

CONTAGION: PAUL MCCARTHY LEAKS OUT

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I analyze how Paul McCarthy participated in the subversion of the optimistic “sunshine sensibility” of the California art community’s reputation through his excessively vulgar performance *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* from 1975. Through his rejection of decorum, modesty, and social codes, he metaphorically allowed the inside of the body to leak out and overrun society’s rules of civilized behavior. *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* was a live performance that was recorded on video. Located in a corridor in an adjacent room, an audience watched McCarthy’s performance on a television monitor set on a chair. The video and the television monitor not only document the performance, but also provide evidence of an evolving consumer culture. I analyze McCarthy’s performance of *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* in terms of *noir*, a dark literature and film-based artistic sensibility that evolved in Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s and affected the city’s art world. Also influenced by Allan Kaprow’s happenings, McCarthy developed a genre of performance incorporating a critique of gender roles, video documentation, and a manipulation of the audience. I also analyze his references to popular American food products, which simulate bodily fluids and flesh; the growing sexualization of food advertisements; and the *Bow Bride* film still from Russ Meyer’s movie *Europe in the Raw* from 1963. I propose that the dark side of McCarthy’s work parallels that of Viennese actionism. Finally, McCarthy’s performances are typical of a *noir* sensibility that can also be seen in the work of Chris Burden.

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Paul McCarthy: An Introduction

Noir, often in illicit alliance with San Francisco or New York elitism, made Los Angeles the city that American intellectuals love to hate.

– Mike Davis

Video and performance artist Paul McCarthy, born August 4, 1945, began to study art at the University of Utah, and finished his BFA in 1969 at the San Francisco Art Institute. He then studied film, video, and art at the University of Southern California, where he received his MFA in 1973. Allan Kaprow's happenings and European avant-garde movements, like the Vienna actionists, initially influenced him. This led him to create a "series of violent performance-paintings during the 1970s."¹ McCarthy's work excavated American culture, especially the proliferation of consumer products, while attempting to blur the boundaries between illicit and explicit sexuality. He viewed the setting of a video as a space that was closer to painting than to filmmaking. It was his aim to produce art, not entertainment.²

McCarthy's live performances function as artifacts and as distancing devices. McCarthy performances not only absorbed the audience in the live action being enacted, but also distanced the audience by making them aware of the means by which the action was being recorded and documented. "It is commonplace in Los Angeles to drive down the street and see a movie being shot most hours of the day."³ This culture affected McCarthy's work and he began to depend on the audience's awareness of its remove from reality, much like watching television. He recalls his work as stemming from children's television.⁴

¹ Ralph Rugoff, "Mr. McCarthy's Neighbourhood," in *Paul McCarthy* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 37.

² Art21, *Art in the Twenty-First Century: Transformation*, Season 5 (New York: PBS Distribution, 2009).

³ Michael Duncan, "Daddy's Little Helper," *Frieze Magazine*, no. 10 (May 1993), http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/daddys_little_helper/.

⁴ Marc Selwyn, "There's a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood, Interview with Marc Selwyn," in *Paul McCarthy* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 134.

McCarthy created powerful characters for his video performances who pretended to be neither female nor male, but occupied a middle gender. Curator Ralph Rugoff argues that “this was part of a widespread cultural rebellion against sexual stereotyping, evident in feminist works, like that of Eleanor Antin’s.”⁵ McCarthy’s myriad of personae tapped into both public metaphors and personal history; “his characters indulged in absurd, obsessive taboo acts, which were surrogate urges of both the audience and McCarthy’s unconscious.”⁶ In an interview with artist Marc Selwyn, McCarthy comments that his personae were more “about being a clown than a shaman.”⁷

In 1975, he performed *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* and its pendant *Tubbing* (Figure 1). These works took place in a hotel room in July of that year. Both performances enacted the violent contradictions internal to a pulp Hollywood film conception of femininity and beauty that can also be detected in the performance of drag queens. By amassing cheap beauty products, processed foods, and acts that simulated rape this performance contained the intersexual role explored in many of his performance works.⁸ The end result of the *Tubbing* performance was a tub full of pink vomit-like liquid, which suggested scatological porno and sadomasochism.⁹ The focus of this thesis is *Tubbing’s* companion piece *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight*, which occurred sequentially after *Tubbing*.

⁵ Rugoff, “Mr. McCarthy’s Neighbourhood,” 45.

⁶ Duncan, “Daddy’s Little Helper,”

⁷ Selwyn, “There’s a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood, Interview with Marc Selwyn,” 134.

