Reuniting the Mind and Body: Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate and Phenomenological Experience

Traci McDowell Matthews
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS, THEATER AND DANCE

REUNITING THE MIND AND BODY:
ANISH KAPOOR’S CLOUD GATE AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

By

TRACI McDOWELL MATTHEWS

A Thesis submitted to the
Department of Art History
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2010

Copyright © 2010
Traci McDowell Matthews
All Rights Reserved
The members of the committee approve the thesis of Traci McDowell Matthews defended on March 30, 2010.

__________________________________________________
Karen A. Bearor
Professor Directing Thesis

__________________________________________________
Michael D. Carrasco
Committee Member

__________________________________________________
Stephanie Leitch
Committee Member

Approved:

__________________________________________________
Adam Jolles, Chair, Art History

__________________________________________________
Sally E. McRorie, Dean, College of Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.
Dedicated in loving memory to
Ann Melville McDowell,
who taught me never to fear big words and always encouraged me to ask:

*What does it mean?*

and to

Gregg Shafer Matthews,
whose love and support never waiver.
My luckiest day was the day our paths crossed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of the faculty within the art history department. Dr. Richard Emmerson was instrumental in my decision to return to full time study. I am most thankful for his encouragement. Dr. Karen Bearor has been consistently supportive in her role as thesis adviser. I feel quite fortunate to have the mentorship of someone whose skill and opinions I trust, and I remain grateful for her willingness to step in at the last minute and guide this project. Dr. Michael Carrasco has provided key insights—angles I would not have considered, books about which I would not have known. Dr. Stephanie Leitch has challenged me to engage more fully the craft of writing, and I am a more conscientious because of her example. Dr. Lauren Weingarden has always encouraged my educational goals and has been ever supportive of my writing projects. Finally, Dr. Adam Jolles and Dr. Jack Freiberg made funds available under unorthodox circumstances, and consequently I had a most enlightening field trip to Chicago. My time in that wonderful city continues to influence my project choices. I also wish to acknowledge Kathy Braun, graduate adviser extraordinaire, whose organizational skills keep us all on track. Thank you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES............................................................................................................................. vi
ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................. ix
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction...................................................................................................................... 1
CHAPTER TWO: Cloud Gate Contextualized in Art Critical Discourse ............................................. 11
CHAPTER THREE: Selected Works by Kapoor in Light of New Generation and Abstract Modern Influences ......................................................................................................................... 21
CHAPTER FOUR: The Embodied Subject: Memory, Whiteout, and Cloud Gate .......................... 39
CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 55
APPENDIX: Figures ............................................................................................................................ 59
BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................................... 82
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ....................................................................................................................... 88
LIST OF FIGURES


5. Arches National Park, Moab, Utah. ........................................................................................................ 63


7. Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky. ........................................................................................................ 64

8. Robert Morris. *Untitled*, 1965/71. Mirror plate glass and wood objects, 35.98 x 35.98 x 35.98 in. The Tate Gallery, London .................................................................................. 64


14. Phillip King. *And the Birds Began to Sing*, 1964. Acrylic and metal object, 1803 x 1803 x 1803 mm. The Tate Modern, London ................................................................. 67


vi

17. Barbara Hepworth. *Family of Man*, 1970. Bronze in nine parts, edition of 2 groups plus 4 individual sets of each figure. Complete groups at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (on loan from the Hepworth Estate); The Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Garden at PepsiCo, Purchase, New York ........................................................................................................ 69


94 x 115 x 115 in. Installation: Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.................76


34. Hans Holbein the Younger. *Double Portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* (*The Ambassadors*), 1533. Oil and tempera on oak, 207 x 209 cm. National Gallery, London. .................................................................78


ABSTRACT

Cloud Gate, a monumental, sculptural-structure by artist Anish Kapoor, provides the focal point of this paper. I demonstrate through an exposition of specific art critical, art historical, and phenomenological reasoning why Cloud Gate functions as an agent of embodied awareness. Despite Cloud Gate’s high-profile status within a burgeoning family of abstract public art, scholarship does not adequately address its appropriation of features from the 1960s minimalist idiom; its indebtedness to theoretical concerns explored by New Generation or abstract modern sculptors; or its tacit condition as an object representative of concerns within phenomenological discourse. I utilize a three-pronged methodology to address these gaps in the knowledge base related to Cloud Gate. First, I analyze a facet of mid-twentieth-century art-critical discourse pertaining to formal shifts in sculptural media. I examine the polemical interaction between Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss to discern how their thinking hastened the propagation of monumental, abstract art within the public sphere. Next, I perform a stylistic analysis of selected objects from Kapoor’s oeuvre. In part, this analysis is positioned within the framework of Krauss’s Klein group schema, which provides a scholarly basis for introducing the idea of sculptural interiority and exteriority. I juxtapose specific sculptures and sculptural-structures by Kapoor with works of similar scale by New Generation sculptor Phillip King and modern abstract sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Alexander Calder. Finally, with an art historical framework in place supporting notions of how Kapoor’s Cloud Gate alters ambient space and implies abstract ideas of bodyhood, I investigate two other installations by the artist. Memory and Whiteout demonstrate how he has become increasingly concerned with specific facets of phenomenological theory. I expose how Kapoor’s exploration of these themes manifests in Cloud Gate, producing a monumental, public sculpture capable of making one aware of embodied human nature, as well as the concerns of being an individual with stakes in the public sphere. The paper concludes with a synopsis of how this analysis intersects existing scholarship on Kapoor. Further, I outline a few of the many directions in which this research could be expanded at a later date.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Cloud Gate, a monumental, sculptural-structure by artist Anish Kapoor, provides the focal point of this paper (Fig. 1).\(^1\) Cloud Gate, also referred to as “The Bean,” resides in Millennium Park, a multi-use recreational area in the heart of downtown Chicago, Illinois (Fig. 2).\(^2\) This public art object’s significance and impact derives in great measure from a combination of theoretical concerns. I demonstrate through an exposition of specific art critical, art historical, and phenomenological reasoning why Cloud Gate functions as an agent of embodied awareness.

I offer a unique interpretation of this sculpture’s valence by employing a tri-fold methodology to interrogate the work. Further, one could use the methodology developed herein to interrogate any of Kapoor’s sculptures. If one applies the interpretive framework assembled in this essay to future works by Kapoor, one could analyze those works against a baseline constructed of some of the most salient features of his current oeuvre. This baseline would assist one in recognizing philosophical and stylistic changes as they occur in Kapoor’s process.

Despite Cloud Gate’s high-profile status within a burgeoning family of abstract public art, scholarship does not adequately address its appropriation of features from the 1960s minimalist idiom; its indebtedness to theoretical concerns explored by New Generation or postmodern sculptors; or its tacit condition as an object representative of concerns within phenomenological discourse. I utilize a three-pronged methodology to address these gaps in the knowledge base related to Cloud Gate.

\(^1\) For reasons that shall become clear, I make a distinction between sculpture and sculptural-structures. Where Kapoor is concerned, the art object is a three-dimensional entity but does not share all of the characteristics historically associated with the Western tradition’s sculptural medium.

\(^2\) Millennium Park shares a boundary to the south with Grant Park along Monroe Street. Its other boundary markers are South Michigan Avenue to the west, East Randolph Street to the north, and Columbus Drive to the east.
First, I analyze a facet of mid-twentieth century art critical discourse pertaining to formal shifts in sculptural media. I examine the polemical interaction between Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss to discern how their thinking hastened the propagation of monumental, abstract art within the public sphere. This critical transmission is partially responsible for public acclimation to a new style of sculpture in the environment. Even more importantly, however, the rhetoric surrounding 1960s minimalism is pertinent to Kapoor’s oeuvre because the “style” of his work is morphologically congruent with aspects of the minimalist idiom. The analysis of Fried’s criticism sets the stage for the introduction of Krauss, the art historian and critic who repositioned in a positive light those formal, minimal attributes of which Fried disapproved.

This analysis is offered to the reader as one means of delineating the stakes in play for abstract art arising in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, this discussion allows one to apply an established vocabulary to Cloud Gate, which assists cogent analysis of how closely—or not—that object subscribes to basic tenets underlying many artworks housed under minimal art’s rubric. In the context of this study, the most important aspect of that discourse is minimal sculpture’s insistence upon subjective participation through temporal duration and site specificity. Any sculpture that is to impact a viewer and make him or her aware of embodied experience requires both of these qualities.

Next, I perform a stylistic analysis of selected objects from Kapoor’s oeuvre. In part, this analysis is positioned within the framework of Krauss’s Klein group schema, which provides a scholarly basis for introducing the idea of sculptural interiority and exteriority. This idea is crucial for positing Cloud Gate’s activation of viewer awareness of the lived-body.

I juxtapose specific sculptures and sculptural-structures by Kapoor with works of similar scale by New Generation sculptor Phillip King and modern abstract sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Alexander Calder. Throughout his career, despite changes in medium and scale, Kapoor has always been passionate about exploring issues related to embodied experience, and these concerns can be traced to stylistic precursors from which he is likely to have taken visual cues.

3 Granted, the siting of giant, abstract art in public spaces had already begun. To clarify, I use Fried and Krauss’s criticism to show the dialectical milieu providing one source of intellectual scaffolding for the art produced in the 1960s and 1970s.
By contextualizing select pieces from Kapoor’s sculptural inventory in a precursory tradition, I illustrate how his work compares to non-minimal abstract sculpture whose forms explored notions of anthropomorphic or biomorphic ways of expressing interiority and exteriority. Providing these alternative antecedents as a foil for the discussion of minimal influences allows one to position Cloud Gate at an intersection of historic, stylistic convergence. Of course Cloud Gate, as a twenty-first-century artwork, equals more than the sum of these sculptural modes. Viewing the work in this light, however, gives one a solid art historical base from which to expand interpretation.

Finally, with a framework in place supporting notions of how Cloud Gate alters ambient space and implies abstract ideas of bodyhood, I investigate two other installations by the artist. Memory and Whiteout demonstrate how Kapoor has become increasingly concerned with specific facets of phenomenological theory. I include a concise overview of those parts of phenomenological thought most germane to the current work. I demonstrate how Kapoor’s exploration of these themes manifests in Cloud Gate, producing a monumental, public sculpture that with potential for positive reception. This potential rests on its ability to make one aware of embodied human nature, as well as the concerns of being an individual with stakes in the public sphere.

Existing scholarship on Kapoor’s sculpture lacks any substantive discussion of this formal or stylistic genealogy. Until 1998, the go-to monograph on Kapoor was Germano Celant’s Anish Kapoor. This volume nimbly traces the sculptor’s career from his school days to the time of publication. However, because Celant covers a broad sweep of time in only thirty

---

4 The only work that looks at Kapoor’s sculpture as a successor to a 1960s minimal aesthetic is the dissertation by Malin Hedlin Hayden, “Out of Minimalism: the Referential Cube : Contextualizing Sculptures by Antony Gormley, Anish Kapoor and Rachel Whiteread” (PhD diss., Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2003), 2–8. Hayden’s work situates Kapoor in a triumvirate with Antony Gormley and Rachael Whiteread. The author coins the term “applied minimalism” to construe each artist’s unique appropriation of some aspect of the minimal idiom. She takes a semiotic approach in that her foundational premise presumes sculpture itself as a system of signs that produce meaning. Hayden asserts that minimal sculpture was the first “style” of sculpture to take into account the spectator’s body. It is in this vein that she discusses how the work of Kapoor, Gormley, and Whiteread is contextualized by its site specificity—another conceptual contribution made by 1960s artists working in the minimal idiom. In her chapter on Kapoor, she does treat with issues of sublimity and tactility, but Hayden’s exercise involves situating sculpture in the “white cube” of the gallery space and analyzing how this placement affects performativity. Thus, while her work is exceptionally thorough and runs tangentially to issues that concern my investigation, she deals only with sculpture small enough to work in a gallery space and does not deal at all with the mirrored pieces.
pages, he does not offer a fulfilling exposition of Kapoor’s very large works. Moreover, while Kapoor had fashioned many large scale pieces prior to 1998, he had not created enough monumental artwork to indicate this type of work would become a significant segment of his inventory.\(^5\) Celant’s focus is on Kapoor’s philosophical evolution as an artist and how such is reflected in his sculpture. In a nutshell, Celant exposes and analyzes the dichotomous nature of Kapoor’s creations.\(^6\) Moreover, his text is crucial for understanding the diverse, not easily recognized influences that play out in the sculptor’s work.\(^7\) Since 1998, only one other monograph has been published on the artist. In 2008, a full decade after the publication of Celant’s book, Rainer Crone and Alexandra von Stosch released *Anish Kapoor: Swayambh*, which presents Kapoor’s work in light of a romantic tradition.

In 2008, the catalog *Anish Kapoor: Past, Present, Future* was published for an exhibition of the same name. In “Being with Cloud Gate,” an essay within this volume, Mary Jane Jacob recognizes that *Cloud Gate* works on a phenomenological level, and her direct experience of the sculpture reinforces notions of how the object clicks with observers on both cognitive and kinesthetic levels.\(^8\) This is the only essay dealing exclusively with *Cloud Gate* (aside from the

---

\(^5\) Until 1998, the largest work Kapoor had created was *Building for a Void*. Celant notes “*Building for a Void* is a cylindrical cement edifice, fifteen meters high, designed in collaboration with David Connor for Expo ’92 in Seville.” Germano Celant and Anish Kapoor, *Anish Kapoor* (Milano: Charta, 1998), 35. See 144–49 for photographs and plans.

\(^6\) Kapoor’s objects typically express a dual nature of one, or a combination of, the following: in/out, or male/female, or light/dark, or interior/exterior, or mass/void.

\(^7\) Ibid. Celant observes that Kapoor is indebted to Paul Neâgu “[for his] influence on his perception of art as a ritual, ecstatic process.” Also, there is an underlying “idea of the body’s absence, indirectly harkening back to the ‘unspoken voices’ of Brancusi’s table, [which is] accompanied by the energetic physical presence of a sculpture halfway between soft and hard, between flesh and object.” Furthermore, Celant makes connections between Kapoor, earth artists, and the *arte povera* movement, whose name, of course, Celant himself coined. He says, “[Kapoor] situates himself in a kind of symbolic and procedural synony with arte povera and with land art from Jannis Kounellis to Robert Smithson enriching their vocabulary of sensorial and sensual data.” See Celant, *Anish Kapoor*, 15, 17, and 21, respectively.

\(^8\) Anish Kapoor and Nicholas Baume, *Anish Kapoor: Past, Present, Future* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2008), 17, 117. In this volume, Nicholas Baume provides a succinct overview of the artist’s career in “Floating in the Most Peculiar Way.” He is one of the few commentators to draw direct parallels between the minimalist practices of the 1960s and Kapoor’s work, and to the extent that this paper also concerns itself with Kapoor’s work being the legatee of many of those practices, Baume’s article provides critical substantiation.

