

ROBERT
MORRIS

SEEING
AND
SPACE

Robert Morris Seeing and Space

April 3–June 27, 2025

Castelli

24 W 40

Sight/Unseen

Jeffrey Weiss

Watt’s room contained no information.

—Samuel Beckett

“The basement was my mirror of the uncanny.” So wrote Robert Morris in *TELEGRAM: THE RATIONED YEARS*, an autobiographical recollection of the artist’s early youth, published in 1998. He was speaking of the basement of his childhood home on Indiana Street in Kansas City, Missouri. This was a place of looming objects and “ambivalent spaces”—a furnace, a coal bin, and an “angled storm cellar door forming a sloping compressed space that I sometimes wedged into.” The basement was “remote and separate,” a space of “chthonic darkness.”¹

Morris’s analogy of basement to mirror in the context of the uncanny is central to a thematic of vision and psyche that permeates his practice of the 1970s. The present exhibition addresses this relation by juxtaposing two forms of the artist’s work: a single-room installation with mirrors called *Untitled (Walk Around)*, which was first shown in 1975 at the Galleria D’Alessandro-Ferranti, Rome^[FIG. 1] and later included in five exhibitions in the United States and Germany, and a selection of sheets from the first two sets of a drawing series Morris referred to as *Blind Time*

^[FIG. 2]. In this context, the installation and the drawings form a strategic dyad. First, they constitute an opposition of actual to reflected space: the physical space of drawing and the virtual space of mirror reflection. Second, they signify two opposing forms of seeing: obstructed vision versus the perceptual infinity of the *mise en abyme*.

During the early seventies, Morris’s practice underwent a pronounced shift. In the sixties, he had produced “large-form” objects to be engaged by a mobile observer.^[FIG. 3] Materials and methods of fabrication were drawn from industry and light manufacture. Morris’s large objects

in painted plywood and fiberglass were initially made by the artist and eventually produced by professional shops, always according to what he called non-fine art, “utilitarian” methods of making.² Geometric in form and blank in appearance, they were scaled to the body: bulky volumes that deliberately interfere with passage through the room.³ Related works include open steel and raw fiberglass boxes arranged in grids and single-object configurations of large metal beams. Still others were made of sheets of thick industrial felt cut, stacked, tangled, draped, or folded and suspended from the wall—heavy but soft objects that respond to gravity. Permutation, modular repetition, and gravitational pull were chief principles through which Morris avoided habits of abstract

compositional form. All Morris’s works of the sixties were shown without pedestals, platforms, or barriers—directly on the floor and fully exposed to the actual space of the room.

By the early seventies, Morris became concerned less with the autonomous object than with works that structure perceptual experience as an act of physical orientation. He produced four groups of work of this kind. In the *Blind Time* drawings (which would occupy several series over four decades), Morris drew with his eyes shut: using bare hands,



FIG. 1: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Walk Around)*, 1975, 4 mirrors in aluminum frames, each: 60 × 60 inches; 8 steel frames, each: 36 × 36 3/8 inches. *Robert Morris*, Galleria D’Alessandro-Ferranti, Rome, November 1975



FIG. 2: Robert Morris, *Blind Time*, 1973. Powdered graphite and pencil on paper; 35 × 46 inches. Princeton University Art Museum/Princeton/New Jersey/USA



FIG. 3: Robert Morris, Green Gallery, New York, December 1964–January 1965

he applied powdered graphite and other mediums mixed with plate oil to sheets of paper that, laid out on a table, were large enough to contain the breadth of his reach. The works follow instructions, or “protocols,” which are inscribed on the sheet along with an estimated time of execution. With the works called *Labyrinths* Morris created built structures in wood based on designs dating back to the antique, through which one is to walk—to lose and find one’s way [FIG. 4]. As has been remarked in literature on the artist, a separate but related set of drawings consists of schematic axonometric images of labyrinthine corridors and other walled spaces that Morris referred to with a series title, *In the Realm of the Carceral* [FIG. 5]. (Titles of individual drawings make explicit reference to prisons and panopticons.) The drawings are said to have been motivated by the artist’s visit to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, to see a 1971 exhibition of drawings and etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, which included fantastical images of imaginary prison architecture—a sequence called *Carceri d’invenzioni*.⁴ Finally, Morris produced single-room installations with mirrors arranged in a variety of configurations. The mirrors reflect both the beholder and one another, deploying strict arrangements of virtual space within the actual space of the room.

Morris accounted for his work’s new terms in writings and interviews. In 1971, prior to the full emergence of any of the four groups—*Blind Time* drawings, *Labyrinths*, *Carceral* drawings, and installations with mirrors—Morris described the emerging turn in a letter to the curator Michael Compton on the eve of an exhibition of Morris’s work at the Tate Gallery, London [FIG. 6]. There Morris spoke of his large objects, with which visitors were invited to interact: “The progression [in his work] is from the manipulation of objects to constructions which adjust to the body’s presence, to situations where the body itself is manipulated. I want to provide a situation where people can become more aware of themselves and their own experience rather than more aware of some version of my experience.”⁵ This formulation is deceptively simple: it distinguishes between the artist and his audience, but the distinction deepens rather than lessens the ambiguous role of Morris as initial rather than chief subject.

Shortly after the interview, two strains of writing by Morris emerged, one critical, the other autobiographical. The first tendency concerns the experience of the self within the context of the phenomenology of space. In his 1975 essay “Aligned with Nazca” Morris wrote of “spaces of the self” in recent art, with specific reference to Land art and to installations that occupy entire rooms. The essay was composed by Morris in response to his visit to the Nazca Desert in Peru, celebrated for ancient pictographs that lie across the desert floor. The drawings are vast linear images: depictions of human figures, animals, and plants, as well as abstract geometric shapes. Morris went to walk among them—to see them not from overhead, as they had been in published photographs taken from a small plane, but from on the



FIG. 4: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Labyrinth)*, 1974, painted plywood and Masonite, 96 × 360 inches diameter. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Panza Collection

Nazca” Morris wrote of “spaces of the self” in recent art, with specific reference to Land art and to installations that occupy entire rooms. The essay was composed by Morris in response to his visit to the Nazca Desert in Peru, celebrated for ancient pictographs that lie across the desert floor. The drawings are vast linear images: depictions of human figures, animals, and plants, as well as abstract geometric shapes. Morris went to walk among them—to see them not from overhead, as they had been in published photographs taken from a small plane, but from on the