⁸ Thomas McEvelley, “Paul McCarthy: Performance and Video Works, The Layering,” in *Paul McCarthy: Head Shop, Shop Head, Works 1966-2006* (Stockholm: Steidl, 2006), 36-39.

⁹ Daniel Baird, “Paul McCarthy-ism,” *The Brooklyn Rail* (February 22 - May 13, 2001) <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2001/05/art/paul-mccarthy-ism>.

Analysis of *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*

McCarthy's video performance *Sailor's Meat/Sailor's Delight, Long Edit # 1* (Figures 2 and 3) initiated a series of performances that "referenced sailors, myths about intersexual roles, moral boundaries, and open violence". Curator and writer Eva Meyer-Hermann suggested that "McCarthy's character conveys the loneliness of the sailor and turns the ocean into a metaphor for life and eternity; the sailor resists with all his wits before steering the bow of the ship into the open sea and becoming lost in the vast emptiness."¹⁰ Based on the oscillation of overtly sexualized gender roles and depictions of violence, the sailor refers to the interrelationship of repressed psychological states and social taboos. In this performance, McCarthy took on the "personae of both the sailor and a female protagonist, engaged in aggressive sexual behavior with American consumer products."¹¹ He switched between the male and female roles throughout the performance to explore the feminine and masculine sides of his psyche.

The inspiration for the protagonist of *Sailor's Meat* was a photographic still entitled *Bow Bride*, from Russ Meyer's film *Europe in the Raw* from 1963. As a basis for his performance, he rotated the *Bow Bride* image 90-degrees to signify the figurehead of a ship (Figure 4). After pasting this image onto a manila folder, he drew around the image to determine what direction best suggested a figurehead on a car or on a ship. He gave her a name to reference a bow, the forward part of a ship, and created a character based on a sailor and the sailor's delight.¹² Later that year, he placed the manila folder, with *Bow Bride*, on a larger sheet of paper with two stills

¹⁰ Paul McCarthy and Eva Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2004), 70.

¹¹ Rugoff, "Mr. McCarthy's Neighbourhood," 47.

¹² The online Urban Dictionary defines sailor's delight: Before a long voyage a sea, it was foretold that sailors have the practice of packing a mason jar or other handy vessel chock full of earthworms for those lonely nights at sea.

from *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight* (Figure 5), which served as a roughly sketched storyboard after the fact.

This performance took place in Southern California, in the dingy and dimly lit bedroom of a Pasadena hotel. The room contained minimal accoutrements: a tubular metal bed with a bronze-colored bed cover, two curtained windows, and a small round table. McCarthy's small video crew filmed him perform for an audience that watched him on a nearby television monitor, propped up on a chair, which blocked the viewers from seeing McCarthy directly. This allowed McCarthy to control their role in the piece, while the monitor also distanced the audience and mediated his live performance. Through the monitor, the audience saw him open his performance in the nude, wearing a platinum blonde wig and make-up with a bright gaudy azure eye shadow, emphasizing his eyes.

As the performance continued, McCarthy put on black mesh women's panties and then climbed on to the mattress. He proceeded to strike effeminate poses that mimicked pin-up girls derived from Meyer's low-budget erotic film. At this point, he delicately rubbed red make-up on the shaft of his penis and in-between his buttocks. The opening minutes represent the act of foreplay, a prologue to McCarthy's sexual intercourse, which unfolds over the course of 85 minutes and 83 seconds. For the audience and subsequent viewers of the tape, he put himself in the position of being seen as a mediated object of desire, appealing and repulsive to both the male and female gaze.

As the performance progressed, it became more active; he inserted a small hotdog into his anus area, and put on a fringed black mesh top to match the panties. He placed meats – liver, hamburger, and hotdogs – on the bed, where he sensually licked them, and picked up the liver with his mouth several times. After this point in the performance, his mesh top slid down to his

waist, then to his knees. He became more aggressive with the meats, molding the hamburger into balls, arranging the hotdogs in a row, dumping a white-labeled Heinz Ketchup bottle's viscous liquid on the bed. His face smeared with the ketchup and meat mixture, he stood on top of the bed and rubbed a large handful of hamburger meat on his chest. He mixed all of the consumer products, including the contents of a jar of Miracle Whip sandwich spread (similar to mayonnaise) together on the bed cover and began to thrust his genitals repeatedly into the pile. The sexualization of food products was made literal. Pushing himself to the limit, he stood up and began to gag several times, at the point between nausea and euphoria.