In “History, Memory and Kapoor,” Partha Mitter draws some conclusions about the sublime nature of Kapoor’s objects; he, like Crone and Stosch, finds some consanguinity between Kapoor and Barnett Newman. Mitter,
chapter in Gilfoyle’s comprehensive accounting of the creation of Millennium Park in Chicago [2006].)\(^9\)

Anthony Vidler’s essay, “Reflections on White Out: Anish Kapoor at Barbara Gladstone (2004),” was written for the *White Out* exhibit and focuses on some of the smaller mirrored pieces in Kapoor’s oeuvre. His observations on how reflection operates in Kapoor’s sculpture to create a sense of embodiment have informed some of the discussion of such within this paper.\(^10\)

Two other exhibit catalogs, *Anish Kapoor: Memory* (2008), and *Anish Kapoor* (2009), from the recent exhibit in London, explore the creation of new and exciting mirror-polished sculpture.\(^11\)

To discern the state of the question, the reader might think of *Cloud Gate* as an object situated in a crystal paper weight. As previously alluded, the interrogatory matrix suspending the object comprises 1) elements of an art critical discourse framing sculpture’s shift from a medium conceived as self-referential to one that directly engages a viewing subject in real time and space; 2) Kapoor’s stylistic maturation, as evidenced through changes in media and scale in contrast with sculpture by King, Hepworth, and Calder; and 3) a discussion of phenomenological


\(^11\) Anish Kapoor and Sandhini Poddar, *Anish Kapoor: Memory* (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2008), 44, 79. Poddar’s essay in this volume, “Suspending Disbelief: Anish Kapoor’s Mental Sculpture,” discusses how “Kapoor has been investigating the nature of ‘thingness’ or ‘objectness’ (never objecthood) and the reciprocity of the object and the subject since his student days. For him, the body of the viewer—a necessary co-creator of the work—and the space of the object together create a social structure for perception.”

In “Perception before Cognition,” by Steven Holl with David van der Leer in the same volume, the authors discuss issues of scale and how Kapoor’s monumental works “redefine our perception of space by seamlessly merging the phenomenal with the iconic.”

theory that grounds Cloud Gate in the context of embodiment, which situates the individual in a common world and impacts viewer reception of the work.

As noted above, Michael Fried’s and Rosalind Krauss’s debate forms the basis of this paper’s discussion of minimal work and its stylistic impact on Kapoor’s Cloud Gate. Fried’s 1967 essay “Art and Objecthood” serves as the point of entry into the discussion surrounding minimal sculpture. Krauss’s responses to his criticism in Passages in Modern Sculpture (1977) and “Sculpture in the Expanded Field (1979),” provide the critical, alternative take on the ramifications of sculptural morphology in the 1960s. James S. Meyer’s book, Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties (2001) parses the specifics of the debate between the aforementioned scholars, and Andrew Causey’s volume, Sculpture Since 1945 (1998), provides a solid art historical background for Kapoor’s work. Alex Potts, in The Sculptural Imagination (2000), contextualizes Krauss’s contributions in terms of phenomenology/embodied experience, which is meaningful in the framework of this thesis.

Herein, the scholarship of Hannah Arendt, Nancy Fraser, Hilde Hein, and Rosalyn Deutsche supports concepts of public space and the public sphere. Arendt’s theory of a “common world” and its most relevant characteristic—its “inability to harbor the irrelevant [that is, private, personal concerns]”—provided the cornerstone for the assertion of Cloud Gate’s public nature and its relevance in a truly public sphere.

Rosalyn Deutsche capitalizes on Arendt’s writing in her analysis of human agency within the public sphere. She contends that Claude Lefort’s reading of de Toqueville’s “democratic revolution” most closely frames an ideal method for engaging the common world. She quotes

---


Lefort, who says, “Power becomes and remains democratic when it proves to belong to no one.” Further, he continues, “With the disappearance of an objective guarantor of power [i.e., God, monarchy], guarantees of social unity disappear as well. It is then from a negativity that the public space comes into being, the space where human beings speak to each other, construct society, and form political identities through the declaration of rights. What is recognized in the public space is the legitimacy of debate, a debate in which no one can seek the support of an external judge.”

Nancy Fraser’s scholarship provides a critical reading of Jurgen Habermas’s conception of a liberal public sphere. In her contribution to *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, the author examines that theorist’s concept of the “liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere” and raises questions about the presuppositions underlying the structure of Habermas’s ideal discursive space. Revisionist histories that reveal inherent inequities in Habermas’s structure for public discourse underpin her analysis. Moreover, Hilda Hein’s “What Is Public Art” (1996) crystallizes differences between an object that truly serves as public art and an object that serves merely as window dressing in a space through which many people move. Hein notes that “a crudely pragmatic and narrow definition of public art equates it with art installed by public agencies and at public expense.” However, this definition is entirely unacceptable. If one follows this definition to its logical end, public art “[is just] vernacular, having to do not with a spirit that magnifies as it collectivizes, but with ordinary, unmythicized people in ordinary places and with the ordinary events of their mundane lives.”

Hein nevertheless concludes this powerful essay on an optimistic note, as she believes public art is again taking up its rightful

---


18 Fraser argues that to achieve a truly democratic, discursive space, four criteria must be met: 1) social inequality must be eliminated; 2) a multiplicity of “publics” must exist (that is, the existence of only one “public” in either a stratified or an egalitarian society would subordinate some constituent groups); 3) “private” interests as defined and excluded by dominate masculinist ideologies must be included and; 4) both strong and weak publics must be allowed. See Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992),109–42.


20 Ibid., 3.
mission—to increase the valence of place through providing objects that incite public discourse. She states, “Art is escaping its confinement to private sensibility. It is descending into the streets once more and reclaiming its place in the public realm.”\(^{21}\) Additionally, Cher Krause Knight’s *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism* (2009) makes an invaluable contribution to the discourse on public art. She questions whether various public works, such as site-specific earthworks or themed environments, can constitute meaningful public art. She investigates how specific, novel art forms can, and do, achieve truly meaningful public status. She contends that we should expand our understanding of what constitutes public art beyond a truncated, standard definition of “[public art as] designated for larger audiences . . . placed to attract their attention . . . and intended to provide aesthetic experiences that edify, commemorate, or entertain . . . and [whose] messages are comprehensible to generalized audiences.”\(^{22}\)

Evan Thompson’s *Mind in Life* (2007) provides links between phenomenology and neurophysiology. This volume has informed in large measure the discussion of phenomenology and embodied life within this paper. In the preface to his book, he states, “Mental life is . . . bodily life and is situated in the world. The roots of mental life lie not simply in the brain but ramify through the body and environment. Our mental lives involve our body and the world beyond the surface membrane of our organism, and therefore cannot be reduced simply to brain processes inside the head.”\(^{23}\) This phenomenological outlook is fundamental to understanding viewer reception of *Cloud Gate*. George Marshall’s *A Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception* (2008) assists in the discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s theory within this paper.\(^{24}\)

The material in this composition is organized under three main chapter headings. The second chapter of this thesis examines the previously mentioned, mid-twentieth-century\

\[^{21}\text{Ibid., 5.}\]

\[^{22}\text{See Knight, Public Art. On page 47, Knight discusses Walter De Maria’s 1977 earthwork Lightning Field and how, despite its relative inaccessibility, it is public by virtue of “its ability to foster highly personal reunions with nature.” See page 84–87 in the same volume for a discussion of art as entertainment. See page 22 for the definition of public art as quoted above.}\]

\[^{23}\text{Evan Thompson, Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), ix.}\]

American art-critical discourse that existed simultaneously with, and perhaps accelerated the appearance of, colossal abstract sculpture in civic or otherwise shared spaces. Giant objects such as these cannot simply appear in the public sphere out of a discursive vacuum. The primary focus of the chapter is the shift from sculpture as a purely self-referential artifact to sculpture as an artifact that engages the viewer’s personhood through acknowledging real space and time.

Chapter three traces the development of Kapoor’s work as he traded media and as his work became ever larger in scale. I selected Phillip King’s small, cone-like sculptures from the 1960s; Barbara Hepworth’s ovoid Pendour from 1947–48 and her intensely anthropomorphic Family of Man group from 1970; and Alexander Calder’s gigantic stabiles from the 1970s as sculptural foils for Kapoor’s stylistic development. I examine how, despite formal changes, Kapoor’s work has always, in great measure, been about embodied experience. As an artist’s work evolves over the course of a career, many stylistic changes can manifest. Someone might begin a career working in a figurative, representational mode and later change to an abstract approach. Alternately, one might witness an artist who began as a photographer morphing into videography or digital multimedia. Using scale and media as common denominators, chapter three traces how Kapoor’s work, over the years, has remained focused on a self-imposed prime directive: creating sculpture that manipulates ambient space. Through this manipulation, Kapoor continues to experiment with how a viewer-subject is called upon to perform acts of visual and kinesthetic navigation. These acts directly engage the work and call to mind embodied life.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss how in the 1960s a willingness to expend public dollars for art through various, federal programs coincided with the trend toward formal reductionism in sculptural media. A brief accounting of the most salient features of that conversation is outlined with the goal of shedding some light on certain politics at play in the public sphere where shared art comes to exist. Chapter four continues with a discussion of one of Kapoor’s most recent sculpture-structures called Memory (2009), as well as sculptures from an exhibit entitled Whiteout (2004). These works demonstrate how Cloud Gate participates in phenomenological themes that run throughout Kapoor’s oeuvre. By investigating pieces from the most recent work, one can observe how Kapoor has become increasingly preoccupied with specific aspects of phenomenological theory—namely gaps in viewer perspective and memory—and how he compels acknowledgement of these lacunae through sculptural intervention. These encounters
could change a person’s awareness of embodiment, one’s attentiveness to other people, and one’s cognizance of the common world—a world in which we all live in varying states of tenuous symbiosis.

The paper concludes with a synopsis of how this analysis intersects existing scholarship on Kapoor. Moreover, I discuss how postmodern work created since Krauss’s formulation of the expanded sculptural field could be used to further complicate the categories outlined in the Klein group. Finally, I outline a few of the many directions in which this research could be expanded at a later date. Much more could be said about *Cloud Gate* itself. I briefly point out some of the opportunities for continued, scholarly exploration. Additionally, scores of works in Kapoor’s inventory linger in an under-interrogated status, and many prospects for interpretation and criticism in relation to these pieces remain unexploited. I describe a few of the lacunae, which additional study might address.
CHAPTER TWO

CLOUD GATE
CONTEXTUALIZED IN ART CRITICAL DISCOURSE

Cloud Gate is situated on the western side of Chicago’s Millennium Park. The 24.5 acres comprising the park were not always the verdant, multiuse landscape city-dwellers enjoy today. Until recently, the Illinois Central Railroad controlled them. Although the acreage belonging to Millennium Park was originally part of the land designated for Grant Park, Daniel Burnham, the author of the 1909 Plan of Chicago, left this parcel untouched. Recognizing the railroad’s hold on the area and, perhaps, the futility of trying to integrate it, Burnham developed Grant Park around it. The area languished until 1997, when Mayor Richard M. Daley initiated an effort to build a music venue over the railroad tracks and parking areas that had remained an eyesore along the lakefront. First conceived as a 16-acre park that would imitate the Beaux-Arts style of its neighbor, Grant Park, the Millennium development evolved into a project of considerably greater scope and came to include the talent of architect Frank Gehry, artist Juame Plensa, and sculptor Anish Kapoor, among others.\(^\text{25}\)

Cloud Gate is a saddle-shaped sculpture created by Kapoor, which was unveiled in July 2004 (Fig. 3). Its dimensions are 66 feet long by 33 feet wide by 44 feet tall, and one can walk through it by passing under the arch that peaks at the omphalos 27 feet above one’s head.\(^\text{26}\) The 168 steel plates comprising the sculpture’s skin weigh between a half and full ton each. They were manufactured off-site and then connected together in situ.\(^\text{27}\) Upon circumambulating this sculpture, one almost must wonder how did they do that? An art object or engineering marvel


\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) For the number and weight of panels, see Gilfoyle, Millennium Park, 261.
imbued with features that arouse a sense of inquisitiveness in the viewer will always inspire just this question.

Indeed, how was the immense *Cloud Gate* created, and how does it achieve such weightless presence given its gigantic mass? When watching state-of-the-art illusion practiced by Criss Angel or Penn and Teller, one knows magic is not involved but senses tremendous resources were brought to bear on the exercise. As with illusionists’ feats, however, *Cloud Gate’s* ability to defy common explanation is one of its most intriguing characteristics. It is, in truth, a technological wonder. For the past decade, Kapoor has worked with the firm Aerotrope to bring his sculptural designs to fruition.²⁸ Christopher Hornzee-Jones describes the process involved in manufacturing *Cloud Gate* in conjunction with Performance Structures Incorporated, of Oakland, California, when he explains:

We generally become involved on projects with Kapoor when his ideas demand the input of some fairly sophisticated technology. . . . [*Cloud Gate*] is expressed as a purity of polished form, and the complex technical systems [that] make it possible remain unseen. For . . . *Cloud Gate*, it was crucial to achieve the effect of an apparently massive object just having landed softly on the plaza in Chicago’s Millennium Park. To convey a weightless presence demanded specific attention to the nature of the contact between object and ground. . . . Although *Cloud Gate* gives the impression of a solid object, its stainless steel skin is only a quarter of an inch . . . thick. In order to maintain the purity of the surface reflections, we [devised] systems to suspend the skin elements during assembly and the whole structure once it was complete . . . We . . . [balanced] the weight of each . . . tile individually by springs. This allowed them to fit together collectively without the distorting effects of gravity. Once welded together to become a complete shell, we transferred the sculpture onto thirty-two custom-made units, which bear its eighty tons while allowing it to respond as a whole to external conditions such as wind, snow falls, and the wide seasonal temperature changes that are characteristic of Chicago.

These many curved plates form a burnished, seamless whole creating a giant, kidney bean-shaped mirror that reflects the cityscape, the sky, and the people who observe it. In its current location, it sits solitarily in the center of that concrete plaza. It rather looks like a giant

eyedropper pressed out a bead of liquid mercury; upon regarding it from a distance, one might wonder if it would wobble when touched.

Upon coming into its orbit, the first thing one perceives about this sculpture is its size. *Cloud Gate* is enormous, imposing, and architectural in scale. Its sculptural arch maps an interior face that exceeds description as mere intrados. Its exterior surface marks the mass of its curvature in space beyond simple extrados. Inside and outside are split by the sculpture’s mass, but more significantly by one’s ability to move under the object’s bulk of as if through a portal. Its haunches spring directly from the concrete plaza. While this sculpture resides in a park that boasts many artworks, *Cloud Gate* stands alone on this flat plane—it is completely unencumbered by any presentational device. Its titanic size invalidates the need for any prosaic exhibit accessory.

