am at a loss to know, and I deeply pity for their lack of understanding the men who are thus miserably wandering in error. For even though there are some living creatures which do not possess all the senses, as worms and caterpillars, and all those that appear to be imperfect from the first through the conditions of their birth, such as moles and the field-mouse, which Nicander calls "blind and terrible"; yet these

are better than those images and statues which are entirely dumb. For they have at any rate some one sense, that of hearing, let us say, or of touch, or something corresponding to smell or taste; but these statues do not even partake of one sense. There are also many kinds of living creatures, such as the oyster family, which possess neither sight nor hearing nor yet speech; nevertheless they live and grow and are even affected by the moon. But the statues are motionless things incapable of action or sensation; they are bound and nailed and fastened, melted, filed, sawn, polished, carved. The dumb earth is dishonoured when sculptors pervert its peculiar nature and by their art entice men to worship it; while the god-makers, if there is any sense in me, worship not gods and daemons, but earth and art, which is all the statues are. For a statue is really lifeless matter shaped by a craftsman's hand.[7]

This early assessment of sculpture's deficiency and its effects is carried through many accounts of statues, up through the Enlightenment tradition when the myth of Pygmalion's animation of his cold and unresponsive statue becomes perhaps the structuring trope of the aesthetics of sculpture. The fear that statues were merely "motionless things incapable of action" and "lifeless matter" motivated both the creators of statues and those who would write about them. As Sartre would observe a millennium and three-quarters later, "The truth is that for three thousand years sculptors have been carving only cadavers."[8]

Such anxieties of animation determine the history of the statue. The statue's supposed lifelessness (already decried by Clement) served as the tradition's foil. Indeed, figurative sculptors developed an arsenal of methods directed at imbuing their static bodies with the impression of life. They spent a great deal of energy trying to convey actual movement and the capacity for motility in their sculpted bodies in an attempt to convince viewers to look past the obdurate stillness of their works. Contrapposto, facial expressions, gestures, and other implied movements were all used to simulate motion and its capacities in unmoving anthropomorphic masses. Consequently, the most biting criticism of sculpture was to call it cold and lifeless. This was most articulately written about by the Victorian Aestheticist critic Walter Pater, who argued in 1893, "The limitation of sculpture results from the material, and other necessary conditions of all sculptured work, and consists in the tendency of such work to a hard realism, a one-sided presentment of mere form, that solid material frame

which only motion can relieve." He concluded that "each great system of sculpture resist[s] . . . its stiffness, its heaviness, and death."[9]

One could look to Pater's exact contemporary Edward Onslow Ford and his *Shelley Memorial* at Oxford, completed in 1892, in light of this attitude toward sculpture's struggle (figure 1). Ford attempted to push the boundaries of realism in sculpture by depicting the corpse—the lifeless body that has lost its capacity to move. Though not wholly unprecedented, Ford made this a bolder move than tomb sculptures or effigies of the sleeping departed that preceded his work. He did this in order to activate the materiality of the white marble and fuse it with the pale flesh he was representing, thus finding in his thanatic realism a way out of the limitation of sculpture's stillness.

The corpse has proven to be an important subject matter for sculptors attempting to deal with their art's supposed lifelessness. We need only look to another important example, Alberto Giacometti's *Woman with Her Throat Cut* of 1932, for the way in which Giacometti both justified and amplified his move off the pedestal to the floor through the subject

Figure 1. Edward Onslow Ford, Shelley Memorial *(1892, detail), marble and bronze, life size. University College, Oxford University, Oxford. Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.*

matter of the corpse (figure 2). We approach the sculpture as we would an actual dead body encountered on the street. Its spatial confrontation with the viewer and its groundbreaking removal of the pedestal or plinth to activate that confrontation are both predicated on obviating the nagging issue of sculpture's immotility. Only in the subject matter of death can the human body be like the statue in its ceaseless stillness. I regard both Ford and Giacometti's works as key moments of commentary in the history of three-dimensional representation, for both found a means to trump our evaluation of the sculptural body in terms of its lack of movement.[10] They made the bold move of embracing the lack of life in the statue, giving us the dead body as the answer.

