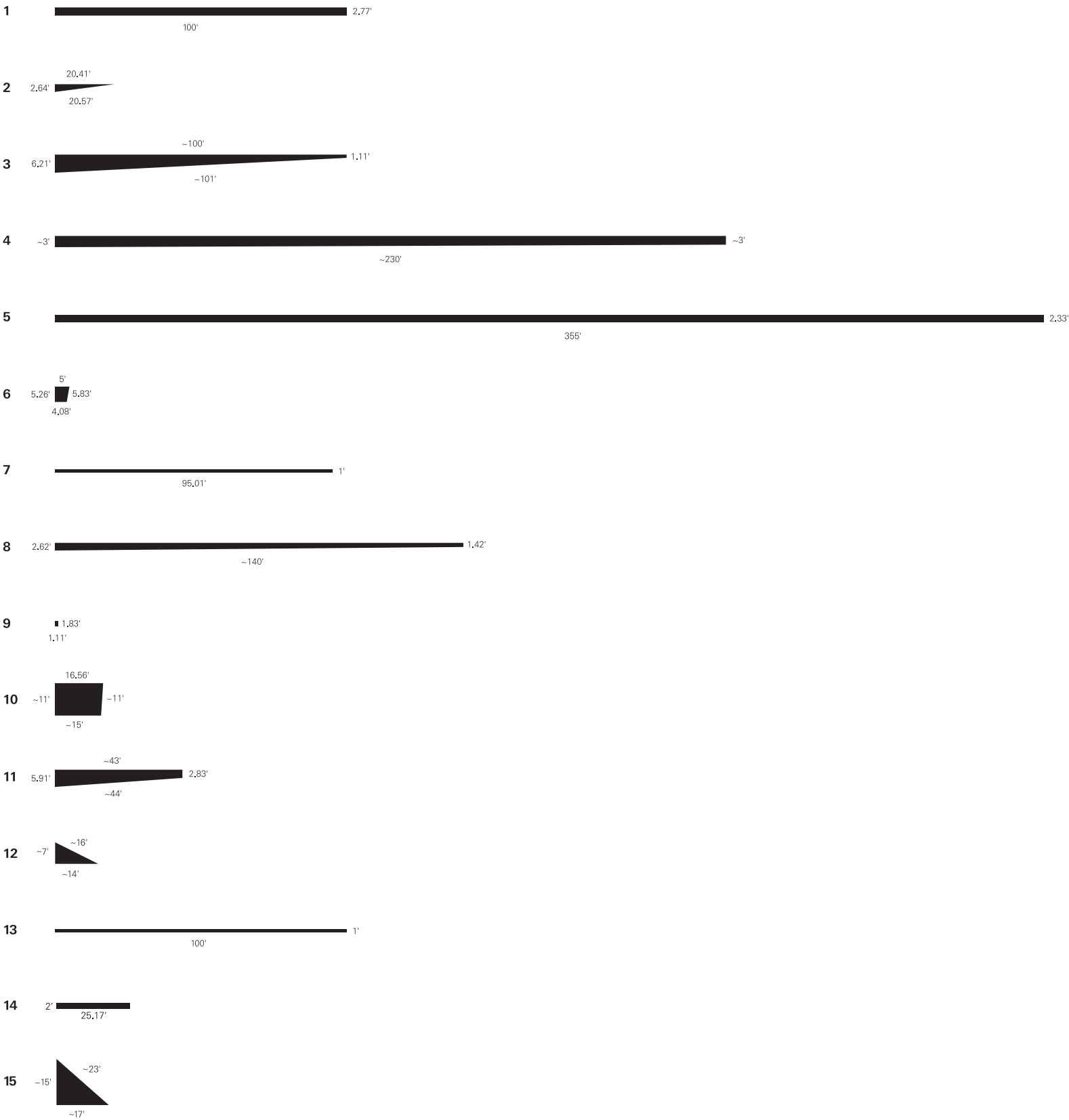


*Edited by Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi, and Frances Richard*  
*Essays by Jeffrey A. Kroessler and Frances Richard*

# Odd Lots

Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's  
*Fake Estates*

Cabinet Books / New York  
In conjunction with the Queens Museum of Art and White Columns



Schematic drawings of lots acquired by Matta-Clark at auctions in 1973.