This art object sends a mixed message. On the one hand, its highly polished, abstract design lends itself to comparison with the architectural design work of Frank Gehry. In fact, *Cloud Gate’s* setting in Millennium Park positions it along the same site line on which Gehry’s ultra-postmodern *Jay Pritzker Pavilion* falls (Fig. 4). Furthermore, The Bean’s raindrop shape and mercurial shimmer call to mind the water works of nearby *Crown Fountain*, whose twin, LED pylons rotate a display of 1000 different faces of people who reside in Chicago.²⁹ These faces, whose expressions change while they are shown, always have mouths positioned at large outlets on the pylons. These outlets erupt every five minutes with torrents of water. In warm months, children play in the long, rectangular basin that stretches between the two monoliths where faces playfully spout water at each other.

Despite this contemporary art-park context, however, it could be argued that *Cloud Gate* more strongly evokes—even if in a clearly more refined way—geological features like those found at Arches National Monument (Fig. 5). Beneath its hump, a cave-like space exists. Because of its mirrored surface, though, when one looks up this space evokes a counterintuitive sense of having walked into a depression in the earth. One’s sense of standing on the level plane of the plaza is inverted as one peers into the omphalos. This illusion lends a kiva-like impression to the hollow underneath *Cloud Gate* (Fig. 6). If one became acquainted with this sculpture only

through the photographic record, one might assume that, because of its stainless steel
construction, it would feel more architectural than grotto-like; but this is not necessarily the case.
Because of its sheltering, quasi-marsupial qualities, *Cloud Gate* feels equally akin to a natural
monument like Mammoth Cave (Fig. 7) as it does to the materially more similar Frank Gehry
band shell just a stone’s throw away. This observation is relevant because one generally cannot
equate technically executed, contemporary artwork with earthbound, corporeal descriptors such
as cavern, flesh, viscera, or even womb. When one is in close proximity to *Cloud Gate*, however,
these words capture possible associations.

As with striking natural wonders, we cannot seem to walk past Kapoor’s *Cloud Gate*
without yielding to its gravitational pull. It is as if in its presence, we lose our free will. Despite
their curious, ephemeral forms, many of Kapoor’s works can evoke an empathetic response.
Kapoor’s sculpture is always highly abstracted, often deeply pigmented, and sometimes
complexly mirrored. These qualities are capable of engendering in the viewer an awareness of
embodied experience. One can easily feel as if an encounter with one of Kapoor’s artworks is not
with an inanimate object, but is rather a meeting with an object holding its breath until one leaves
the scene.

In order to address how an observer might respond to Kapoor’s work by becoming aware
of embodied life, it is crucial to investigate why and how, in the past half-century, so much
abstract sculpture escaped the confines of its traditional setting. A legacy of conceptual
mechanisms made this migration possible. To best interrogate how Kapoor’s *Cloud Gate* works
on a phenomenological level, it is necessary to question how stylistically analogous work began
landing in the public sphere. *Cloud Gate* produces its greatest effect by virtue of its inherent,
formal attributes; nevertheless, observer awareness of other stylistically comparable work
unquestionably frames and colors the reception process.

Repeated instances of exposure to nonfigurative sculpture inevitably produce
neurologically networked schema in an observer. If one had a map of America, and each public
sculpture were represented by a dot, one can imagine what sort of web would be created by
drawing lines between all of the points. While any one person sees only a fraction of this web in
a life-time, he or she will, after encountering a few examples, formulate a mental category under
which these sculptures are filed.
Ellen Dissanayake summarizes this networking process and describes how it dictates logical responses to environmental stimuli. As is well established, the human brain actively filters the vast majority of environmental data so that we can survive what would otherwise be sensory overload.\textsuperscript{30} Filtering information does not equate to losing it, though. When a need arises, previously filtered items will surface and lead to appropriate action.\textsuperscript{31} Dissanayake states, “When sensory input is processed cortically . . . it is also compared with stored (i.e. learned or ‘hardwired’ [inherited]) information or knowledge and is evaluated as to whether the organism must do something about it (act). In other words, emotional coloration or ‘meaning’ is added.”\textsuperscript{32}

When abstract sculpture went public, the public, in turn, gained the ability to amass information about it as a category and thus formulate emotional responses to a new species of art in the environment. As it pertains to awareness of embodied life, the investigation of how people became habituated to nonrepresentational sculpture is important. Individuals have cognitively networked fields of association into which they drop each new experience.\textsuperscript{33} For instance, when someone encounters \textit{Cloud Gate} in the Millennium Park setting, the brain files that experience in a web of lived moments and situates it in relationship to analogous examples it has on file. Semir Zeki calls this the process through which the brain applies “situational constancy” to an experience or object. When “a given situation has features that are common to many other situations of the same kind . . . the brain [can] categorize it immediately as being representative of all.”\textsuperscript{34}

However, when people inquire about an object’s specific meaning, this kind of question has features of “implicit constancy.” Zeki explains that situations or objects under this category

\footnotesize


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 155. Dissanayake states, “we can say the human brain is a storehouse of emotionally toned, nonverbal, perceptual-motor memory structures, whose components are tightly integrated in associative “webs” or networks. A new stimulus can be perceived in terms of others that share resemblances with it in any number of different parameters.”

\textsuperscript{34} Semir Zeki, \textit{Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 22.
allow the brain “free play in interpreting the work in as many ways as possible.”

Two of *Cloud Gate*’s most obvious attributes are its scale and its reflectivity. These features lend themselves to Zeki’s ideas about implicit constancy. Observers interacting with *Cloud Gate* have undoubtedly assigned the work a place within situational constancy, and having done so are free to further interrogate the object’s impact on their own space.

Both *Cloud Gate*’s monumental scale and its specularity engage Michael Fried’s notions of *theatricality* as explored in his seminal 1967 essay, “Art and Objecthood.” Fried’s criticism delimited a hierarchy that he applied to abstract sculpture. This hierarchy remained influential—if hotly debated—for years thereafter. Thus, “Art and Objecthood” remains a convenient way of framing the polemics of 1960s modern art and some of the concepts relating to abstract art that persist to the present day. Fried remains relevant because Kapoor’s *Cloud Gate* so clearly resembles, morphologically speaking, some of the 1960s sculpture Fried so roundly lambasts. Fried employed the term *theatrical* for artwork exhibiting traits he identified as antithetical to high modernism—the abstract art he championed. For better or worse, it is in contrast to Fried’s seminal essay that many of the most recognized art historians couch subsequent commentary, and it is largely out of this particular discourse that we come to recognize abstract sculpture’s presentational mode of being in the public sphere.

Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Tony Smith bear the lion’s share of Fried’s disapproval as it relates to theatrical sculpture. For Fried, despite their internecine squabbling, these artists shared an ideology—“a conceptual activity that could be described.”

____________

35 Ibid.


37 See Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 150, 166. Fried says, “but this and other disagreements are less important than the views Judd and Morris hold in common. Above all they are opposed to sculpture that, like most painting, is ‘made part by part, by addition, composed’ and in which ‘specific elements . . . separate from the whole, thus setting up relationships within the work.’” Fried examines and rejects the possibility that Judd’s desire to achieve “wholeness through repetitious units” and Morris’s notion of “‘shape as the most important sculptural value’” are valid theoretical underpinnings for the exploration of new sculptural objects. Moreover, Tony Smith’s appeal to what Fried asserts is completely over-the-top theatricality would result, according to that critic, in observer experience devoid of meaning. Fried states, “Like Judd’s Specific Objects and Morris’s gestalts or unitary forms, Smith’s cube [Die] is always of further interest; one never feels that one has come to the end of it; it is inexhaustible. It is inexhaustible, however, not because of any fullness—that is the inexhaustibility of art—but because there is nothing there to exhaust.”
The most crucial point of Fried’s analysis of that ideology, which framed his accusation that minimalist artists were reducing artwork to mere objects, was that minimalist work presented a new genre of theatre. Viewer participation with sculpture became necessary. With physical participation as an essential part of the viewing equation, temporal duration also entered the picture. Moreover, despite artists’ protestations to the contrary, Fried was convinced these objects veiled anthropomorphism behind their theatricality. He states, “The apparent hollowness of most literalist works—the quality of having an inside—is almost blatantly anthropomorphic.”

Fried’s assessment is valid, especially in light of tendency prevalent in the 1960s of talking about sculpture as having “presence.” As Meyer clarifies, “presence was an impression of aesthetic quality so implacable that the spectator could sense it without even looking at the work. The work made its presence felt, demanding the viewer’s recognition.” While Fried’s conclusions are perhaps too alarmist regarding the consequences of artists exploring object-only value in sculpture, he did provide the earliest acknowledgment of sculpture’s transition from self-referential artwork to viewer-dependent object.

Response to “Art and Objecthood” came fast and furious after its publication. Meyer explains that Annette Michelson and Rosalind Krauss’s criticism became the enshrined rebuttal of the Friedian stance. In the essay she wrote for the catalogue accompanying Morris’s retrospective show at the Corcoran Gallery in 1969, Michelson explained that Morris’s work, by embracing the theatricality Fried had so deplored, changed the fundamental conditions defining

---

38 Ibid., 230.

39 Fried, Art and Objecthood, 156.

40 Ibid., 231–32.

41 In “An Introduction to My Art Criticism,” Fried rhetorically asks, “Is there another frontline art critic writing in the 1960s who harped on the importance of bodily experience to the extent I did? I can’t think of one.” Additionally, he observes that “the terms of my argument have gone untouched.” (original emphasis) He expounds further by stating, “As mentioned earlier, no one of all those who have written against “Art and Objecthood” has contended that literalist art was not theatrical; instead, they have tried to reverse my negative assessment of theatricality itself, which is understandable.” For quotes, see respectively pages 41, 43, and 52 in Art and Objecthood.

sculpture’s way of being in the world. Michelson celebrated this innovative, phenomenological work that engendered viewer perception in “real time” and in “actual space.

In her inspired work *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Krauss significantly expanded on Michelson’s thoughts. Krauss explained that the argument underlying Fried’s *Art and Objecthood* had its roots in a nineteenth-century tradition that pursued a moralistic, unconditional purity in art forms. Fried believed minimalist sculptors had subverted the arthood of the medium by introducing into a sculptural system real-time duration, which in turn created an event transpiring between object and subject. Krauss, however, embraced this development and focused on the importance of how minimalist sculpture assailed classical form. Previously, the subject who encountered sculptural form was understood to perceive it with “syncretic vision.” That is, a person encountering sculpture would, through feats of instantaneous mental acrobatics, “see” the object from all positions. In reality, it is only possible to see an object from one position at a time.

Nevertheless, it was this quality of “presentness” whose passing Fried lamented with objects that introduced site and duration into the equation. Krauss states, “Fried had asserted that theatricality must work to the detriment of sculpture—muddying the sense of what the medium uniquely was, depriving it thereby of meaning that was sculptural, and depriving it of the same time of seriousness.” She finishes her thought by noting that artists working in the minimalist idiom did so because they believed classical sculpture was not the highest goal of the sculptural

---

43 Ibid., 239–40.

44 Ibid.


46 Ibid., 240.

47 Fried distances himself from this position by calling attention to the fact that “[he relied] . . . on constructions involving ‘as though,’ which by itself should have ruled out taking instantaneousness literally, so to speak.” In other words, Fried’s previous, seemingly concrete opinion that sculpture worked on the viewer in a syncretic fashion was not meant to be taken quite so seriously as some (read: Krauss) subsequently took it. See Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 47.

medium. These artists had no faith in the ideals classical sculpture was founded on, and the only means by which they could explore the medium’s possibilities were to introduce the situational elements of placement and temporal duration.\footnote{Ibid.} For Krauss, this readjustment of perspective allowed meaning to arise from a different source; instead of emanating from the work itself, meaning now had an opportunity to arise from the overall staging—from the space in general.\footnote{Ibid., 262. Krauss contends “minimal artists are simply re-evaluating the logic of a particular source of meaning rather than denying meaning to the aesthetic object altogether. They are asking that meaning be seen as arising from . . . a public, rather than a private space.”}

Through his recriminations, Fried aided modern sculpture’s flight into the open by acknowledging its new situational and durational characteristics, which were well suited to an outdoor context. Krauss further abetted its get away by defusing Fried’s accusations and demanding respect, and continued analysis, of minimal art objects in the extra-museum public sphere. Abstract sculpture thus continued its mass migration into mainstream public spaces, but with a more widespread understanding of some of its underlying principals.

Art historian Andrew Causey summarizes key ideas comprising the minimal idiom. In addition to viewer engagement obtained through temporal duration and emphasis on site as discussed above, these principals include symmetry; lack of a presentational (pedestal) base; a gestalt quality; a “refusal to fetishize the figure of the artist;” and a coolness in relation to the angst of 1950s Abstract Expressionism.\footnote{See Causey, \textit{Sculpture Since 1945}, 119–23.}

If one studies \textit{Cloud Gate} with this check list in hand, one can understand why it is fairly unproblematic to place it in formal relation to minimal precursors. Compared to Robert Morris’s \textit{Untitled} (1966/71), many similarities certainly do exist (Fig. 8). The sense of symmetry, direct contact with the ground, coolness, and lack of artist presence in the finished work all lend themselves to minimalist precepts. However, \textit{Cloud Gate} cannot fully be categorized as minimal, or even postminimal. It offers no gestalt experience for the viewer, and its biomorphism exceeds even Fried’s notions of the anthropomorphic valence he ascribes to Morris’s pieces. While \textit{Cloud

\footnotesize{\begin{quote}
\end{quote}}
*Gate* participates in facets of a minimal lineage, its stylistic heritage, as we shall see in the next chapter, cannot be contained under minimalist rubric.
CHAPTER THREE

SELECTED WORKS BY KAPOOR
IN LIGHT OF NEW GENERATION AND ABSTRACT MODERN INFLUENCES

In her book *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (1999), Barbara Maria Stafford provides powerfully insightful contributions to the discourse on embodied experience and how the brain creates networks through processes of analogy. Stafford purports that at the turn of the nineteenth century “analogy as a reciprocating method and mentality was overturned by *disanalogy*.”\(^52\) Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not permit a thorough overview of the historical analysis supporting Stafford’s claim. Her argument related to improving the human condition by returning to an analogical framework is the item most salient here.\(^53\)

Where sculpture is concerned, Rosalind Krauss took decisive steps toward just this kind of an analogical reengagement by looking at apparently oppositional object-classes through the lens of likeness. In “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” a follow up to *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Krauss uses the Klein group to visually articulate an expansion of object-categories. Through the logic provided by this mathematical model, one can accept that, by virtue of sculpture being neither landscape nor architecture, it had become “a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions.”\(^54\) However, when Krauss applied the Klein schema, she was able to create positive-value object-categories. For example, when one diagrams not-landscape and

\(^{52}\) Stafford, *Visual Analogy*, 3.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 183. Stafford states, “In the end, I like to think that restorative and enlivening analogy can continue to perform in the modern world much like Bruno Latour’s ‘propositions.’ As the name indicates, a proposition does not pertain to language, it is not a statement. Rather, it is an offer extended by one body or thing to another inviting it to reality in a new manner. Each entity is forced to pay attention to the other, and, in so doing, both diverge from their customary paths to venture onto territory which, although it appears foreign from each of their unique vantage points, nonetheless belongs to an interdependent existence.”