The video depicts him wrapping adhesive bandages and gauze on his thighs and hips. Attaching a rubber underarm cushion from a crutch to his penis, he smeared the appendage with a mixture of ketchup and meat, groaning, panting, and making a loud sexual moan. He thrust the meat and ketchup covered appendage into a jar of Miracle Whip, first holding the jar then placing it below him on the mattress. The Miracle Whip jar functioned symbolically as a vagina and a reference to Americans' desire for mass-produced food products. McCarthy removed the bandages and began to penetrate the sticky mass on the mattress with his own phallus.

Naked again, he continued to abuse the rubber pad, with aggressive, violently sexual acts. Moaning and salivating, he put the crutch pad into his mouth and gagged himself. Donning a black see-through shin-length robe, he stood on top of the bed and rocked back and forth slowly. He pulled over a small white table with a sausage on it, playing sexually with the sausage before urinating on the meat. I believe that this is a reference to sadomasochism, much like in his performance of *Tubbing*, because the sausage could reference a surrogate penis. In the gay community, McCarthy's act is seen as urolagnia, the sexual excitement associated with urine or

with urination. Depictions of men urinating on each other can be seen as early as the 1930, in the erotic sailor works of Charles Demuth.

At the climax or end of the performance-as-sexual act, he endured physical pain by smashing the ketchup bottle on top of the Miracle Whip jar and repeatedly walking barefoot over the broken glass. At the very end, the camera veered off of McCarthy to a television monitor; you can hear him cough and gag indicating that he pushed himself to the threshold of over indulgence. Significantly, McCarthy chose to utilize American household staples such as Heinz Ketchup, Miracle Whip, and meats in his performance because of their abundant use, and the fact that these were items McCarthy was familiar with and most likely used himself.¹³

A year after McCarthy created this video performance, he was invited to participate in the exhibitions *Southern California Video Anthology* at the Long Beach Museum of Art in 1976. At the exhibition he produced several small pencil drawings and texts that referenced *Sailor's Meat*, *Sailor's Delight* (Figures 6 and 7). These works include explicit verbal descriptions of his unfiltered dream sequences, "vented dreams," along with uncompromising images of an overtly sexual nature. The drawings depict scenes of sailors in the act of rape or masturbating, much like in the performance. In 1982, McCarthy again referenced *Sailor's Meat* to re-create enlarged drawings for the exhibition at the Exile Galley in Los Angeles. He used the gallery space to draw large figures on 3.5 meters wide and up to 6.8 meters long pieces of paper, and after each drawing was finished it was hung on the wall (Figures 8 and 9).¹⁴ McCarthy harkened back to *Sailor's Meat*, *Sailor's Delight* for both of these exhibitions.

¹³ My descriptions and interpretations, unless otherwise attributed, are based on McCarthy's DVD, *Sailor's Meat/ Sailor's Delight, Edit #1*, 1975, distributed by Hauser and Wirth Zürich, Switzerland (1975; Pasadena, CA: Hauser and Wirth, 2002).

¹⁴ McCarthy and Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream*, 70.

I believe that McCarthy's performance *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight* specifically rejected the decorum, modesty, and social codes of society during the 1960s and 1970s. This rejection embraced a darker, a *noir*, side that opposed the stereotypical notion of Los Angeles as an optimistic sunny culture. Illuminated minimally with artificial light, the dark claustrophobic hotel room that McCarthy chose for his performance was similarly shielded from the bright light of California. This countered the prevailing movements of light and space, finish fetish, and pop art in Los Angeles. McCarthy deliberately made his performance dark. I believe that McCarthy, and other Southern California performance artists like Chris Burden, used their freedom of expression to subvert society's rules of civilized behavior with their own *noir* oriented art.

Noir not only opposes sunshine, but also suggests elements of violence and danger. McCarthy's performance included many instances of pain, and he adopted food products to reference the body and acts of violence. This allowed McCarthy's psyche to leak out and infect society. By leaking body I refer to the visceral aspects of McCarthy's body that are revealed in *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight* to the viewer through his use of Heinz Ketchup and Miracle Whip as bodily fluids. McCarthy argues that "food lent itself to grotesque bodily symbolism. 'It just sort of led to the obvious. And that was that ketchup was blood. It was ketchup – but it could be blood. Mayonnaise was mayonnaise – but it could be sperm. Mustard could be shit. Chocolate could also be shit.'"¹⁵ He allowed these bodily fluids – blood and sexual secretion – to metaphorically cover his own body. "I had a thing about exposing the interior of the body," McCarthy says, "the orifices leading into the body, and what the interior was, and the taboos of

¹⁵ Jonathan Jones, "Paul McCarthy: 'I had this thing about exposing the interior of the body,'" *The Guardian* (November 11, 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/nov/11/paul-mccarthy-artist>.

the interior.”¹⁶ He broke with the standards of food consumption and sexual behavior, and combined the two to intrigue and repulse his audience.