Most sculptures, however, are not of corpses. Rather, the central justification for the figurative statue historically has been to keep the dead alive, to memorialize them, to embody their characters, or to project the ideals they supposedly upheld in their lives. The corpse and its loss of animation, however, haunt the history of sculpture, becoming the allegory for its struggle with inert materiality. There are plenty of dreams of animated paintings and, of course, there are moving pictures, but one could argue that the history of the statue is nothing less than a history of compensations for sculpture's stillness. Consequently, the dream of animation looms large whenever the statue is written about. Ovid's tale of Pygmalion is the foundational story of this tradition, and it is replayed and referenced

Figure 2. Alberto Giacometti, Woman with Her Throat Cut *(1932), bronze. National Galleries of Scotland (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh).*

whenever the statue is in play. The Pygmalion myth has been well stud-
ied by Kenneth Gross, Essaka Joshua, Mary Sheriff, George Hersey, and
Victor Stoichita, among others, revealing it to be a fundamental literary
trope that takes the statue, quite literally, as its animating figure.[11] For
artists, art critics, and art historians, furthermore, the unmoving sculp-
ture has been more than a metaphor or literary image. It has been a driv-
ing concern, and the problem of the statue's confrontational inertness has
preoccupied those who would praise, criticize, create, narrate, or analyze
sculptural objects.

In all of these traditions of discussing statues, stillness is defined nega-
tively as an absence of movement and responsiveness. As with Johnson's
"muteness envy," there is an idealization and aestheticization of a position
constituted as a lack to be filled. In other words, this supposed inade-
quacy is postulated as the statue's undeniable burden, and consequently
the statue is cast in a passive and subordinate role to the viewer, the critic,
and the sculptor. Nevertheless, this lack of life does not mean that stat-
ues are overlooked as mere objects. Quite the contrary, a belief in statues'
need drives many narratives about their effects on the living. In poems
and stories, we read of loving caresses bringing statues to life, hear tales of
men locking themselves in temples to make love to statues of Aphrodite,
and learn cautionary justifications for iconoclasm.[12] Psychiatric and sexo-
logical literatures warn against agalmatophilia or Pygmalionism—the
sexual attraction to the stillness of statues.[13] Across this range of responses,
the frozen lifelessness of the statue induces extreme affect and reaction in
viewers, justifying a range of actions not permissible with the living body.
Indeed, seeing the lack of movement of the statue as a taunt can help
us to understand just why so many statues on college campuses become
the victims of pranks or dress-up. As well, this idealized passivity of the
sculptural body underwrites the failure of animation that is the primary
example of Sigmund Freud's uncanny.

The history of sculpture evinces the recurring desire to assert the statue's
lack of action, and the nomination of this trait as something to be corrected
or overcome often rings disingenuous. Technologies of animatronics have
been around for centuries, yet sculptors and critics still expect, look for, and
admire immotile statues. The organizing myths of the history of sculpture
and the themes of its aesthetics all serve to install stillness as the statue's
guiding principle—even as it is recurringly derided. There is a compulsion
to performatively reiterate the claim of the statue's inability to act, and those
claims often take the form of a paternalistic wish for the statue's life or a dis-
ingenuous fear of its deathliness. This pattern in the history of sculpture ef-
fectively idealizes motility and activity, which become comfortably located

in the circumambulating viewer or the adept artist. In short, a product of the discourse of the statue is the valorization of the superior position of the mobile viewer or artist.[14] The continued and repeated arguments about the statue's lack of animation serve as a means of aggrandizing beholders' capacity to move, to act, to control. In short, the stillness of statues may be lamented, but it is nevertheless enjoyed for its reinforcing of the motile viewer or artist's power over that statue.