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## Mythology: The Evolution of *Fake Estates*, Part II

In these conversations, Jane Crawford and others involved in shaping the posthumous career of *Fake Estates* recount the story—from Crawford's receipt, in approximately 1980, of the cardboard box containing photographs, maps, deeds, and related documents, through the assembly of these materials into exhibitable form in 1992. Here again, the difficulty of producing a seamless narrative from the messy texture of past events is evident, and it has not been possible to speak to all participants. Contradictions also emerge among the recollections gathered here, one example being the fact that when the following interview was conducted, neither we nor Crawford knew that Jaime Davidovich had taken his own photograph of the missing fifteenth site—or, indeed, that the 1975 video documenting one of Matta-Clark's visits to Queens still existed in Davidovich's archive.

—  
**Jeffrey Kastner:** Tell us about the evolution of *Fake Estates*, as far as you've reconstructed the story. How many original sites were there?

**Jane Crawford:** There were fifteen. One was in Staten Island, and fourteen were in Queens, but documentation exists for only thirteen of the Queens plots. The fifteenth is missing its detail photographs and its deed, I suppose because Gordon was not able to get access. I can tell you where it is, but they won't let you go see it. It's between three buildings, so the only way to see it would be from the roof, or a helicopter.

I didn't know much about the project while Gordon was alive, but when I was asked to organize and assemble the work in a form that could be presented in the retrospective of 1992, I checked with Gordon's friends from that period, asking them about their recollections of the piece.

In the early 1970s, Alanna Heiss was very interested in real estate and trying to find alternative spaces to develop for art situations—this was before she was running the Clocktower Gallery or the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, now known as P.S.1. She came across the sale of properties in Queens by the City of New York, remnants of land left over from rezoning. When she told him, Gordon was delighted by the idea of such a sale. The idea of buying property in New York City for \$25 to \$75 was the American

dream! This was a myth that he could really get behind: America had so much land that there was enough for everyone. This was the kind of myth he liked to play with. Gordon strongly believed that we—particularly artists—needed to develop a new mythology. Of course, the reality was, and still is, that property is very expensive, and if you're a poor artist, you could never hope to become "landed gentry" by buying an estate. One of the most pervasive themes in his work is driven by that need for a cheap place to live. His last project, which was uncompleted, revolved around this idea; he decided to leave the ground and go into the air with his work *The Balloon Housing Projects*, in which he was searching for places to anchor whatever these sorts of inhabitable platforms would be.

The small properties that he bought in Queens were often inaccessible or an impracticable size, for instance, two feet square and completely landlocked. One of the most interesting was a ten-inch [sic] strip that extended along one side of an entire length of an alley, so that people living on that half of the block had to trespass on Gordon's property in order to park their cars in their own garages [Block 3398, Lot 116].

**JK:** Did he ever consider enforcing his property rights?

No, but he did consider asking Charles Simonds to put up a few condos [laughter]. Gordon went to two auctions of these properties. At one, he didn't have enough money, so he asked his friend Manfred Hecht to pay for the properties. Manfred then signed the deeds over to Gordon. Gordon went out several times to photograph the sites. The photographs are site-specific; he photographed the actual dirt or concrete. The photographs and documents—the deeds and maps—were put loose into a big cardboard box, which were, according to Alanna, brought out and shown to people at a couple of his loft parties.

As a property owner, Gordon was now required to pay the property taxes annually, money he didn't have. Today it may seem ridiculous not to have \$25 to pay your property taxes, but in those days \$25 was a lot of money. So he presented all the material to a very close friend, Norman Fisher, who agreed to pay the taxes for him.

The story was that Gordon gave Norman the box and told him that he could assemble the pieces any way he wanted. They didn't have to be done sequentially or even kept separated by property. They could

be assembled in a crazy shape, or left loose in a pile. Norman obviously had better things to do, and left them in the box. Dear, sweet Norman Fisher died in late 1977. One of his last requests was that the box be returned to Gordon. Then Gordon died the following August, in 1978. The box was finally returned to me in about 1979 or '80. I received the box via our good friend, Tina Girouard, who told me it contained Gordon's *Fake Estates*.

At the time, I was still overwhelmed recovering from Gordon's death and trying to organize and inventory his estate, so upon discovering that the box contained many tiny, loose, close-up photos of grass and dirt and cement, and innumerable legal documents, I was completely dumbfounded. Around that time, and possibly before I received the box, several property tax bills arrived at the loft. Having had no experience in paying property taxes, or even realizing what they were for, I ignored them. Norman had paid the taxes on all of the properties through 1977, but in the confusion between his death and Gordon's, many of the tax slips went into the abyss. By 1980 or sometime thereafter, I received several rather nasty letters saying the properties were being confiscated by the city for nonpayment of taxes. Again, I had no idea what they were talking about.