FIG. 5: Robert Morris, *In the Realm of the Carceral - Security Walls*, 1978, ink on paper mounted on board, 33 1/8 × 44 inches

ground, where they reveal themselves to be long, narrow paths swept clean of top soil and stones. Morris saw that viewing them this way, as mere lines, required one to look up and out, where the field of vision includes the level horizon. From his experience at Nazca, Morris extrapolated lessons about aspects of recent artmaking (Mary Miss, Michael Asher, and Chris Burden, among other artists, are named). In contrast

to Minimal art, the new work, Morris wrote, “dispenses with systems and orders derived from notations whose home is flatness.” Instead, it ventures into “the irrationality of actual space,” where we as beholders are both subject and object—an encounter with “the self in relation to an enclosure and the expanse of the surrounding site.”⁶ The implication throughout the text is that Morris is also speaking of his own current work. He even goes so far as to cite the form of the labyrinth, which he calls a “metonym of the search for the self.”⁷

In his other crucial essay of this decade, “The Present Tense of Space,” Morris wrote of actual space in contrast to the space of memory, assigning to the experience of “real” space a temporal identity, that of the “ongoing immediate present”—“real space” experienced in “real time.” In the text, Morris’s chief object of scrutiny is the space of architecture, with examples both ancient and modern, from the Zapotec ball court in Oaxaca, Mexico to Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s colonnade at Saint Peter’s Square in Rome. “In perceiving an object,” he wrote, “one occupies a separate space—one’s own space.” In architecture, by contrast, “one’s own space is not separate but coexistent with what is perceived.” The narrative of “The Present Tense of Space” is lengthy and complex, but it is enough to say that, as with the Nazca essay, it posits historical conditions for the spatial coordinates of recent sculpture, here including the work of Alice Aycock, Robert Irwin, and Richard Serra: the move from a focus on the autonomous object of the 1960s to “the uses of distances and continuous deep spaces,” which the viewer can now be said to occupy or walk within and through.⁸

Morris’s concern with the experience of the self in actual space had a direct bearing on both the *Blind Time* drawings and the installations with mirrors. Yet, a decade later, the artist changed course when he turned in his writing to autobiography, with implications for the formation of his work. The first example of the new strain of writing was a 1989 essay for *Art in America*, “Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (or Interruptions).”⁹ This text was followed by *TELEGRAM*, which contains, as one critic has described, “memories, reflections, facts, and judgments.” (The book appeared in 1998, but it was



FIG. 6: Robert Morris: *Bodyspacemotionthings*, Tate Gallery, London, May 22–July 14, 1971

presaged by a lengthy, more plainly autobiographical essay, “Indiana Street,” composed, but not published, in 1993.¹⁰) Printed without punctuation and entirely in uppercase, it is something like “a telegram that the subject addresses to himself, an express missive that R MORRIS of Kansas City, Missouri, from the forties, sends to R MORRIS of New

York, New York, from 1998.”¹¹ As a work in and of itself, *TELEGRAM* is an experiment in the relation of meaning to the appearance of language on the printed page, with blocks of text that are at once declarative and confessional—public and private both. But that does not keep the text from functioning to disclose, through memory, urgent personal mythologies of actual space.

This returns us to the basement at Indiana Street. Students of Morris’s work will recognize images in this autobiographical (and, as the title of the 1989 essay makes clear, allegorical) account that seem intended to trace his work of the sixties and seventies back to his early experience, an American childhood of World War II: the “six-foot tall labyrinth” of bundled newspapers from which Morris and other children clipped news of the war; the “trestle tables in the basement assembly room for the grease and tinfoil collecting,” part of a wartime salvaging and recycling effort, which conjures *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969), an installation in which Morris, working each day for three weeks, deposited changing heaps of non-rigid materials—earth, clay, asbestos, water, and grease, as well as felt and thread waste—onto tables and across the floor of a room at the Castelli Warehouse in Manhattan; the “maze of shelves” at the local library, through which Morris recalls wandering, preferring the feel and smell of books to the consultation of the “card file,” the very object Morris would later transform into a work that he conceived while employed at the New York Public Library. Relaying that he and his friends produced a “column” of stacked wooden drawing boards in the high school storage room, Morris refers to the object’s “superiority” to Constantin Brancusi’s *Endless Column*, its “compact minimalism.”

But the basement on Indiana Street is singular. Described at length by Morris as being “more than the bottom floor—part of the house but a world apart foreign to the diurnal one above,” it was “full of ambivalent spaces and items”: the furnace, characterized in quasi-mythological terms; a coal bin; a workbench piled with rusty tools; the compressed area before the storm cellar door; and “half a dozen blackened and charred overhead joists.” The basement was, he wrote, a place of exile, an “unimaginable elsewhere confined to an inaccessible and forgotten space testing for the feel of the edge of panic.” Morris concludes, writing in unpunctuated, uppercase run-on prose: “In this basement zone from which the reign of the totalizing visual had been banished I turned porous to absence and felt its blind aggressivity spreading through and eroding the site of the self opening me to its flow—emptied of images I became vast with absence losing the self and recognizing it in becoming one with absence—the basement was my mirror of the uncanny.”

Taking Morris at his word, I want to claim that the artist’s portrayal of the basement represents a personal invocation of psyche and self in relation to seeing and space. His account implies that his early experience lies behind his aesthetic practice of the sixties and seventies, including the *Blind Time* series and the installations with mirrors, beginning with *Untitled (Walk Around)*. (Indeed, we might want to trace Morris’s first retrieval of childhood space to 1961, when he made *Untitled (Passageway)*, a long curving corridor that narrows to a point, lit only by bare light bulbs and faintly animated by the recorded sound of a beating heart.) Whether or not it was an exaggerated conceit, the autobiographical turn in Morris’s writing was not merely nostalgic; it was a critical device through which he identified aspects of his early practice with the psychopathology of space.

The key term, invoked by Morris, is *uncanny*. There can be no question, as various authors have claimed, that one model for Morris’s pursuit of confined spaces, above all the labyrinth and the prison, is the writing of Michel Foucault. This argument is a reference to Foucault’s book *Discipline and Punish* (1975), a theorized history of the eighteenth-century invention of the modern prison, one of many institutions—including schools, factories, and hospitals—that, according to the philosopher, compose an industrial-era sociopolitical regime of surveillance, discipline, physical coercion, subjugation, and control. In his politics of the sixties and seventies, Morris often revealed himself to be politically antiauthoritarian. As Maurice Berger, among others, has amply demonstrated, given the thematic of his practice at the time, the Foucauldian model is at stake in a variety of works, including, but not limited to, the figure of the labyrinth and the prison.¹² But, in so far as Morris’s practice was never a consistent expression of ideological critique, modalities of seeing and space in his work of the era raise a separate, less ideologically programmatic set of questions.