But what if we dispense with such stories of lack and inadequacy and perform an inversion of their terms to make this negative account positive? This won't wash away the problematic assumptions of the gendered lineage of Pygmalion (nor the idealized need and receptivity of Galatea), but it will help reveal some of its key terms. Rather than see a lack of motility, I want to uphold the statue's refusal to move. Its immobility is an act—a performative act—that affects those who would approach it. The statue's acts of stillness are unnerving, disconcerting, and defiant, let's not forget. It is this refusal that catalyzes what I see as a central issue for sculptural aesthetics: that is, how the physical copresence of the statue initiates a cascade of effects on the viewer in which she or he attempts to manage the incursion into their space by a material object that is equivalent to the image that it depicts three-dimensionally.[15] The management of that incursion on the part of the viewer often takes the form of a desire to control, and the responses to statues' acts of stillness can manifest themselves in pleas, in probing caresses, in desires, in fantasies of rape, in violence, in paternalism, in destruction, in mocking indifference, and in violation. Aggressive responses or negative affects often fall out of accounts of sculptural aesthetics in which such positive terms as beauty, interest, eroticism, or pleasure are emphasized, but they are nevertheless part of the larger history of sculpture and its receptions. When collated with the negative reactions and reprisals, these positive responses are revealed, too, to rely on the unequal power dynamics of active/passive that are endlessly replicated when the statue's stillness is idealized for what it supposedly misses. I propose that acknowledging statues' performativity and viewers' consequent desires to control it offers a means of better articulating a theory of the sculptural encounter in all of its variety. Our encounter with statues is always an encounter with other bodies that share our space, wait for us, and defiantly remain unresponsive. Consequently, a different way of characterizing the discourse of the statue is to see it as a history of its acts of passive resistance to the motile viewer or artist's attempts to assert control.

Figurative sculpture makes this relation manifest and visible, but this dynamic also haunts other sculptures that take on a minimal set of the

most basic traits of human bodies. In his 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried's infamous denunciation of Minimalism rested on his perceptive claims about anthropomorphism in literalist sculpture. Whereas the sculptors associated with Minimalism claimed to avoid reference and achieve literality, Fried argued that the sculpture was there waiting for viewers and was fundamentally anthropomorphic. Of Minimalist sculpture, Fried wrote,

> [T]he beholder knows himself to stand in an indeterminate, open-ended—and unexacting—relation *as subject* to the impassive object on the wall or floor. In fact, being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest, entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another *person*.[16]

Fried then proceeded to call out Minimalism for its anthropomorphism, using Tony Smith's human-scale *Die* (1962) as his example (figure 3). Fried concluded, "One way of describing what Smith was making might be something like a surrogate person—that is, a kind of *statue*." Fried continued to invoke the image of the figurative statue in all its stillness and muteness as the key to understanding the exaggerated bodily confrontations and relations at which Minimalist sculpture had aimed with its banishing of representation. He returned to this tactic, saying in one of the most famous lines of the essay,

> An inasmuch as literalist work *depends* on the beholder, is *incomplete* without him, it *has* been. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone—which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him.[17]

In making his case, Fried effectively characterized the encounter with the literalist sculpture as two things: as intercorporeal (due to the sculpture's nascent anthropomorphism) and as reactive (i.e., a response to the sculpture's performing of copresence). I am not interested in adjudicating Fried versus Tony Smith or Robert Morris in this case. His terms, however, are useful in that they point out how human-scale bodily relations—even with a cube—usher in affects in the viewer that are determined by experiences of previous social, bodily, interpersonal, and intersubjective relations.[18] Fried activated these specific interpersonal experiences when he claimed that the objects "waited"[19] for him and compared this to the

Figure 3. Tony Smith, Die *(1962)/fabricated (1968), steel with oiled finish, 182.9 × 182.9 × 182.9 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; gift of the Collectors Committee 2003.77.1. © 2013 Estate of Tony Smith/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.*

"disquieting" effect of unexpectedly coming upon such a silent presence in "somewhat darkened rooms."[20] No less than Giacometti, Fried used the intercorporeal and spatial confrontation of the shared space of sculpture and viewer to intimate scenes of danger, control, and excitement.

The affects Fried enumerated are created because the sculpture is understood to be a statue acting on the viewer. His limit case helps to show that sculpture's stillness is nothing short of a performative act. The steel cube, the marble, or bronze statue confronts the viewer not just as a hunk of material and not just as a three-dimensional image but as a body in our space acting by not moving.

