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Metronomic Irregularity: Investigating Eva Hesse's Sculpture Through Dance

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THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

METRONOMIC IRREGULARITY: INVESTIGATING EVA HESSE’S SCULPTURE THROUGH DANCE

A MASTERS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ART IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ART

BY
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The focus of this thesis is ephemeral art, and the largely undocumented history of Fluxus events. Art historians exploring these areas must rely on the generosity of those artists living during the time to share their stories. For this I am indebted to the sculptor Charles Ginnever, who graciously spent hours remembering and describing these events to me. Without him, I could not have written this meaningful addition to the scholarship.

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Introduction

Finding Movement In Eva Hesse’s Sculpture

The female body was considered a place of both strength and vulnerability during the 1960s. During a time of civil rights, sexual revolution, and cries for peace, a new wave of feminists emerged who still felt a sense of trepidation when confronting the contentious site of women’s bodies. Eva Hesse’s (German American artist, 1936-1970) first sculpture was a dance performance entitled, *Sculpture Dance* (1962-1963) (Figure 1). It is no accident that during a time of redefinition of feminine identity that the first realization of the young sculptor’s work utilized a body in motion. Its integration of performance, choreography, and Fluxus collaborators makes it distinctly different from her later object-based sculpture for which she is more widely known. Although briefly mentioned in the existing literature of Hesse scholarship, *Sculpture Dance* is often overlooked and excluded from the artist’s sculptural oeuvre. Most scholars credit Hesse’s first three-dimensional work as starting with the 1965 *German Reliefs* series. However, this thesis importantly refocuses attention to the fact that Hesse began to contemplate the representation of the body through sculpture in her performance-based Fluxus dance years before the *German Reliefs*.

It is important to contextualize Hesse’s understanding of the body through dance and its presence in her sculpture. Her early interaction and exposure to Yvonne Rainer (American dancer and choreographer, b.1934) and the Judson Dance Company is crucial to unlocking a new understanding of Hesse’s sculpture through her use of dancer-like movement in her

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earliest sculpture. Hesse and Rainer both participated in the same Fluxus Festival, The Yam Festival (1963), where Hesse performed *Sculpture Dance* and Rainer performed an improvised dance piece. After seeing each other’s works there, the two artists remained continually aware of one another. They admired each other’s works for the rest of the decade within the close knit downtown New York art scene where they were both integral and active members. Although stationary at certain moments, Hesse’s latter sculptures’ overall qualities of ephemerality, chance, and permutation, propel them into mobility in a dance-like way. Thus, in this thesis, dance will be used as a tool to re-visualize the bodily form inscribed in Hesse’s work in order to perpetuate its desired space of chaos, motion, and infinitude -- concepts that were most important to her from her very first sculpture to her last.

Although much of Hesse scholarship is analyzed through a feminist lens, many interpretations focus on the tendencies to essentialize Hesse’s work -- that is to reduce the significance of her art to that of her own body. Her works’ affinity to the coeval choreography of Yvonne Rainer and the Judson Memorial Dance Group suggest similar methods of repetition, transience, and absurdity in an effort to confront the gendered body. In this thesis I will trace how Hesse sought to define herself as a female artist through dance and a Fluxus sense of experimentation within a male dominated circle. Throughout her career she deconstructed the modernist grid as well as other Minimalist ideologies created by male-defined rules. In doing so she turned to models outside of the Minimalist canon.

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2 One of the only primary sources with any in-depth examples about the artists’ influences on each other is an informal conversation between Julia Bryan-Wilson, Yvonne Rainer, and Anna Sew Hoy, in “Interdisciplinary Artists’ Conversation” (panel discussion, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA, April 10th, 2011). Hesse also stated that one of the biggest influences on her works was Yvonne Rainer in an interview with Cindy Nemser in, “A Conversation With Cindy Nemser (1970),” in *Eva Hesse*, edited by Mignon Nixon, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 7. However, the name is only mentioned by Hesse and never explained in any source the ways in which she found her inspirational.
I will argue that Hesse’s early exposure to Fluxus dance and dance performance in general introduced her to think about the implicit dilemmas of body and object inherent to the medium of sculpture. Dance must similarly confront this predicament; it requires the use of the body for its essential form, yet it must also transcend a literal and objectified interpretation. Hesse incorporated similar methods of resistance and difference in her sculptures that paralleled the ways Rainer and the Judson Company was overcoming such impasses in dance. This thesis will contextualize the reasons why such similarities are present in Hesse’s sculpture and Rainer’s choreography. It is no coincidence that Hesse’s sculpture resists the stagnancy, rigidity, and sense of permanence, which was fundamental to the sculpture created by her male contemporaries. Instead, she conveys the key elements of the dance of her time: reinvention, experimentation, and celebration of irregularity.

Minimalism, Fluxus, and Otherness

The Minimalist movement emerged in the 1960s and favored a systematic and logical understanding of art in which the object’s geometry, material, and form were the literal subjects of the work. As the decade progressed, sculpture became the favored and more popular medium for one of the first times in modern art. As the object itself dictated the meaning of the work, audience interaction became integral to the piece, often making it difficult to tell where the art began or ended in the space that it occupied. Many works were created at a monumental scale and were constructed with industrial materials such as steel, wood, and fluorescent lights, giving them a streamlined orderliness and expressing a more masculine practice and aesthetic.³

³ Michael Fried’s essay, “Art and Objecthood” originally published in *Artforum* (Summer 1967): 77-87, is a critique of Minimalism’s use of audience, object, and theatricality. This essay was written in response to the popularization of Minimalists Donald Judd and Robert Morris, and Fried’s concern that their ideology for their practices were too literal and prescribed. Another important critique of Minimalism is the survey text *Minimalism* by James Meyer. Meyer questions the elitism and inaccessibility of Minimalist. He comments on many of the works’ self-referentialism, which requires that the viewer know something about art and art history to fully understand its true meaning.
Minimalism also incorporated theatricality and recognized the importance of an audience. The Minimalists’ concern for the viewer was informed by the philosophical movement known as Phenomenology, which examined ideas such as perception and individual experience. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) is most famous for developing this ideology. One of Merleau-Ponty’s most famous texts is *The Primacy of Perception* (1945), which examines first-person consciousness and perception, and analyses the distinction between body and object. Phenomenology was a central influence on Minimalist artists since they were interested in object centrality in which the meaning was dictated by the perspective and interaction of an observer.

If one examines the differences in ideology between Fluxus and Minimalism, it becomes apparent that Hesse came of age as an artist during an important transitional time in modern art. Although she is traditionally identified as being part of the Minimalist movement, her first sculpture was produced when she was most involved with Fluxus artists and festivals. Similar to Hesse’s interest in fluidity and ephemerality, Fluxus artists created pieces that were nearly impossible to sell by using ephemeral materials as well as conceptual and performance based art. Such iconic examples include pieces like Allan Kaprow’s (American artist, 1927-2006) *Happenings* (first begun in 1957), and Le Monte Young’s (American artist and composer, b.1935), *Composition 1960 #10 Performed by Nam June Paik*. All of these pieces are quintessential Fluxus works. They share an affinity for improvisation and chance-based compositions, performance and audience-based participation, as well as an inability to be

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replicated. Since most works were performance-based, the materials of Fluxus pieces are often only available in the form of archival and documentary ephemera such as scores, notebooks, and film.\(^6\) I argue that Hesse’s early exposure to Fluxus directly informed her understanding of her medium and played a vital role in her choice of ephemeral materials and conceptually mobile constructions, and most importantly made her visualize sculpture like dance.

Hesse’s artistic identity was formed between the influences of both Fluxus experimentation and the Minimalist emphasis on material and form. Her participation in the artistically liberating Fluxus festivals advanced her concept of what it meant to create art that was unrestrained by medium, rules, or even one’s own body. Her focus on process, repetition, and material form, all speak to a Minimalist canon. However, her allusion to the body makes her work drastically different from the logic and order that are often characteristic of the Minimalist group. In many ways, Minimalism resisted ‘otherness’ in its preference for industrial materials and definite forms and contested any suggestion of fluidity, ephemerality, or the organic concepts that most fascinated Hesse. As a woman she was an outsider to this circle and thus, she could not always identify with the Minimalist’s certitude in absolute logic. Instead, she sought to represent her differences in the expression of unknown and irregular forms in her sculpture. Determined to define herself as a sculptor in a male-dominated scene, she looked to other models for inspiration, such as dance. The sense of transience in her work was a radical departure from the Minimalists, and is emblematic of her early exposure to the Judson Dance Company as well as the Fluxus festivals. Hesse’s irregular and ambulating works are evidence of a desire to express her own otherness. Similarly, Rainer’s choreography embodied elements of foreignness.

and ambiguity in which the expression of femininity and difference could escape the limitations of confined masculine definitions.

Not only was Hesse caught in the middle of a vital transitional moment in modern art, but she was also one of the few female sculptors of her time. Minimalism, as all of art history, was dominated by an elite circle of male artists. Furthermore, although performance and theatricality revolved around the presence of the body, because of the male artist’s privileged vantage point, that body could be detached from political, biographical, or social taboos. Female artists of this era were distinctly disadvantaged by their gender and social roles: by attempting to reconcile their traditional duties as wives and mothers they were forced to lead a duel existence rather than have a holistic identity as an ‘artist.’ Women artists had to find ways to rectify this problem. Thus, the elements of movement and dance, as seen both physically and conceptually in Hesse’s work, created a sense of fluidity in which one could become liberated from the duplicities placed upon women’s bodies. Hesse used absurdity in order to represent the paradox of what it meant to be a female artist of this time. Her continuous expression of dichotomous concepts in her work stems from a confrontation with her dualistic roles as a creator and a woman. Repetition of absurd polarities continued throughout her work of the ‘60s such as: body and material, order and disorder, ordinary and extraordinary, and nothing and something.

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7 Art historian Anna Chave is one of the leading feminist scholars on Minimalism. One of the most important arguments on these issues is Anna Chave’s, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64 no. 5 (January: 1990) 44-63. The essay was one of the first pieces of writing to critique Minimalism through a Feminist lens. Chave argues that the ideology, aesthetic, and artistic practice of Minimalist artists, is oppressive and privileged, which stems from the fact that it was a male dominated art movement.

8 Kristen Swenson, “Machines & Marriage: Eva Hesse and Tom Doyle in Germany, 1965-56,” *Art in America* (June 1, 2006), 166-212. This essay discusses the marital relationship Eva Hesse and her husband, Tom Doyle. It focuses on the double standards placed upon female Hesse, which made her feel confused and restricted by her competing roles of artist and wife.
The title of Hesse’s series *Metronomic Irregularity* (1966) (Figure 2) alludes to another dichotomous concept that addresses the constraints of working within male dominated systems. Both the title and work evoke a sense of both chaos and rationale. In the piece, cotton covered wires are woven across two grey wooden panels. The piece looks like an opened triptych in which the middle panel is removed and is instead filled with void space. Although empty, the space is actually filled with the wires that merge between the two panels as well as the shadows they cast on the wall behind. The sculpture is a quintessentially visual example of Hesse’s representation of ‘otherness’ throughout her work. The title of my thesis is borrowed from this particular piece in order to emphasize such a significant aspect of her sculpture and how it similarly relates to the use of void and irregularity in dance. Hesse created a new language embracing unrestrained movement, difference, and irregularity. This contrasted with the order and homogeneity embedded in so many of the works of her male contemporaries.

The aspect of movement, both physically and conceptually also connects Hesse’s sculptures to the dance of her time. As in all of her work, a precarious boundary exists between the lines of stillness and motion. These borders are constantly undulating, both physically and metaphorically, in Hesse’s sculpture and in the kin-like mediums of experimental dance of her time. Both mediums occupy two spheres of a concurrently active and ephemeral form. The active form is the moment of performance: a work is captured in one of its variations for some fleeting moments. The ephemeral form acknowledges a work’s potential for alteration: a work that uses chance and improvisation is in a constant state of transformation. After reading Hesse’s diaries, it is clear that she was deeply aware of these dichotomies in her work. These visceral

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9 Oberlin College’s Allen Memorial Art Museum houses Eva Hesses’s archives and has a good amount of its content available digitally. This includes: the artist’s notebooks, diaries, sketchbooks, photographs, and letters. [http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/EvaHesseArchives.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/EvaHesseArchives.html)

I also looked through her published dates books, specifically those from 1964-1965 regarding
qualities create ambiguous spaces between corporeal and metaphysical realms. They are most apparent in Hesse’s later sculpture and may be given a new understanding through dance as it was re-envisioned in this same way by Yvonne Rainer and her company during the 1960s.