The *Blind Time* drawings and the mirror installations share a group of distinct but related concerns regarding vision and the self. This is underscored by Morris’s concise, albeit figural, conflation of actual and reflected space in the context of the uncanny, which makes the alternative to Foucault, if one is needed, Sigmund Freud. Specifically, I am speaking of the spatial and architectural uncanny. The phenomenon, which has been addressed at length by Anthony Vidler, predates Freud but was brought to theoretical life in Freud’s essay “Das Unheimliche” (1919), which concerns the “unhomely” as a condition through which familiar things become unfamiliar. In the essay, Freud drew from an established etymological study of the words “heimlich” and “unheimlich” to emphasize that the two terms, apparent opposites, eventually acquired the same meaning: that which is domestically familiar is also that which

is private or concealed—unconscious, hidden, and thereby possibly unsafe. The topic of the architectural uncanny is vast, but I mean to stress architecture as a seat of “spatial estrangement,” in Vidler’s words, with reference to both the city overall and, within it, the domicile or house. Regarding space as a projection of the subject’s psyche, the early modern city was diagnosed, so to speak, as a site of agoraphobia, a syndrome identified with the open spaces associated with urban reform during the late nineteenth century. Conversely, claustrophobia was endemic to the house: “The house, haunted or not, pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror.”¹³

We need not claim for Morris a close interest in the history of the uncanny to acknowledge that his recourse to early domestic, or “homely,” spatial mem-

ories corresponds to an established historical narrative of the uncanny as a form of disorientation in relation to built space—what Vidler, paraphrasing Freud, called a “phobic milieu.”¹⁴ Indeed, one key pre-Freudian site of the architectural uncanny was the Piranesi prison, which, during the nineteenth century, had inspired various hallucinatory accounts of spatial delirium [FIG. 7]. As Vidler writes, such texts, by Thomas de Quincey and Charles Nodier, among others, describe Piranesi’s imaginary prison interiors as labyrinthine enclosures of infinite extension, “abyssal repetitions,” in the case of De Quincey—who, in *Confessions of*



FIG. 7: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Gothic Arch, from “Carceri d’invenzione” (Imaginary Prisons)*, 1749–50, etching, engraving; Sulphur tint or open bite, burnishing; first state of six Robison; plate L 16 1/4 × 21 7/16 inches; sheet: 19 7/16 × 25 1/8 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1937



FIG. 8: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Walk Around)*, 1975, 4 mirrors in aluminum frames, each: 60 x 60 inches; 8 steel frames, each: 36 x 36 x 3/8 inches, *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York, January 15 – May 1, 1994



FIG. 9: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Mirror Cubes)*, 1965/2018, mirrors and wood; 4 units each, each: 24 x 24 x 24 inches



FIG. 10: Robert Morris, *Mirror*, 1969, 16 mm black and white film

an *English Opium Eater*, a memoir, imagined Piranesi himself ascending the prison's vertiginous flights of stairs—"of the imaginary void."¹⁵

Together the mirror installations and the *Blind Time* drawings establish two extremes of seeing: respectively, seeing multiplied and seeing obscured. When *Walk Around* was exhibited at Ohio State University in 1976, Morris explained that the installation could be adapted to differently shaped rooms. The mirrors and frames are suspended by cables from the ceiling, independent of the existing walls. So long as the four mirrors face one another respectively across the width and length of the defined area

and correct angles of incidence are maintained for the frames, the configuration forms its own contained space.¹⁶ Indeed, images of the five separate installations of *Walk Around* mounted between 1975 and 1995 show that the work displayed in a striking variety of settings [FIG. 8], including rooms that are irregular in shape or contain niches and dividing walls. (See *Exhibition History* in this volume.)

To move through the work is to "walk around," pausing at various locations within the perimeter. In doing so one sees reflections of oneself both from the front and, strikingly, from behind, a distant image contained within the reflected concentricity (or, better, coaxiality—like a long narrowing tunnel) of empty squares. As beholding subject I am a vanishing point. A turn of the head then affords a vision of the space of the room as multiplied or rearranged. Moving through the work, additional glimpses of oneself—and/or of others, if more than one person is present—appear, seen from both close-up and far away. In

subsequent mirror installations Morris stood the mirrors on the floor; suspending the mirrors and frames in *Walk Around* makes them appear to float, which lends an unnerving weightlessness to certain views.

As is often noted, and discussed at length in an essay by Caroline Jones,¹⁷ Morris's use of the mirror predates the installations of the 1970s. It began with *Pharmacy* (1962), an early sculpture, and achieved a simple but stunning deployment in *Mirrored Cubes* (1965) [FIG. 9], a set of four mirror-faced cubes arranged on the floor as a precise grid. In this work virtual space defeats the literalism of the kind of Minimalist object Morris was otherwise producing at the time. The four cubes reflect one another as well as the walls, ceiling, and floor of the room. Only several feet high (various versions of the work differ slightly in size), they invite inspection but defeat expectation: eerily, it is difficult—without standing close to and leaning over the cubes—to find a reflection of oneself. So too is this common function of a mirror—a plane at/into which

we look to see ourselves—conspicuously absent from Morris's short film *Mirror* (1969), in which the artist moves through a snowy field holding a mirror that reflects both the landscape and, as Morris backs away, sharp flashes of sun [FIG. 10]. (A cameraman and an accomplice, dancer Simone Forti, briefly appear.)



FIG. 11: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Williams Mirrors)*, 1976–77, 12 mirrors mounted on steel frames, each: 7 x 8 feet. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts



FIG. 12: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Portland Mirrors)*, 1977, 4 mirrors, each: 72 x 96 inches, 4 Douglas Fir timbers, each: 12 x 12 inches, lengths variable, *Robert Morris*, Portland Center of Visual Arts, Oregon, March 11–April 24, 1977



FIG. 13: Robert Morris, *Blind Time II*, 1976, etching ink on paper; 39 x 51 inches. Private collection

The works *Mirrored Cubes* and *Mirror* remind us that, in actual and semantic terms, reflected and obstructed seeing were twin concepts for Morris. In the basement, his *mirror* of the uncanny, Morris also found "a sequence of environments available only to my body—*protoblind* spaces—eccentric ignored spaces unvisited by anyone but me" (italics added). Conversely, in *Mirror*, the mirror is an instrument that intermittently—through flashes of sunlight—induces blindness.