\(^{54}\) Krauss, “Expanded Field,” 36.
not-architecture in conjunction with their binaries, which are landscape and architecture, new categories can be created from the relationship between the four items. Krauss explains that “the expanded field is thus generated by problematizing the set of oppositions between which the modernist category sculpture is suspended.”\(^{55}\) Sculpture was the existing category. According to Krauss, the three new categories are 1) axiomatic structures; 2) site-construction; and 3) marked sites.\(^{56}\)

During the mid-twentieth century, gigantic objects appeared in the public sphere constructed of materials traditionally excluded from the Western sculptural milieu. Ambiguity regarding their object-nature spawned questions about their art status. Using the Klein group as a schematic sieve, Krauss took binary sets out of their either/or context and discovered middle grounds—terminologies built on an analogical foundation—for talking about these unprecedented objects. As Stafford notes, “It is through intuition or beholding that we come to know what is innate. Insight allows us to infer the ontological and phenomenological likeness binding seemingly unrelated structures.”\(^{57}\) Krauss affected Stafford’s notion of binding through an elegant, diagrammatic solution, demonstrating the powerful efficacy of the analogical technique.

Within Krauss’s Klein group model, Kapoor’s *Cloud Gate* falls inside the axiomatic-structures category. Regarding these constructions, Krauss says, “In every case . . . there is some kind of intervention into the real space of architecture . . . The possibility explored in this category is a process of mapping the axiomatic features of the architectural experience—the abstract conditions of openness and closure—onto the reality of a given space.” (emphasis mine)\(^{58}\) *Cloud Gate*, which represents a high point in Kapoor’s thirty-year span of stylistic maturation, deals on several levels with notions of openness and closure.

\[^{55}\] Ibid., 38.
\[^{56}\] Ibid.
\[^{57}\] Stafford, *Visual Analogy*, 89.
In this chapter, I focus on particular works from Kapoor’s oeuvre to demonstrate how he has been concerned since the inception of his career with these very notions of openness and closure. I compare items from his sculptural inventory with pieces by the artists Phillip King, Barbara Hepworth, and Alexander Calder, whose sculpture prefigures some of the concerns Kapoor negotiates in his body of work. I demonstrate that Kapoor’s preoccupation with certain themes culminate in *Cloud Gate*, an object exemplifying Krauss’s notion of the axiomatic structure. Moreover, *Cloud Gate* lends itself to analogical association, a sense of viewer embodiment, and works as a potential catalyst to reengagement with a common world.\(^59\)

Kapoor’s artistic inventory includes sculptures that look nothing like *Cloud Gate* in shape, composition, materials, or size; nevertheless, they are the progenitors of the work at Millennium Park’s heart.

From 1979 to 1985, Kapoor created and elaborated in multiple, subsequent installations a sculptural grouping he entitled *1000 Names* (Fig. 9).\(^60\) In its earliest incarnation, *1000 Names* consisted of small- to medium-large-scale, abstract, quasi-geometric masses dotting a gallery floor. These hand-formed, carved objects gave the impression of being molded entirely from pure pigment. In reality, they were shaped and carved from mud and then encased in sheaths of glowing, primary hues.\(^61\) As if they were shedding skin, the pigment embracing the objects’ mass dusted the floorboards around them suggesting a gentle self-sifting. One could speculate that in their subtle, powdery disintegration, these objects had begun a process of decomposition through which they were beginning a retreat from whence they came. Celant says the halo of color surrounding these forms “demonstrates [their] contingency and ephemerality.”\(^62\)

---

59 For features defining her construct of the common world, see Arendt, “The Public Realm,” 9.

60 “The first version of *1000 Names*, exhibited in 1980 in the Paris studio of the sculptor Patrice Alexandre, consisted of objects made directly of red and white pigment. This was followed by a show at the Coracle Press in London, in which Kapoor broadened his vocabulary of forms and colors while preserving the impact of an arrangement that fills a space to the point of transforming it into an energy field. Other permutations and modifications followed, the essence and variety of the work being in a constant state of enrichment between 1981 and 1985.” See Celant, *Anish Kapoor*, xxii.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., xxi.
Observers were obligated to watch closely where they were stepping lest they stumble and inflict damage on themselves, the artwork, or others. These forms might have appeared fragile, but they were not powerless. The objects’ control of the gallery space required the subject to map a route and remain cognizant of his or her path. This process would have engendered an awareness of embodiment virtually impossible to deny. The eye’s involvement with the navigation of space, and the body’s subsequent maneuvering through the environment created a kinesthetic experience. The sculptural scale, while vastly smaller than that of Cloud Gate, nevertheless forced visitors to move through space as one might progress through a miniature mine-field. Additionally, many of the 1000 Names objects were cloaked in colors used by nature to convey warnings to predators. The visual impact of these color choices would signify potential danger. One would not wish to walk into an ant pile; the photographic record suggests that some of these forms could create just such a familiar, anxiety-producing association.

Over a period of six years, variations on these forms became increasingly organic. Celant notes that objects found in collections of 1000 Names from 1982 “[suggest] a sort of bud, seed, or heart or some other internal organ . . . [and they] speak of fertility and the coming together of the sexes (Fig. 10).” Indeed, these shapes feel much more like items one would run across in the natural world—tidbits one would encounter while hiking through the summer woods. Kapoor’s shapes were morphing from geometric to organic, from infertile to generative.

With the creation of objects like Hole and Vessel II (1984) and Mother as a Mountain (1985), Kapoor began opening the sculptural mass of objects similar to those in the various compilations of 1000 Names (Figs. 11 and 12). No longer solid, these pieces were about the female principal. Celant states, “As the locus—the feminine locus—of mystery and enigma, the place where the wonders and secrets of all metamorphosis converge, place of the unmanifest and the unknown, the vessel is the absolute space. The void—wellspring and abyss, maelstrom and fullness of being—is presented as the maximum of unknown intensity.” Hole and Vessel II, a jug-like container, is tipped on its side. In this position, the work evokes an aquatic personality.

---

63 Ibid., xxvi.

64 Ibid.
The hole at the horizontal apex mimics a fish’s mouth; the left side of the “body” bristles with scales, while the right side attenuates into ridges that suggest a crenellated fin. The piece is akin to a sea anemone—beautiful—but one is cautious; one never knows about these creatures. Its red energy makes one wary. This object is undeniably female and is perhaps like the exoskeleton of some sea creature tumbled by tide and time, cast up on the beach baking in the sun. Like blood that appears blue beneath the skin and then shocks one when liberated by laceration, Hole and Vessel II might engender a similar shock in the viewer. Its color is an assault; it keeps one at bay by forcing one to circle cautiously around it. If one had a stick, one might poke it to see if it still breathed.

Mother as Mountain, while maintaining the deep, heady red of Hole and Vessel II, sits upright. Its cone shape twists with carving that suggests a gentle contrapasto; its openings are congruent with female genitalia. As with Hole and Vessel II, this work is also open but more posturally aggressive. Kapoor returns to an inclusion of micronized pigment around the sculpture’s foot that affords the object a virtual force-field keeping viewers at bay. As with Hole and Vessel II, one might warily circle this piece, but it absolutely does not invite the same impulse to check for signs of life. Active respiration is asserted through its gill-like, incised slashes. To trespass on its field of powdered color would constitute a transgression. Like first footprints sinking into a deep snow, tracing one’s self into the object’s personal space would constitute molestation of an unspoiled, aesthetic field.

In these pieces from the early- to mid-1980s, Kapoor is experimenting with opening forms and with taking objects from a neuter state to a generative state. Thus, even in his earliest works, the artist was preoccupied with gendering shape and projecting bodyness onto his abstract forms. As he does so, the sculptures acquire increased overtones of emotional valence leading one to question whether or not these little bodies are entirely benevolent. The shapes are curiously biomorphic, but one’s inability to name them heightens the caution with which one approaches them. The insertion of this vague uneasiness in negotiating the gallery floor would add a palpable sense of time to one’s interaction with these works. Alex Potts mentions that “engaging with the sculpture at the very basic level of immersing ourselves in our motor responses and negotiating the restrictions it imposes on our movements is also complicated by a distancing inherent in the process of viewing. . . . This temporal layering of response, this
dimension of non-immediacy in our immediate viewing of what lies before us, is integral to the process of seeing.”65

Like its older cousins from variations on 1000 Names, Cloud Gate is supremely biomorphic. Unlike these small, gender-specific precursors, however, its presence is androgynous. The saddle shape created by the concavity at its belly reminds one of a cell in the act of division. It is as if Cloud Gate is in an act of splitting, as if it is on the verge of becoming something new. Moreover, the generative connotations are obvious if one applies a modicum of imagination. The diploid shape is both ovarian and testicular. The observer’s act of walking beneath it is a metaphorical correspondence to halving a zygocyte.

Regarding surface tension, Kapoor states “since the beginning of my work the skin of an object has always been the place where things happen.” 66 (emphasis mine) German art historian and art critic Doris von Drathen expands on this theme when she notes that Kapoor’s mirrored sculptures evoke a sensation of encountering a membrane.67 If one gets very close to this membrane, it does cut off one’s view of the rest of one’s surroundings. This truncation of perspective produces an uncanny effect. Furthermore, at just a short distance, one can get lost in a visual, quasi-vertigo that translates into a subtly jarring sensation of displacement.

In breaking with the precepts of sculptors like Judd and Morris, who actively disavowed any anthropomorphism in their work, Kapoor’s work embraces analogies that liken it to flesh, breath, and sex. Germano Celant contextualizes this aspect of Kapoor’s dissimilarity to minimal art when he states, “By transforming sculpture into a restless vibrant mass, an unstable, fragile object, Kapoor [made] his own contribution toward moving beyond the disagreeable rigidity and absolutism of minimal art . . . His vibrant, seductive images, which invite one to draw close and touch, throw the visual closure of a Donald Judd . . . into crisis.”68

65 Alex Potts, Sculptural Imagination, 218.
67 Ibid., 193.
68 Celant, Anish Kapoor, xxi.
One can find a far more likely stylistic antecedent for Kapoor’s early pieces in Phillip King’s sculpture. While Judd and Morris insisted on the most reductive interpretation possible for their work, King did not claim the same for his. As a member of the New Generation sculptors and a disciple of Anthony Caro, King was not obsessed with creating exterior-side only art (in other words, sculpture that denied any interiority).69

King’s sculpture, entitled Rosebud (1962), “expressed a belief that ‘sculpture had to catch up with painting (Fig. 13).’ Part of the way forwards [sic] was the upwards-pointing cone; ‘a very self-contained shape [in which] surface is more fundamental to the structuring of the shape in the cone than it is in the cube or other shapes.’”70 Additionally, King chose the softest, cloud pink he could obtain for the plastic material used in Rosebud in an effort to undermine any feeling that color persisted more deeply than surface level. By opening the cone with a wavy slice, he asserts exteriority and interiority; in essence, he creates a cone of pale skin. Overton quotes King as saying color is “‘the life-line into this invisible world where feeling takes over from thinking and without the experience of which one’s sense of reality in art would be false and diminished.’”71 (emphasis mine)

In a work similar in shape to Rosebud, King exploits the power of color even further. And the Birds Began to Sing (1964) was created from acrylic and metal (Fig. 14). While this sculpture is not as open as Rosebud (it has no slice revealing an interior cavity), the depth of the red hue King uses reminds one of those red objects from the early iterations of Kapoor’s 1000 Names. The jagged incursions of black material into the red suggest a surface level opening, as if the skin has been severely clawed but not completely torn. The cone shape of And the Birds Began to Sing...

---

69 Anthony Caro was the central figure around whom a group of artists gathered to form the “New Generation.” Andrew Causey relates that these artists “gathered from the late 1950s at St. Martin’s School of Art, where Caro was a teacher . . . they showed together under the [New Generation] title at Whitechapel in 1965. The following year they exhibited alongside the Minimalists in the ‘Primary Structures’ show at the Jewish Museum, New York.” Causey goes on to note that this group of sculptors used whatever materials were appealing, not based on any ideological stance, but because they wished to experiment with different material properties. See Causey, Sculpture Since 1945, 113–114.


71 Ibid.
Sing conspires with its black and red coloration to evoke the presence of a male cardinal. One can see how this object might open from the top like a small volcano to produce birdsong. It is all beak and no bird, but somehow still capable of utterance. The color and varying levels of perforation in King’s pieces declare alliance with the New Generation’s formal idiom, which, although intensely steeped in abstraction, had not released the sculptural object’s self-referentiality. King, moreover, is concerned with the process by which art transitions the viewer out of thinking mode and into feeling mode, the place where one comes to understand the other’s body through one’s own embodiment. The color and texture of King’s cone sculptures declare anthropomorphic vivification. In this manner they herald the same line of thought that appears in Kapoor’s abstract sculptures some 20 years later.

A notable development in Kapoor’s oeuvre through the remainder of the 1980s to present is his focus on the increased scale of his sculpture. The objects become larger and, as a result, the relational dynamic of observer-to-artwork shifts.

In works like Adam and It Is a Man, Kapoor used slabs of roughly hewn sandstone that are significantly larger than human scale (Figs. 15 and 16). In Adam, a perfect rectangle is incised into the upper half of solid block of sandstone, which bears choppy chisel scars in the skin of its reverse side. The rectangular opening in Adam reveals a pitch black interior. The overall impression is of a cave wall on which a mirror has been mounted too high for an observer to see her reflection. Instead of reflecting light, though, the “mirror” draws all available light into itself like a black hole. In It Is a Man, a comparable block of sandstone is fashioned with a similar rectangular opening. This indentation is completely swathed in a velvety field of dark cobalt blue. This object, unlike Adam, situates the aperture of the rectangle almost within the center of the block. While the viewer is enticed into the object’s space, the oversized scale effectively keeps the subject in a satellite position. Moreover, the cleft in the rock, the bottom of which falls just too high to permit ease of access, suggests an entrance through which one could

---

72 Andrew Causey notes that “New Generation art, despite the strangeness and unfamiliarity of its sculptural forms and colors, was a classical art, not provisional but resolved and complete.” In other words, in contrast to minimal works, New Generation sculpture comprised works replete in themselves. This perseverance of sculptural tradition was felt to be embodied by those works exhibiting durability. This is the durability Arendt talks about when she says the “things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life.” Arendt, however, was talking about objects of common use, like tables and chairs, not art. See Causey, Art Since 1945, 117, and Arendt quoted therein.
step if one were willing to infringe on the object’s personal space. Penetrating the object, however, would be a violation, an intrusion. *It Is a Man* is just that—an anthropomorphized rock that, because of its virtual personhood, has quasi-human boundaries—the most significant of which is the presence of an implied membrane separating observer and sculpture. For Kapoor, the surface of the object, like human flesh, is the largest organ of the sculptural body. He says, “The skin that I try to talk about is one that is less tangible, more difficult to talk about, but nonetheless very real. . . . The skin that forms itself across the dark space [is] a kind of blank mirror . . . a veritable plane. That is the skin that interests me.”73 Ironically, the object’s insistence on elbow room vis-à-vis allusion to dermis, to body-hood, *creates* the object-subject relationship. These sculptures demand an observer’s acknowledgment of their otherness. Kapoor captures the essence of this interaction when he states, “The idea [is] that one can have a relationship, for however short [or long a] time, with a non-living thing, whether fearful or caressing, that can have the tendency of the relationship . . . one might have with another human being, even if . . . only for a very small moment. It is about the small moment. It is not about some grand opera. . . . I am interested in fundamental intimacy.”74 Intimacy, of course, implies a relationship of bodies.