Although often mediating between physicality and ephemerality, the latent female form is an oversaturated topic in Hesse scholarship. Authors like Anna Chave and Anne Wagner have criticized the double standard of inscribing biography into the analysis of female Minimalist works, and not in their male counterparts.\(^\text{10}\) It is not only important to be effectively critical of this dilemma, but to visually examine the ways in which the artists themselves work through such issues. Hesse’s and Rainer’s studios were only blocks away from each other in SoHo, they shared the same circle of friends, and they saw and admired each other’s work.\(^\text{11}\) Although Rainer and Hesse were not always close friends, their works’ intersections reveal larger truths about the importance of the female artists’ influence in Minimalist work. An analysis of the ways in which Hesse’s sculptures were shaped by dance offers a nuanced approach to reading the body in her work. Furthermore, an examination of the body in Hesse’s work as it relates to dance, provides a unique perspective, one which departs from the traditionally personal and essentialist reading of the body in her work.

Spaces of Experimentation: Farms and Factories as Studio

In the haze of liberation, both political and social, artists of the early 1960s similarly searched for their own integration and freedom. Many are familiar with the iconic music

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\(^{10}\) The arguments made in Anne Wagner’s, “Another Hesse” in Mignon Nixon’s, *Eva Hesse* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2002) as well as Anna Chave’s, “Eva Hesse: A Girl Being a Sculpture,” in Cooper’s *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), are central to the feminist methodology in this thesis.

festivals of the decade, such as Woodstock, but not with the many artist festivals occurring at the same time. Artist festivals, which mostly took place in abandoned fields outside city limits, provided an escape for New York City artists. They had flocked to industrial and abandoned spaces (many in SoHo), which provided cheap, large work places. These spaces often provided them with abandoned factory materials that were used for art pieces.\textsuperscript{12} Here in these unconventional spaces is where Hesse first discovered her sculptural identity. Thus, this thesis also takes into consideration how sense of a place informed Hesse’s experimental works. Her sculpture embraces both a Fluxus sensibility and Rainer’s choreographic methods which both break down the traditional boundaries of studio and performance. As will be expounded through the next three chapters, Hesse’s sculptures incorporate the key ingredients to improvised performance: unpredictability and permutation, as well as a blurring of the confines between the interior and exterior spheres of studio and stage. Many of her works became mutations of themselves, repeated and different each time, embodying a similar sense of playfulness and excitement that permeated the air of Rainer’s rehearsals of the era.

Chapter one will discuss Hesse’s first and most unconventional work sites: the two Fluxus gatherings in upstate New York and New Jersey. Hesse attended her first festival with her husband, Tom Doyle (American sculptor, b.1928) at Charles Ginnever’s (American sculptor, b.1931) “Ergo Suits Traveling Carnival” in Woodstock, New York in 1962. Ergo Suits was the original site of Sculpture Dance. The dance was first conceived by Ginnever and was intended as a collaborative work to be performed by Kaprow, Doyle, Hesse, and Ginnever himself.\textsuperscript{13}

Hesse’s second performance of Sculpture Dance was in May of 1963, at George Segal’s (American painter and sculptor, 1924-2000) Yam Festival in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Segal

\textsuperscript{12} Kelly Baum, \textit{New Jersey as Non-Site}. (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
invited artists from all mediums, united by a circle of Fluxus artists. The event was characterized by its mingling of artists working in different mediums in both visual and performing arts as was typical of the Fluxus movement.\textsuperscript{14} At the festival, Fluxus pioneer Allan Kaprow organized happenings and Trisha Brown (American choreographer and dancer, b.1936), Chuck Ginnever, Dick Higgins (British born American composer, poet, and artist, 1938-1998), Yvonne Rainer, Wolf Vostel (German painter and sculptor, 1932-1998), La Monte Young, and many others presented performances.\textsuperscript{15}

Just a few years after the Yam Festival, Hesse embarked on her series of \textit{Mechanical Drawings}, completed in Germany between 1964-65. Many of the drawings were used to actualize her further development of three-dimensional form, widely referred to as her \textit{German Reliefs} (1965). Chapter Two will argue that many of the drawings were intended to constantly transform and alter, and thus one may further understand this as an early instance of Hesse’s non-static and choreographic vision that was present in her work.

Lastly, an analysis of the late period of Hesse’s sculpture will further expand upon the idea of her works imprint of the body. Some works that will be used as examples in Chapter Three are \textit{Untitled or Not Yet} (1966) as well as \textit{Contingent} (1969) and \textit{Untitled (Rope Piece)} (1969). This analysis will delve into the gesturing of Hesse’s late work to issues of the body such as impermanence and indefinite form. Her use of ephemeral and translucent materials, as well as a juxtaposition of void and occupied expanses, articulates a moving body that flutters between a transient and present space, not yet here, nor there.

\textsuperscript{15} Bud Wirtschafter, description of \textit{What’s Happening} (1962) in his artists file. Film Makers Cooperative, New York.
Chapter One

Sculpture Dance: Forging An Early Artistic Identity

Impossible Beginnings

As previously mentioned, the Yam Festival was a significant event of the Fluxus movement with invited artists from various mediums participating in a series of performances on George Segal’s farm in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1963. It was also the site of Eva Hesse’s first sculpture, *Sculpture Dance* (1962/1963) and the first instance of her work merging two mediums: sculpture and dance. This was a key moment in the forging of her early artistic identity. The playful and permutable atmosphere of the Fluxus festival will be examined in this chapter as a crucial threshold in shaping Hesse’s early career. As Hesse encountered and participated in these various dance-like performances, the connections between dance and sculpture undoubtedly began to crystalize in her mind.

Although there were several variations of *Sculpture Dance* that were performed at different times, the most complete documentation of it is in its group dance sequence at the Yam Festival. In the film still in Figure 4, one can view what may be considered the “sculpture” or the “costume” for the dance that Hesse created. It looks like a sprawling scroll that covers the dozen artists dancing beneath. It is sewn out of rags and patched with abstract and brightly colored shapes. The participants dance in a line with the cloth cloaked over them like a cape. Their midsections are hidden underneath the material and their heads pop out above. The cloth takes its shape from the movement of the dancers, drooping in the absence of bodies and motion, and conversely stretching and waving where there is activity. As the artists dance through the crowd in celebration, others watch on the sidelines as if part of some unknown ritual.
Ginnever recalls that Hesse also performed an individual variation of the piece during the Yam Festival weekend. Although there is no visual documentation of this event, one may gain a sense of what it looked like from the photograph of the “costume” or material used in its earlier 1962 version at a different festival as shown in Figure 1. Although Hesse made both of these sculptures, she only danced inside of the 1963 version. However, Ginnever explains that her individual version of *Sculpture Dance* used much “softer” material and looked more “natural.” One can see that the material used in her sculpture gives an appearance of being round and loose. Thus, one would have really seen the outline of bodily form underneath. In this version, the body is completely covered and moves fluidly with the shape and gestures of the performers.

Throughout her life Hesse reflected upon her experiences at the Fluxus festivals and continued to contemplate their importance on the formation of her artistic ideas. An undated page in Hesse’s diary reveals that the earliest parts of her career were most important to her. She writes: “If I could go back to the beginning, where it all began.” At first this statement seems unfinished and cryptic as the thought does not continue into the rest of the journal entry. Yet, it also concedes a self-reflective artist, one who was intent on uncovering her own identity. The passage shows Hesse’s desire to pinpoint some gestalt moment of her career to discover the germination of all of her ideas. The hypothetical “if” in this statement indicates that she thought this to be an impossibility. However, through this introspective moment, one may begin to see Hesse’s disparate understanding of time and her works’ utter resistance to formulated delineations of space and direction.

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16 Charles Ginnever interview by author, telephone conversation, September 1, 2015.
17 Ibid.
Hesse first began to understand her artistic identity through performance and dance at the Fluxus festivals. In turn she was exposed to the medium of sculpture at the very moment it was on the verge of major transformation and redefinition. Unidentifiable beginnings, middles, or endings are a reoccurring theme throughout all of Hesse’s pieces, as her materials cannot be contained to definite form; rather they mutate over time. It is no mere coincidence that Hesse’s latter works echo the Fluxus formula of performance that uses spontaneity and chance-based works. The Yam Festival’s calendar (both an archival Fluxus object and schedule for the event) [Figure 3] describes an artist carnival that was an “endless and continuous program of performances.”¹⁹ As the calendar suggests, many of the pieces were continuous and lacked the traditional time structures of a performance with defined beginnings, middles, or endings. The inherent quality of ephemerality within performance – based work, which was so characteristic of the Fluxus festivals, would continue to reappear throughout the rest of Hesse’s career.

Ergo Suits Traveling Carnival

Before further analyzing Hesse’s dance performance at the Yam Festival of 1963, it is important to examine The Ergo Suits Traveling Carnival, a festival that Hesse participated in the previous year. The original concept for Sculpture Dance was conceived by the sculptor Charles Ginnever and was first performed at his Ergo Suits Traveling Carnival of 1962. The festival took place in Woodstock, Bridgehampton, and Southampton, N.Y, as Ginnever was very attracted to the idea of producing a traveling artist carnival.²⁰ Although Ginnever does not categorize the carnival as a specifically Fluxus event, many of the participants were associated with the Fluxus movement such as Al Hansen, Allan Kaprow, and Le Monte Young. He invited his friends Eva Hesse and Tom Doyle (Hesse’s husband) and asked for their assistance with a dance he was

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²⁰ Charles Ginnever, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2015.
planning.\textsuperscript{21} Like the rest of the festival structure, \textit{Sculpture Dance} was completely improvised. Each performer/dancer created his or her own costumes. The materials were made out of lumber, chicken wire, and brightly colored rags sewn together.\textsuperscript{22} Ginnever recalls that there were no rehearsals or any preliminary discussion of the piece beforehand.\textsuperscript{23}

The atmosphere of Ergo Suits was charged with a sense of freedom, chaos, and spontaneity.\textsuperscript{24} The environment in which the young Hesse created her first sculpture was filled with innovative performances and included many artists who were redefining what it meant to be a sculptor. It is impossible to think that Hesse would not have absorbed these ideas as she discovered her artistic voice and began working in three-dimensional form for the very first time.

The invitation list to the festival reveals a roster of animated and theatrical performances. Featured events included Peter Schuman’s Bread and Puppet Theater’s \textit{Death Dance}, as well as continuous improvised theater, music, poetry, and happenings occurring 24 hours a day. It must have been quite an immersive experience for all participants. Also present were performers who were outsiders to the art world. One such invitee on Ginnever’s list was “Mama, an Old Fortune Teller.”\textsuperscript{25} The presence of a psychic at such an event is further evidence of the mystical quality of these types of festivals. They mirrored ceremonial rituals rather than the rigid business-oriented New York art scene from which many artists sought to escape. The diverse range of both artists and imaginative characters epitomized the mingling of visual and performing arts in the early 1960s. The festival nurtured the sense of experimentation that was so critical to young artists on their paths to self-discovery.

\textsuperscript{21} Charles Ginnever to Eva Hesse and Tom Doyle, July 5, 1962, 1977.52.45.113, Eva Hesse Archives, Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH.
\textsuperscript{22} Restany and Cohen, \textit{Charles Ginnever}, 17.
\textsuperscript{23} Charles Ginnever, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2015.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ginnever, Invitation with roster of artists’ names and performances, shared by the artist from his personal archives.
Although serious in artistic pursuit, there was a great deal of playfulness at Ergo Suits. However, it is also apparent that this time away from “work” was deeply informative to their growth as artists. By participating in these experimental festivals in suburban and rural sites, artists were able to escape the stress of the New York City art scene. Here they were able leave the restrictive rules and pressures of New York art dealers and gallerists behind. Kelly Baum, author of the catalogue and exhibition *New Jersey as Non-site*, calls these rural and site-specific areas (where events like the Yam Festival took place) “non-sites.” Baum argues that during the 1960s, New Jersey was a place of urban decay and industrial desolation. This was most attractive to the underfunded Fluxus and Minimalist artists seeking abandoned industrial-objects and empty vast spaces for site-specific performances. Thus, artist festivals were a place of liberation from tradition and a space to create an uncontrolled environment. As Hesse entered this alternate universe, first in Ergo Suits and then at the Yam Festival, this must have informed her own understanding of what it meant to be an artist, a notion that was undergoing great transformation during the early 1960s.