With the mirror installations of the seventies—*Walk Around* as well as *Twelve Mirrors* (1976–77) [FIG. 11], at Williams College, and *Untitled (Portland Mirrors)* (1977) [FIG. 12], for the Portland Center for the Visual Arts in Oregon—the mirrored self returns. As Jones

remarks, in works of this kind, the mirrors produce "plausible, mensurable architectonic infinities."¹⁸ Morris referred to the virtual images as "magnified distances"—a form of "the infinite sublime."¹⁹ Crucially, his characterization relies on the distribution of mirrors to establish a virtual space inside the actual space of the room. Within this reflected space

resides "infinities" where, depending on vantage, the beholder is trapped. What separates *Walk Around* is the incorporation of the suspended frames. Framing is a pictorial device that belongs to painting and photography—the mirror having historically been a metaphor and a tool for both practices. In *Walk Around* the nature of the camera as an object with two apertures—shutter and lens—is summoned, above all, by the nest of floating squares. Nonetheless, given one's mobility in the room, the image of the beholder (seen from behind) is not just distant but, unlike a photographic image, elusive, fleeting or unfixed.

In the first series of *Blind Time* drawings the artist's "self" is revealed through what Kenneth Surin identifies as proprioception—the bodily sensation of spatial orientation without vision. Further, as Kimberly Paice has written, the drawings summon the portrayal of the phenomenology of sense experience by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty as being that of the "spatiality without things" that emerges from a "pre-objective experience of depth." "This is what happens in the night," Merleau-Ponty wrote, in a passage that Morris may well have been paraphrasing in his memories of the protoblind spaces of Indiana Street: "Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me."²⁰

For the drawings of *Blind Time II*, Morris enlisted the participation of a woman—referred to anonymously as A. A.—who had been blind since birth. Because she produced the drawings under the artist's direction, the works experiment with what might be called a displacement of the perceiving subject [FIG. 13]. True blindness is unfathomable to those who possess

sight. Morris later admitted that the collaboration with A. A. was a source of conflict for both parties.²¹ Yet, for my purpose, their partnership sharpens the significance of the artist as subject in *Blind Time I*, where a self-imposed temporary deprivation of sight is the operative strategic act.

The protocols on which Morris based the drawings for *Blind Time I* are rote, as antirhetorical as the simple tasks that served as instructions for dancers at Judson Church, among other settings, which Morris often joined and for which he sometimes constructed props. The role of the protocol can be directly likened to Morris’s own account of performance practice of this kind, which establishes, he wrote, a “situation of ‘rules’ or game-like structures” that required performers to respond to a sequence of “cues.”²²

With the eyes closed the attempt is made to tape out and blacken a square figure within an estimated time lapse of 5 minutes. Time estimation error: -5 seconds.

With eyes closed the left hand (black) and the right hand (red) attempt to touch in equal areas for an estimated time lapse of 60 seconds. Later a perimeter is drawn around each attempt and the areas calculated. Black area: 211.3125 inches. Red area: 209.84375 inches. Discrepancy: 1.4685. Time estimation error: +9 seconds.

With the eyes closed the ten fingers move outward from the top center making counting strokes. Two thousand strokes are made in an estimated two minutes. Time estimation error: +45 seconds.

Drawing blind within the parameters of a set of instructions is an ingenious device because it produces neither figuration nor abstraction, even as it belongs to a pictorial practice that, throughout its entire history, had been one or the other or some hybrid of both. The result is often visually striking ^[FIG. 14]. Differences in proficiency of design between the drawings made by Morris and those of his blind collaborator are clear and should be ascribed as much to Morris’s sightedness, which allows him—intentions to the contrary notwithstanding—to imagine the finished drawing, as to his gifted draftsmanship and his familiarity with drawing practice under normal conditions. Even so, the *Blind Time* drawings display no rationale for con-

ventional judgments of quality or comparison among works. Importantly, the drawings of series I and II share one key property: they were all produced with an equal application of the right and left hands; as a result, many are overtly bilateral. The sheet receives marks that index the act of drawing as a function of direct touch. (Concerning the prevalence of out-reaching hand gestures in old master allegorical drawings of the blind, Jacques Derrida wrote: “If to draw a blind man is first of all to show hands, it is in order to draw attention to *what one draws with the help of that which* one draws, the body proper as an instrument.”²³) This de-skilling principle of two-handed drawing, which is unique to drawing practice, heightens our awareness of the sheet (forty to fifty inches in width) as a delimited plane—a space of record for the residue of task-based actions executed in what Morris referred to as real space and real time.