The discipline of performance studies has taught us to attend to the history of acts. Accordingly, nothing is ever merely acted upon without, too, performing—even if that performance is of passivity or, in this case, mute stillness. Similarly, such perspectives as speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, posthuman studies, actor-network theory, and thing

theory have all called for a greater recognition of objects' agency within a matrix of acts, of which human participation is just an element.[21] One of the implications of these perspectives is to decenter the human into a network of material relations, only some of which involve human agents. Statues are, without a doubt, some of the most privileged of objects, anthropomorphic in a literal rather than tropological sense. What they perform is their bodily relationality to the humans that they resemble, and their acts are still and motionless.

Beyond inverting the negative aspersions of stillness as subservience, it is productive to see that performance of motionlessness as a kind of critical passivity—that is, as an enactment of passive resistance. In other words, the statue's act of stillness compels the viewer to negotiate the contours of power established between their moving body and the defiant, unmoving one presented by the sculpture. As we have learned from the history of nonviolent resistance as a tactic of civil disobedience, the refusal to move or to respond can be a powerful act that exposes the dispensation of power and the ethics of those who wield it.[22]

Confronted by its refusal to move, people take liberties with sculpture all the time. They have been performatively cast as stillness's target, reactant, and addressee. They respond; they want to touch it, to feel it, to kick it. Under the guise of exploration or appreciation, they probe and caress the sculptural body. They walk around it and examine its details and forms. They sometimes play at hurting it, giving it a slap or a poke. As we have all seen from sculptures placed in public places or, indeed, anywhere other than a museum, sculptures bear the evidence of people's desires to touch, to feel, and to vandalize, and to objectify. The nude held sway in the history of sculpture far longer than it did in other media, I think, precisely because its spatial and tactile passivity authorizes an attitude toward the art object that masks a desire to objectify the bodily image. Again, both the aesthetics of sculpture and the history of the sculptural encounter are characterized by these *reactions* on the part of the viewer to the statue's acts of stillness. That is, the fascination, disdain, boredom, excitement, mocking judgment, longing, hatred, and laughter statues inspire can productively be understood as responses to the statues' performances of mute motionlessness.

The performativity of the act of stillness makes the statue—despite its monochromy, its immotility, its heaviness, its unresponsiveness—into something like a defiant agent. One should be clear, however, that the statue is not a subject in the full sense of the term. As Whitney Davis has noted, "Artworks are never subjects, but always objects; only subjects are subjects."[23] The mutual recognition between subjects that defines

intersubjectivity is a powerful and infrequent episode amongst a lifetime of interpersonal encounters and negotiations.[24] Intersubjectivity can be vertiginous, thrilling, comforting, or agonistic, but its transformative potential is underwritten by a logic of sameness and mutuality. Two-way recognition requires as much, and both the joy of rapport or the despair of discord that intersubjective encounters can usher in are made possible by confronting categorical likeness. For this reason, agents of an entirely different category (an object, a statue, or even a person characterized with prejudice as inferior or inhuman) do not operate as subjects despite their efficacy, resistance, or power.[25]

Individually or collectively, fantasies of or wishes for the intersubjective are often projected onto objects or events (as with the case of some reactions to statues). Such beliefs can be enabling, powerful, catalyzing, or structuring. However, the one-sided nature of the exchange with the object means that—however much it acts in the world as agent due to these mediations and uses—it cannot offer intersubjectivity in the full sense. The object (as well as the object-as-agent) remains reflective of the individual or collective projections onto it. This distinction is useful because it allows one to examine how fantasmatic, projective (false) "intersubjectivity" often reveals a great deal about the subject(s) who so deploy the object. Statues—because of their figurative valence—are exemplary of this. They are not subjects, but they are sometimes treated like them. They act as agents because of viewers' projections onto their material rendering or evocation of the human form—re-created as copresent in three dimensions with the viewer. They function as ersatz persons (not subjects) that, in their defiant stillness, expose the ways in which living viewers respond to that inertness. Indeed, it is precisely because the statue is an acting agent but not a recognizing subject that its encounter stages power dynamics that evoke social, interpersonal, and corporeal interactions. How do viewers choose to use the power that their capacity to move seems to give them over the defiantly unmoving bodies of sculpture? It is here where the ethical contours of the sculptural encounter manifest themselves, as motile viewers confront the resistant passivity of the statue's copresence. I contend that the viewer's response to the statue's stillness most often takes the form of an assertion of control—whether that assertion takes the form of a nonconsensual caress, of vandalism, or merely of the viewer's insistent urge to show off the ability to move by circumambulating and examining.