*Sina Najafi: Was the piece a compensation for the taxes being paid? Was he basically selling the work to Norman Fisher, do you think?*

I don't think he thought of it as an actual sale of an artwork, because, knowing Gordon's modesty, he probably didn't think the work had any real value. It was just a great idea Norman generously supported.

*SN: It was a gift, but it wasn't an artwork?*

It was an artwork, but one that may have been recognized as such by only a handful of people. Therefore, it was of questionable value. You must understand that, at that time, most people didn't know what to make of Gordon's art. Even his friends often weren't sure if Gordon was making art or just fooling around. Gordon always thought he was making art, but he had no idea if such art would one day be deemed worthwhile, if it might have a value beyond the moment. I was so daunted by trying to make any sense out of the contents of the box that I stuck them away in a closet. When the three or four tax bills arrived addressed to Gordon, I knew he didn't own property. We were broke. I probably didn't have even that small amount of money needed to pay the bills. I thought the city had made a mistake. All of the properties were taken back by the city.

*SN: Would you have paid the taxes if you had known?*

Of course I would have! I would have found a way.

As it was, I just shoved the box in a closet and thought, "Well, I'll save that for a rainy day..." Then, in 1992, a museum curator came from IVAM in Valencia, Spain. Corinne Diserens: She was my rainy day! Corinne looked in the box and said, "Jane, this looks very interesting; I think you need to assemble these photographs and see what you have here." Easier said than done, but I did it. It turned out to be a lot of fun, like a picture-puzzle. Gordon had left many of the negatives, which had been kept in his archives, so from them I was able to follow many of the sequences. Having a guide for most of the properties made assembling those without corresponding negatives much easier. It really was a mind teaser!

THE LAST DAY TO PROTEST ASSESSED VALUATIONS FOR 1975 - 76 IS MARCH 15, 1975.

TEAR OFF HERE

FINANCE ADMINISTRATION  
BUREAU OF CITY COLLECTIONS  
ROOM 200 350 ST. MARKS PLACE  
ST. GEORGE, STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. 10301

BILL FOR REAL ESTATE TAXES  
TAX YEAR JULY 1, 1974 TO JUNE 30, 1975  
MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: CITY COLLECTOR

CITY OF NEW YORK  
RICHMOND  
74 75

FIRST PAYMENT DUE AUGUST 1, 1974

1

070174

RECEIPT FOR PAYMENT WILL BE ENTERED HERE

| B  | Y | Q | C | BLOCK | LOT | C  | C | FIRST QUARTER AMOUNT DUE AUGUST 1, 1974 |
|----|---|---|---|-------|-----|----|---|---|
| 54 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1224  | 12  | 04 |   | 1.83                                    |

CHECK BLOCK AND LOT NUMBER

INTEREST

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE

ARREARS AS OF MAY 31, 1974

SEE BACK OF BILL IF THE WORD "ARREARS" APPEARS ABOVE

MAIL PAYMENTS TO:  
CITY COLLECTOR  
P.O. BOX 3120  
CHURCH STREET STATION  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10008

CASH PAYMENTS MAY BE MADE ONLY TO CASHIER AT ABOVE ADDRESS MON-FRI. 9AM-3PM

YOUR TAX IS DUE IN FOUR INSTALLMENTS ON THE DATES SHOWN ON EACH BILL. THE APPROPRIATE QUARTERLY BILL MUST BE DETACHED AND FORWARDED WITH REMITTANCE WHEN PAYMENT IS MADE.

YOUR CANCELLED CHECK IS YOUR RECEIPT. RECEIPTED BILLS WILL NOT BE RETURNED UNLESS WRITTEN REQUEST ACCOMPANIES YOUR PAYMENT.

IF NAME OR MAILING ADDRESS IS INCORRECT NOTIFY THE OFFICE INDICATED ABOVE.

GORDON MATTA CLARK  
155 WOOSTER ST  
NEW YORK NY 10012

*JK: Had he just gone out and shot these by himself?*

Gordon was never alone, but I wasn't able to find out at the time—

*JK: Who shot the film with him or who was with him on this trip—*

Gordon's stories would go on and on and so, you would never know.

*JK: Was that kind of thing, with the box, happening all the time? Would you often get bits and pieces of Gordon's stuff that came at you out of his past?*

Yes. I had a lot of "stuff" that I didn't know how to categorize. I thought it was probably art—so I never threw any of it out—but I was never sure.