The non-site, home to Hesse’s first three-dimensional work, predates and almost anticipates her latter writings about wanting to create a “non-art.” In an exhibition statement from 1968 she remarked: “It’s not the new, it is yet not known, thought, seen, touched, but really what is not and that is.” This statement is truly resonant and connected to her proto-sculpture, *Sculpture Dance*, as it embraces a certain hybridity. Hesse alludes to duality in this statement by

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28 Baum, 7.
29 This phrase is taken from the catalogue statement describing *Contingent*, published to accompany *Art In Process IV*, Finch College Museum of Art, 1969. As quoted in Catherine de Zepher’s “Drawing as Binding/Bandage/Bondage,” in de Zepher’s *Eva Hesse Drawing*, 105.
calling for a simultaneously material and conceptual existence for her art. Similarly, *Sculpture Dance* may be dually perceived in that one may see, as well as touch, the sculpture. However, once its’ performance is completed, it exists only in the memory and in its ephemera, and eventually becomes completely conceptual. Thus, the sculpture infinitely oscillates between “what is not and that is.” The piece becomes simultaneously exigent upon a corporeal activation as well as a conceptual and unconscious format. Hence, Hesse’s latter writings and concept of a non-art may have unconsciously begun in its nascent stages during her performance of *Sculpture Dance* at the Yam Festival.

Sculptor as Sculpture, Dancer as Dance

In *Sculpture Dance*, body and material become inseparable. Since the piece is contingent upon the activation of the body, it hinges upon moments of unpredictable, irregular, and spontaneous motion. It creates an interdependent relationship between body and medium, and occupied and void spaces, as they are blurred and in constant flux. Ginnever describes Hesse as an eager young artist who readily and inventively created her own costume and delighted in watching the performances at Ergo Suits. However, when it came time for her to actually perform, to get inside the sculpture that she made and dance in it herself, she refused. Instead, Allan Kaprow danced in her costume and performed the piece for her.\(^3^0\) It was not until a year later, at the Yam Festival, that Hesse performed her own version of the dance. What was different that Hesse had the courage to perform a year later? Although there is no definitive answer, acknowledging the distinct change in her confidence one may surmise that Hesse gained a more complete sense of her artistic identity at the Yam Festival. This was only after she had

\(^{30}\) Charles Ginnever, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2015.
the opportunity to take a step back and examine the work as an observer rather than as a performer.

As Hesse danced in her own costume for *Sculpture Dance* and performed it for the first time, did she feel herself becoming part of the sculpture? The paradoxical pairing of the words “sculptor” and “sculpture” reoccurs in several different moments throughout Hesse’s career and became interchangeable words in her vocabulary throughout her life. One may argue that this concept manifested itself in her first performance of *Sculpture Dance* at the Yam Festival. Anna Chave’s essay “Eva Hesse: ‘Girl Being a Sculpture’” explores this idea, as she argues that Hesse envisioned her body to be intrinsically connected to her sculpture. Chave observes that Hesse jotted down the phrase “girl being a sculpture” on a dance program, and either consciously or subconsciously equated her sculpture as one with her own body. Although this quote was taken from a later journal entry, it suggests that Hesse may have first encountered such concepts while participating in *Sculpture Dance*. Even in its proto-sculptural stage, the title and concept of the piece relies on the body to give it meaning. The fact that the note is written on a dance program reveals the interconnectedness between sculpture and dance in Hesse’s mind. Although there is no evidence that Hesse was consciously thinking about dance while writing this, it is apparent that dance was at least subconsciously on her mind. Furthermore, the idea of equating sculptor and sculpture is similar to equating a dancer to a dance in that they are mutually exclusive terms in which one gives the other meaning and form. It is also significant that Hesse saw the body as a sculptural object inscribed in both mediums.

The presence of bodily form in Hesse’s sculpture is further explored in Lucy Lippard’s *Eva Hesse*, the only scholarship to mention *Sculpture Dance* as Hesse’s first three-dimensional

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work. Lippard writes that Hesse’s costume was rounder, floppier, and more organic than the two other male sculptors’ costumes. Lippard calls attention to the difference between Hesse’s organic open form, as opposed to the erect tower-like sculpture created by Ginnever and the angular constriction of Doyle as seen in Figures 5 and 6. Similarly, Chave attests to Hesse’s use of organic form as a means of inscribing herself and her femininity into her work. As the piece transforms sculptor into sculpture (as well as dancer into dance) one may fully understand the blurring of both body and object in Hesse’s mind. One may also consider the organic and flexible materials that Hesse worked with in Sculpture Dance which were used to accentuate mobility and fluidity in the sculpture. Her use of flexible materials is apparent in some of her latest works that sought to enhance dance-like movement through her use of latex, wire, and string.

As Hesse developed into artistic maturity, her desire to break the rules became increasingly apparent. A diary entry from a year after the festival reads: “What does being an adult entail. Responsibilities, maturity, decisions, and a sense of being oneself.” Although it is difficult to explain why the Yarn Festival became the site of Hesse’s first performance of her three-dimensional work, it is apparent that her surroundings inspired her to see herself differently. As Hesse’s first sculpture breached the boundaries of the in between (between sculpture and dance, body and material, beginning and end, the immediate and the infinite), her cryptic statement “girl being a sculpture” takes on new meaning of the hybridity and metamorphosis intrinsic to these two festivals.

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33 Chave, 99.
34 Diary entry of Sat., 21 Nov. [1964], in Cooper, 115.
Discovering Dance At The Yam Festival

Through Bud Wirtschafter’s documentary film, *What’s Happening* (1963), one is able to re-experience some of the fleeting Fluxus performances from the Yam Festival. Ginnever explains that *Sculpture Dance* was done in four different variations on Segal’s farm. There were three separate performances, individually featuring Ginnever, Doyle, and Hesse. There was also a collaborative group version in which many artist participants spontaneously danced in one version of the costume. In this variation, we see a young Hesse, hair in pigtails, smiling at the camera as she runs, hopping up and down accompanied by her friends in the conga like dance as seen in Figures 7 and 8. She looks happy and confident, in stark contrast to Ginnever’s original description of the shy and unsure artist attempting the same performance just a year prior at the Ergo Suits Traveling Carnival.

As previously stated, the Yam Festival served as a point of transformation for Hesse as well as many young artists who attended. Baum best describes these festival participants as being in a state of liminality. In her essay *New Jersey as Non-Site*, she likens the Yam Festival to a ritual in which newcomers like Hesse would have been caught in between their pre-ritual and post-ritual identities. She explains: “Liminality is equally at play in the intermedia projects that artists spearheaded and the hybrid identities they assumed during this period, a moment when poets doubled as activists, editors, and publishers, and sculptors served as critics, writers, and curators.”

Thus, one may envision the ceremonial like dancing of Hesse’s *Sculpture Dance* at the Yam Festival as an initiation into an artistic community.

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35 A certain quality of incompleteness hovers over all Fluxus performances; their temporal nature fails to be fully recaptured in recollections of those present at the performances, and sometimes distorted through their fragmentary ephemera and archives. By viewing Bud Wirtschafter’s film of the festival, *What’s Happening*, as well as listening to Ginnever’s reflections in a personal interview, one can gain a fuller sense of *Sculpture Dance*.

36 Baum, 41.
In his film, Wirtschafter juxtaposes the performances of Kaprow’s happening entitled, *Tree*, along with Hesse’s *Sculpture Dance*, as well as an improvised dance by Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown which they performed on Segal’s chicken coop roof. The two performances are edited back to back so that the motions of each segment crashes into the other as if they are one seamless performance. An inherent stream of consciousness and playfulness is at the very core of Kaprow and Segal’s vision for the festival and that in essence is echoed in Wirtschafter’s cinematography. Similarly, Baum’s historical understanding of the festival acknowledges the fluidity of the performances. She writes: “…radically decentered: it [the festival] claimed neither a single author nor a discrete location nor even a distinct point of origin.”

Baum’s description of the festival’s abandonment of structure and embrace of disorderliness is apparent in both *Sculpture Dance* and the Judson dance.

In one frame, Rainer slams her body against a wall, she moves jaggedly, as if she has lost control over her own body. In another shot, Rainer and Brown run around each other, revolving around some invisible center, their hands flailing above their heads like rustling branches of a tree. [Figure 9] The next shot returns to *Sculpture Dance* and similarly jagged motions of bodies are seen from underneath the brightly decorated cloth tubing. Hesse’s body simulates the frantic and ecstatic movements also found in the Judson improvisation. Furthermore, the cloth creates even more unpredictable shapes as the body becomes uncontained in an infinitely expanding field. Both pieces hinge upon chance, and their sense of immediacy comes from the unpredictable and unrehearsed nature of the works. Ginnever recalls that the Yam Festival did not have any pre-scheduled events. Instead, artists viewed each other’s works by word of

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37 Baum, 19.
Thus, Wirtschafter’s looping of the performances with indefinite beginnings and endings seemed to simulate an accurate experience of being at the festival.

*Sculpture Dance* incorporates a Fluxus sensibility of performance and dance as it may be reinterpreted in many variations but can never be the same twice. It truly resounds with Kaprow’s ideology of the time, most prominently with his thoughts in his 1961 essay “Assemblages, Environments and Happenings.” The text reads like a manifesto in which Kaprow calls for blurring the lines between art and life. He insists that, “Happenings should be performed once only,” so that they become fleeting and ephemeral moments. The festival’s improvised and playful nature replicates these ideals and may especially be seen through the elements of dance that are apparent in both Hesse and Rainer’s performances. For example, Ginnever explains that he did not want the movement in *Sculpture Dance* to read like choreography, but rather that it would incorporate motions from everyday life. Indeed, the steps are simplistic, innocent, and at times banal. *Sculpture Dance* fuses everyday movements like running, falling, and crawling. Additionally, he asked visual artists (as opposed to professional dancers) to perform the piece in order to add to the movements’ simplicity.

Just as Ginnever, Hesse, and Doyle were formulating these ideas within *Sculpture Dance*, the Judson Dance Company was redefining their medium. The group began to reshape previous notions of traditional choreography by incorporating everyday movement as well as improvisation. Dance historian, Sally Banes, explores this topic in her article, “Democracy’s Body: Judson Dance Theatre and Its Legacy.” She identifies Judson’s choreography as a democratization of dance, as its incorporation of everyday movement made it accessible to both

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38 Charles Ginnever, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2015.
dancers and non-dancers alike.\textsuperscript{40} This may be seen in Rainer’s first solo piece for Judson called *Ordinary Dance* which she began in 1960 and performed at Judson in 1962. It was the first of Rainer’s choreography to incorporate what she refers to as, “pedestrian” movement.\textsuperscript{41} As one may see in the series of film stills from the dance [Figure 10], Rainer’s body takes shape in repetitive sequences. Some poses look extremely advanced such as the film still on the bottom left corner of Rainer in a standing split. Yet, others look extremely simple, such as the still on the bottom right where Rainer merely bends over as if she is about to fall. Most interestingly, many of the stills capture a sense of motion as they are blurry and one can see the fading of one movement into the next. *Ordinary Dance* was created right before the Yam Festival and has many similarities to the improvised dance that Rainer performed on Segal’s roof. The use of ordinary motions may also be detected in Hesse’s *Sculpture Dance*. Although there is no video footage of Hesse’s individual performance of the piece, one may imagine what it may have looked like based on the photographs of the costume as shown in Figure 1. Inside the soft sculpture, one would have to move continuously in repetitive, yet distinct motions. The spontaneity of the movements would make the rhythm disconcerting in its irregularity and unpredictability. Never remaining still for more than a moment, the sculpture wavers between its closeness to disappearance and its resounding call to the present moment. Thus, the photographs of *Ordinary Dance* that capture the changing motion of a ghost-like body are quite similar to those of *Sculpture Dance* that oscillate in moments of in-between.


Ginnever recounts that there was an acute awareness amongst all of the artists of this period and that everyone was conscious and inspired by each other’s innovation within all medias. Furthermore, the cross-fertilization between mediums would have been even more explicit at an event like Yam Festival with its spirit of collaboration and co-authorship. The Yam Festival reveals larger truths about these early works of Hesse and Rainer. Both pieces reflect artists using mediums tied to the body as well as expressing the desire to transcend their corporeal and material form through dance and improvised performance. The evolution of both artists’ works from the festival and onward, consistently unveil and juxtapose the spaces of material and ephemeral bodies, as well as visualize the in between moments of figures interpolating these two spheres of existence. It was here, at the Yam Festival, that Hesse was first exposed to the potential malleability and interconnectedness of both sculpture and dance that could serve to express these innate characteristics in her work.