I think it is important to see the networked and two-directional relations between the statue and the viewer's projections as a means to reclaim statues' resulting performativity.[26] The power dynamics of the sculptural

encounter are made more visible once the terms are inverted by upholding the statue's stillness as an act of passive resistance. Indeed, the trope of the statue's lack of life that so determines the history of sculpture is endlessly repeated precisely because it, *pace* Johnson, idealizes that lack for the ways in which it seems to authorize acts of mastery. That caress, that kick, that sneer, that giggle that are so frequent when viewers encounter statues (in a museum or outside of one) are acts of mastery that the rhetoric of lifelessness in the statuary tradition seeks to mask and justify. By shifting perspective to the statue's positive performance of stillness, one can characterize the full range of physical engagements with the statue as reactions to its passive resistance.

One result of tracking such patterns of response is the greater visibility of gender's role in the statuary tradition. Again to invoke Johnson's claims about the idealization of muteness, the passivity of the statue is upheld as an organizing ideal and used as justification for acts of power in these accounts that so often associate this passivity stereotypically with women. Pygmalion's glad Galatea is the most prominent, but we could also look to E. T. A. Hoffman's Olympia or Fritz Lang's robot Maria from *Metropolis* (1927) (or, for a cautionary inversion, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* [1818]). It is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the long list of historical examples that bears out this claim about the ways in which the sculptural encounter becomes a site for the replaying of gender difference and power, but suffice it to recall that the myths of the animate statue are almost all about statues of women.

But, of course, there are also statues of men, and these, too, fall prey to the same exercises of reactive control as do statues of women. A statue of a man—especially, but not just, an unclothed man—is marked as an object, despite the statue's best attempts to convey a representation of a subject. As an object, the statue of the man, too, is the recipient of reactions of control, and the predominance of gender violence in the history of vandalism of statues bears this out. I am reminded of Jules Dalou's statue of *Victor Noir* (1891), which has had its crotch rubbed shiny by generations of Parisian women (and random passersby in Père Lachaise Cemetery) who consider his ample dressing to the left to be a fertility charm (figure 4).[27] Liberties and violations are still exercises of power, and what is important here is not the named gender of the viewer but, rather, positions of active and passive that have historically taken sexual difference as their primary metaphors.

In this essay, I have largely restricted myself to conventional statues, lifesize and freestanding, but I need to reemphasize that implications of this could be extended into the many other three-dimensional bodily images that surround us. Rainer Maria Rilke, writing on dolls, for instance, came

Figure 4. Aimé-Jules Dalou, Victor Noir *(1889–1891), bronze, 190 × 97 × 28 cm. Père-Lachaise Cemetery, Paris.*

to a similar conclusion about the performance of stillness: "With the doll we were forced to assert ourselves, for, had we surrendered ourselves to it, there would then have been no one there at all."[28] For Rilke, the doll forces us to react—to assert ourselves—in response to its passivity.

I will conclude with a brief mention of a doll sculpture that brings the gendered implications of the performance of stillness and the reactive assertion of control to the surface. Amber Hawk Swanson's 2006–8 *Amber Doll Project* involved the creation of a life-size RealDoll sex doll in her own image. After Amber Doll was brought into the world, Hawk Swanson commenced a romantic relationship and a collaborative artistic partnership with her (figure 5). Hawk Swanson's aim in this and related work was to investigate the slipperiness between being victim and victimizer, exploring both her self-portrayal as passive object and her role as controlling agent. She pursued this paradoxical dynamic by staging a series of events in which she would subject Amber Doll (and, since it was a self-portrait, herself by implication) to uncontrolled nonart social situations. She watched her own life-size sculptural image endure as she

purposefully abandoned Amber Doll in such places as a skating rink, a wedding reception, and a tailgate party (figure 6). As expected, Amber Doll became the target of sexual violence, but she was also the victim of the violence of curiosity as liberties were taken with her passive body by both male and female participants. In an interview with me, Hawk Swanson remarked that she came to realize that in any such situation there was—in addition to the bald exercises of sexualized power—always someone else who would pass by and stop the violation.[29] For instance, while some college-age men were tauntingly exposing Amber Doll's genitals, an older man walked by and scolded them for their actions. His act of protecting paternalism, however, was also an attempt to control the situation of Amber Doll's stillness. According to Hawk Swanson, this Good Samaritan was also fulfilling a desire for mastery over the passive body and its capacities, just as much as the boys were violating it.