Barbara Hepworth’s sculpture, especially pieces from *The Family of Man* bronze group completed in 1970, demonstrate structural similarities to Kapoor’s outsized rock stelae (Fig. 17).75 In some of these works, Hepworth does not completely pierce the body of the work. Instead, she scoops large amounts of matter from them, leaving vertical trenches reminiscent of body cavities or skulls. The personhood of these bronzes is palpable. They stand like sentinels. The photographic record captures a sense of the membrane Kapoor references when he speaks of something stretched over openings forming a “veritable plane.”


74 Ibid., 23.

In *Untitled* (1998), one can compare Kapoor’s sense of hollowed-out interiority with Hepworth’s earlier wooden sculpture, *Pendour*, from 1947–8 (Figs. 18 and 19). *Pendour*, an object that rests on a horizontal axis, allows one’s gaze to flow through and over it by virtue of the spherical shafts bored into the sculpture body. Seen from a certain angle, it appears that one is looking through the eye sockets of a human skull. Seen from another angle, one is struck by an interior, cave-like space that mimics stalagmites grown from cave floor to ceiling. Alex Potts remarks:

Hepworth’s . . . *Pendour* . . . looks like a fairly solid object resting on its side, with two rounded cavities scooped into it that run through to what seem to be equivalent cuts made into the other side. From this opposite side, however, more and also larger cavities come into view, and a hollowing out effect takes precedence over a sense of rounded solidity. The difference between the two views is emphasized by the slightly different coloration of the hollows, light blue on one side and white on the other, with both contrasting with the darker, outer form of the work. Moreover, because the cavities are cut out sharply, with no transitional modeling, the interruptions created by those on the far side breaking into the simply rounded overall form of the sculpture cannot be inferred from slight irregularities in the shaping of the sculpture’s outer surfaces on the near side.

As with Hepworth’s *Pendour*, Kapoor’s *Untitled* (1998) presents us with an ovoid, horizontally-oriented object. But this sculpture, like the earlier *Adam* and *It Is a Man*, has a rectangular aperture incised in its surface—-not spherical apertures as in Hepworth’s *Pendour*. Nevertheless, upon walking around the object one would realize that the whole is slightly curved inward and that the “window” into its belly becomes less visible the more oblique one’s orientation to it becomes. The object, which from a head-on position looks totally flat, reveals secrets about its body as one takes it in from differing vantage points.

Kapoor and Hepworth are both concerned with observer orientation to the sculptural work. Regarding *Pendour*, Potts observes that “because the cavities are cut out sharply with no transitional modeling, the interruptions created by those on the far side breaking into the simply rounded overall form of the sculpture cannot be inferred from the slight irregularities in the shaping of the sculpture’s outer surfaces on the near side.”

Neither can one entirely grasp *Untitled* (1998) from any solitary vantage point. As Nicholas Baume points out, the way “the

---

76 Potts, *Sculptural Imagination*, 152–53.
[sculptures] behave is not ‘normal.’ Kapoor’s objects are active; they always suggest a process of becoming, both experientially and imaginatively. What at first we thought was solid stone contains a void. What seemed to be flat plane morphs into a protrusion; a mirrored three-dimensional form opens an unfamiliar window into bounded space.”77 To understand the otherness of Untitled (1998), one must dignify its presence with circumambulation. Only then will it reveal secrets about itself. Stand in front of it, ogle it, and it will keep its mouth firmly shut.

Untitled’s (1998) shape is notably similar to that of Cloud Gate. In fact, if one could transform the material to stainless steel, increase the scale, and “rotate [it] 90 degrees over its orthogonal opening,” one would have Cloud Gate’s fraternal twin (Fig. 20).78 From the blocky yet anthropomorphic forms of Adam and It Is a Man, to the ovum-shaped curves of 1998’s Untitled, Kapoor has challenged observers to establish spatial relationships with his sculpture. In offering works that presented bodyness, he has suggested that a relationship with the object is the point of the encounter. It has been left up to the subject to determine the dynamics of that encounter, and how intimate it becomes. A person could thrust a hand into the openings of Adam, It Is a Man, or Untitled (1998). However, it seems that doing so would be tantamount to a violation of sorts. A thin line exists between intimacy and infringement, and these sculptures make the subject aware of that line’s tenuousness.

Kapoor is a member of a small coterie of twenty-first-century artists awarded commissions for monumental, public artwork. Unlike Cloud Gate in Millennium Park, Kapoor’s Taratantara and Marsyas are situated indoors, but they are nevertheless every bit as gigantic as the first two pieces (Figs. 21 and 22). In “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” Krauss states, “The first artists to explore the possibilities of architecture plus not-architecture were Robert Irwin, Sol Lewitt, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Christo.”79 Krauss, of course, is referring to the array of object possibilities that exists on the continuum between architecture and not-architecture within her modified Klein group schematic—the field of axiomatic structures. To reiterate, that which makes an object an axiomatic structure is “the process of mapping the

77 Baume, Past Present Future, 16.
78 Ibid., 18.
axiomatic features of the architectural experience—the abstract conditions of openness and
closure—onto the reality of a given space.” Krauss’s invention of nuanced terminology, which
captured developments in the medium of abstract sculpture, arose from factors manifesting in
contemporary art practice that required reconciliation. Artists were incorporating into artworks
scale and materials that formerly had no provenance within the Western tradition’s sculptural
milieu. Krauss states:

Another way of saying this is that even though sculpture may be reduced to what is in the
Klein group the neuter term of the not-landscape plus the not-architecture, there is no
reason not to imagine an opposite term—one that would be both landscape and
architecture—which within this schema is called the complex. But to think the complex
is to admit into the realm of art two terms that had formerly been prohibited from it:
landscape and architecture—terms that could function to define the sculptural (as they
had begun to do in modernism) only in their negative or neuter condition. Because it was
ideologically prohibited, the complex had remained excluded from what might be called
the closure of post-Renaissance art. Our culture had not before been able to think the
complex, although other cultures have thought this term with great ease. Labyrinths and
mazes are both landscape and architecture; Japanese gardens are both landscape and
architecture; the ritual playing fields and processionals of ancient civilizations were all in
this sense the unquestioned occupants of the complex. Which is not to say that they were
an early, or degenerate, or variant form of sculpture. They were part of a universe or
cultural space in which sculpture was simply another part—not somehow, as our
historicist minds would have it, the same. Their purpose and pleasure is exactly that they
are opposite and different.  

Krauss’s methodology single-handedly lent legitimacy to new breeds of art objects. In
applying an analogical framework to new species of art like Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty or
Christo and Jean Claude’s Running Fence, these works were validated through an increasingly
attenuated categorical association with what they were not. Despite this distancing, one could
trace a path back to specific points of origin on either end of a continuum.

One can much more easily comprehend how something is art if there are precedents for
it, and Krauss had exceptional enough vision to look beyond the matrix of Western art
production when seeking precursors. Furthermore, in so doing she acknowledged that this new-
order art was not modern, but postmodern. The dicta structuring modern art were mostly

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 38.
inflexible concerning both notions of artists’ practices and the media they used. According to Krauss, modernism demanded strict separation between media. Critics might brand as eclectic any artist and work not adhering to these mandates. When one was labeled eclectic, one was essentially no longer a member of the modernist club. Over the course of the late 1960s and 1970s, artists had become increasingly nomadic within the expanded field, experimenting throughout the course of their careers with producing diverse kinds of art objects. Concerns about the formal limits of media had given way to a new set of concerns. Krauss avers that during this period, sculpture resided somewhere between the not-landscape and the not-architecture, but artists were “[focusing on] the outer limits of those terms of exclusion.” In other words, they were experimenting with how far they could push not-landscape plus not-architecture before it morphed from sculpture into a completely new thing.

With his gigantic works, Kapoor entered the Kraussian realm of that which is not sculpture due to scale. These axiomatic structures are intimately concerned with abstract notions of openness and closure, or, more explicitly, where one body ends and another begins. These pieces intervene in their immediate environs by carving out real pockets of space, as well as creating sensations of liminal space apprehended only obliquely, as if through peripheral vision.

In the Western tradition of monumental, public art, Alexander Calder’s gigantic sculptures provide a logical point of departure for discussing how some of Kapoor’s more eccentric, colossal works have come to enjoy tremendous popularity in America and abroad. In 1969 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Calder installed a forty-three-foot tall sculpture entitled La Grande Vitesse at the Vandenberg Center (Fig. 23). Much like the site where Millennium Park

---

82 Ibid., 41–2.
83 Ibid., 42.
84 Ibid., 37.
resides, the area where *Vitesse* was built was formerly “in the heart of a blighted area of [the] city. Today it is a magnetic focal point of national and international cultural interest.”

*Vitesse*, a sculptural type Calder referred to as a “stabile,” is a gigantic variation on a theme he developed in smaller pieces ranging from ten-to twenty-feet in height. Art historian Marter notes that “while a ten-foot construction is a pleasant accessory for a museum terrace or a small park, a fifty-foot stabile interacts aggressively with its site. A Calder colossus positioned on a public square changes the character of that outdoor space for all who walk through it.”

What Marter is not saying is that *Vitesse* exceeds traditional Western concepts of what is, and what is not, sculpture. Throughout her article, she refers to all of Calder’s pieces as sculpture, but as Krauss so aptly demonstrated, objects such as these burst through limiting, modern notions of sculptural possibilities and demand new, postmodern object-categories. *Vitesse* is an axiomatic structure by virtue of its scale, and it challenges the primacy of the building situated as its backdrop. The soaring *Vitesse* peers in the windows of that building, reminding the occupants that were it not for the glass providing a screen between them and it, its steel frame and the steel frame they inhabit would have an entirely different relationship.

*Vitesse* was the first public commission carried forth under the NEA’s A-i-P-P program. Prior to commissioning the Calder sculpture, the city had already broken ground for a fountain project proposed for the same site. Forty-thousand dollars had been expended in this effort. Nevertheless, when the NEA offered a matching grant, the Calder project went forward. When the artwork was unveiled, thousands of people, who had raised ninety-two thousand dollars to cover the cost of the installation, showed up to express their satisfaction. *Vitesse* has become Grand Rapids’ icon and appears on that city’s chamber of commerce materials.

---

86 Ibid., Marter quoting Christian Sonneveldt, the mayor of Grand Rapids.
87 Ibid., 75.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 76.
Five years later in 1974, the city of Chicago commissioned a stabile for its Federal Center Plaza. This work, which is even larger than *Vitesse*, soars to fifty-three feet above street level. The structure, entitled *Flamingo*, is painted a brilliant scarlet hue.\(^2\) *Flamingo* (Fig. 24) is situated in front of a post office built of black steel and glass designed by Mies van der Rohe; the brilliant coloration of the stabile plays nicely off the starkly modernist building behind it.\(^3\) Marter observes that “[*Flamingo*] provides a point of reference for the viewer to relate to the larger dimensions of the entire architectural complex. Calder’s work was readily accepted in Chicago, “perhaps because the city had previously installed Pablo Picasso’s *Head of a Woman* in Civic Center Plaza in 1969.”\(^4\) Colossal, abstract sculpture has a history in Chicago. Urbanites there have been acclimated to this kind of work appearing in the environment since the second half of the last century. Thus, Kapoor’s giant work is not unprecedented in their environment. Calder’s work was, moreover, very popular. A history of enthusiastic reception exists in the city for this type of sculptural/structural intervention in public space.

Over the course of his career, Kapoor’s art objects grew in scale from significantly larger-than-life-size to positively enormous. However, while Calder’s colossal objects invite viewers to navigate space within and around their “limbs,” Kapoor’s objects manipulate volume to the exclusion of an identical navigational experience. Calder’s objects are flat. The stabiles are spectacular for their size, not their scale. They do not hold space; rather, they outline portal-arcs that invite entry into a structural sphere of influence. Kapoor departs significantly from this Calderesque, delimiting way of framing space. His objects, as opposed to outlining three-dimensional cuts in space, hold space within or destabilize space around themselves. Often, Kapoor’s works subsume, fold, or suck space into themselves. The viewer is able to navigate around them or under them, but never entirely through them.

Calder’s works have an accessible inside; they are entirely open. Kapoor’s objects, conversely, are typically almost entirely or completely closed. This does not, however, stop them from compelling one into their orbit as if by tractor-beam. As Steven Holl and David van der

---

\(^2\) Ibid., 75–6.

\(^3\) Ibid., 76.

\(^4\) Ibid., 77.
Leer state, “When materializing space . . . the intuitive powers to perceive subtle proportions in the physical world are crucial. Just as we can tune musical instruments with a minuteness of proportional adjustments to produce harmonies, we can also appreciate visual and spatial proportions. . . . Kapoor’s reassertion of the human body as the locus of experience, as well as his firm aim to root his work in the perceptual realm of the moment before thought can occur present us with new questions of proportion and scale. . . . Kapoor has taken on scales usually reserved for the realm of architecture.” (emphasis mine) Holl and van der Leer conclude by asserting that when Kapoor builds these sculpture-structures, his profoundly deft grasp of human scale promotes in the viewer-subject an understanding of space and time at the “macroscale without becoming merely iconic.” In other words, the observer comes into the work’s field of influence but is not overwhelmed by its size. Because one stays in some sort of proportional relationship with the object, that thing is not instantly reduced to a single, flat meaning.

In 2000 at New Castle-upon-Tyne, Kapoor installed a structure called Taratantara in an old flourmill (Fig. 25). This gargantuan object was roughly the size of a ten-story building. It has been described as follows:

The tube of red vinyl stretched between the two remaining, standing walls replaced the missing end walls and seemingly converted the building into a block with a hole through it. From the outside, this was fairly simple; one saw the stretched red fabric and anticipated or imagined the mechanics of the installation. Although certainly the continuity of surface between the two ends—the effect of a folding of the outside into a vortex that swept through the building—caused some complications, and the glistening, vibrant surface of the vinyl gleamed with an awesome intensity.