42 Charles Ginnever, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2015.
Chapter Two

Sculpture as Dance, Dance as Sculpture: An Examination of Hesse’s *Mechanical Drawings* and Yvonne Rainer’s *Trio A*

Searching For Three-Dimensional Spaces

As the intersections of media culminated in the early 1960s, it is only natural that the interconnected relationship between drawing and sculpture now became prevalent in the next stage of Eva Hesse’s career. Her fascination with drawing was truly manifested during her residency in Kettwig, Germany (1964-1965). Once again, Hesse was confronted with the intimidating prospect of beginning a new project while further developing her artistic identity in a foreign country. Her series of *Mechanical Drawings*, created during the two years of her Kettwig residency similarly addressed the challenge of inserting the body into her work that she had first encountered during *Sculpture Dance*. Most interestingly, the drawings use movement to break away from the linearity and two-dimensionality that is inherent to the medium. Hesse’s methods for the series included constant reconstruction through collaging, cutting, and re-orienting these works. Most strikingly, when she displayed the drawings in an exhibition, she hung them from the ceiling so they looked like mobiles occupying a three-dimensional space. I infer that this combination of movement and sculptural form incorporates her initial discovery and use of the hybrid mediums of sculpture and dance that she had first encountered at the Yam Festival. This chapter also explores the influence of Simone de Beauvoir’s text *The Second Sex* on Hesse’s *Mechanical Drawings*. The direct impact of the book on Hesse’s work has been explored by other scholars, however, I will argue that Beauvoir’s proto-feminist understanding of gender fluidity and transcendence ultimately shares the very same ideas to which dance was
bound in the 1960s. Thus, the *Second Sex* will be used as an example of yet another model that Hesse was exposed to that possessed an essence of experimental dance.

**Drawing Movement in the Kettwig Studio**

In 1964 Hesse moved with her husband, the sculptor Tom Doyle, to Kettwig, Germany. Doyle had received a commission to show and create works by the German art collector F. Arnhard Scheidt. Together, the couple embarked upon a 15-month residency in their Kettwig studio. The workspace had previously been used as an old textile factory. While the two artists inhabited it, their mass quantity of productivity, as well as their works’ mechanical aesthetic, began to mimic the textile factory in an absurd way. Doyle’s scrap machine parts for his sculptures and Hesse’s drawings of machines scattered around the space evokes a factory of impractical objects with absurdist functionalities. Hesse’s closeness to Doyle’s work at this time is one clear inspiration for the series. She often sketched the spare parts of Doyle’s machine-like sculptures from various perspectives. One can recognize these forms and similarities immediately in such examples as shown in **Figures 11 and 12**. Producing numerous works at a rapid speed, Hesse continuously explored new methods as the series changed throughout the course of the year, alternating between ink, pencil, watercolor, or gouache on paper.

As sense of place played such an important role in framing Hesse’s work at the Yam Festival, it is important to similarly acknowledge the significance of her time at the Kettwig studio. Just as George Segal’s farm provided an environment of playfulness and freedom in which Hesse was able to create her first sculpture, the Kettwig studio also served as a place for experimentation. Once again, Hesse completely altered her understanding of her medium with a sculptural vision. During this period, she became frustrated and further disconnected from

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painting.\(^{44}\) Still young and very much at the beginning of developing her artistic identity, Hesse delved into a new medium: drawing.

As one reads Hesse’s journals during this two-year span, it becomes clear that confronting her artistic identity caused considerable anxiety. In a diary entry dated only a few days after entering the studio, Hesse began to experience feelings of self-doubt. She writes: “Our 6\(^{th}\) day here in Kettwig. Initially, I felt different, now I am once more left with myself. That is my first big problem. My second is to work and they are related.”\(^{45}\) In this introspective moment, Hesse seems to be confronting a familiar insecurity: the space of her body and its place in her work. Hesse was once again at the beginning stages of tackling new artistic ideas, and it is clear that she felt a similar sense of unease as she did at the Ergo Suits Carnival. She herself draws a parallel between this time in the Kettwig studio to her earlier experience at Ego Suits in a diary entry: “Tom + I are together constantly and are quite close and happy this way. It is like our first summer together in Woodstock.”\(^{46}\) It is interesting that she is reminded of Woodstock during a moment of both self-doubt and artistic reinvention. However, it not surprising that the situation seemed relatable to her. Indeed, the Kettwig studio presented a similarly existential predicament as she had faced in Woodstock, in which she was once again creating new work in an environment that was both intimidating as well as liberating, experimental, and most importantly constantly shifting. As will be further discussed in this chapter, Hesse collaged and physically moved the *Mechanical Drawings* within the studio as part of her practice. By viewing

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\(^{44}\) Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 50.


\(^{46}\) Ibid.
the drawings as three-dimensional proto-sculptures, one may also understand them as mobile and multifaceted, rather than linear and flat. Caught in between two-dimensional drawings and three-dimensional sculptures, the *Mechanical Drawings* exhibit a wavering precariousness. The series displays bodies in hybrid states and likens body to machine. However, because the figures are fragmented bodies (split into organs and limbs rather than a whole self) they also have obscure identities and indefinite functions. The mutable quality of the *Mechanical Drawings* pushes them toward Hesse’s essential understanding of sculpture in their resistance to flatness or stagnancy.

It is apparent that Hesse often struggled with the paradigm of being both female and an artist throughout her career. She writes: “Do I have a right to womanliness? Can I achieve an artistic endeavor and can they coincide?” Although this journal entry is from a date later than the drawings (1967), it still seems relevant to her struggles during this period. Hesse worked through this dilemma by visually expressing her dual roles as an artist and as a woman. The drawings fragment and juxtapose identity and body, echoing Hesse’s confrontation with representing her ‘femininity’ in her work. Disconnected from a whole body or identity, the chimera-like figures seem to transcend gender in their non-specificity and hybrid nature.

Similarly, Rainer and the Judson Dance Company were also redefining their respective medium as a means of transcending traditional notions of the body’s gendering in dance. Rainer addresses these concerns in *Trio A* (1966) with her choreography of mechanical motions and chance movement. Like many of Rainer’s dances, *Trio A* has had many variations and permutations throughout its performance history. It was first performed in 1966 as part of the larger performance *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I* at Judson Memorial Church in New York City. However, it has been performed repeatedly, with different interpretations and contexts, by both

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professional and non-professional dancers alike. It was more recently performed at the Museum of Modern Art in 2009 and described as the following: “The piece comprises a sequence of unpredictable movements that unfold in a continuous motion, deliberately opposing familiar dance patterns of development and climax.” This phenomenon may be clearly seen in Figure 13 where the continuous film stills show repetitive and mechanical movements. Although there are recognizable modules that reoccur throughout the piece, they are constantly permuting within the performance. For example, at one point Rainer turns towards the audience, falls over, rolls, rises and swings her hands in clockwise circles. She then repeats some of this sequence on the opposite side of the stage with slight variation when she taps both feet in circles before a variant swinging of her hands. Thus, sequences repeat in the dance, but are never identical or predictable to the viewer. This further illustrates Rainer’s breaking down notions of the audience’s expectations for narrative, drama, or identity based on gender, as is more common in traditional choreography and theater.

It is important to note that since Trio A was created a year after the Mechanical Drawings, there is no way Hesse saw the performance while making the series. In other words, this argument does not claim that Hesse was directly inspired by Trio A or vice versa, but rather that there was a conceptual and collective awareness of ideas shared by the two young female artists. Thus, it is important to focus on their individual understanding of dance and sculpture, and to deconstruct key dance pieces during the 1960s as a tool to better understand Hesse’s sculpture and how it similarly confronted such dilemmas in representing the female body.

Scoring

The *Mechanical Drawings* and dance performance of the 1960s incorporate conceptual elements through the importance of their accompanying ephemera. One way to view such archival materials is to examine them like a score. Scoring, or writing a score that both documents and encompasses a work, is an artistic method mostly associated with Fluxus artists, with whom Hesse and Rainer were both active during the earliest parts of their careers.\(^4^9\) Hesse’s notebooks are filled with sketches for the *Mechanical Drawings* and at times mirror Rainer’s choreographic scoring. We can see this in a playful and almost comic manner in Figure 14 taken from a journal entry from 1964-1965. This sketch of the Kettwig studio looks like both a stage and a laboratory of experiments. Backwards, non-synchronized numbers and clocks occupy the top right corner, and instill a sense of chaotic movement. The letters “abc” with reversible arrows and an infinity symbol suggest an attempt to revert order with infinite combinations. Perhaps the separating boxes or grids reveal the separation of space, dividing the studio into Doyle and Hesse’s various workspaces. However, the attempt to create any type of orderly composition within a grid system soon becomes uncontained and chaotic. The multidirectional arrows and protruding text articulates a constant fluttering of energy and shifting within the space. It resembles a disorienting map and documents two artists spouting ideas of infinite variations.

Similarly, one may also view the drawings for Rainer’s *Trio A* as a mapping of her own spontaneity and creativity. For example, Figure 15 is drafted on grid paper, however, it conversely express eruptions of chaos. Although based on a system of sorts, the drawing of the dance becomes uncontained and unpredictable. In Figure 15, an individual linear path (or one dancer’s motions) warps and overlaps other parallel paths, continuously changing in structure

\(^4^9\) See more on the influence of the Fluxus movement and Yam Festival in Chapter One.
and flow. Both of these drawings have an essentially sculptural sensibility: although the plans are flat and linear, they represent bodies in motion as they await interpretation in three-dimensional form. Hesse’s similarly linear drawings are also sculptural. Lucy Lippard understands these as catalysts for the “German Reliefs,” Hesse’s first widely recognized body of three-dimensional sculpture. The reliefs were also created and exhibited in Kettwig alongside the Mechanical Drawings at the end of her residency in 1965.

Hesse’s drawings did not merely inspire her sculpture, but also became sculptures in themselves. As Kirsten Swenson observes, the artist did not see these drawings as merely two-dimensional, but rather as transitory objects that she continuously moved around her studio. She began cutting, pasting, and recreating the drawings into a choreographed collage-like dance. Swenson points out the pinhole markings in the four corners of the paper that are apparent in almost all of the drawings. Hesse’s process of constant reconfiguring and alteration is a method that is shared in both mediums of sculpture and dance. In each respective medium, the work is constantly expanded and redefined every time a new variation is integrated. Thus, the works produced have multiple “lives,” existing in both linear and three-dimensional states. The evocation of perpetual transformation and instability encapsulates a quintessential phenomenon of the body and identity and their impossible representation of stillness. Through the process of scoring work, both Hesse and the coeval Judson dances represent the instability of the body and the self through both physical and conceptual movement.

Yvonne Rainer’s piece, Trio A, was created a year after Hesse’s drawings. However, both pieces illuminate the connections between drawing and dance and suggest that the artists shared similar ideas on the representation of the body. Rainer deconstructed the dance of her

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50 Lippard, 30.
time by favoring ordinary and repetitive movement rather than recognizable sequences. This removed the constrictions of gender and body for both men and women and interestingly utilized professional as well as amateur dancers. The piece also has a plethora of accompanying ephemera that are two-dimensional such as drawings, notes, and program descriptions. This archival material is an integral part of understanding the piece as a whole. It straddles flat and three-dimensional spaces, and physical and conceptual realms in the same way as Hesse’s *Mechanical Drawings*.

Woman Is Object

Mutation and deconstruction are at the core of the *Mechanical Drawings*. This may be seen in the artist’s methods of drafting, drawing, scoring, and permutation. The drawings oscillate between a simultaneous stillness and dynamism. In a similar way to Rainer’s choreography, the drawings’ contingency upon re-assemblage reveals its indefiniteness or singularity. The elite sphere of Minimalist artists was primarily male because of men’s unique ability and privilege to desexualize their bodies and identities. Simone de Beauvoir wrote about the divisions and inequalities of gender in her groundbreaking book *The Second Sex* (1949), which was translated into English in 1961. Hesse began closely reading the book and writing about these ideas in her diary while simultaneously creating the drawings. The feminist philosopher’s theories about the issues of representing and understanding the female body began to influence Hesse’s own artistic methods as she dissected and deconstructed the body in her drawings in very similar ways.