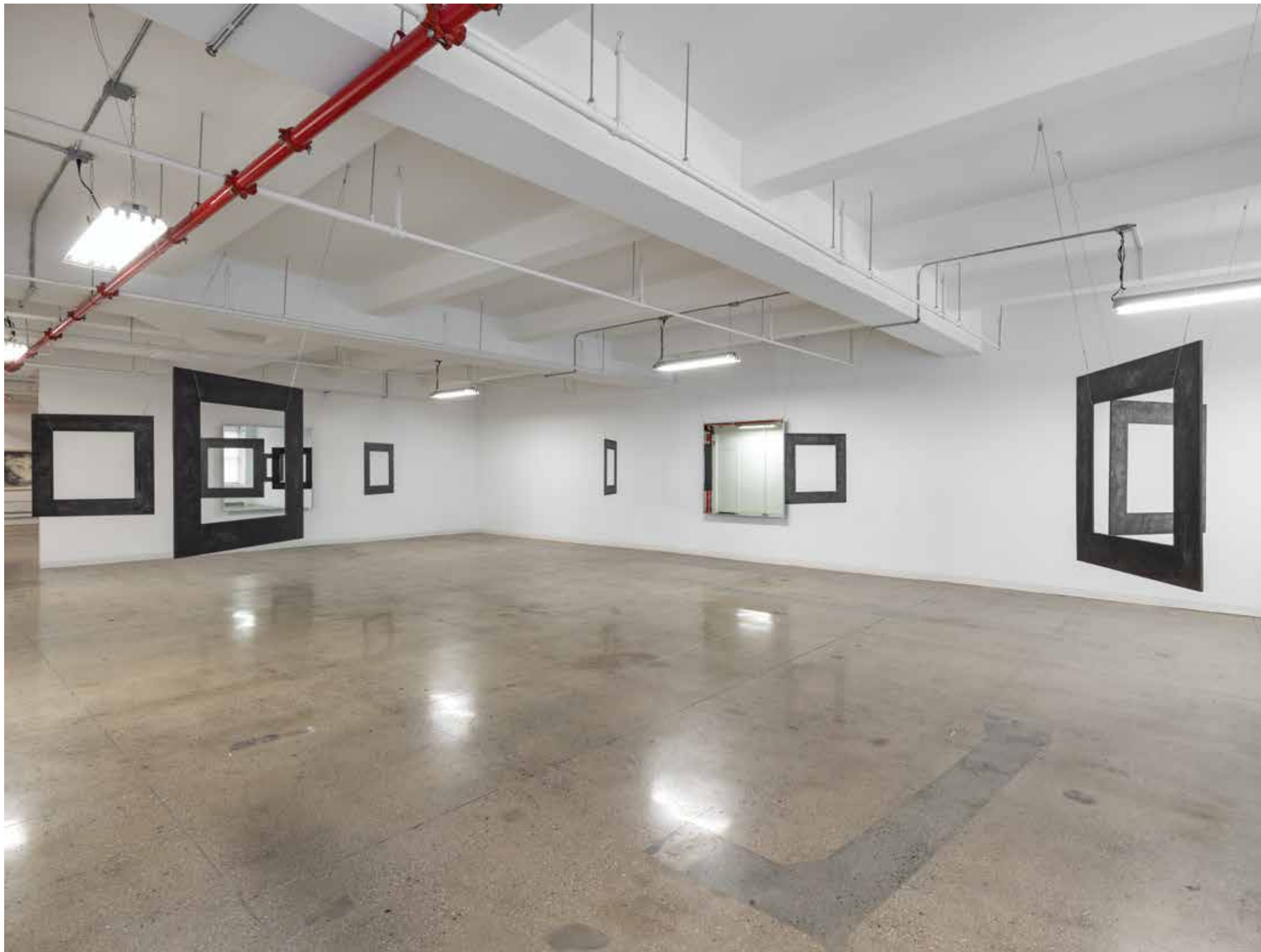


FIG. 14: Robert Morris, *Blind Time*, 1973, powdered graphite with plate oil and graphite inscription on wove paper, 35 × 46 inches. National Gallery of Art. Gift of the Collectors Committee

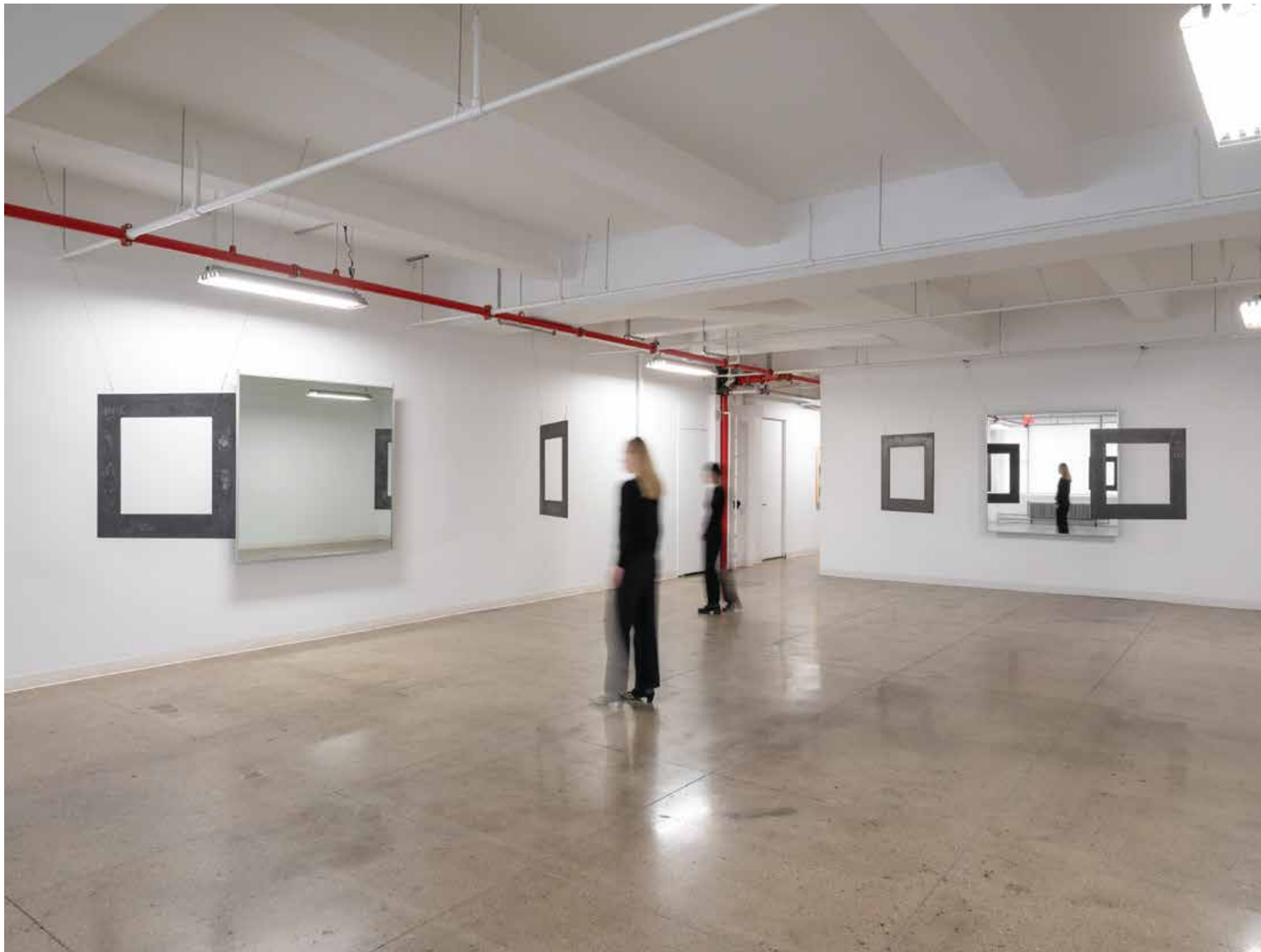
In an era of artmaking that sought the conditions of direct encounter, Morris opposed two forms of seeing: the illusion of multiplied space and space experienced through touch but visually obscured. According to this opposition, the sheet and the room are two present-tense domains of abyssal seeing. The works in question are not symbolic. Instead, each transforms a realm of the actual into one of disorientation and estrangement through the annihilation of seeing as a method for grasping the world. As such, each is posited to be a site of the self, both lost and found—of artist and beholder as perceiving subjects who, across two bodies of work, merge.