*Frances Richard: So that would have been typical of him, a) to sprinkle things around with other people, and b) not to leave much written or verbalized description or instruction about it?*

Well, people were always around and things circulated, usually with a new story and title each time. Gordon had a very European sensibility—you know, you pull the art out from under the bed and pass it around the dinner table to discuss. That was typical, and it kept the ideas fresh and active. Then there was the idea of the tour. Gordon had gone on several of Bob Smithson's tours of New Jersey, and, like Bob, Gordon liked to involve people in the experience of the art.

*FR: So all the photographs are black and white, and they're all jumbled together—*

Yes, jumbled together with various legal documents.

*FR: The documents being the deeds and maps?*

And paid tax slips, things I didn't recognize. Once I had assembled everything else in some sort of order, I decided to exclude the paid tax slips from the collages, because they were no longer relevant to the works. I assembled the sequential black-and-white photos of the ground in the order determined by the photos themselves, and then fastened them together with archival tape. The supporting materials, such as the deeds, maps, and location photographs, I kept separate. Then, over the next three months, my husband, Robert Fiore, and I drove around Queens trying to match up the different sites to the strings of photographs. In one case, we found that Gordon had photographed the wrong location. He thought he had purchased a strip of curb by the Long Island Expressway, when he had actually acquired a little triangle of grass around the corner [Block 209, Lot 160]. We also discovered that in order to see many of his lots, we had to sneak through several backyards, trespassing on private property. On one occasion, when we were caught by a homeowner, we were asked what we were doing in his backyard, and we told him that we were looking for a particular piece of property, and showed him the deed. He said, "Oh, you must be from

the city; they send someone out here every year to check and be sure that we haven't built over the line."

*JK: They're still assessing it? Amazing. And all this is original source material from Gordon? Or did you add components to it?*

No, we didn't add anything. We merely matched up the properties' sites with the deeds and artworks.

*SN: Did you use everything in the box? You included as many maps and images as possible?*

Yes, I included everything there was except the tax receipts.

*FR: So the fact that, in a given collage, there is one photograph of a given site means just that: There was one photograph of that particular site, whereas the collages that contain a panorama are arranged that way because there happened to be multiple photographs of that site?*

Exactly. There is a degree of inconsistency among the elements included in each work. In some, Gordon included a long shot of the site, or more than one map. I imagine it depended on what he found or was able to photograph. Some of the sites running between houses, down the middle of the block, must have been just about impossible to photograph. In several cases, it's been impossible just to reproduce the string of collages in catalogues—the panoramas are too long.

*FR: So, some of the framed artworks don't show all the photographs? That is, there are some of these composite images that have not been exhibited or reproduced?*

There are quite a few. All of them had composite images except for the one he wasn't able to photograph, the missing fifteenth site.

*JK: What happened when you visited the site that was minus its photographs, number fifteen?*

From the map, the fifteenth property appears to be at the intersection of three buildings. One business, a furniture outlet, owned two of the buildings, so we asked them if we might be allowed to view Gordon's property. They wouldn't let us into the back of the building to see where the site was. From the other side of the block, there was a group of industrial buildings, and I believe there had also been a car-repair shop there. Bob and I speculated that there could have been some sort of dumping in that spot about which the businesses may have been sensitive.

*SN: Once you made the collages for the IVAM show, have they always stayed in the same configuration?*

Well, by then they were acknowledged as artworks, so the elements were married to the individual properties. No one has re-sorted

them. The archival tape I used can be easily pulled off and put back on again, so they might have been undone for shipping purposes. The long strips were able to be folded, because nothing had yet been framed. By the end of the IVAM show, they were put into separate folders so they couldn't get all mixed up again.

At one point, the Guggenheim Museum bought one of the most beautiful *Fake Estates*. I was thrilled, because I have come to believe that these are among Gordon's most insightful and important works. Later they discovered that I had assembled the collage, and they were terribly upset, thinking that because I had assembled it that it was not a work by Gordon Matta-Clark. Keep in mind that Gordon had made other puzzle-participation pieces, like his *Blast From the Past* [1970-72], which gives you the opportunity to reassemble the sweepings from his studio floor using a photo and a measure as a guide. I wrote a letter explaining that the assembly could be undone, and that that aspect was the least of the work. As Gordon had instructed Norman Fisher to configure the work any way that he wanted, I assured the museum that they could do the same.

By un-taping the photos, they could return them to their original state, or reconfigure them however they preferred. A couple of his friends, including Carol Goodden, remembered that the material actually had been exhibited at 112 Greene Street in 1974.