One of Beauvoir’s most convincing arguments in *The Second Sex* is that a woman is distinctly different than a man, and should not be forced to give up her individual identity or emulate masculine qualities in order to gain equality. Conversely, she should be respected for
her difference, her otherness, and her femininity, in order to gain this freedom. While Hesse read Beauvoir’s theories she ventured further into her art. It is apparent that she began to understand her medium in an alternative way and saw the necessity of embracing difference rather than sameness. Her work from this period stresses the importance of flexible, mutable, and multifaceted materials, as well as a transformation from the two-dimensional realm to the third -- concepts that Rainer was also using in her dance. It is evident that the transformative and dynamic qualities of dance, as envisioned in Hesse’s drawings, echo Beauvoir’s similar idea of independence in their aesthetics of irregularity.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir uses the two terms *immanence* and *transcendence* to better describe the differences between male and female characteristics. *Immanence* is the traditional perspective of female qualities such as passivity and interiority. *Transcendence* is mostly a masculine attribute of activity, creativity, and an externality. Beauvoir argues that every human should have the ability express all of these traits but that man has denied woman’s pathway to transcendence.  

It is undoubted that Hesse found urgency and truth within this philosophical concept, and that her drawings reference this concept with their allusions to dance. As previously argued, Hesse actively incorporated movement into her drawings that sought to propel them from the merely physical world into a metaphysical space. Beauvoir’s hopes for the modern woman can be expressed in dance because it is a medium that is constantly reinvented through its juxtaposition of stillness and motion, as well as hybrid form. Additionally, Hesse’s fascination with hybrid forms, such as machine and body, recapitulate a genderless identity in which one may be both male and female.

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52 Beauvoir, 679.
Hesse’s journal from this year is filled with her own paraphrasing of the feminist philosopher: “Simone DB writes woman is object – has been made to feel this from first experiences of awareness. She has always been made for this role. It must be a conscious determined act to change this.”\(^5^3\) Hesse wished for her art to embody this change, as the drawings challenge conventional ways of representing the body as well as the place of female form within the Minimalist lexicon. One may argue that Hesse was attempting to deconstruct and redefine an established system through her three-dimensional drawings and her subject’s grappling with objects severed from whole parts. Beauvoir’s call for radical change seems to be ingrained in this experimental period for Hesse -- a time in which she too desired to break a system of sorts.

Hesse’s \textit{Mechanical Drawings} use the qualities of dance to confront the intersection of body and object. Thus, just as Beauvoir demanded that women’s identities not be one-dimensional, Hesse created works that similarly accentuated differences and resembled multiple un-identical parts to create cohesive wholes. Without the early choreographic vision of \textit{Sculpture Dance} and her early exposure to Rainer, it is interesting to question whether or not she would have found such limitless possibilities in drawing.

\textbf{Dance Is Hard To See: Creating Invisible/Visible Bodies}

Swenson’s description of “mutable combinations” for the \textit{Mechanical Drawings} infers a type of transformation within the works. As previously mentioned Swenson’s observation of Hesse’s collaging process for the drawings, inferred that these works were unfixed in the artist’s mind. Hesse’s desire to continuously alter and move the drawings gave them a three-dimensional, and sculptural sensibility. Swenson’s analysis of mutability may also be related to choreography.

\footnote{Eva Hesse, Diary entry November 19\textsuperscript{th} 1964, Eva Hesse Papers Archives of American Art, Accessed 3/30/15, \url{http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/eva-hesse-papers-7755}.}
through the drawings’ encompassment of movement and change in order to resist finite forms or definitions. Through constant mutation, identity can become fluid rather than stagnant. Perhaps this was Hesse’s answer to Beauvoir’s stated dilemma that “woman is object” and her “determined act to change this.” By equating dance with the idea of “difference,” one may further understand why Hesse sought to capture the essence of such a medium in these works, as she wanted them to transcend, mutate, and combine. It is also logical to relate the dance-like quality of these drawings to Hesse’s reaction to reading Beauvoir’s and her call for change. It is evident that Hesse became interested in incorporating movement into a traditionally two-dimensional and linear artist medium like drawing during the period in which she was reading *The Second Sex*. As Hesse recorded her struggles in her diary to find her own distinct voice in an artistic circle that rarely excepted difference, one may see the inspiration she must have drawn from Beauvoir. By using the ideas of dance in drawing, she was able to unhinge her work from stagnation and transcend the boundaries placed upon female artists.

Similarly, Rainer also used “mutable combinations” in her series of pedestrian movements in *Trio A* in which dancers followed choreography based on chance and their own individual interpretations. In the piece, the dancers perform variations of the same repeating movements, but they are never in unison, making it impossible for the viewer to follow a pattern. Sometimes *Trio A* is accompanied by music or it keeps time with a metronome. However, the dance’s lack of phrasing or logical transitions makes it impossible to stay within the steady rhythm of the metronome or music. Thus, the body begins to emulate its own mechanical motion and individual logic within a larger structured system. The irregular repeating and random movement becomes absurd and nonsensical. Thus, Rainer’s dancers echo Hesse’s sentiments of the mechanical body parts when she states: “Thus, they look like machines,
however they are not functional and are non-sense.” The “mutations” in both works create absurd and undefined bodies that may be liberated from within a controlled system. If an object or body is in constant motion it becomes nearly impossible to give it a singular definition or understanding. Thus, these works must be understood by their “difference”, a concept that both artists had to work through in both their professional and personal lives as female artists.

Hesse’s *Mechanical Drawings* eviscerate the human figure as she literally removes its internal organs from an identifying body. She decontextualizes the body from a character or narrative by cutting and collaging. Similar to *Trio A*’s lack of a core structure, Hesse repeats forms in the series but does not create recognizably distinct patterns as each drawing is slightly unique. In **Figure 16**, Hesse’s mechanical forms run into each other, all similar yet all specific with their own idiosyncrasies. This is reiterated in the following image of Rainer’s in **Figure 17**. Although a contemporary variation of her work, its resistance to uniformity is undeniable. Each dancer is lined up in a slightly varying position. One dancer from this specific workshop comments: “The movements look simple. The pedestrian qualities look simple. However it is all but simple...the many directions remained extremely difficult for me to apprehend and I asked her: why? She answered: to go against predictability!” The varying directions for the piece make it almost impossible for bodies to look uniform or “in synch” while performing. Thus, each part looks unique and distinct, with each dancer’s movements being of equal importance. Hesse’s drawings may also be seen in this way as they consist of separate, yet autonomous parts.

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Rainer wrote that “dance is hard to see” in her 1968 essay “A Quasi Survey of Some ‘Minimalist’ Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A.” The article is a retrospective look at her choreography of Trio A during the mid 1960s, and its place in the broader spectrum of the Minimalist movement. In the essay, Rainer makes a list of demands for dance: “eliminate development, climax, and character, substituting for them equality of parts, repetition, and neutral performance.” Rainer’s call for the evisceration of her medium strips it down to purer and more basic movement. By removing narrative and identifiable characters, one may begin to look at the bodies on stage in a new way.

Transcendence

Hesse quotes de Beauvoir in another notebook entry during her stay in Kettwig: “What woman essentially lacks today for doing great things is forgetfulness of herself; but to forget oneself is first of all necessary to be assured that now and for the future one has found oneself.” This quote reflects Hesse’s conceptualization of the female body and its multiplicity. If the body (or self) is represented through multiplicity and broken down into parts, an understanding of a total self becomes attainable. Hesse’s drawings directly evoke the same type of imagery as in Beauvoir’s quote; the division of whole figures into their bare and severed parts is a necessary means of embracing ones true essence, that is one’s own nothingness, in order to transcend as a whole.

Hesse’s confrontation with forgetting oneself in both Sculpture Dance and in the Mechanical Drawings is reminiscent of Beauvoir’s quote. As she confronted the dance at the Yam Festival for the second time, she was successful in forgetting her own body and entered into

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57 Swenson, 95.
the void space of the sculpture, as figure and medium became one in the same. Similarly, she
had to deconstruct the machine parts in the drawings in order to arrive at her first internationally
recognized sculptures known as the “German Reliefs” in 1965. The mutable experiments that
preceded this sculpture series the previous year culminated in this ultimate moment.

The cyclical path of losing and finding one’s own self is something that perhaps most
artists experience throughout their lives. However, Hesse’s direct physical and visual
embodiment of such patterns in her work echoes the discontents of early feminist theory, and
Beauvoir’s call for a total identity comprised of varying parts. Therefore, flickering moments of
in betweenness and variation are achieved through the uncontainable qualities of dance. The
Mechanical Drawings ardently resist the tenets of predictability and logic often found in Hesse’s
male contemporaries’ works, yet they are paralleled in Rainer’s choreography. Such digressions
should be read as a deliberate choice, as Hesse continued to incorporate dance and
experimentation from one of the earliest experiences of her career as an integral part of her
artistic practice.
Chapter 3
Not Yet: Absence and Presence in Hesse’s Works of the Late 1960s

Expanded Expansion

Impermanence, an epitomic quality of sculpture and dance, was being explored in new and experimental ways during the late 1960s and had a direct impact on Hesse’s work as well. Hesse’s use of ephemeral materials in her late sculptures often heightened their precariousness. Thus, Hesse’s use of transience in her pieces seems to make them exist between two realms, wavering between their material and their conceptual forms. Stemming from this dichotomy, her late works also embraced such contradictions as permanence versus impermanence. A piece like Expanded Expansion (1969) [Figure 18] plays on this idea with the sturdy and permanent fiberglass poles set against the delicate cheesecloth draped over them. During the installation process, one may control the width of the piece by expanding or reducing the space between each pole. Additionally, the ephemeral material of cheesecloth naturally decays and changes color and form over time. Expanded Expansion and Hesse’s late sculptures all utilize mutable materials and spaces in the same way as Sculpture Dance - her very first sculptural project. The concept of a mobile sculpture is revisited in her later works and similarly employs flexible materials such as latex, wire, and string.

Although her late sculptures do not directly incorporate choreography, they certainly evoke a sense of dance. Virtually all of the sculptures discussed in this chapter may be seen as dance. Even though each sculpture exists as a single work, every one consists of numerous, varying parts that constitute the whole. Again similar to dance, even though stationary at certain moments, the sculpture avoids stagnancy in its interchangeable form and various interpretations.
Hesse saw no distinction between herself and her art and built her identity around her work. As previously acknowledged, this was a very anti-Minimalist notion as it refutes the idea that art and life must be separate. Hesse recognized this in an interview with Cindy Nemser. She tells Nemser that she thinks an artist like Carl Andre (American artist, b.1935) would not appreciate the fact that his work reminded her of concentration camps since it immediately immerses his work in her own personal tragedy. She explains: “Maybe it would be repellent to him that I would say such a thing about his art. He says you can’t confuse life and art. But I think art is a total thing. A total person giving a contribution. It is an essence, a soul, and that’s what it’s about… In my inner soul art and life are inseparable.”\(^{58}\) Thus, I contend what was at stake for Hesse, unlike many of her male counterparts, was to express her individual identity - a uniquely feminine predicament. The Minimalist model resisted the personal and demanded uniformity, but Hesse’s work related more to alternative ideologies, such as the performance-based Fluxus artists who she was exposed to in her early career.

I further argue that Hesse’s sculptures, composed of organic looking, yet chemically decomposing, materials and ephemeral nature, are comparable to the proto-feminist dance of her time. Concurrently, Yvonne Rainer’s choreography became more dictated by chance. The structure was determined by random decisions that the dancers would interpret each time the piece was performed. This is most apparent in her work *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1970) [fig. 8]. Using Rainer’s work as an example, one may further understand a revisionalization of Hesse’s sculpture as dance. Her use of ephemeral and translucent materials, as well as a juxtaposition of void and occupied expanses, articulates a body that flutters between a transient and present space, not yet here, nor there. Just as a photograph can never fully capture a

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dancer’s movements, Hesse’s sculpture of this period was inspired by dance as a means to create works that could not be reduced to binary containers.

Moving Past The Wound

Hesse’s late work, made during the last few years before her death in 1970, are some of the most iconic in her oeuvre. Not only did they receive wide attention during her lifetime, but even more so after her death. They still resonate as some of the most influential works of art to artists today.59 There are those artists and art historians, such as Mel Bochner and Anne Wagner, who attribute this phenomenon to what they call the “myth making” of Eva Hesse. Both write about the romanticization of her early death and viewing these pieces as absurd relics of her tragedy.60 Thus, while one must embrace Hesse’s statements that there was no separation between her work and life, one cannot analyze her work merely through her biography. To do so is reductive and limits the understanding of the artist’s sculpture, defining it by her gender or by her battle with brain cancer as she created her last works.61 It is important that a new narrative be given to these works. Thus, by using Rainer’s coeval dances of the late 1960s as a framework for viewing Hesse’s work, one may acknowledge the presence of the body without this reductive analysis. It contextualizes the choices she made and the struggles she and other female

59 Hesse’s exhibition history is quite extensive, especially towards the end of her life, including an exhibition at The Fischbach Gallery in 1968, as well the Whitney’s Anti-illusion exhibition in 1969. Hauser and Wirth “Exhibition History and Biography” Accessed 3/26/16, http://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/34/eva-hesse/biography/

60 Both Anne Wagner’s essay “Another Hesse” (1996) and Mel Bochner’s essay “About Eva Hesse: Mel Bochner Interviewed by Joan Simon (1992) discuss this in Mignon Nixon’s, Eva Hesse (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2002).