NOTES

- 1 Robert Morris, *TELEGRAM: THE RATIONED YEARS* (Geneva: JRP Editions, 1998), n.p. Throughout this essay all unattributed quotations from the artist are extracted from this book.
- 2 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “A Conversation with Robert Morris in 1985 (1994),” reprinted in Julia Bryan-Wilson, ed., *Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 58.
- 3 Ibid., 64.
- 4 Kimberly Paice, “In the Realm of the Carceral,” in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, exh. cat. (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994), 262.
- 5 Robert Morris, letter to Michael Compton, March 15, 1971. Quoted in Jon Bird, “Minding the Body: Robert Morris’s 1971 Tate Gallery Retrospective (1999),” reprinted in Bryan-Wilson, ed., *Robert Morris*, 161.
- 6 Robert Morris, “Aligned with Nazca,” *Artforum* 14, no. 2 (October 1975), reprinted in *Robert Morris, Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 143–73. For other matters concerning this essay in relation to broader questions of vision and visibility in Morris’s work, see my “Líneas de visión” (Site Lines), in Barbara Rose, ed., *Robert Morris: El dibujo como pensamiento*, exh. cat. (IVAM, Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, 2011), 79–97. See also Anaël Lejeune, “The Subject-Object Problem in ‘Aligned with Nazca’: On Phenomenological Issues in Robert Morris’ Artwork,” in Katia Schneller and Noura Wedell, eds., *Investigations: The Expanded Field of Writing in the Works of Robert Morris* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2015), 109–22.
- 7 Morris, “Aligned with Nazca,” *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 165.
- 8 Robert Morris, “The Present Tense of Space,” *Art in America* 66, no. 1 (January–February 1978): 71–82, reprinted in Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 177, 182, 199.
- 9 Robert Morris, “Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (Or Interruptions),” *Art in America* 77 (November 1989): 142–51, reprinted in Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 259–86.
- 10 See the essay “Indiana Street (1993),” published in Robert Morris, *Have I Reasons: Works and Writings, 1993–2007*, ed. Nena Tsouti-Schillinger (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 17–40.
- 11 Isabelle Alfandary, “Addressing Oneself: On TELEGRAM by Robert Morris,” in Schneller and Wedell, eds., *Investigations*, 215.
- 12 Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). See also Paice, “Hearing, 1972,” “Labyrinths, 1973–74,” “Voice, 1974,” and “In the Realm of the Carceral, 1978,” in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, 202, 250, 256, 262; and Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro, “Politics of Blindness: Robert Morris’ Antivision,” in Schneller and Wedell, eds., *Investigations*, 149–62. For a related interpretation of Morris and Piranesi, see also Miguel de Baca, *Robert Morris at the End of Minimalism: In the Realm of the Carceral* (1978) (New York: Castelli Gallery, 1981).
- 13 Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 26.
- 14 Ibid., 42. For Vidler’s chief discussion of the unhomely in architecture, see the chapter “Unhomely Houses” in his book *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 17–44.
- 15 Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 38.
- 16 Ali Esposito, “Morris’ Reflections Prompt Mirror Art,” *The Lantern*, October 27, 1976.
- 17 Caroline Jones, “Mirroring Morris: Reflections, Space, and Movement Around 1969,” in Jeffrey Weiss, ed., *Robert Morris: The Perceiving Body*, exh. cat. (Mudam Luxembourg, 2019): 30–45. It should be said that Morris addressed the mirror in his work and that of others in two texts: “The Present Tense of Space,” 204, where he discusses Robert Smithson’s “outside mirror pieces,” with specific reference to Smithson’s *Mirror Displacements* (1969), and 207n9; and an essay he wrote for *Robert Morris: Mirror Works, 1961–78*, exh. cat. (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1979), n.p., in which he briefly itemizes the many appearances of the mirror as object and image in the history of culture, including the polished stone mirrors of ancient Egypt, the image of the mirror in *Las Meninas* (1656), a painting by Diego Velázquez (as discussed by Michel Foucault), his own work *Mirrored Cubes* (1965), and the shoot-out scene in a carnival fun house in *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), a film by Orson Welles.
- 18 Jones, “Mirroring Morris,” 44. The mirror appears elsewhere in art of the 1960s and 1970, including, in addition to the work of Smithson, performance works of Joan Jonas. But with *Mirrored Cubes*, Morris was the first artist of the era to exploit the mirror as a device for the production of virtual space.
- 19 Robert Morris, interview with Thierry Raspail and Thierry Prat, in *Robert Morris: From Mnemosyne to Clio: The Mirror to the Labyrinth (1998–1999–2000)*, exh. cat. (Lyon: Musée d’art contemporain, 2000), 230.
- 20 Merleau-Ponty, as quoted in Paice, “Blind Time Drawings (1973),” in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, 244.
- 21 Jean-Pierre Crique, “Drawing from the Heart of Darkness: Robert Morris’s *Blind Time*,” in *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings 1973–2000*, exh. cat. (Centro per l’Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 2005), 16–18.
- 22 Robert Morris, “Notes on Dance,” *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), reprinted in Bryan-Wilson, ed., *Robert Morris*, 1.
- 23 Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Braut and Michael Naas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4–5.



Robert Morris, *Untitled (Walk Around)*, 1975; 4 mirrors in aluminum frames, each: 60 × 60 inches; 8 steel frames, each: 36 × 36 × ¾ inches





Untitled (Walk Around) 1975

Robert Morris's *Untitled (Walk Around)*, 1975, is an installation consisting of four rectangular mirrors in aluminum frames and eight empty square steel frames. All elements are suspended from the ceiling. The installation is variable, having been conceived to be installed in configurations that change to accommodate a given space.