*JK: How did he assemble them there? Or is there no record of it?*

There are no installation photos, so we don't know exactly. People remember only that they were taped on the wall, in a line. I don't think they were framed. But, because they are contiguous, with cracks in the cement going from one photo to another, there's really only one way to show them. What he did with the documentation, no one remembers. Whenever I need to find out about a piece of Gordon's, I always call his close friends from that period. They're very generous with their memories and have helped me over and over again to piece together histories. I'm sure someone probably told me that the documentation was shown with the collages, and that was why I put them together in that form.

The poor Guggenheim and its Board went round and round about the work. Artists in the seventies, and particularly Gordon, liked exploring those gray areas, and to their credit, the Guggenheim understood this and accepted the work.

*SN: In terms of subtitles like "Jamaica Curb" or "Maspeth Onions"—*

Those are my names.

*SN: When you attached those names, was there a specific thing in the photographs that clued you in?*

There were onions in "*Maspeth Onions*" when we went there, although the photograph itself is empty. I had one "Driveway with

dog," one "Driveway without dog." They were my way of keeping track of things, because it was easier than block and lot numbers.

*FR: And those names stuck and entered the literature because they were helpful to everyone?*

It's more interesting than "GMC-1221."

*JK: We had a question, too, about the evolution of the whole name of the project. At one point it appears that Gordon himself—in the letter to Carol Goodden and the Anarchitecture meeting—calls it "Fake Estate." Then later it becomes "Fake Estates," plural.*

*FR: And yet, in the Matta-Clark literature now, the piece is typically titled Reality Properties: Fake Estates, but sometimes also Realty Positions: Fake Estates. I've even seen Realty Position: Fake Estate, singular. Where did "Reality Properties" and "Realty Positions" come from?*

Well, he couldn't spell. [Laughter] Gordon could come up with a clever new title for a work with every new person with whom he'd talk! That's why there are so many different recorded titles for his work. In this case, I took the titles from what he'd written on his negatives in the archives. On some, it would be one title, and other others, another title—and a misspelling. I put all the titles on them to see what would stick. He would have a new name for it if it was a Tuesday. But I never came up with this stuff myself. It was always what was in the file. Now they're called *Reality Properties: Fake Estates*. That's become the official title.

*FR: Does the box still exist?*

No, the box is gone.

The exhibition "Gordon Matta-Clark: Retrospective" at the IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez had the effect, as Crawford says, of "declaring" the *Fake Estates* material to be "art," via the osmotic ratification process of exhibition and cataloguing. But the first curatorial contact with the deeds, maps, and photographs had come in 1985, while curator Mary Jane Jacob was preparing her "Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective" for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. While conducting research for this show and its accompanying catalogue, Jacob visited Crawford and, as Crawford says, "really came in and organized for me." The MCA catalogue lists the project as *Fake Estate*, illustrated by a single map [Block 138, Lot 107]. As Jacob tells it, she found no notes regarding other titles. But this does not, in her view, preclude the existence of such details:

The map was in the estate; I would have seen it and selected this one from several in the files. I went through *everything*; every crumb, shred of paper, photo, negative, so that this show and a book became essentially a catalogue raisonné. If I had come across other

titles for this work, I would have listed them, as I did with other works. I did not find them. Still, that doesn't mean Gordon didn't have other titles, working titles, alternate titles, other names he called it—that was common, and I accepted all such titles just to keep them together, so one would know that this collection of titles referred to the same thing. If you have found some more for *Fake Estate*, then they would function the same way.

After the IVAM retrospective, the *Fake Estates* were shown in 1994 at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York and in 1995 at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, in an exhibition titled "Realty Positions: Fake Estates and Other Architectural Musings." The two venues maintained the format established in the context of IVAM. Lance Fung became the director of the Holly Solomon Gallery in 1989. As he recalls:

I remember that, in the first discussion with Jane Crawford, we did an overview of the work she still had and which public institutions had work, which was not very many. I remember asking to see *Fake Estates*, because it was one of the most interesting projects, for me, based on its highly conceptual aspects and how it related to much of Matta-Clark's social critique and commentary. One of the first shows I worked on at Holly's gallery was on Gordon Matta-Clark. That was in 1990, and we showed work including *Four Corners* [the pendant fragment of *Splitting*] as well as photo collages of *Splitting*. Andy Grundberg wrote a great review of the exhibition<sup>1</sup> and all the museums came to see the show and revisit the material, which had been neglected. One by one, those works were placed with institutions, with the exception of *Four Corners*. But all of the photographic works went to major public collections.