61 Nordin argues that Hesse’s illness disproportionately informs the analyses of her sculpture in Linda Nordin, “Getting To ‘Ick’: To Know What One Is Not,” in Helen A. Cooper’s, Eva Hesse: A Retrospective. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) 51. Kreutzer argues that Hesse viewed the figure in the Mechanical Drawings as her own, and connects the drawings to the events of her life. Maria Kreutzer, “The Wound and the Self: Eva Hesse’s Breakthrough in Germany” in Cooper, 75. Wagner discusses the interpretations of other Hesse scholars that unfairly interprets the artist’s work with biography. Anne Wagner’s, “Another Hesse” in Mignon Nixon’s, Eva Hesse (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2002) 51.
Minimalist artists had to overcome. As the sculpture is newly viewed in this context, by its affinity for dance and performance, one may now see works that oscillate between physical stasis and metaphysical transcendence. She created works that danced between these worlds, where issues of the body are central but are not exclusively defined by sex, illness, or death. Furthermore it expands the way one looks at her work - not discriminating between feminine or masculine, but taking on both qualities.

As Wagner explains, the early death of Hesse complicates the analysis of her work. One common issue for the female artist is that her biography, and in this case, Hesse’s “illness,” becomes fixed into the interpretation of her work. Wagner writes, “It is her (un)timely death that has meant she has survived to play a special cultural role: forever under thirty-five, she answers a hunger for youthful, tragic death. She is the ‘dead girl,’ the beautiful corpse who stands for so much in so many cultural narratives.”62 Although there is a lot of truth in Wagner’s essay, it actually further relegates these works into this myth-making realm, rather than offering a resolution. How can one avoid these interpretations if they are so embedded into the works’ critical reception and in the ways that society views the works of female artists of this time? By using the sculpture’s essence of movement and dance, one may find some resolution to Wagner’s ominous predicament for the work to be inscribed within biographical myth. I argue that one must acknowledge that the material that Hesse uses in these pieces does reference a body, however this must not be seen as one singular body, and not necessarily her own body.

Alternatively, Hesse viewed her sculptures similarly to the way a choreographer sees the body of a dancer: as a mutable and flexible object in which identity and form shift as often as the changing roster of performers. In this way, Hesse’s late sculptures strive for constant reinvention and renewal rather than the circumscription of personal myth.

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62 Wagner, “Another Hesse,” in Nixon’s, Eva Hesse, 93.
As in dance, these works encompass an endless permuta
tion of punctuating space, as they displace order with chaos,
and time with the infinite. In pieces like Area (1968) [Figure 19],
the latex material rolls out onto the gallery floor like an old scroll. Discolored from deterioration and time, its
creases and limpness look like wrinkled skin or bandaging. Many feminist authors like Anne Wagner and Anna Chave discuss how both Hesse’s work and their surrounding criticism revolve around ideas of “sickness” and “wounds.” In Wagner’s essay “Another Hesse,” she argues for a non-
biographical reading of her sculpture. However, she also writes: “Anyone who wants to make a serious contribution to remembering Hesse will likewise have to speak about a wound – not, in this instance as the chief characteristic of her art, but as the emblem of its transformations in print.” Although Wagener acknowledges the need for a decentralization of body and biography in Hesse’s art, she reverts back to its inherent place in scholarship.

Chave similarly argues that there is an indispensable element of the body within Hesse’s work, and that one must view this as a political emblem rather than biographical symbolism. She writes: “What was specifically inscribed on Hesse’s body, and what she inscribed in her art, were above all the debilitating effects of tyranny, whether sociopolitical, sexual, or physical, as in the tyranny of disease.” While I agree that the sculptures may be informed by the crippling polemical strikes against women of Hesse’s time, Chave’s allusion to “disease” seems to be informed directly by events in Hesse’s life. For example, she refers to the materials being emblematic of surgical paraphernalia such as hose, bandages, and restraints. This type of interpretation inevitably returns to Hesse’s life and illness, and assumes an analysis that could

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63 Not only was she exposed to the works of Judson early on in her career at Fluxus festival, but it is also noted that she attended a Judson performance in 1966 with her close friend the conceptual artist, Sol LeWitt. Kirsten Swenson, Converging Lines: Eva Hesse and Sol LeWitt, (New Haven: Blanton Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2014).

64 Chave, “Girl Being A Sculpture,” 109.


66 Ibid.
not exist if the artist had not died young, further perpetuating the myth making of the artist’s works.⁶⁶

While it is important for Hesse scholarship to review this literature, but one should also actively gage new ways of writing about Hesse’s art without reinforcing its myth. By envisioning Hesse’s late sculpture through the new lens of dance, one is forced to view her use of ephemerality not merely as a representation of her own short life, but of the general absurdity of all bodies struggling for transcendence. Both dance and Hesse’s sculpture encompass ethereal and material realms and seem to be stuck in between these two spheres of existence. As may be seen in Area, the materials occupy multiple fields of space. For example, the latex scroll falls adjacently onto both the floor and gallery wall. The placement is definitely intentional, but not permanent. The presence of alteration is concurrent throughout these works and stress Hesse’s embrace of difference. This technique was also incorporated in Rainer’s late choreography as dancers precariously moved around, constantly changing direction, and blurring the lines between stage and offstage. If one views Hesse’s late sculpture through its affinity to dance by its similar use of repetition, chance, and process, then one may finally push past reading them as relics of her own personal wound or disease. If to some they still speak of death, then it is a reincarnate death - one that is not contained to a singular identity or body, but rather one that surpasses the constraints of mortal lesions.

A New Kind of Spontaneity

The choreography of Yvonne Rainer during the late 1960s is noted for its use of repetition, chance, and process, most similar to the methods of Hesse and the Minimalist canon. Although Rainer drew from the trends of her time, she and her colleagues invented a new way of
looking at performance and dance. Together, the Judson Company and Rainer’s unique vision established a new perspective of the body, one which diverged from theater’s previous representations and signifiers.\textsuperscript{67} Thus, Rainer’s late choreography emphasized elements of incompleteness and indefiniteness. Caught in a constant state of becoming, her dances sometimes feel like a continuously evolving thought in one’s own consciousness. Rainer said her work encapsulated “a new kind of spontaneity, not just a new permutation of material, but eruptions of laughter, gayety, it opened up a new set of possibilities.”\textsuperscript{68}

It seems as though Hesse’s use of repeating forms serves to illuminate difference rather than similarity, and chaos rather than order. She famously stated that “if something is absurd, it’s much more exaggerated, more absurd if it’s repeated.”\textsuperscript{69} This sentiment may be visually explored in *Repetition Nineteen III* (1968) [Figure 20] as the repeating forms of 19 fiberglass and polyester cylinders are all subtly different in shape. They are far from uniform, and the organic and translucent material gives them a natural quality. Much like the asymmetry of the human body, the object’s naturalism supports their imperfection. In another work, *Schema* (1967) [Figure 21], one is faced with the contrasting concepts of multiplicity and individuality. Each ball varies in size and texture yet, fits into repeating holes on a grid-like plane.

As a medium, dance hinges upon its necessity for repetition and difference. Rainer’s late works of the decade similarly attempt to expand and redefine these terms, as well as other core structures of performance. One of the strongest examples of this is in her piece *Connecticut Composite* (1969). The drawing plan for this piece outlines a non-definitive version of

\textsuperscript{67} Perhaps this is why many art and dance historians characterize Rainer’s choreography as the first example of postmodern dance. More is written about Rainer’s role as a postmodern choreographer in: Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

\textsuperscript{68} Excerpt from the film *Rainer Variations* by Charles Atlas, 2002.

\textsuperscript{69} As quoted in Krauss, “Hesse’s Desiring Machines” in Nixon’s, *Eva Hesse*, 49.
Continuous Project - Altered Daily (1969-1970) that was performed in the summer of 1969 while she was completing a teaching residency at Connecticut College. Rainer explains that it was an evening involving 80 students, taking place in five separate performing areas in one building.\(^{70}\) Her notes also show that the performers regroup 20 times throughout the duration of the performance.\(^{71}\) As seen in Figure 22, the arrows indicate the direction in which the dancers stand and the lines represent the alignment of their bodies. Each box represents a phrase (or as Sally Banes describes them, ‘modules’) that reoccurs, but never truly repeats.\(^{72}\) Thus, the reoccurring, yet asymmetrical, sequencing used in both Hesse’s sculpture and Rainer’s choreography speaks to a greater urgency - to represent the movement of the human body in all its variation and difference.

Hesse’s sculptures dismantle the idea of a singular identity and Minimalism’s material Absoluteness. They break away from the assumption that repetition is subservient to an original or absolute identity. As seen in Repetition Nineteen III and Schema, her use of repetitive, yet discordant forms, subvert audience expectations that repetition is defined by similarity, but rather emphasizes its unpredictable notion of difference. Dance’s compulsion for duplication is embedded in its core existence. The medium’s aspect of live performance may be duplicated, but never truly replicated. As Hesse and Rainer were influenced by the Fluxus notion of non-replicable performances and objects, their works built upon the possibilities of permutation and unfixed identities. Both of their works begin with unfixed originals, by means of chance and improvisation, and charge them with a new kind of spontaneity.

\(^{71}\) Ibid, 125.
\(^{72}\) Sally Banes, *Terpsichore and Sneakers Post-Modern Dance*, 45.
Right After

In a 1970 interview with Cindy Nemser, Hesse said that when she went back to work she wanted “not to know what the end was going to be.”\(^{73}\) There is an undertone of unpredictability in many of Hesse’s late sculptures and her statements about them. It is important to note that during this period Hesse underwent surgery to remove her brain tumors. It is obvious that this had a deep impact on her art and that this element of her biography is relevant to an analysis of her work. However, this should not be the only means of understanding Hesse’s late sculptures. The works’ themes of precariousness and ephemerality also speak to a certain choreographic experimentation that can be traced back to the very beginning of her career.

Beginning in 1970 Rainer also continued to experiment with dance and performance as she joined another dance group called Grand Union. This group perpetuated the style and ideas of the Judson group such as the combination of improvised choreography and the incorporation of professional and pedestrian movement. Banes observes that “There was no focal climax, no particular order, no illusions, focus, presence, repetition, logic and structure…”\(^{74}\) Thus, similar to Hesse, it was just as important to Rainer that she never knew beforehand what the end of a piece was going to look like.

Both artists were very aware of the importance of play and experimentation, and believed that they were the keys to creating a transcendent art. Hesse’s proclamation that she wanted “not to know what the end was going to be” is evidence of her belief in the role of chance as form.\(^{75}\) Accordingly, the latter period of Hesse’s sculpture is characteristic for its precarious and indefinite structures, use of ephemeral material, and sense of impermanence. Similarly, Rainer’s choreography has a kin-like vulnerability; its structure is equivalently ephemeral in its lack of

\(^{73}\) As quoted in Briony Fer, *Studiowork*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 16.

\(^{74}\) Banes, “Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance,” 43.

\(^{75}\) Fer, *Studiowork*, 16.
order and definitive form. Banes describes the phenomenon of watching Rainer’s Grand Union performances: “The performances ebbed and flowed, flickered and changed, like life, life thought.” Thus, both mediums border on the horizon of visibility and invisibility as they integrate metaphysical or conceptual elements to their survival.

Creation often rises from destruction, a trope that holds true for many of the works discussed here. The concept of nothingness is present in both artists’ ideologies and works: They felt that they could create the most transcendent works within moments of absurdity, banality, and stillness. Emptiness is at the core of Hesse’s sculpture *Accession II* (1968/1969) [Figures 23 and 24]. It is filled with duplicities: it is hollow and infinite, hard and soft, as well as insular and exterior, depending on one’s perspective. The viewer must visually navigate these borders as he or she participates in both a visceral and esoteric experience. At first, the piece looks like a typical Minimalist sculpture; the industrial and streamlined metal cube pronounces its definite and mathematical form from the outside. It perpetuates unity, consistency, and the idea of *something* - the object itself. However, once the viewer reaches the interior of the sculpture, the sturdy logical structure of the cube begins to decompose into chaos. Hundreds of rows of nails which appear stable and ordered on the outside, conversely twist and turn in varying angles forming a non-geometric sea of unruly shapes and hollow nothingness.