95 Steven Holl with David van der Leer, “Perception before Cognition” in Kapoor: Memory (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2008), 79.
96 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 125.
99 Ibid., 122.
This quotation suggests, and the photographic record confirms, that the visual effect of Taratantara was that of an object sucking the mass of a building in on itself—as if brick and mortar were being consumed in a vortex.

In 2004, Kapoor installed yet another monstrous structure inside the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall (London). Entitled Marsyas, this work is like a double-ended, deep red trumpet at whose center is situated a flared opening under which observers can stand (Fig. 26).\textsuperscript{100} This work is a mixture of “a highly sophisticated combination of pull, elasticity, and load [that made] it possible to turn 40 tons of steel and fabric into a giant sculpture.”\textsuperscript{101} Taratantara and Marsyas both interrogate the space of the buildings that barely hem them in. Forster states, “Both [works] devour the architecture, calling into question the solid contours and encompassing spaces in the process. What once appeared as fathomless, wavering field in the depths of the stone [referencing Kapoor’s earlier carved stone sculptures], hard as it may be, now deprives viewers of access as infinitely stretching, bending funnels and tunnels of colored fabric.”\textsuperscript{102} Forster thus confirms the premise that, as alluring as these structures are and as much as they pique one’s curiosity regarding spatial possibilities, ultimately they deny the viewer actual entry.\textsuperscript{103}

While Calder’s stable structures of the late 1960s and 1970s were utterly open, jungle-gym-like objects inviting observers to visually and physically swing around them, Kapoor’s work of the same scale—by virtue of containing (and sometimes appearing to dissolve) space—keeps visitors at a remove. One can touch but never truly enter the object’s body (nor should one), for that area is completely encapsulated by the structure’s skin. As previously alluded, breaking that surface would be a violation, the cutting into a body, an unnecessary and

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 125.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} “The PVC membrane has a fleshy quality, which Kapoor describes as being ‘rather like a flayed skin.’ The title refers to Marsyas, a satyr in Greek mythology, who was flayed alive by the god Apollo. The sculpture’s dark red colour suggests something ‘of the physical, of the earthly, of the bodily.’ Kapoor has commented, ‘I want to make body into sky.’ Marsyas confounds spatial perception, immersing the viewer in a monochromatic field of colour. It is impossible to view the entire sculpture from any one position. Instead we experience it as a series of discrete encounters, in which we are left to construct the whole.” See http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/kapoor/default.htm (accessed march 27, 2010).
undignified surgical intervention. *Cloud Gate*, unlike its behemoth, red cousins *Tarantatara* and *Marsyas*, is an outdoor creature but nevertheless functions similarly. Not only can one not pass through it (as opposed to walking under it), even one’s image bounces off it. Its convex exterior pulls reflections of tall buildings and skyscrapers down into its gravitational orbit, recreating similar sensations of folding space inward. Walking underneath its bulbous archway, one can touch its cool surface as one might pat the belly of a horse one was saddling, but there is no getting inside its insides.

Tracing a path from *1000 Names* through *Tarantatara* demonstrates that, for Kapoor, *Cloud Gate* was always a nascent structural manifestation. From his early, small works in mud and pigment, the artist was questioning the nature of the sculpture/object’s interaction with observers. He has tirelessly investigated methods of creating the appearance of volume and its collapse, or disappearance, through visual and kinesthetic effects of erasing, folding, or bending space. These properties are typically achieved through manipulating the shapes’ skins and the material quality of those skins. Funnels, tunnels, pockets, and pouches all give the observer a sense of the object’s possession of interiority, its existence as a *body*. However, the shedding of pigment and the glimmer of reflection suggest a state of active disintegration or dynamic contraction.

Krauss’s powerfully persuasive Klein group schema neutered Fried’s influential criticism and disavowal of early, minimal objects that share similar formal characteristics with *Cloud Gate*. Krauss was deeply influential in ushering new sculptural/structural objects into the public sphere. By juxtaposing Kapoor’s objects with other twentieth-century precursors, it becomes apparent that a Western viewing public would already have been familiar with abstract forms in the public sphere—especially those that lend themselves to anthropomorphic interpretation by creating awareness of the subject’s embodiment. Moreover, especially where Calder is concerned, a direct link exists with Kapoor’s work in terms of public commissions, dollars, and gargantuan sculptures.

Thus in the mid-twentieth century, new art forms propagated the public arena through the tandem emergence of positive critical discourse and active artistic production. These fertile conditions set the stage for works like *Cloud Gate*, whose postmodern abstraction can produce a discernable sense of our embodiment—the effects of which are investigated next.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMBODIED SUBJECT: MEMORY, WHITEOUT AND CLOUD GATE

Thus far, this essay has explored Cloud Gate in relation to: 1) Anglo-American art-critical discourse culminating in the validation and continued propagation of highly optical (modern) or objectified (minimal) sculpture; 2) Rosalind Krauss’s successful establishment and application of the Klein group schema, which literally expanded the sculptural field to encompass new object-classes; and 3) a constellation of modern sculptures that exemplify stylistic precursors to Kapoor’s work.

When one juxtaposes works by King, Hepworth, and Calder with those of Kapoor, one realizes that since the beginning of his career, Kapoor has been fascinated with issues of embodiment—exteriority and interiority; openness and closure; and emptiness versus void. Virtually every item in his sculptural/structural praxis reflects this near obsession. Moreover, these precursors are practically emblematic of the abstract sculpture a Western viewing public would have been increasingly familiar with despite the circumstances discussed below.

Historically, decisions made by a politically privileged, socio-economically elite membership dictate what constitutes art in the public sphere; museums and galleries count as public venues under this rubric, as well.\(^\text{104}\) What begins as avant-garde innovation is often subsequently enshrined as high art. Frequently, in the transformation of art from bleeding edge ground-breaker to museum-worthy artifact, those who affect the conversion do not first obtain the good will of the public. When nonfigurative works are elevated to this rarefied station, it is nearly impossible to extract them after the fact. It is one thing when abstract painting and sculpture populates the interior of museums and galleries. For many people, however, it is

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 52. Knight notes the irony inherent in excluding museums and galleries from concepts of public space. Museums are intended solely for public interaction with art, and despite their commercial purpose, galleries are also public spaces that invite people in—regardless of their ulterior, sales-based motivations.
another issue entirely when indecipherable content starts flowing into the streets. In the face of such unintelligible artwork, many people do not remain emotionally neutral.  

In further acknowledgment of public art’s penchant for creating mixed reactions, one must consider that multiple iterations of public policy in America have led to confusion about the government’s role in supporting public art. Beginning with FDR’s New Deal, the Treasury Department administered a Section of Fine Arts division. In her work on public art, Cher Krause Knight quotes Marlene Park and Gerald Markowitz when they observe that “the Section’s goal was to create a contemporary American art, neither academic nor avant-garde, but based on experience and accessible to the general public.” Thus, the first federally-underwritten project for public art did not seek to challenge the public’s aesthetic sensibilities. Indeed, Knight emphasizes that “there was a pronounced strain of cultural democracy in the New Deal.” The goal was to provide art that would enrich and edify, not upset an aesthetic apple cart.

Edward Bruce, director of the Public Works of Art Project in the 1930s, suggested a revenue mechanism leading to a subsequent, federally funded arts initiative, which was the 1963 Art in Architecture (AiA) program administered by the General Services Administration (GSA). The AiA mandated that for each new federal architecture development, the budget would include a percentage for art. Thus, the body public would “own” art by virtue of its having

105 Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* is perhaps one of the most well-known examples of an American public artwork causing enormous controversy. Art critics come down on both sides of this issue, but one of the most clearly reasoned, objective explanations for what transpired in Federal Plaza comes from Hilde Hein. She explains, “[Serra] meant to confront the public in behavioral space . . . The crusade for the removal of the sculpture was initiated by a federal judge and federal employees who protested the affront committed by the Arc and the aggression it might inspire, but in their testimony some revealed a deeper sensibility—a consciousness raised and smothered by oppression from elsewhere.” See Hilda Hein, “What Is Public Art?: Time, Place, and Meaning,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 3, as well as Serra quoted therein.


107 Ibid., 5.

108 Ibid., 6.
been paid for with tax dollars.\textsuperscript{109} The AiA has a sketchy history of installing artworks that are meaningful or appropriate to their sites. Knight notes:

Some AiA works remain vigorously scrutinized by critics bemoaning the unfortunate proliferation of “plop art,” guided by an “unstated assumption that a successful museum or gallery artist would be a successful public artist.” Dubbed “turds in the plaza” by architect James Wines, such art is typified by the lone, epic, abstract sculpture, resting awkwardly in but unrelated to its vast surroundings. Its life being granted through percent-for-art dicta rather than an understanding of shared public culture, “plop art” cannot be saved by its egalitarian ambitions.\textsuperscript{110}

Later, another federally underwritten initiative for the creation of public art came with the Johnson administration’s 1965 creation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In 1967, under the auspices of the NEA, the Art-in-Public-Places (A-i-P-P) program was begun. Its core aims were “increasing awareness of contemporary art; fostering aesthetic enhancement and socially-minded redevelopment of public spaces; offering American artists, especially emerging ones, opportunities to work in public contexts; supporting artistic experimentation; and engendering direct community involvement in the commission and placement of art.”\textsuperscript{111} The A-i-P-P’s efforts to involve the community did not always proceed smoothly, but Knight observes that for the first time the federal government did not interfere, and part of A-i-P-P’s success was due to a process whereby public commitment and acceptance was sought in advance of installing artwork.\textsuperscript{112} Beginning under the Reagan administration, representatives of neoconservative constituencies gutted the NEA. The A-i-P-P no longer exists.\textsuperscript{113} By 1993, the government combined the A-i-P-P and Visual Arts Forum’s funding lines. Now, through a series of more convoluted grant-routing mechanisms, monies are doled out for projects that may or

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 19.
may not be able to keep alive the community involvement of projects carried out under the A-i-P-P.\footnote{Ibid.}

Even though it is beyond this paper’s scope to offer a comprehensive discussion regarding the principals, politics, or value of installing abstract art in public spaces, there is one study that must be taken into account. Corrinn Conard, a recent graduate student at the Ohio State University, conducted a research poll in the summer of 2007. She used Millennium Park as a case study to substantiate answers to the following set of questions.\footnote{“I conducted these surveys on-site at Millennium Park over a period of three weeks in the autumn of 2007. The surveys involved both residents and non-residents of the city and asked a total of eleven questions followed by a short section on demographic data. I chose each participant for the survey by walking throughout Millennium Park and approaching individuals to request their assistance. I tried to choose a demographic variety of participants based on my observations so that my research represented Chicagoans and non-Chicagoans, men and women, various ethnicities, and citizens of all ages. The majority of questions in my survey were closed questions with a multiple choice format. However, I also included two questions that were open-ended, allowing participants the opportunity to express themselves in their own words. Open-ended questions are valuable because they generate answers that describe “the world as the respondent really sees it rather than how the researcher does.” Corrinn Conard, “Where Is the Public in Public Art: A Case Study of Millennium Park,” (Master’s thesis, The Ohio State University, 2007): 49.} She asked, “Where is the public in public art? What is the role of that group believed to be the primary client of such public endeavors? How much power does the public have? Should they have? Do they want?”\footnote{Ibid., ii.} Her findings are illuminating, and she contextualizes them within a discourse that takes into account the history of public park creation in Chicago; the contested history of Millennium Park, itself; the media’s participation and influence in the park project; city residents’ feelings about Mayor Daly and the Chicago political machine; as well as a host of demographic data. Relevant to my research are her findings regarding public response to the park’s artwork. She does not parse responses by individual works, but rather asks general questions about art in the park in sum total.

Even though these data are not tailored to \textit{Cloud Gate}, the numbers indicate trends that are applicable. For example, 53 percent of respondents were from Chicago, 32 percent were from other states or countries, and 13 percent were from the Chicago suburbs.\footnote{Ibid., 95.} Eleven percent

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{Notes}
visited the park daily while another 20 percent visited weekly.\textsuperscript{118} Thirteen percent said they came to the park specifically for the art and the gardens while 26 percent said they came simply to relax by themselves.\textsuperscript{119} Of the population surveyed, 65 percent of visitors not from Chicago “absolutely liked” the artwork, as opposed to 44 percent of Chicago residents responding in kind. Another 43 percent of visitors said “yes, it’s pretty good” compared to 31 percent of residents responding in kind. Only two percent of residents said “it’s just okay,” and another two percent of residents responded by asking “you call this art?”\textsuperscript{120} Thus, in the polled population comprising city residents, the overwhelming majority felt positively disposed toward the art in Millennium Park. While these data cannot be specifically extrapolated for \textit{Cloud Gate}, they are valid indicators of the general mood that exists in the park.

One cannot, of course, make universal claims for the appeal of any artwork. This paper’s goal is not to convince the reader of \textit{Cloud Gate}’s aesthetic superiority to other public artworks. Rather, the aim is to demonstrate why \textit{Cloud Gate}, through its manipulation of space, can make a viewer aware of embodied life. Throughout this work, it is observed that \textit{how} a viewer comes to recognize a piece as being a certain “style” or species of art influences his or her reception of it. Further, if an artwork with an art historical lineage like that of \textit{Cloud Gate} impinges on one’s personal space, the visitor/viewer may be suddenly and effectively re-situated in awareness of his or her lived-body. In what follows, I unpack notions of how \textit{Cloud Gate} is likely to bring to mind embodied existence for a viewing subject.

In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay on Kapoor’s sculptural structure, \textit{Memory}, which was site-produced at the Deutsche Guggenheim in 2008, he says, “The size of Marsyas (2002) taught Kapoor that no one sees the whole thing [structure] at once. And in \textit{Memory}, he has made that part of the plan. . . . If it is true that Kapoor has made the lesson of \textit{Marsyas}—that no one

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 98.
\end{flushleft}
sees the whole thing at once—part of the plan of Memory, then the lesson has been staged also as a reminder of the body as measure.”