I bring in Hawk Swanson's complex and multistaged project here because of the ways it hyperbolically plays out the power dynamics of statues' passive resistance. Hawk Swanson intentionally produces morally ambivalent and emotionally charged situations, and her works enmesh viewers in the power dynamics of victimization, whether they are compelled to protect, curious to examine, or enabled to violate.[30] In these public performances, it is the confrontation with the unmoving body that

Figure 5. Amber Hawk Swanson, To Hold, In Bed (from the Amber Doll Project) (2007), archival pigment print, 53 × 35.5 cm. © Amber Hawk Swanson, 2014.

Figure 6. Amber Hawk Swanson, To Violate, Tailgate (from the Amber Doll Project)
(2007), archival pigment print, 76.2 × 101.6 cm. © Amber Hawk Swanson, 2014.

catalyzes the dynamics of power and control.[31] Hawk Swanson does this
by realizing—and sacrificing—her own self-image to the real world of
bodily and social contact, prompting beholders to decide on the ethics and
emotions of their reactions to the critical passivity of Amber Doll.[32]

Hawk Swanson invested her life-size self-portrait sculpture with an
ersatz personhood, and she achieved for herself a receptivity closer than
any would-be Pygmalion. She exaggerated the myths of animation and
of passivity that characterize the history of sculpture, pushing them to
their limits in order to expose the exercise of control that so easily rises to
the surface of any sculptural encounter. Furthermore, Hawk Swanson's
work shows how quickly gender and sex become central to the content of
these acts of control, as viewers repeatedly chose to focus on Amber Doll's
body as gendered and sexualized. Hawk Swanson's example (however
extreme) uses sex and gender to distill the scene of confrontation posed to
the viewer by an unmoving, physically present three-dimensional image
of the body. Her work illustrates how the passive resistance of the sculp-
tural body poses an immediate opportunity for the confronted viewers
to use their ability to move, to touch, and to control. They are postulated

as the addressees of an ethical predicament about how to dispense (or to withhold) power in the face of the passive body.

Recasting the statue's stillness as a resistant act enables one to see more clearly that the space of the sculptural encounter is a theater of power dynamics and corporeal relations. In that theater, viewers (and, to an extent, artists) are faced by passively resistant sculptural bodies, and they engage in a range of relations and reactions to them as both corporeal images and physical copresences. These three-dimensional figures are nonhuman players in this scene, but they nevertheless initiate and make visible the principles that the viewer calls on when confronted with passivity. The sculptural encounter, then, has never been just about the disinterested aesthetic judgments of beauty but also about the ethics of interpersonal relations. The passive resistance of the immotile statue stands up to the motile viewer, leaving them in the position of choosing how to act. In order to undertake a more comprehensive, extensive account of the history of art and aesthetics, we must attend to the ethics that underwrite viewers' finding of themselves in a position to wield or withhold degrees of power. Sculpture's particular interlacing of physicality and representation in three dimensions animates this theater of power relations and its potential for actual bodily contact.

It is incumbent to examine the patterns in the history of sculpture and its literature of justification in order to challenge the ways in which the statue's acts make visible larger cultural forces. Many sculptural encounters may be neutral or uninteresting in this regard, but it is imperative to have an account of the limit cases (of vandalism, of the sexual caress, of the antagonistic kick) that are normally seen as beyond the bounds of the aesthetics of sculpture. They are merely the more extreme manifestations of the ethical predicaments that arise when viewers are confronted with a statue's acts of stillness.

David J. Getsy is Goldabelle McComb Finn Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His books include Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art and Performance, 1965–1975 *(Soberscove Press, 2012),* From Diversion to Subversion: Games, Play, and Twentieth-Century Art *(Penn State University Press, 2011),* Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture *(Yale University Press, 2010), and* Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905 *(Yale University Press, 2004).*

NOTES

1. Barbara Johnson, "Muteness Envy," in *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race, and Gender* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 128–53.