Allan Kaprow’s Influence and McCarthy’s Deviation

The dark side of McCarthy’s work is what separates him from Allan Kaprow, but Kaprow’s influence is evident in McCarthy’s performances. McCarthy became aware of Kaprow’s work through his book *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings* published in 1966. To better understand the overarching influence of Allan Kaprow on McCarthy it is important to know some major works by Kaprow, and to reference parallels between his and McCarthy’s performances.

Kaprow received his M.A. in art history at Columbia University, New York, where he wrote his master’s thesis, titled “Piet Mondrian: A Study in Seeing” in 1952, under the supervision of Meyer Schapiro. On completing his thesis, he began to devote himself to his own work and co-founded the Hansa Gallery in New York. He held his first one-man exhibition there in 1953. During 1956 to 1958 he attended the New School in New York, where he studied musical composition with John Cage, who was influential in the development of his art. During this time Kaprow composed short works that included concrete sounds, contained movements, and purely visual images.¹⁷

At this point, he ceased to exhibit as a painter or sculptor in the traditional sense, and became more interested in the conceptual and philosophical aspects of art. He turned to sculptural installations, called environments, and happenings. The term happening first

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Michael Kirby, “Introduction,” in *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), 32.

appeared in Kaprow's essay "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock":

The space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or if need be, the vastness of Forty-second Street. Not satisfied with the suggestion through paint of our other senses, we shall utilize the specific substances of sight, sound, movements, people, odors, touch. Objects of every sort are materials for the new art: paint, chairs, food, electric and neon lights, smoke, water, old socks, a dog, movies, a thousand other things that will be discovered by the present generation of artists. Not only will these bold creators show us, as if for the first time, the world we have always had about us but ignored, but they will disclose entirely unheard-of happenings and events, found in garbage cans, police files, hotel lobbies; seen in store windows and on the streets; and sensed in dreams and horrible accidents. An odor of crushed strawberries, a letter from a friend, or a billboard selling Drano; three taps on the front door, a scratch, a sigh, or a voice lecturing endlessly, a blinding staccato flash, a bowler hat – all will become materials for this new concrete art.¹⁸

In general "happenings were things that just happened."¹⁹ "There was no structural beginning, middle, or end, and no distinction or hierarchy between artist and viewer. The viewer's reaction determined the art piece, which made each happening a unique experience that could not be replicated. It was participatory and interactive, with the goal of tearing down the fourth wall between artist and observers. The observers were not just visually interpreting the piece, but also interacting with it, becoming part of the work," Kaprow explained.²⁰

Kaprow's happenings were all-encompassing events that included a "basic script, staging, music, and improvisational dance." From the beginning, the audience was implicated in the action, which led to a distinctively whimsical orientation, "when chance and the participant indeterminate actions came into their own."²¹ Alongside the happenings, "he developed environments that usually surrounded or enclosed the viewer on all sides."²²

In 1958, Kaprow produced his first public happening at Douglass College at Rutgers

¹⁸ Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 8-9.

¹⁹ Michael Kirby, "Introduction," in *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), 9.

²⁰ Allan Kaprow, "Art and Architecture," in *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), 176-183.

²¹ Kirby, "Introduction," 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 24.

University. He first adopted the term happening, which gained currency among other artists working in the New York area, in his essay, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” published in 1958. This was a kind of “elegy-cum-manifesto,” a marker that summarized artistic situations after abstract expressionism, and became a “primer for production” for artistic practices. This essay is an optimistic manifesto that extends Harold Rosenberg’s notion of the “arena” of action painting into the environment.²³ Kaprow demands a “concrete art made of everyday materials that can be easily found in a surrounding environment.”²⁴ He states that craftsmanship and permanence should be forgotten, and perishable materials should be used in art. That year he also created a public awareness of happenings through shows at the Reuben Gallery in New York. The first of these was the sound happening *Intermission Piece*, and was later followed by *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, which involved an interactive environment that audience members moved through together. “Their experience was divided into six parts that had three happenings occur at the same time, and included elements such as a band playing toy instruments, a woman squeezing an orange, and painters painting.”²⁵

Kaprow's most famous happenings occurred in 1961, when he would take his students and/or friends out to a specific site to perform a small action. Kaprow developed techniques to prompt a creative response from the audience, encouraging audience members to make their own connections between ideas and events. He rarely recorded his happenings, which is what made them a one-time occurrence. Kaprow states in *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings*, that the separation between life, art, artist, and audience becomes blurred. The happening allows the artist to experiment with body motion, recorded sounds, written and

²³ Judith F. Rodenbeck, “Car Crash, 1960,” in *Radical Prototypes, Allan Kaprow and the Invention of the Happenings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 209.