Memory is a gigantic, egg-shaped structure constructed of 154 individual steel tiles assembled in situ, “perfectly manufactured to prevent any light from seeping through, read[ing] as one continuous form (Fig. 25).” Kapoor used Cor-Ten steel for the construction, which with continued oxidation turns an increasingly darker, rusty-red color. The ribs and bolts that suture the tiles together create a burly grid visible on the exterior of the structure, while the interior space is perfectly smooth. The “egg” is situated on a horizontal axis inside a hall within the museum. A visitor/viewer approaches Memory in one of three ways: down a short stair where one is presented with a raised, square opening through which one can peer into the work’s dark, silky interior, or through either of two doors allowing observation of one or the other end of the structure’s exterior. The photographic record implies that, where the work curves away from the wall, one could duck under from one side to the other. This is not the case, however. Poddar explains, “Its thin skin, only eight millimeters thick, suggests a form that is ephemeral and unmonumental, defying gravity as it gently ‘glances’ against the peripheries of the gallery walls, floors, and ceilings. . . . However . . . our physical comfort is undermined. We want to walk around and under the bulging curves, but are denied this access. The sculpture is not architecture—we are prevented from entering Memory’s aperture/window. In trying to overcome Memory’s restraints, we become even more aware of our own bodily constraints.” (emphasis mine)

The issue of never being able to see the whole work reminds one of Krauss’s position on syncretic vision, based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of phenomenology. Krauss states, “The notion of . . . axiomatic coordinates, which allows one to think of oneself as capable of reconstituting the object, from all around itself, regardless of one’s own position, or its, is a

121 See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay, “Signs and Trace,” in Poddar, Memory, 60.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 28.
notion that wants to forget that meaning arises only from this position, and this perspective; and that one has no knowledge of these things beforehand. The column [or any sculpture-structure] insists that only phantasms appear to ‘the syncretic vision’; but its meaning is specific and is a function of lived time.”

When applied to the metaphorical import of Memory, one can deduce that the sculptural-structure analogically re-produces the lived nature of memory. Each person constitutes memory from a combination of consciousness of past experiences and filters unique to that individual’s personality. When someone encounters Memory, each of these three features is present. Consciousness is the precondition for experiential events. Moreover, each person has had different experiences—for example, one person might view Memory from one end, another might view it from the other. But even if these two people traded places, one person’s experience would never be exactly like another’s because everyone’s personality, tastes, and desires dictate a differently inflected end result.

If one approaches Memory from the steps, one can look through the square window, but all one will apprehend is its interior darkness. This action suggests how memories are formed—a one-way conduit allowing awareness of empirically-derived sense experience to enter, but once there never to escape whole again (Fig. 26). Similarly, one can look into another’s eyes, but can never see through them. This looking into the dark ovoid seems to parallel one’s inability to access the lived experience of another. One can know parts of the other, but one cannot know the other in total.

As with syncretic vision, there is an illusion that our limited perspective allows us some complete understanding. This simply is not true. Kapoor’s sculpture implies this actuality. Memory is always a reconstruction based on a selective assemblage of events. For example, one can view Memory from one vantage point; then one is forced to move out of its immediate space and approach it from a different portal to get a different perspective. From the new situation, one will remember where one came from, and try to put the pieces together (Fig. 27). A person may feel like he or she understands the whole structure, but in actuality, gaps in understanding always exist.

---

125 Krauss, Passages, 240.
Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s thinking about phenomenologically-based reality insists upon this perspectival awareness. He firmly resituated the mind, or consciousness, within the lived-body.\textsuperscript{126} Cartesian mind-body dualism, which has in one guise or another been deeply influential to the philosophical discourse from the early seventeenth-century forward, has no place in Merleau-Ponty’s rationale.\textsuperscript{127} Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow for a thorough unpacking of his judgments regarding the nature of lived experience. The following synopsis must suffice.

The scholar George J. Marshall provides an overview of the philosopher’s \textit{magnum opus}. Marshall states, “Central to the \textit{Phenomenology of Perception} is . . . rediscovery of ‘lived perception.’ It is from ‘lived perception’ that we have access to reality, and indeed, to ourselves. It is on the basis of this ‘lived perception’ that we abstract, conceptualize, theorize, and develop our sciences and philosophies. . . . While [the aforementioned processes] give us reality as it is, they give it to us in limited ways.”\textsuperscript{128} For Merleau-Ponty, human existence is “incarnate consciousness.” That is, we humans are not just a body and not just a soul. Perhaps we are some hybrid of the two, but more germane to his argument is the notion that we are that species of creature \textit{who can mentally conceive both concepts}.\textsuperscript{129} According to Marshall, Merleau-Ponty’s primary objective was to force people to question their presumptions, which are based on completely individual, perspectival situatedness.\textsuperscript{130} Merleau-Ponty felt that competing schools of rationalist and empiricist discourse had eclipsed all other possible methods for exploring the nature of truth. For Merleau-Ponty, the institutionalization of these modes of inquiry was unacceptable.\textsuperscript{131} To his way of thinking, philosophy—instead of being a way of obtaining

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{127} For an enlightening exposition of the way people would function if one took literally Descartes’ principal of \textit{cogito ego sum}, see Evans’ section entitled “Zombies: A Phenomenological Critique,” in \textit{Life in Mind} 230–35.
\item \textsuperscript{128} George J. Marshall, \textit{A Guide to Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception} (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008), 55.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 60.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 61.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
answers—should be a means of questioning that challenges presuppositions and resists theories.\textsuperscript{132} For example, while Merleau-Ponty might use a dialectical argument to question reality, he is not presenting dialecticism as an epistemological absolute. His object is to keep the reader questioning what is being revealed rather than getting distracted by the method.\textsuperscript{133} In this case, one might say he is centering the reader in the question what does it mean? as opposed to the inquiry \textit{is it philosophy}? Marshall notes that “Merleau-Ponty denies . . . any radical distinction between philosophy . . . and art in general. The goal of art is to transform our perspective so that we see more, and that we see differently.”\textsuperscript{134} This take on the function of art has striking parallels to Semir Zeki’s primary thesis in \textit{Inner Vision}. Zeki contends that the principal purpose of the visual brain is “the acquisition of knowledge about the world around us. . . . Just as the brain searches for constancies and essentials, so does art.”\textsuperscript{135}

In 2004, Kapoor mounted an exhibit called \textit{Whiteout} at the Barbara Gladstone gallery in New York. This exhibit comprised only pieces formed of stainless steel or of fiberglass and/or wood lacquered a stark white. Harkening back to the configuration of \textit{1000 Names}, these mirrored forms were placed about the gallery floor; however, these particular objects were wildly dissimilar to the brightly colored pigment-pieces from two decades prior (Fig. 9). The chalky pieces of \textit{1000 Names} formed bodies unto themselves. In marked contrast, the objects of \textit{Whiteout} resemble petrified organs cast out of bodies that, with one exception, have been snatched away. A roll call of titles underscores this impression. For example, the grouping contains \textit{Implant}, \textit{Pregnant Square}, \textit{Sack}, and, additionally, the tool that might be implicated in the evisceration, \textit{Blade} (Figs. 28–31). \textit{Carousel}, a mirrored disc supporting a column painted white, which in turn supports a second, mirrored disc, suggests a body with its torso surgically excised. \textit{Carousel} is not the specific body from which the organs were stolen (Fig. 32). Rather, it is an iconographic body that represents a mute victim; in the gallery space it is situated with all

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{135} Zeki, \textit{Inner Vision}, 8, 11.
the smaller sculptures arranged around it.\textsuperscript{136} One is brought to mind of a generic horror story reported on \textit{60 Minutes}—a tourist who travels to country X and takes only pictures but leaves behind a kidney in addition to footprints. \textit{Sack} could be that kidney, or a stomach, or a liver. \textit{Implant} has been rejected by the body. It has landed in a lump on the floor, its mass pushed off kilter by regurgitation and frozen in the shape it took the second it hit the ground. \textit{Spire}, a mirrored, inverted funnel, attenuates into a reed-like needle for administering anesthesia, perhaps (Fig. 33).

If Merleau-Ponty and Zeki are correct, and the goal of the visual brain, and by extension the goal of art, is to widen perception so that we might learn more about our environment, one wonders what these objects could possibly be trying to communicate. Evan Thompson relates Merleau-Ponty’s observation of the experience one has when one joins one’s hands together. He quotes Merleau-Ponty: “Thus I touch myself touching: my body accomplishes ‘a sort of reflection.’ In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body—that the body is a ‘perceiving thing,’ a ‘subject-object.’”\textsuperscript{137} Note how truly radical this statement is—the notion that perception, or consciousness of experience, is not only seated in the \textit{mind} but also equally, maybe even entirely, in the \textit{body}. Thompson concludes that this experience is equivalent to a kind of “self-othering.”\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, “this self-othering dynamic is a crucial precondition for empathy, in the broad sense of being able to recognize others as subjects like oneself on the basis of their bodily presence.”\textsuperscript{139}

The \textit{Whiteout} objects impose this condition of self-othering. While they exist outside of our actual, real-time bodies, these sculptures are so intensely like frozen, abstract viscera they could belong to anyone, including the viewer. The final step in identifying with these organs that

\textsuperscript{136} Vidler, \textit{Whiteout}, 13.

\textsuperscript{137} Merleau-Ponty as quoted by Thompson in \textit{Mind in Life}, 251.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
are alien-yet-personal comes when one apprehends their shiny surfaces reflecting . . . one’s self. In the exhibition catalogue for Whiteout, Anthony Vidler notes that Jacques Lacan, in one of his famous lectures on “The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,” used the example of anamorphosis, as presented in Holbein’s The Ambassadors to describe how, through the invention of orthogonal perspective, artists had divined a method for including the observer in a space that was truly nowhere (Fig. 34). 140 Through this illusory technique, two dimensions had become the visual equivalent of three dimensions. 141

With the Ambassadors, one of the methods one might use for apprehending the flattened skull at the subjects’ feet is to gaze at it in a cylindrical mirror. In Whiteout, Carousel is not only an iconic body in the arrangement of objects; metaphorically, it is the mirrored cylinder—a decoder ring—that would make intelligible the anamorphosis of the smattering of objects at its feet. It cannot perform in this capacity, however, because a block of its mirrored exterior is missing.

Whiteout’s sculptures could leave one entirely at a loss. A subject would see a distorted reflection of herself, as well as anyone else in the vicinity, in these quasi-gruesome blobs of congealed mercury. These images would be indistinct, and nothing would really make sense. Most visitors would wonder what possibly could be taken away from such an ambiguous, slightly off-putting encounter. The lesson is simply this: the mirrored cylinder required for breaking the anamorphic cipher is not Carousel. The decoder ring one must employ is the actual, physical body. Through this translational transaction, if one is resituated in his or her embodied humanity, the point is made. As long as one is brought to awareness of the importance of respecting the other—both as body and unique source of perspective—as one respects the self, Whiteout has successfully completed a mission.

These diminutive, stainless steel pieces might suggest that Cloud Gate had a brood of children in New York before lumbering off to Chicago. Interestingly enough, the objects of Whiteout presented at Gladstone in 2004 are exactly contemporaneous with Cloud Gate, which also was unveiled in July of 2004. One can safely assume, due to morphological similarities, that

140 Vidler, Whiteout, 14.
141 Ibid.
Kapoor was working through a set of aesthetic and philosophical issues that informed all these works. In an essay written for a Kapoor retrospective installed in 2009 at the Royal Academy, London, Jean de Loisy says of some of Kapoor’s specular sculptures: “These works demand that the spectator’s gaze plays a performative role. They assume bodily movement with important phenomenological and psychological consequences, but afford the spectator none of the narcissistic satisfaction usually associated with mirrors.”

Cloud Gate undermines narcissism and relativism, two of the most pernicious features of postmodern life. Contemporary life is often assumed to have its foundation in alienation and fragmentation. However, Cloud Gate can transform its surroundings in a public park into a space where one can, for a moment, feel connected one’s own body, to other people, and current time and place. In the moment someone engages Cloud Gate, the brain, through its visual and kinesthetic interfaces, triggers memory and powers of applied analogy. In this moment of attention, the rational brain elides what it knows to be a public space with the private conditions and concerns of personal life history. Once this elision occurs, the observer’s mind, now residing in the slightly different state the artwork engenders, can situate and integrate its personhood with other people in the sculptural setting and the world in general. Cloud Gate creates a multivalent, intensely haptic space for the observer. In this heightened state, one might shift from a habitual focus on ego-driven experience to an awareness of one’s inextricable ties to others and a shared world.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt explores issues of how the common world is constructed and how it has devolved in the modern age. For Arendt, the common world is a public realm comprising relevant ideas and objects, and as such is intelligible and significant to many generations despite a vast diversity of viewpoints. The common world cannot accommodate private or subjective emotions such as love, or a means to private ego gratification, such as vanity. Love and vanity are not irrelevant in private life, but they are irrelevant to experience in public space. She asserts that when we impose private motivations on this common world, or public space, we compromise and fragment it, making public space unintelligible to the people

comprising the body public.\textsuperscript{143} Notably, she avers that “[the common world is destroyed] under conditions of mass society or mass hysteria, where we see all people suddenly behave as though they were members of one family, each multiplying and prolonging the perspective of his neighbor. . . . They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times.”\textsuperscript{144}

One can interpret Arendt’s comment thusly: When concerns of private life are made public through the mass media, they are treated \textit{as if} they are public concerns. For example, the relationship woes of one man or woman courting twenty opposite-sex contenders can seem as important as the president’s State of the Union address.\textsuperscript{145} The media de-centers those items that are truly of concern to the body public by providing all programming in virtually the same context and by equally promoting everything they produce. To the “Bachelorette,” it is supremely important to choose the correct mate. It is not so crucial to the rest of us. How does an object like \textit{Cloud Gate} have the potential for subverting this type of confusion? How might an observer of this work be reminded that, in this world, some essential priorities should exist?

These conclusions could feel hyperbolic or specious given \textit{Cloud Gate’s} siting in a public park where people gather for fairly mindless recreational purposes. However, as demonstrated above, \textit{Cloud Gate} has great potential for evoking positive viewer reception. It fits a type with which the public is familiar, and that its scale and biomorphic properties make it an object likely to arouse awareness of one’s embodied nature. The specific effects I noted in what follows may not \textit{actually} occur for everyone. Rather, they \textit{could} occur to anyone. In other words, there is room for a literal or metaphorical interpretation.

W. J. T. Mitchell relates this provocative concept about how certain sculptures can operate: “The notion of ‘collective representation,’ the condensation of a social totality into a single gestalt, is central to what Emile Durkheim called ‘totemism.’ The totem is, literally (in its origin in the Ojibway language), a ‘relative of mine,’ a figure that mediates social difference . . .

\textsuperscript{143}Arendt, “Public Realm,” 12.

\textsuperscript{144}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145}I purposely use diametric examples. Things are obviously far less categorically opposed in real life, which makes it exponentially more difficult to assign importance to issues.
with a sense of social solidarity and collective identity.”\textsuperscript{146} 

\textit{Cloud Gate} functions in this totemic capacity. This sculptural structure has become associated with the city of Chicago, and through such association has gathered to itself iconic status. However, as mentioned previously in relation to \textit{Grand Vitesse}, \textit{Cloud Gate} is not just an icon, not just a stand in for something not present.

The idea of totemism far more accurately encompasses this object’s functional potential. If one considers that a “totem” equates to one’s relative, then everyone whose reflection is gathered into \textit{Cloud Gate}’s mirrored surface may be viewed as related to one in that moment (Fig. 35). In this manner, “social differences” are mediated through an image of “social solidarity and collective identity.”\textsuperscript{147} Moreover, one’s image is blurred through the curving skin of the object; thus, it is difficult to apprehend one’s likeness as more or less important than anyone else’s in the ground of reflection. \textit{Cloud Gate} undermines the narcissistic tendencies mirrors inspire. People’s reflections dissolve into one another, identities are unclear, and as such a sense of merged being can arise.