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76 Banes, 48.
77 Nothingness is an idea that appears in both of their works and may have been informed by the type of Minimalist nihilism popular at the time, as well as the rise of Conceptual Art. In 1962, Ad Reinhardt (American painter, 1913-1967) famously wrote, “Art-as-art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art.” This remark is followed by a series of nihilistic statements in his essay “Art as Art” (1962) and arguably defined Minimalism and its denouncement of art’s incorporation of the political or social aspects of life. Ad Reinhardt, “Art as Art” as it appears in Harrison and Wood’s, *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, 2003, 821.
Another important piece of writing during this time was Sol LeWitt’s (American Conceptual artist, b.1928) “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art.” Although the idea of conceptualism emerged as early as the Fluxus movement, LeWitt’s ideas cemented the notion that art could be an idea itself. Hesse and Rainer’s works evoke both Reinhardt’s and LeWitt’s modes of thinking in different ways. Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 10, (Summer: 1967), 79-83.
Hesse’s juxtaposition of occupied and empty space within this piece enables its ability to move away from prescribed or premeditated interpretations. The contrast between the ordered exterior of the cube versus the unsystematic and unruly interior may also comment upon a certain hybridity of masculine and feminine qualities. The outer cube may be read as the systematic grid typical of Minimalism. Yet the interior forest of mangled nails speaks to a sense of difference and otherness. In many ways this is reminiscent of the use of chance and improvisation that Rainer used in her performances. She desired forms that the audience would not expect. For example, a sequence that would be performed on stage left would be contrasted by the sequence done by the next sequence on stage right. Furthermore, modules that would begin with an orderly sequence would then erupt into spontaneity. The contrasting of order and disorder through the presentation of nothingness adds another element of hybridity to both of their works. Works become simultaneously still and moving, present and absent, visible and invisible. These differences paired together suggest a chimera-like body, absent of gender binaries such as interiority and exteriority, passivity and activity.

As previously mentioned, Beauvoir’s theory of transcendence and immanence outline many of the gender binaries still very relevant in the 1960s. It is apparent that Hesse’s reading of this text remained integral to her work while creating her late sculptures. Beauvoir writes, “The young girl throws herself into things with ardor, because she is not yet deprived of her transcendence; and the fact that she accomplishes nothing, that she is nothing, will make her impulses only the more passionate. Empty and unlimited, she seeks from within her nothingness to attain All.” Here, Beauvoir presents nothingness as an attainment of metaphysical transcendence. She explains in this chapter “The Formative Years: The Young Girl,” that a younger woman is actually granted more opportunities because she is unscarred from all the

78 Beauvoir, 362.
burdens placed upon older women. These oppressions ultimately drive women to a state of immanence and intellectual stagnation.\(^7^9\) Thus, in many moments of Hesse’s sculpture, including *Accession II*, its mobility comes from reaching towards the substance of the infinite: the vastness of nothing and emptiness. Often, the nihilistic rejection of systems offers an ability to create new truths. Although Minimalism embraced this type of Nihilism, its response was to create a system of sterility and homogeneity. The type of nothingness characterized in Hesse’s sculptures is contingent upon otherness and the meeting place of the unseen and the unknown. Hesse presents an alternative to the Minimalist perspective on Nihilism and offers an alternate view. Since her work hinges upon the unknown, this type of nothingness is akin to that of a dance performance, in which one small change alters an entire course of motion.

One of Hesse’s closest friends, the artist Mel Bochner (American Conceptual artist, b.1940), also comments on these binaries and her use of nothingness as a creation of the infinite. In an interview with scholar Joan Simon, Bochner references Hesse’s statement that she believed her work to be “Ordered, yet not ordered. Chaos structured as non-chaos.”\(^8^0\) Bochner then makes the analogy between Hesse’s sculptures such as *Untitled (Rope Piece)* (1970) to the scientific study of string theory and chaos theory. Bochner tells Simon that “You could call those last pieces Hesse’s own string theory. She said many times she wanted to make an artwork that was ‘almost nothing.’ And, of course, that’s how physicists describe ‘string space,’ in exactly those terms.”\(^8^1\) These scientific theories introduce the premise that even the most chaotic algorithms and sequences will eventually begin to develop an order. Furthermore, one tiny change can unleash a whole series of events that is determinable yet unpredictable.

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\(^7^9\) Ibid.

\(^8^0\) Mel Bochner, *Eva Hesse*, 40.

\(^8^1\) Ibid.
Indeed, one may see the perpetual permutations by means of invisible motion and difference in *Untitled (Rope Piece)* (1969-1970) [Figures 25-27] as it is reinstalled throughout the years in different spaces and formations. This allows for infinite variation that is invisible or impossible to predict. Even though there are some basic constants, a tiny change or movement of one rope will alter the entire projection and aesthetic of the piece. For example, one needs only to look at the differences in installation practices of the pieces at the Whitney from their first installation in 1970 until today. The changes occur in almost every aspect, including width, depth, height, and shadow. Bochner’s comparison of string theory to Hesse’s sculptures is most apparent in *Untitled (Rope Piece)*, as each piece of latex rope dangles from the ceiling in a unique pattern. Once again, the idea of multiplicity and difference, rather than unity, dominates the work. Through its potential to transform over time, the piece becomes both material and conceptual, as the fluxing ropes resemble interchangeable bodies in a dance of time and space.

The idea of perpetual construction and deconstruction is apparent in Rainer’s “Composite” series performed at Connecticut College in the late 1960s, and is also very evocative of Hesse’s *Untitled (Rope Piece)*. Although the image of *Connecticut Rehearsal* (1969) [Figure 28] is a still from a film, once can sense the chaotic energy of the piece. Specifically, the aspects of the dance in which the dancers spontaneously use body weight, chance, and spontaneous reactions to each other’s movements to create a fragility and ephemerality most similar to Hesse’s sculpture (which was being shown at the Whitney during the same year as Rainer’s dance.) As seen in one repeating module of *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, the dancers all stand in a circle with some facing each other and others have their backs turned. They push their bodies into one another, forcing some to fall and crumple onto the ground. They then all grab each other’s arms.

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from various positions and fight to pull themselves up as a group. While some are able to rise, others are dragged back to the ground. In another sequence, entitled “Group Hoist,” dancers join hands once again attempting to swing one member up into the air, causing a chain reaction of movement within the circle of bodies. [Figure 29]. The movement uncannily resembles those pieces of dangling rope in *Untitled (Rope Piece)* where some touch the ground, while others are hoisted into the air. Both of these pieces are about art that is on the brink of disappearance, both physically and conceptually. Just as the placement of one rope at a varying angle alters the entire grouping of ropes, the positioning of one dancer’s body may change the entire outcome of the rest of the dance.

Just as Hesse’s work used the idea of nothingness as means of artistic freedom, her late sculpture also used its own threat of dissipation in order to gain alternative perspectives. In Mark Godfrey’s essay, “A String of Nots,” he describes Hesse’s sculpture *Right After* (1969) [Figure 30] as “thin and light, on the brink of disappearing.” In this piece, the strings are thinner than in *Untitled (Rope Piece)*. Its sleekness gives it a weightlessness, almost to the point of near levitation. It hovers in between the gallery floor and ceiling like a translucent web. From a distance it looks as though it could be almost two-dimensional. However, if one were to walk underneath it, its three-dimensional complexity explodes into limitless possibilities. As Godfrey points out, its mixed state of presence and invisibility pushes forth its ability to transform without actually physically moving.

It is also interesting to further analyze Godfrey’s essay title: “A String of Nots.” His play on words, replacing “Knots” for “Nots,” is whimsical, yet it is also an insightful perspective on Hesse’s artistic ideology. In a 1968 exhibition statement Hesse proclaimed:

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I wanted to get to the non-art, non connotive, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non, nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort.
from a total other reference point…
that vision or concept will come through total risk, freedom, discipline.
I will do it
It’s not the new, it is yet no known, thought, seen, touched but really what is not
And that is.  

Although Hesse’s nihilistic proclamation dismisses the presence of anthropomorphism in her art, her embracement of a “new vision” articulates works that must always be wandering though a field of intersections – simultaneously everything and nothing, and what is and what is not. This entails works that are constantly in states of betweenness, transformation, and movement. This statement by Hesse is evidence of her search for alternative systems and multiple identities. Thus, by comparing her work to dance one of these intersections is illuminated.

In 1965 Yvonne Rainer wrote the “No Manifesto” as her proclamation for her unique style and ideology of dance:

No to spectacle.
No to virtuosity.
No to transformations and magic and make-believe.
No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.
No to the heroic.
No to the anti-heroic.
No to trash imagery.
No to involvement of performer or spectator.
No to style.
No to camp.
No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.
No to eccentricity.
No to moving or being moved.  

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84 As quoted in De Zegher, “Drawing as Binding/Bandage/Bondage,” in Eva Hesse Drawing. 105.
Although there are some contradictions in this statement, Rainer also wanted to attain the essence of “nothingness.” Like Hesse, Rainer’s disavowal of her medium was actually a call for incorporating alternative ways of seeing in dance, such as improvisational performance and bodily movement that imitated and interacted with sculptural objects.\textsuperscript{86}

It is apparent that Hesse was also very interested in interconnecting bodily form and sculptural form comparable to Rainer’s dances. When Cindy Nemser asked Hesse what she would call her sculpture she replied, “a lot of it could be called nothing - a thing or an object or any word you want to give it.”\textsuperscript{87} Hesse mentions this directly after speaking about \textit{Contingent} (1969), a work in which microscopic motion and change alter the form of hanging thin sheets made of fiberglass, latex, and cheesecloth. As seen in \textbf{Figure 31}, the sheets themselves are translucent and react to the invisible and ephemeral forces that create movement from its surroundings. Nothingness is at the very core of \textit{Contingent} and echoes the artist’s declaration that “it is not? known, thought, seen, touched but really what is not and that is.” The work’s interchanging notion of visibility and invisibility is also put into question, as moving and constantly shifting audience bodies and other ephemera alters its course of motion and appearance. However, even as one achieves moments of transcendence while looking at such works, its borders of truth are constantly being altered and navigated. This is very similar to Rainer’s dancers reacting to each other’s movements through a call and response pattern. The cheesecloth sheets react to the energy in the room, just like bodies moving towards and away from each other in an empty space.

Hesse’s sculptures are often only understood though their various parts. Of course one must see the object, however, one must also see the non-object - the void space, which comprises


the object’s form. One must comprehend the negative space and its difference in addition to the occupied expanses in order to fully understand the pieces. Similar to dance, it is made of parts, where one does not understand the whole until the end of the performance. Both mediums, as understood by Hesse, incorporate moments of rest, stillness, and nothingness. It is through these intersections, shared by both sculpture and dance, where the she found the necessary space to express her ‘otherness,’ incorporating her distinct voice of feminine difference.

**Studio Works**

Rainer and Hesse both blurred the lines between studio and performance (and in Hesse’s case, exhibition). Towards the end of the 1960s Rainer created her series of “Composite Pieces” which blurred the lines between rehearsal space and stage space. These dance pieces remain unfinished, imperfect, and ambiguous and are reminiscent of Hesse’s “Studioworks” or “test pieces,” created in her Canal Street studio in the late 1960s. This series of Hesse’s work was first brought to public attention by Briony Fer’s 2009 book and exhibition *Eva Hesse: Studiowork*. Many of the pieces are prototypes and test pieces for her larger sculptures and some are individual works in themselves. Both Hesse’s studio works and Rainer’s composite choreographies each achieve an ultimate form of transcendence as they combine the two-fold, and often separate, aspects of dance: process versus presentation.

During the years of 1968-1970, Rainer’s choreography became concerned with what she called “Performance Demonstration.” She explains: “Between 1968 and 1970 my work moved along in overlapping stages. I devised a format variously called ‘Performance Demonstration,’ or ‘Performance Fractions,’ or ‘Composite,’ which would include fragments from old work plus slides, sound, and whatever I was engaged in.” The best surviving documentation of this is in a film by Michael Fajan, which captures the rehearsals of *Continuous Project Altered Daily* in
1969 at the Connecticut College American Dance Festival. The rehearsal itself is broken into segments: some of the rehearsal is based on instruction and direction and other parts are completely improvised and infused with playfulness and eruptions of laughter. Although the film is silent, there is a lot of dialogue between Rainer and the other dancers. The conversations are clearly about the actions and movements occurring within the rehearsal and seem integral to the group process. It is also important to note that the conversational aspect of the dance is not eliminated in its performance version. Although it is probably not exactly the same dialogue, its inclusion infers the critical importance of the practice and rehearsal elements in its final variation.