The most recent, or the final, exhibition at Holly Solomon Gallery was in 1994, in her new space on Houston Street. For that exhibition, I met with Jane again. We did another overview, and so many museums and private collectors had acquired from the estate that I thought it would be important to bring in a new body of work, because there were no longer any *Splitting* elements available. I brought up the idea of showing *Fake Estates*. We ended up exhibiting that entire grouping, which was extraordinary; it was thrilling, not only for Jane to have done the research and assembly, but for Holly to see work that she remembered.

Jane and I had a conversation about what constituted a complete work. For me, it was an honor to work on what would hopefully be an historical exhibition. From all previous documentation, Gordon seems to have viewed the complete work of art as, a) documentation of the land with dimensions and whatnot, b) an overall photograph of the actual site, c) the collaged photo-strips, and d) the

property itself. Well, naturally, the property itself no longer existed in title, as the taxes were unpaid and title had returned to the city. But since we were presenting the works posthumously, we decided to show the three remaining elements: the original deed and statistics, the overall photograph, and the collaged photo-strip. I didn't think many people would purchase *Fake Estates*, because the project was unknown, conceptual, and it wasn't an emblematic cut building. So the actual commercial value was unimportant to me, though Holly and the estate and I did assign prices, with each site being a work—which is how Gordon initially intended it.<sup>2</sup>

*JK: How were the photo-strips assembled?*

Jane figured out the proper order of the small photographs based on her physical investigation—you know, if you look at a curb, sometimes there's a letter that's imprinted; there might be a crack. Of course there will be new weeds and grass. But where there were gaps, she just continued the photo-strip, because we don't know why there was a gap—if they were lost; if Gordon didn't have time to print those; if the negatives were damaged; or if he just decided not to show that extra foot (which I would have doubted). Jane had to make some judgment calls—such as, if it was a curb that was, you know, twenty feet long, and there happened to be a foot-and-a-half of curb missing, what did one do? I believe that she decided—rather than leaving that area blanked out, as they do when they repair a fresco—to pick up where the curb left off. I know for a fact, however, that no new photography went in.

*JK: Were there any works that didn't have all of their elements?*

Yes. Since I felt that this exhibition wasn't very commercial, and we wanted to exhibit the entire body of work, there were several works that didn't have the overall photograph. In these cases, we presented the deed and the photo-collage strip. One reason why only one or two of the works sold from the exhibition was because museums and collectors preferred works collaged by Gordon himself. I disagreed, so much so that I bought a piece.

*JK: But you were always aware that they had been assembled posthumously, and that was something that you had taken on board conceptually.*

I think the project itself is valuable on a conceptual and visual level. It fleshes out the way I view Gordon in terms of *Splitting* and so on. It also allows people to understand the conceptual and social nature of Gordon's work rather than only being viewed as a deconstructivist, chainsaw-wielding man. I did, however, stick to my own principles, in that the *Fake Estate* [that I bought] had all three of the remaining components.

<sup>1</sup> Andy Grundberg, "Splitting: A Chronicle of a House Divided," *The New York Times*, 14 December 1990, p. C32.

<sup>2</sup> A checklist from the Rhona Hoffman Gallery lists eight works—two framed and six unframed—with prices ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000.

## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY AND OWNERSHIP**

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**N°** \_\_\_\_\_

THIS DOCUMENT CERTIFIES THAT THE WORK DESCRIBED HERE IN IS THE AUTHENTIC, UNIQUE AND ORIGINAL WORK OF GORDON MATTA-CLARK, AND SHALL AT NO TIME BE REPRODUCED AS A WORK, BY THE ARTIST OR BY ANY OTHER PARTY. IT SHALL ALSO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT ANY WORK RESEMBLING THAT OF THE ARTIST, EVEN IF IT BEARS A FACSIMILE OF THE ARTIST'S SIGNATURE, SHALL BE CONSIDERED FAKE AND OF NO COMMERCIAL VALUE UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY THIS SIGNED DOCUMENT, PERMANENTLY GLUED ON THE BACK OF THE INDICATED PANEL OF THE COMPLETE WORK.

### **DESCRIPTION OF WORK :**

THIS DOCUMENT IS CONSIDERED VALID ONLY WHEN SIGNED AND DATED BY GORDON MATTA-CLARK UPON COMPLETION OF THE ORIGINAL SALE AT WHICH TIME THE ARTIST WILL GIVE OR SEND THIS VALIDATED PAPER DIRECTLY TO THE OWNER. NO DUPLICATES OR REPLACEMENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE MADE AT ANY TIME.