It might seem as if a phenomenological interpretation of \textit{Cloud Gate} would inspire rather than discourage a relativistic outlook. After all, Merleau-Ponty insisted that embodied nature mandated unique perspectives. But there is more to the theory than meets the eye. Phenomenological definitions of seeing exceed merely “looking and being looked at.”\textsuperscript{148} If this were the case, then yes, phenomenology would be just another catalyst for claiming the impossibility of ever definitively knowing anything and despairing of that fact. However, Merleau-Ponty conceived of seeing as more than this glancing operation. For him, it was a “symbiosis, not between someone seeing and something being seen, but between an inside and an outside, the boundaries of which are constantly shifting.”\textsuperscript{149} Symbiosis implies not only

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Potts, \textit{Sculptural Imagination}, 222.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
merging, but *needing*. In symbiotic relations, one body acquires something fundamental for survival from the other, and vice-versa.

*Cloud Gate* reflects our symbiotic nature (Fig. 36). In its urban park context, it makes public space intelligible by promoting intergenerationally relevant themes that assist in the formation of a common world.\textsuperscript{150} Consider what it reflects: a diverse public that comes into its orbit to relax in solitude or reconnect with friends or family; the buildings of the Chicago skyline, which symbolize many social and economic concerns; and the sky above it that holds all the world in its grasp—a world increasingly threatened by human impact. All of these reflections are public in both fact and nature.

Potts reflects that when Merleau-Ponty “envisages a body image playing a role in our viewing of things . . . he does so in terms that are radically at odds with traditional anthropomorphic models.”\textsuperscript{151} In the past, people have understood some sculpture as being human-like, because when we see it, we ascribe properties to it that conform to notions of what bodies look like.\textsuperscript{152} Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, views this process as one whereby we are made conscious of embodiment based on an object’s encroachment on our space.\textsuperscript{153} The bodyness traditionally ascribed to the “other” is, according to this view, misplaced. A sculpture may or may not have biomorphic properties. What matters is whether or not the object situates us in embodied awareness, regardless of its formal attributes.

*Cloud Gate* happens to have formal characteristics that evoke its own body-hood. However, whatever its personal concerns might be, they are held tightly inside it. It does not impose opinions on its viewing public. *Cloud Gate* is completely apolitical, entirely asexual, and utterly without religious valence. Perhaps it is true that we can *see* only from one perspective at a time. However, *Cloud Gate* seems to assert that if we look from a place of embodied vision, we will discern myriad areas of overlap between ourselves and the world around us. We can


\textsuperscript{151} Potts, *Sculptural Imagination*, 220.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
recognize our symbiotic reliance upon others and thus better frame what constitutes Arendt’s notion of a truly common world—one that acknowledges that, while we may see things differently, our survival depends on the activation of shared vision.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in this paper, Cloud Gate inherited formal attributes from several stylistic forbearers. Its postmodern concavity echoes with latent minimal, New Generation, and abstract-modern voices. These resonances assist in viewer acceptance by pointing to stylistic antecedents with which many observers may already be familiar. Moreover, its playful, fun-house method of manipulating ambient space blurs its envelope of spatial displacement with a viewing subject’s sense of personal space. This shifting boundary can effectively produce in an observer awareness of embodied life.

The methodology I brought to bear in interrogating Cloud Gate allowed for a stylistic analysis that has not been conducted within the scholarship on Kapoor. Additionally, by combining this approach with a phenomenological reading, I was able to show how mid- to late-twentieth-century sculptural preoccupations with space, temporal duration, and anthropomorphic forms have played out in “The Bean.” None of the scholarship had adequately delved into how Cloud Gate co-opts elements of the minimal idiom. While this relationship is mentioned tangentially in regard to Cloud Gate and other of Kapoor’s sculptures, no one had yet delineated which aspects of 1960s sculptural concerns continue to be relevant in the colossal work situated in Millennium Park.

More importantly, even though Kapoor began his formal art training in Britain in the 1970s and still works out of a studio located there, no scholarship had yet made connections between his work and that of New Generation sculptors working in Anthony Caro’s orbit of influence. Phillip King’s conical pieces are but one example of New Generation sculpture that underlies formal expressions in Kapoor’s work. Regarding Caro, Andrew Causey states, “Being three-dimensional, sculpture shares the corporeality of the body. Sculpture, therefore, can create figurations and liberate gesture in a way painting cannot. Sculpture’s traditional problem, militating against this, had been gravity and the risk always that it was liable to be, not gesture but object. Caro’s answer was to eliminate sculpture’s base and, by means of complex forms and
lateral extension, to replace gravity with the appearance of weightlessness.” Kapoo’s sculpture and sculptural-structures have thus far always excluded a base, and they often actively involve an illusionistic refutation of gravity. Many of Kapoo’s wall- or ceiling-mounted pieces exploit this manifestation of weightlessness and obscure in unexpected ways the boundary between the object’s and the observer’s personal space. In Untitled from 1990, three deeply blue half-spheres appear to levitate with their backs casually abutting the gallery’s walls (Fig. 37). Kapoo’s Untitled (1990) is representative of the work within his oeuvre that maintains engagement with theoretical issues that began to gel in New Generation-thinkers’ sculptures.

Contrasting Kapoo’s ovoid and anthropomorphic objects with those by Barbara Hepworth seemed a most natural pairing. Hepworth once stated:

I have always been interested in oval or ovoid shapes. The first carvings were simple realistic oval forms of the human head or of a bird. Gradually my interest grew in more abstract values - the weight, poise, and curvature of the ovoid as a basic form. The carving and piercing of such a form seems to open up an infinite variety of continuous curves in the third dimension, changing in accordance with the contours of the original ovoid and with the degree of penetration of the material. Here is sufficient field for exploration to last a lifetime.

So much of Kapoo’s work falls into various themes on ovoid forms, it is astonishing that this connection had not yet been taken advantage of in the scholarship. The possibilities related to further expanding this connection are most intriguing.

One of the more startling omissions in Kapoo scholarship is any volume concerned only with his monumental works. In the past decade, Kapoo radically expanded his stock of gargantuan, public sculpture-structures. The comparison in this paper of works like Taratantara and Marsyas to Alexander Calder’s behemoth stabiles from the 1970s provides a first step in analyzing formal antecedents for these spectacular objects. Moreover, this study’s application of Rosalind Krauss’s Klein group schema provides a recognizable point of departure for initiating a dialogue about Kapoo’s colossal objects. These pieces are so large that they impinge on

154 Causey, Sculpture Since 1945, 112.

traditional notions of architecture. I contend that exciting possibilities exist for further complicating Krauss’s already expanded sculptural field. For example, where site construction and axiomatic structures intersect (that is: architecture plus not-architecture plus landscape) one could hypothesize an entirely new space-centered intervention that exhibits traits like Kapoor’s proposed Landscape Void (1990) (Fig. 38). At the axis of site construction and marked sites (landscape plus not-landscape, plus architecture) one could investigate the structural valence of an expanded earthwork like The Farm (begun 2003), currently under construction in Auckland, New Zealand (Fig. 39). Finally, if one added a category based on either anthropomorphic or biomorphic shape as it intersects any of Krauss’s previously developed categories, extremely exciting new categories could arise. Tail Pavilion, designed in 2005 but unrealized, is one example of a structured space where biomorphism, architecture, and sculpture enfold each other (Fig. 40).

Themes explored in this thesis will remain in process for some time to come. Moreover, the limited scope of this paper precluded touching on relationships between Kapoor’s works and the broad, romantic tradition. Many of Kapoor’s sculptures could be seen to stand where romantic concepts of individual, interior life intersect phenomenology. Moreover, I started this process by looking at Aby Warburg’s theories on iconology of the interval and pathos formulae. Prospects for mining those ideas as they relate to empathy theory are germane to a deeper discussion of phenomenological theory where they meet the new, far more expressionistic installations Kapoor is producing.

One could also address—much more exhaustively than could be done in this paper—areas of overlap between Kapoor’s mirrored sculptures and recent findings in visual neurobiology. As cognitive science continues to uncover how the brain processes sensory input, one could cull just the mirrored objects from Kapoor’s output and investigate how they might impact subjective experience on a neurophysiological level. Moreover, with the mirrored sculptures, one could expand significantly on concepts of “facingness,” as elaborated in Fried’s current art criticism. Although Fried’s writing is specific to photographic media, one could extrapolate the concept of facingness to mirrored sculpture. In a critique of Fried’s Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before (2008), Matthew Bowman explains how Fried’s thinking has evolved since he wrote “Art and Objecthood” over forty years ago. He says,
“Fried . . . testifies] to a structure of ‘to-be-seenness’ prevalent in contemporary photography in which the beholder is acknowledged . . . in a non-theatrical way. [Moreover], ‘to-be-seenness’ isn’t restricted to depicted content, but can include the format the photography is presented in—e.g., Wall’s light boxes, the fact of them being on a wall, or photographs presented within a book.”156 Certainly this idea of ‘to-be-seenness’ (especially as it implicates the subject in a kind of performative action) has important phenomenological connotations. That is, if sculpture is understood as an object that does not compel the gaze, but rather stands as a presence with which a person interacts merely because of its existence on a visual horizon, new phenomenological valence could be ascribed to how a viewing subject becomes situated in embodied awareness through such contact.

Finally, much work has yet to be done regarding Cloud Gate and its siting in the greater environs of Millennium Park. As touched upon earlier, Kapoor’s “Bean”—although arguably the most iconic object erected in Chicago in recent memory—is an object in direct dialogue with Gehry’s Jay Pritzker Pavilion as well as Plensa’s Crown Fountain. These structures play off each other in such a way that the value of each is exponentially enriched by its relationship to the others. Issues of site specificity—both as geographic and discursive locales—elaborated by Miwon Kwon were also beyond the scope of the present work. In future, however, Kwon’s arguments could serve as a logical departure point for analysis of the constituent objects in Millennium Park.

As one can see from these concluding comments, Cloud Gate encapsulates a rather astounding technological and aesthetic cohesion. Moreover, it is an object that offers an art historian exhilarating possibilities for continued, scholarly exploration.

Fig. 1: Anish Kapoor. *Cloud Gate*, 2004. Polished stainless steel, 66 x 33 x 44 ft. Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.
Fig. 2: Anish Kapoor. Aerial view of Millennium Park, 2004. Chicago, Illinois with Cloud Gate, the Crown Fountain, and the Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Grand Lawn and BP Bridge.
Fig. 3: Anish Kapoor. *Cloud Gate*, 2004. Polished stainless steel, 66 x 33 x 44 ft. Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.
Fig. 4: Frank Gehry *The Jay Pritzker Pavilion*, 2004. Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.
Fig. 5: Arches National Park, Moab, Utah.

Fig. 6: Anish Kapoor. *Cloud Gate*, 2004. Looking into the omphalos. Polished stainless steel, 66 x 33 x 44 ft. Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.
Fig. 7. Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky.

Fig. 8. Robert Morris. *Untitled*, 1965/71. Mirror plate glass and wood objects, 35.98 x 35.98 x 35.98 in. The Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 10: Anish Kapoor. *1000 Names*, 1982. Earth, pigment. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
Fig. 11: Anish Kapoor. *Hole in Vessel II*, 1984. Polystyrene, cement, earth, acrylic, pigment, 100 x 275 x 175 cm. Private collection, Switzerland.

Fig. 12: Anish Kapoor. *Mother as Mountain*, 1985. Wood, gesso, pigment, 140 x 275 x 105 cm. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Installation: studio of the artist.
Fig. 13: Phillip King. *Rosebud*, 1962. Fiberglass on wood, 148.5 x 167 x 158.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 14: Phillip King. *And the Birds Began to Sing*, 1964. Acrylic and metal object, 1803 x 1803 x 1803 mm. The Tate Modern, London.
Fig. 15: Anish Kapoor. *Adam*, 1988–89.
Sandstone and pigment,
119 x 102 x 236 cm.
The Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 16: Anish Kapoor. *It Is a Man*, 1989–90.
Sandstone and pigment, 241 x 127 x 114 cm.
Museo National Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.
Fig. 17: Barbara Hepworth. *Family of Man*, 1970. Bronze in nine parts, edition of 2 groups plus 4 individual sets of each figure. Complete groups at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (on loan from the Hepworth Estate); The Donald M. Kendall Sculpture Garden at PepsiCo, Purchase, New York.

Fig. 19: Barbara Hepworth. *Pendour*, 1947. Plane wood with colour.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.


Fig. 22: Anish Kapoor. Marysas, 2002. PVC and steel, dimensions variable. Installation: Tate Modern, London.


Fig. 28: Anish Kapoor. *Implant*, 2004. Stainless steel, 10 x 31 x 34 in. Installation: Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.


Fig. 34: Hans Holbein the Younger. *Double Portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ("The Ambassadors"), 1533. Oil and tempera on oak, 207 x 209 cm. National Gallery, London.
Fig. 35: Anish Kapoor. *Cloud Gate*, 2004. Polished stainless steel, 66 x 33 x 44 ft. Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois.

Fig. 37. Anish Kapoor. *Untitled*, 1990. Installed at Tate Britain, London, 2007. Fiberglass and pigment, three pieces each diameter 250 cm, depth 167 cm. Collection Fondazione, Prada, Milan.

Fig. 38. Anish Kapoor *Landscape Void*, 1990. (unrealized).
Auckland, New Zealand.

Fig. 40. Anish Kapoor. *Tail Pavilion*, designed in 2005.
(unrealized).


Hepworth, Barbara. “Selected Sculptures.”

———. “Quotations from Barbara Hepworth’s Writings.”


———. “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 30–44.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In 1991, Traci Matthews received her Bachelor of Arts degree in art history from Florida State University. Upon graduation, Traci moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where she worked designing curriculum for educational programs at The Hermitage, Home of President Andrew Jackson. In 1992, Traci moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she worked for Saks Gallery as a sales person and artist liaison. In 1998, Traci took a position as Director of Operations for the Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra. She produced orchestral concerts for almost four years. She is most thankful for the opportunities this position afforded her. Traci has had the honor of working with such distinguished artists as Arturo Sandoval, Itzhak Perlman, and Yo-Yo Ma. In 2000, Traci entered a technical writing program at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Subsequently, she worked as an editor and technical writer designing end-user documentation for a software corporation. In 2004, she and her husband returned to Tallahassee. Traci worked for Florida State University, ending her tenure there as Associate Registrar in 2008.

Traci will begin Ph.D. work in the spring of 2011. She intends to study specific strains of gender theory and social justice issues as manifested in contemporary art production. Additionally, she remains interested in interrogating how aesthetic interventions activate space in the public sphere.