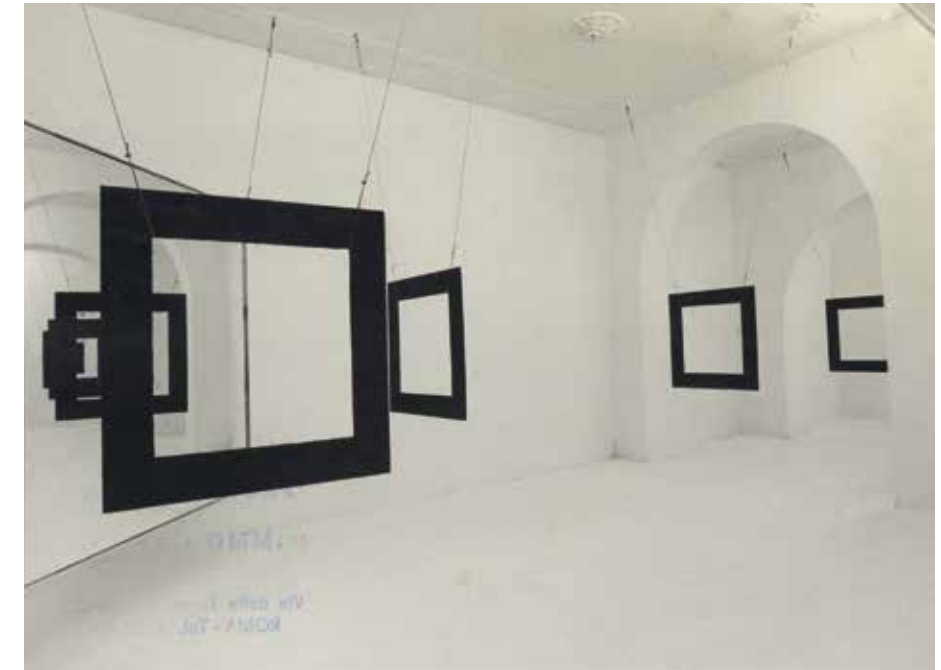
The work was first installed in 1975 at Galleria D'Alessandro-Ferranti in Rome. That show included five *Blind Time* drawings as well as two 1974 felt sculptures. The gallery space was divided into several rooms, with *Untitled (Walk Around)* displayed in a continuous manner throughout. While some of the rooms were interrupted by walls with archways, others were L-shaped, which allowed the installation to be viewed from multiple angles. At the time of the exhibition, Robert Morris was in Rome with artist Marcia Hafif, who had a solo exhibition at Galleria D'Alessandro-Ferranti that June. It was on this occasion that Morris was also offered the opportunity to have a show at the gallery.

Following the 1975 exhibition in Rome, *Untitled (Walk Around)* was installed in May 1976 at Sonnabend Gallery in New York. Unlike the exhibition in Rome, the installation took place in a single room with no dividing walls, similar to the way it is displayed at Castelli Gallery on the occasion of the present exhibition.

In October of the same year, Morris installed the work at Sullivan Hall Gallery, Ohio State University. In an interview in *The Lantern*, the university's daily newspaper, Morris said, "The mirrors can hang in any manner just so long as the sum of the angles equals 360 degrees." This means that *Untitled (Walk Around)* could theoretically be set up in any area of space." While the photos of this installation provide limited information, they appear to show that the work was again installed in a single room.

Untitled (Walk Around) was next shown in 1981, at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston Texas, in the exhibition *Robert Morris: Selected Works 1970–1981*. For this exhibition, the work was installed in a corner space. The mirrors and frames were positioned unusually close to one another in a V-shaped formation.

More than ten years later, *Untitled (Walk Around)* was included in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, a monumental retrospective that appeared at the Guggenheim Museum, New York in 1994. On this occasion the work was shown downtown, at the museum's annex in Soho. There *Untitled (Walk Around)* was installed in a large single space interrupted only by a small wall at one end. This exhibition traveled to Deichtorhallen Hamburg in Germany, where *Untitled (Walk Around)* also appeared. There the room was divided by a large wall, resulting in an overall diamond-shaped formation.



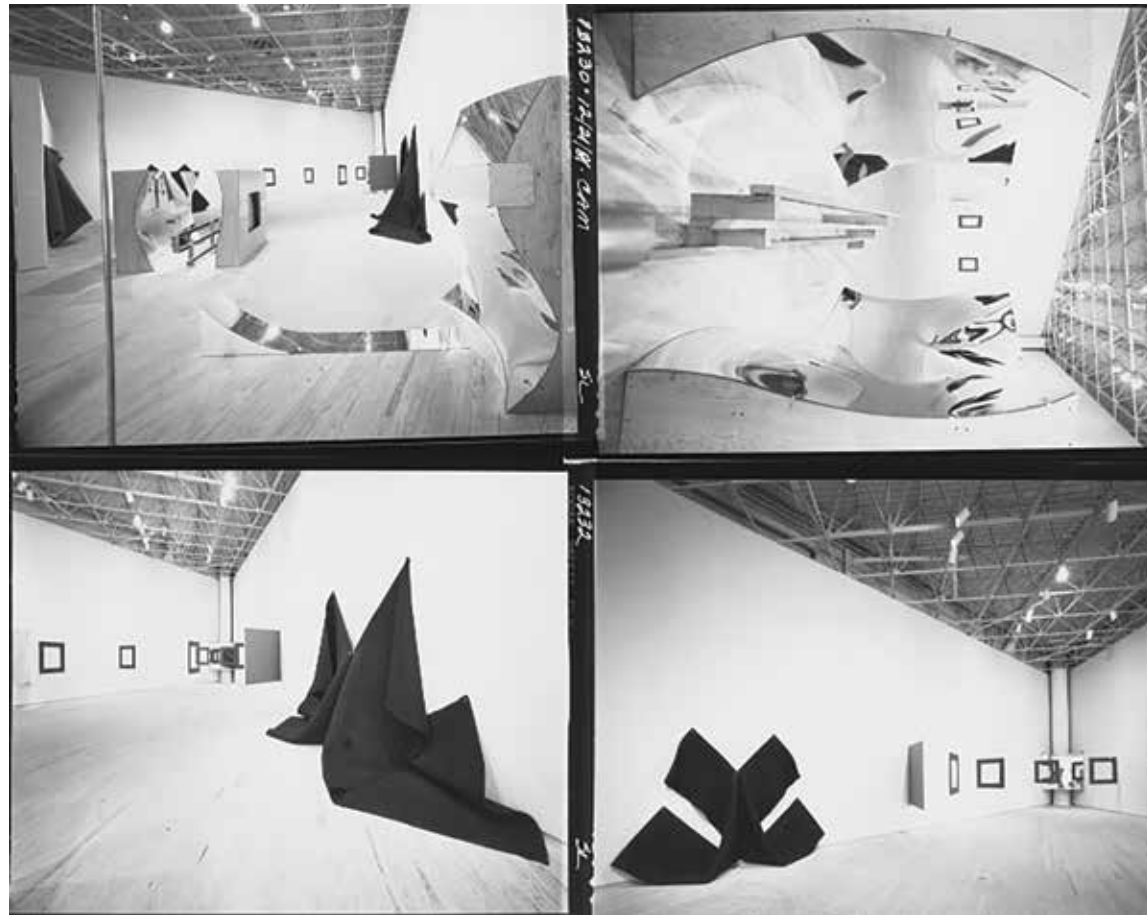
Galleria D'Alessandro-Feranti, Rome, *Robert Morris*, November 1975