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**GORDON MATTA-CLARK**

**DATE :**

**JK: Do you remember how the series got named Realty Positions: Fake Estates for the 1994 show at the gallery?**

I recall Jane and Holly discussing the title.

**JK: Were you able to find evidence that this work had been exhibited in any form prior to your meeting with Jane for the 1990 show?**

No. As I vividly remember from my first studio visit with Jane, she presented a small box of the elements for *Fake Estates* and nothing had been done with it. I remember that when I suggested to Holly that we do the *Fake Estates* show, she said, "That's fantastic, because it hasn't been shown before."

As the *Fake Estates* began to be absorbed into collections as works by Gordon Matta-Clark, questions of authenticity inevitably arose. One instance of such debate, as Crawford points out, centered around the Guggenheim's acquisition of *Reality Properties: Fake Estates—Little Alley Block 2497, Lot 42* (1974). Curator Nancy Spector had to evaluate whether the piece was an original or a posthumous construction—and whether this mattered. She recalls:

When the estate went to the David Zwirner Gallery, I contacted them, expressing interest in acquiring work by Matta-Clark, because he was not yet in the Guggenheim's collection. At that point, we purchased two color photo-collages—one of *Conical Intersect* and a diptych of *Office Baroque*—in addition to one of the *Fake Estates*. It was during the acquisition process that the question came up about the *Fake Estates*' provenance and exhibition history. I heard from a number of people that it had been posthumously assembled and that the museum shouldn't buy it, because it had no evidence of the artist's hand. I thought a lot about it and asked a number of people for advice, including Rhona Hoffman, who had worked with the estate, and Pam Lee, who had written her dissertation on Matta-Clark. I read the "Letter to the Meeting," and tried to find out if the project had ever been exhibited in some form by the artist—whether it was the section we owned, or any of them.

**JK: When you first saw it at Zwirner, it had already been assembled?**

Completely assembled, and dated the year after the photographs were taken, 1974. Some were dated 1973. In the end, we decided to pursue the acquisition, but I presented it as a posthumously assembled work. Our date for the work now reads "1974, Posthumously Assembled, 1992." I felt that this notation was essential, but I don't think it reduces the critical import of the work. The *Fake Estates* represent a really important part of Matta-Clark's practice vis-à-vis his interest in architecture, urban decay, and gentrification. It was a way to own a conceptual part of his practice. In terms of value or marketability, the fact that he didn't assemble it didn't bother me. This resolution really came out of my discussions with Pam. She was very supportive about the idea of a museum owning this work

even though the artist didn't in fact "make" it.

**JK: A lot of this material has a very slippery trajectory.**

As does much of the work from the period. The Guggenheim owns Robert Smithson's *Hotel Palenque* (1969) for example, and it was bought in a similar spirit. My understanding is that Smithson never considered it an actual work. It was a performance. In essence, we now own the performance, which is today comprised of thirty-one slides and an audiotape of the artist's lecture.

**JK: This question of explicitly defined, stand-alone "work" is one we've thought about as well. Could these materials be hived off into separate pieces, or was the whole series meant to be integral? That's not a neutral decision. It suggests a certain approach to thinking about the original work.**

Who made that decision is, I think, the crux here. And that is probably the missing link. There is certainly a question about the aesthetics of the *Fake Estates*. Who would know beyond the shadow of a doubt how Matta-Clark would have chosen to assemble it? It certainly has that seventies look to it, with the collaged photographs and documentation. But it is also quite pristine.

Nevertheless, there's an open-endedness to it, and it's that aspect of his work which I find so compelling.

As Spector notes, critic Pamela M. Lee had also done pathbreaking research, which was published as *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (MIT Press, 2000).

**Pamela M. Lee** It's been acknowledged, this question of the posthumous assembly. It seems to me that the story I was told when I began to research the work has now been retold or discounted by people uncovering other kinds of information. When I was doing this research, the archives were not in any shape to be systematically gone through. What I told Nancy—in response to her suspicions / concern about the provenance of the works, when they were actually made, and when the objects were assembled—was that when I was going through the files, there was no pretension whatsoever on Jane's part. She said that she herself had reconstructed the images, and then mounted them on whatever support to present as the object. She was completely matter-of-fact about her hand in making this into "a work."

When I was having this conversation with Nancy, part of me wanted to say that perhaps Jane should not have assembled them; perhaps she should have granted them the status of conceptual documents—which, paradoxically, would in itself suggest that her assembling them after the fact may not be such a huge problem in any case, if that makes sense.