2. See also the later expansion of some of these issues in Barbara Johnson's *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), which explores animation and the in-animate in a wide range of cultural texts. Most pertinent to the present analysis is Johnson's discussion of the role of the Pygmalion myth and of the image of the Classical statue in the work of nineteenth-century Parnassian poets and their contemporaries (109–30).

3. Sartre saw this as a limitation to be overcome and argued that Alberto Giacometti's post-war works did this by attempting to render the sculptor's acts of looking at the model across a distance. He saw this "leap into the realm of the unreal" as successful because it made the relation to the material, sculptural object secondary. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the viewer still must confront the material and physically present sculptural body despite the distancing embedded in its image by Giacometti (Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Quest for the Absolute" [1948], in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin [New York: Citadel Press, 1965], 388–401, quotation on 395).

4. Ibid.

5. This dynamic of the representational statue offers a heightened experience of what Alex Potts has argued to be a central feature of modern sculptural aesthetics: the sculpture's incitement of fantasies of rapport with objects and its concurrent resistance to be other than an obdurate external thing. He notes,

> The sculptural object within modern bourgeois aesthetics at one level suggests the possibility of an object in the external world that is entirely amenable to the spectator's projective gaze. . . . At another level, the sculptural object is so literally separate and alien, an ob-durate thing rather than an amenable image or representation, that it cannot help but present the flip-side of the phantasy of oneness with the external world—the experience of the latter as radically unassimilable to the self's desires, as hostile threat or barrier to these. (Alex Potts, "Male Phantasy and Modern Sculpture," *Oxford Art Journal* 15, no. 2 [1992]: 38–47 quotation on 46–47)

6. Voice-over script for Frank O'Hara's "Sculpting Master of Bolton Landing," 1964, Frank O'Hara Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

7. Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks*, trans. G. W. Butterworth, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 92 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 115–17.

8. Sartre, "Quest for the Absolute," 390.

9. Walter Pater, "Luca della Robbia" (1893), in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 41–46, quotations on 42.

10. For further explication of Onslow Ford and Giacometti's works in this context, see David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 119–41; and David Getsy, "Fallen Women: The Gender of Horizontality and the Abandonment of the Pedestal by Giacometti and Epstein," in *Display and Displacement: Sculpture and the Pedestal from Renaissance to Post-modern*, ed. Alexandra Gerstein (London: Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum and Paul Holberton, 2007), 114–29.

11. Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Essaka Joshua, *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in English Literature*, Nineteenth Century Series (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2001); Mary D. Sheriff, *Moved by Love: Inspired Artists and Deviant Women in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); George L. Hersey, *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Victor I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*, Bross

Lecture Series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); and Johnson, *Persons and Things.* Similarly, the passive receptivity of the statue is key to the Pandora myth and its translation into sculpture (see Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 213–40).

12. For discussion, see Miguel Tamen, *Friends of Interpretable Objects* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

13. For an overview, see A. Scobie and J. Taylor, "Perversions Ancient and Modern: I. Agalmatophilia, the Statue Syndrome," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 1 (1975): 49–54. See also Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 1, part 3: *Sexual Selection in Man* (1905; repr., New York: Random House, 1942), 1:188; and Murray J. White, "The Statue Syndrome: Perversion? Fantasy? Anecdote?" *Journal of Sex Research* 14, no. 4 (1978): 246–49.

14. Such valorizations of domination often go unquestioned in the writing about sculpture. For instance, a recent article by Martin Kayman proposes the "statuesque" as an analogue to the "statute" in legal theory and uses the mobility of the viewer as a paradigm for the civil subject's capacity for dissent and evaluation of new laws ("The Law and the Statuesque," *Law Critique* 24, no. 1 [2013]: 1–22). To summarize his complex argument, a new law is erected (like a statue) and the motile subject must test the law from different perspectives in order to create a new account of justice from it and its changes to previous laws. Kayman analogizes this to the history of sculptural aesthetics and the problem of animation in which an inanimate statue spurs the viewer's invention of "fictions of life." He concludes, "As the experience of the statuesque moves from inert material to an illusion of animation to material again, we are left, in the end, with the narrative of how we found life in the thing" (19). While there is much value in Kayman's sophisticated argument, his position nevertheless inherits from the history of sculptural aesthetics its heroization of the motile viewer's domination of the immotile statue.