Sonnabend Gallery, New York, *Robert Morris*, April 17–May 8, 1976



Sullivant Hall Gallery, Ohio State University, Ohio, *Sculpture by Robert Morris*, October 25–December 9, 1976



Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas, *Robert Morris: Selected Works 1970–1981*, December 12, 1981–February 14, 1982



The Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York, *Robert Morris: The Mind/ Body Problem*, February 3–May 1, 1994

Blind Time Drawings

Between 1973 and 2009, Robert Morris produced seven sets of drawings for a series titled *Blind Time*. Each drawing was made on a sheet of paper or mylar that measures up to fifty inches in width, large enough to contain the fullness of the artist's reach. Mediums, consistent within a given set, vary across the series: powdered graphite (mixed with plate oil), iron oxide, oil stick, and ink.

In the present exhibition, only drawings from the 1970s are shown, works belonging respectively to *Blind Time I* and *Blind Time II*.

Various artists prior to Morris experimented with drawing "blind," but it had never been pursued as an extended practice. In the *Blind Time* series Morris worked with his eyes shut, applying medium directly with both of his bare hands. For the first set, in 1973, drawings were made according to "protocols," or task-based instructions, which were often inscribed on the sheet. Morris timed the sessions with a stopwatch; the recorded protocol was accompanied by his estimation of the time it had taken to execute the work alongside the actual elapsed time.

In later sets of *Blind Time* drawings procedures took a variety of forms. For *Blind Time II* (1976) Morris collaborated with "A. A.," a woman, blind since birth, who produced the drawings under his supervision. The partnership was conflicted, with A.A. choosing to depart from Morris's instructions. Texts for each drawing, transcribed by Morris on slips of paper, were separated from the drawings to which they correspond, and a complete match of the drawings to their corresponding texts has since proven impossible to achieve. The drawings inevitably show less control than those of the artist, though they are striking for their demonstration of a purely tactile approach, visibility for A.A.—real, remembered, or imagined—having been impossible.

Subsequent series add thematic speculation to the production of work. In *Blind Time III* protocols include allusions to topics in quantum physics (some drawn from the writings of physicist Richard Feynman), including entropy, causality, weightlessness, and void. These are sometimes accompanied by ruminations on the protocols themselves as exercises in the contrast between seeing and touch as means for achieving an experience of the self in relation to space and time. *Blind Time IV* (1991) is subtitled *Drawings with Davidson*, with reference to philosopher Donald Davidson, especially his work on the philosophy of mind. Here protocols include citations from Davidson mixed with memories, dreams, and states of psyche.

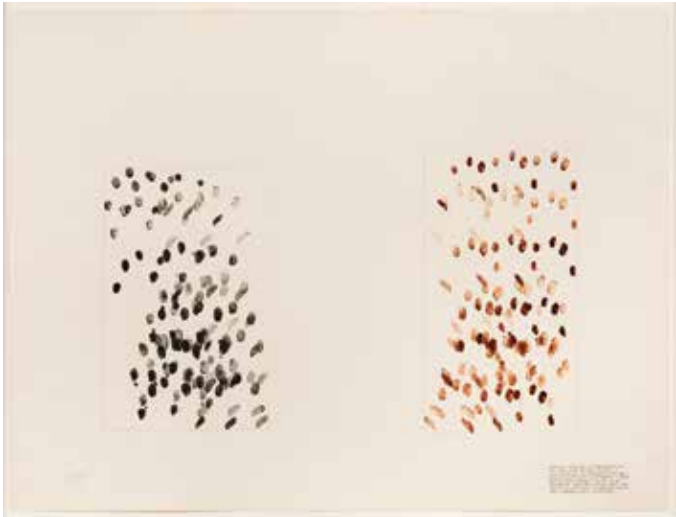
The two subsequent series, *Blind Time V* (1995–1999) and *Blind Time VI* (2000), contain thematic subtitles, such as *Latin Inscriptions*, *Melancholia*, and *Moral Blinds*. In some, single words—*Utopia*, *Moirae*, *Lachesis*—are emblazoned on the sheet. The final sequence of drawings is *Blind Time VII* (2009), which is subtitled *Grief*.



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 × 46 inches



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 × 46 inches



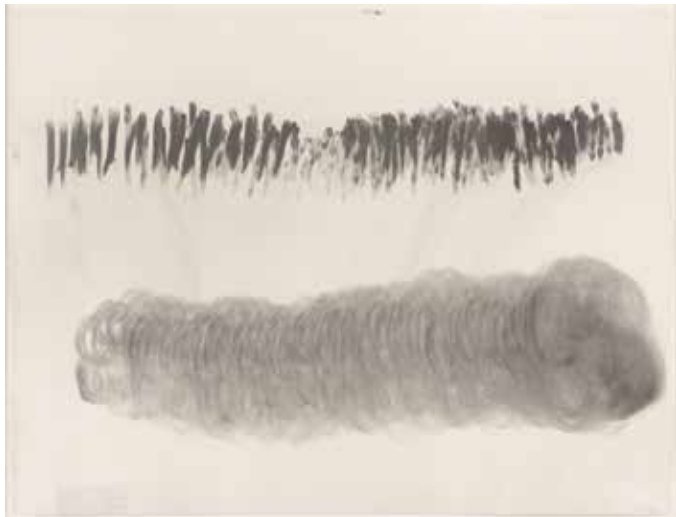
Blind Time, 1973
Ink, pencil on paper
35 × 46 inches



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 × 46 inches



Blind Time II, 1976
Graphite on paper
38 × 50 inches



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 × 46 inches



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 × 46 inches



Blind Time II, 1976
Etching ink on paper
39 × 51 inches



Blind Time II, 1976
Etching ink on paper
39 × 51 inches

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Essay ©Jeffrey Weiss
Publication ©Castelli Gallery

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