With the help of the Eva Hesse Estate and Hesse’s close friend Sol LeWit, art historian Briony Fer was able to reveal the collection of studio works and test pieces left in the artist’s studio to the public for the first time in 2009. Fer’s book and exhibition, *Eva Hesse: Studiowork*, questions the importance and meaning of such objects in relation to her finished sculpture. One of the key findings in this collection of studio experiments is the importance of process and transformation in Hesse’s practices and intentions. Fer writes: “These studioworks are incredibly provisional and raw, so much so that they seem to go back to the beginning in some way – not only their own, as in showing the process of making a shape – but the beginning of making itself. This is not necessarily about making *something* particular, but just about making *some thing*.”

Hesse’s affinity for making non-art does seem to incite visions of a primordial space in which the aesthetics of absence is the most pervasive. Both Rainer and Hesse’s desire to integrate the studio practice into their processes also reveal a stance against stagnation and the Minimalist tendency to de-contextualize object from creator. Furthermore, by including process as a key element to the work, the piece must constantly transform and reinvent itself through time.

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Hesse’s studio works and Rainer’s composite works constant state of becoming imbues them with an ephemeral quality. For example, the image from Hesse’s studio in Figure 32 shows an object that looks like an envelope with pins that hold it together. However the pins merely puncture the surface of the object, and seem as though they could fall off at any instant and just leave traces of small holes (most reminiscent of the temporal pinhole markings in the four corners of the *Mechanical Drawings*). Fer writes: “The pins suggest a temporary fixing as if this is a stage in the working of something that is still coming into being as an object.”\(^{89}\) Similarly, Rainer uses the theatrical technique of “marking” in Continuous Project Altered Daily, a process in which performers do half-gestures and movements for the purpose of memorization and rehearsal and which unconventionally appear in the finished product. However, the marking gestures feel like distant remnants and impermanent fixtures.

Fer argues that Hesse’s test pieces visualize the difference between *something* and *some thing*.\(^{90}\) Rainer also worked through similar concepts in her composite pieces as she juxtaposed moments that fluctuated between activation and rest, making the differences between *nothing* and *something* ambiguous. One may see this trajectory of movement in snapshots and video stills from both performances and rehearsals of Continuous Project Altered Daily. By comparing Figures 33 and 34, it is clear that both artists were interested in using void spaces as form for similar effects. Figure 33 shows two dancers crumpled on the floor, resting and recovering from the moment before. Figure 34 depicts a decayed looking scrap of latex. However when viewing other versions in the series, it is clear that it comes from a test piece for a cylinder for Repetition Nineteen I that has collapsed onto itself. Both images show moments of *nothing* becoming *something*. Thus, the inherent qualities of invisible transformation and moments of transition in

\(^{89}\) Fer, *Eve Hesse: Studiowork*, 27.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
dance were so vital to both artists. Furthermore, the moments of multiplicity and mutation in Hesse’s sculpture that were influenced by dance enabled her to express her multifarious artistic identity, which aimed to surpass the gender binaries which plagued the artistic community at the time.
Conclusion

Resurgence

Even though Hesse’s career and life ended at the young age of 34, her work endures. Although her sculptures are physically stationary objects, a conceptual element of movement is at their core, both as they were first created in Hesse’s studio, as well as in their installations today. Through Hesse’s fateful proximity and participation in the Fluxus festivals of the early 1960s, she was exposed to the intersections of sculpture and dance, which undeniably formed Hesses early artistic identity and gave her a sense of artistic freedom.

Seeing movement in Hesse’s sculptures is key to understanding her as an artist. She was always looking for the new, the changing, and ephemeral qualities in her sculpture, to push past stagnancy in her art and herself. The idea of repetition, a movement of some sort, has been discussed as a common theme in both Hesse’s sculptures and Rainer’s choreography. However, these qualities may also be understood as a kind of resurgence rather than repetition. Just as the repeating movements and forms in Rainer and Hesse’s work vary slightly each time they are presented, the viewer is also slightly changed each different performance both physically and personally. There are few works of art that change along with their viewer in such personal ways. Each time one encounters Hesse’s Untitled (Rope Piece) it is changed and therefore, one is changed as well by the same factors of moving through time and space. The material slowly erodes (as Hesse knew it would) and becomes more discolored each time it is redisplayed, as does the viewer’s own body which changes as well with age. Similar to a performance or dance, this experience is singular and can never be recreated.

Experience and individual identity were integral to both Hesse and Rainer. In many ways both of their works are intrinsically tied to memory. Both the sculptures and performances are in a constant state of movement and adaptation. Thus, the moment one
looks at either performance or sculpture, it instantaneously becomes a memory. In fact one may better understand both artists works by understanding the idea of their works affinity for resurgence. Scholars must work to newly understand Hesse’s works as our perceptions change and these objects change with time.

It is evident that memory and body were integral to both artists’ artistic process. One of the most poignant examples of this is a letter written by Rainer to Hesse dated May 24th 1969, a rare primary source of communication between the two artists. In the letter, Rainer congratulates Hesse on the opening of the Whitney exhibition in which she was featured, Anti-Illusion. She also gives her condolences for her several bouts of illness and recent diagnosis of brain cancer. She writes:

You see – just knowing a little about what you have suffered brings my own experience back in a terribly real and fresh way. Which is not really so terrible; one must re-experience these things again & again in ones life in order to come to terms with them. I have come to accept the fact of that resurgence of feeling and memory that sometimes happens unexpectedly – and yield to it.91

Here, Rainer is referring to her own experience of dealing with illness. However, I also see a connection between the resurgence of personal memory in both artists’ works. As Hesse’s pieces transform through reinstallation and reinterpretation over the years, there is a similar type of resurging experience of memory. Similarly, Rainer’s performances are reinterpreted and live again through new productions. When viewers re-experience Hesse’s pieces, the idea of their own multiplicity and difference may become clearer. One’s self is never whole or complete at any given moment in time. Furthermore, female identity must not be relocated to narrow binaries, but must strive for the conjoining of masculine and feminine realms, embracing difference and otherness. Correspondingly, the intertwining ropes of

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91 Yvonne Rainer to Eva Hesse, May 24, 1977.52.45.195A-B, 1969, Eva Hesse Archives, Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH.
*Untitled (Rope Piece)* converge in new ways, never truly repeating. It is through this conceptual rebirth of Hesse’s sculpture that the work may find infinite reincarnations of itself.
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Figure 1: Eva Hesse, *Sculpture Dance*, 1962, (Also recreated at the Yam Festival in 1963). Copyright Charles Ginnever, 2007.

Figure 2. Eva Hesse, *Metronomic Irregularity I*, 1966, Painted wood, Sculp-Metal, and cotton-covered wire, 12 x 18 x 2 in. with cords (30.5 x 45.7 x 5.1 cm), Estate of Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, New York.
Figure 3. George Brecht, Robert Watts, *Yam Festival Calendar*, Green and blue on white paper; printed both sides; a calendar of events for Yam Festival, May 1-31, 1963. Folded in half, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.
Figure 4. Eva Hesse, Dancing in the group version of *Sculpture Dance*, film still from Film Makers Cooperative, *What’s Happening*, Directed by Bud Wirschafter, New York, 1963
Figure 5. Charles Ginnever, *Sculpture Dance*, 1962. © Copyright Charles Ginnever 2007

Figure 6. Tom Doyle, *Sculpture Dance*, 1962. © Copyright Charles Ginnever 2007
Figure 7. Group Version of *Sculpture Dance* (recreated at the Yam Festival), 1962. © Copyright Charles Ginnever 2007.

Figure 8. Eva Hesse, Dancing in her group version of *Sculpture Dance*, film still from Film Makers Cooperative, *What’s Happening*, Directed by Bud Wirschafter, New York, 1963
Figure 9. Photograph by Peter Moore, Yvonne Rainer performing at George Segal’s farm, N.J as part of the Yam Festival, 1963, The New York Public Library Iconography File Dance Collection.
Figure 11. all images: Eve Hesse, *no title*, 1965, Ink on paper, 8 ¼ x 11 5/8 in. (21 x 29.5 cm)

Left to right, top to bottom:

(i) The estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zurich London

(ii) The Estate of Eva Hesse, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Zurich London

(iii) Private Collection

(iv) Private Collection, Seoul, Korea

(v) Private Collection, Seoul, Korea

(vi) Private Collection, Seoul Korea

Figure 12. Tom Doyle, Sculpture from Scheidt Family Home Exhibition 1965, film still from *Tom Doyle and Eva Hesse: A Silent Movie* by Werner Nikes, 1965.
Figure 14. Eva Hesse, Diary: Eva Hesse-Doyle Kettwig 1964-1965, Black ink on ruled paper 8 ¼ x 5 7/8 in, 1977.52.28. Allen Memorial Art Museum, Eva Hesse Archives, Oberlin College, Ohio. © The Estate of Eva Hesse.
Figure 15. Yvonne Rainer, Score for “Trio B, Running” from *The Mind Is a Muscle* (1966-68), Graphite and ink on paper, The Getty Research Institute. 
http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/rainer

Figure 17. Yvonne Rainer work shopping Trio A at Dancers Project Platform, 2015. Dancespace Project http://www.danspaceproject.org/tag/yvonne-rainer/
Figure 18. Eva Hesse, *Expanded Expansion*, 1969, Fiberglass, polyester resin, latex and cheesecloth, 10 feet 2 inches x 25 feet (309.9 x 762 cm) overall, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.
Figure 19. Eva Hesse, *Area*, 1968, Latex and filler on wire mesh with wire and metal grommets, Dimensions installed: 53 x 132 x 36 in. (134.6 x 335.5 x 91.4 cm) Collection of the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University
Figure 20. Eva Hesse, *Repetition Nineteen III*, 1968, fiberglass and polyester resin, nineteen units, Each 19 to 20 1/4" (48 to 51 cm) x 11 to 12 3/4" (27.8 to 32.2 cm) in diameter, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.
Figure 21. Eva Hesse, *Schema*, 1967, Latex, 42 x 42 inches (106.7 x 106.7 cm) Each (144 individual pieces): 1 3/8 x 2 1/2 inches (3.5 x 6.4 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA.
Figure 23. Eva Hesse, *Accession II*, 1968, galvanized steel and vinyl, 30 3/4 x 30 3/4 x 30 3/4 in. 78.1 x 78.1 x 78.1 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI.
Figure 24. Detail of the interior of Eva Hesse, *Accession II*, galvanized steel and vinyl, 1968/1969.


Figure 30. Eva Hesse, *Right After*, 1969, Fiberglass, approximately: 5 × 18 × 4 ft (152.39 × 548.61 × 121.91 cm), Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI.
Figure 31. Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969, fiberglass and latex on cheesecloth, 8 units each 9 ½ - 11 x 3-4’ The Estate of Eva Hesse, Hauser & Wirth Zurich.
Figure 32. Eva Hesse, S-124, 1968, latex, metal-screen, metal. The Estate of Eva Hesse, Hauser & Wirth, London.

Figure 34. Eva Hesse, S 94 (test piece), 1967, latex 1 x 2.5 x 7.75 inches. University of California, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA.
May 24, 1969

Dear Eva:

I didn't know until the night of the Whitney opening about your recent ordeal. I have been very upset both for you and for my not having known about it. I went out of town for 2 days intending to phone and come see you when I came back. Now I hesitate to do so, as I am afraid that my empathy will upset you too much right now. You see - just knowing a little about what you have suffered brings my own experience back in a terribly real and fresh way. Which is not really so terrible; one must re-experience these things again & again in one's life in order to come to terms with them. I have come to accept the fact of that resurgence of feeling and memory that sometimes happens unexpectedly - and yield to it. My period of illness more and more becomes a familiar, even necessary, part of my life, I don't regret it. My living encompasses periodic fear of its return.

These are strange charged thoughts to lay on you at this time. But having expressed them at a distance, I hope to be lighter when we meet, relieved of what may seem like bathetic baggage. I would be very pleased to visit if you would like it too. Meanwhile take it easy and don't fight your convalescence. The healing of the spirit takes longer than the healing of the body. Advice from an old pro.

Love,

Yvonne

Appendix 1.1  Rainer, Yvonne to Eva Hesse, May 24, 1969, 1977.52.45.195A-B, Eva Hesse Archives, Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH. © The Estate of Eva Hesse