15. Alex Potts has seen in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Pygmalion* (1762) a seminal formulation of this issue. He draws out Rousseau's foregrounding of narcissism and its projection onto Galatea:

> Perhaps inadvertently, Rousseau makes an important point here about the narcissism inherent in one's seeing a figurative sculpture as alive in some way. Insomuch as a sculpture succeeds in evoking something living, this happens by way of an enhanced sense of one's own physical presence facing the sculpture. Its momentary resonance is partly an effect of an internalized feeling of being there provoked by its intrusion on one's space. There is simultaneously a narcissistic identification with the imagined figure and a separation and distancing, not the least because it is fixed and inert. This ambiguity can be pleasurable, but it can also be frustratingly elusive and dissatisfying. (*The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 35)

16. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (1967): 12–23, quotation on 16.

17. Ibid., 21.

18. For discussion, see Potts, *Sculptural Imagination*, 188–95.

19. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 21.

20. Ibid., 16.

21. The literature on these object-oriented perspectives is growing rapidly. For useful entries, see Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*, Posthumanities Series

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and Bill Brown, ed., *Things,* Critical Inquiry Book (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

22. See, for instance, Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003): 395–412.

23. Whitney Davis, "The Subject in the Scene of Representation," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 4 (1994): 570–75, quotation on 571.

24. My usage of intersubjectivity draws on the legacies of object relations in psychoanalysis. For a useful entry into this literature, see Jessica Benjamin's *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), and *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

25. With this more delineated definition of intersubjectivity, one can still see how unequal and unlike interpersonal confrontations can emerge as transformative. In the case of prejudice against other persons, for instance, it has been a staple of the literature about the overcoming of bias that a moment of intersubjectivity can erupt into and destabilize power-determined interpersonal relations. At this moment, a radical potential for over-coming (or, sadly, redoubling) prejudice is made possible precisely because a recognition of sameness has afforded the mutuality of the intersubjective.

26. For a different account of performativity in the history and aesthetics of sculpture (in which the statuary tradition's construction of bodily ideality is argued to be a performa-tive effect), see Catherine M. Soussloff, "Like a Performance: Performativity and the Historicized Body, from Bellori to Mapplethorpe," in *Acting on the Past: Historical Per-formance Across the Disciplines*, eds. Mark Franko and Annette Richards (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 69–98.

27. See Caterina Y. Pierre, "The Pleasure and Piety of Touch in Aimé-Jules Dalou's *Tomb of Victor Noir*," *Sculpture Journal* 19, no. 2 (2010): 173–85.

28. Rainer Maria Rilke, "Some Reflections on Dolls" (1914), in *Where Silence Reigns: Selected Prose by Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. D. Levertov, trans. G. Craig Houston (New York: New Directions, 1978), 43–50, quotation on 45.

29. Amber Hawk Swanson, interview by the author, 10 April 2012.

30. More broadly, Amber Hawk Swanson's work extends to social media, where commenta-tors on videos of the *Amber Doll Project* perform analogous acts of criticism, control, insult, and protection on Hawk Swanson herself as its author and artist. For a more extensive discussion of these aspects of Hawk Swanson's work, see David Getsy, "Queer Exercises: Amber Hawk Swanson's Performances of Self-Realization," *GLQ* 19, no. 4 (2013): 465–85.

31. Consequently, the art-historical context for this aspect of Hawk Swanson's practice would be the work of earlier performance artists who adopted passivity and posed moral predicaments to viewers by making their bodies into unmoving objects—like statues. I am thinking, in particular, of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (orig. 1964), Scott Burton's *Self-work: Dream* (1969), Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (orig. 1974), and Chris Burden's *Back to You* (1974).

32. In this regard, Hawk Swanson aims to produce difficulty—in the sense of the term lucidly examined in Jennifer Doyle's *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Con-temporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).