**JK: Do you think of the Fake Estates project as a thing, or as fourteen or fifteen things?**

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I think of it as a thing, really. It's in line with any systems-based project emerging out of the sixties and seventies, that the strength of the work depends upon its variability. If it weren't for the fact that he was able to buy these pieces of property repetitively—there's a lot to be said for the actual process, the gesture of having gone to those auctions and documenting [the process]. As a totality, the reader—I'm going to call this person who is envisioning these variables a "reader"—in relationship to other elements in the system, is going to have a far different sense of what that project is or what the concept is than if he or she were to encounter one of those objects in its singularity. So, I think it's fantastic that one is able to assemble them all, and thus grasp the scope of it, in terms of site-specificity, in terms of what market values actually were in New York at the time.

*JK: Where do you see this piece fitting into the things he was on about? This interest in systems, bureaucracy, in the urban fabric, is obviously very clear, and many of his contemporaries have spoken to the relationship between this work and his other work.*

I think it radiates backwards and forwards. On one hand, you nail it when you talk about the project in terms of systems and bureaucracy, because what that points to retrospectively—or actually, I should say contemporaneously—is the dimension of institutional critique that runs throughout his work, and that I think tends to get sidestepped a bit in the purely architectural thematization of his projects. Again, it's that dimension of seriality, bureaucracy, that puts him in with folks like Haacke and Asher and Graham. You talk to any of those people and they immediately go to *Fake Estates* as a kind of touchstone, as work that answers to those charges of Matta-Clark's romanticism and his machismo. There's engagement with, for lack of a better way to put it, the boring; the litigious elements of property rights that are absolutely fundamental to how artists are dealing day-to-day at this level. So [the work is relevant] not only as regards that institutional critique, but also pointing forward to various concerns that many contemporary artists are engaging now relative to land-based projects. Matta-Clark's project, I think, makes a nice punctuation between that point where we think of a Smithsonian working with various corporations to reclaim land sites, and what so many artists are doing today in their so-called—their so-called, that's the emphasis—return to the land.

AEROGRAMME  
LUCHTPOSTBLAD

SPOEDBESTELLING  
EXPRES  
P. 4578



THE ~~MEETING~~ MEETING  
40 CAROL LODDEN  
155 WOOSTER ST.  
NEW YORK 10012 N.Y.  
U.S.A.

(TO BE OPENED BY CAROL)

PAR AVION / PER LUCHTPOST

EXPÉDITEUR / AFZENDER

IT IS 3 AM FRIDAY DEC 10. I HAVE BEEN RECEIVED  
A GENT PAT FOR AGRICULTURAL ROOM FOR OVER AN  
HOUR. I LET HIM GO. I DO NOT KNOW WHERE HE  
RETURNED SO I KILLED HIM. I TOOK THE MANHOLE  
BOOK WHERE HE HAD A RESIDENT STAY.

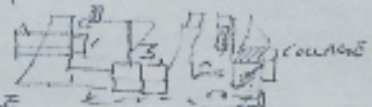
ALL WRITING HAS AS NIETS INSUITEN! SOON AS IVE FINISHED  
EATING THE BUGGER.  
GEEN ADRESSTOKEN, BLUITZBOLLEN, PLAKBAND, ENZ. GEBRUIKEN

### PART 1.

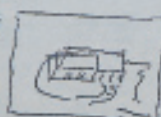
IN A GROUNDING MAIN LINE  
ANTICETECTURE DREWIE.  
DREWIE OR  
THE TOWER SUIROUND DROOL OR  
HE ARE THE CLOSE TOO RAIL DROOL  
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NIET OPENEN / DO NOT OPEN

- ⑬ A THIRD SECOND GENERATION OF THE FORMAL INTERNATIONAL STONE  
MANIPULATION FOR MANIPULATION FOR MANIPULATION.  
WITH A COLLAGE BY SAMUEL FAKAMASHI JR. OF ALL THE  
IMPORTANT IMITANT IMITANT BUILDING TYPES IN OUR NEW  
BRAVE WORLD.



- ⑭ PICK A HOME



WITH FOOTNOTES REFERENCED TO  
DAN GRANTHAM'S MILE STONE WORK  
ON THE AMERICAN HOME.  
THROUGHOUT OUR WORK WE SHOULD  
RECORD ALL IMPORTANT OR RELEVANT  
COMMENTS TO FOOTNOTES 4) 05-517  
THE STRUGGLE FOR A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE 18) 18.10.