²⁴ Kaprow, “Art and Architecture,” 177.

²⁵ Barbara Haskell, *Blam!: Explosion of Pop Minimalism and Performance, 1958-64* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1985), 33.

spoken texts, and even smells. Happenings employ disposable elements like cardboard or cans making it easier for Kaprow and others to be able to change their work every time. The minute the elements break down, the performer could obtain other disposable materials and produce another indeterminate piece. These works could be presented in “lofts, stores, classrooms, gymnasiums, and basements thus widening the concept of theater by destroying the barrier between audience and play to demonstrate the organic connection between art and its environment.”²⁶

McCarthy was largely influenced by Kaprow’s essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” and *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings*. Intrigued by Kaprow’s essay McCarthy linked action painting and performance in his work. He emphasized painting as an action rather than a final product, which led him to produce his *Black Painting* at the University of Utah between 1966 and 1968.²⁷ This led to other documented works, with photographs or video, in which McCarthy performed the role of the action painter, as in *Face Painting – Floor, White Line* (1972) and *Whipping a Wall with Paint* (1974), “where he painted using his whole body to move the paint across the unconventional canvas.”²⁸ He became a type of painting machine, and continued to reference Pollock’s work in particular by performing the role of action painter in later works.

Kaprow also inspired McCarthy’s early installation *Dream Room/ Interior Room/ Tire, Cotton, Water Room* from 1971. For this work McCarthy took large quantities of cotton, dipped them in buckets of water, and then draped them over tires filling an entire interior room. This work recalls Kaprow’s 1961 *Yard*, where he filled the courtyard of Martha Jackson

²⁶ Kaprow, “Art and Architecture,” 188-198.

²⁷ In these paintings, he would smear paint, oil, and dirt onto canvases and wood panels with his hands then drench them in paraffin and finally set them on fire.

²⁸ Frances Colpitt, “In and Out of the Studio,” in *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*, ed. Paul Schimmel and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2011), 69.

Gallery in New York City with used tires (Figure 10).²⁹

McCarthy's performances deviated from Kaprow when he began to stress gender roles. His deviation is exemplified by his hermaphroditic role in *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*. McCarthy constructed both male and female roles during the performance, switched between the two, and also occupied both at the same time. Judith Butler explores this in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990). She begins with a quote from Simone de Beauvoir "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one."³⁰ This statement sets up Butler argument about the construction of gender. If Beauvoir's claim is true then:

It follows that woman itself is a term in progress, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the 'congealing' is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction.³¹

I believe we perceive someone as being a certain gender because of how they look and act in ways that society deems masculine or feminine.

Butler also discusses gender roles in her book *Bodies that Matter* (1993) where she writes: "if gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at the prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access."³² McCarthy performed or became this role of sailor and the female protagonist in *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*, remaining in the ontological state of

²⁹ Paul Schimmel, "Early Works and Writings," in *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, ed. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk, and Stephanie Rosenthal (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 17.

³⁰ Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³² Judith Butler, "Introduction," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 5.

being a male. Biologically male, as the video confirms, McCarthy's "sex change" illustrated Butler's notion of gender construction by interpreting, received norms (of hair, makeup, and clothes) as a tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms in this performance.

McCarthy's manipulation and minimization of the audience and utilization of the video camera, which was becoming ubiquitous in American culture, also played a role in McCarthy's deviation from Kaprow's assemblages, environments, and happenings. McCarthy's performances, unlike Kaprow's, rarely occurred in a public setting. Instead they were usually videotaped before a small, anonymous audience. One or two people acted as a "surrogate public" or "movie extras" that played the role of audience members.³³ Their presence is subtly theatricalized, contaminated by the symbolic framework of the performance. In an interview with writer Benjamin Weissman, McCarthy states "when I perform for the camera there are others standing on the sidelines in the void. It's very Hollywood to stand and watch a movie being made."³⁴ Critic Tom Holbert also argued that McCarthy's work "regardless of medium has dealt with the problem that nothing stands outside of mediated representations."³⁵ McCarthy forced a reaction through the immediacy and presence of his audience's live actions, like a studio audience. His performance was live and recorded on video, a "simultaneous reproduction,"³⁶ much like a television program.

³³ Rugoff, "Mr. McCarthy's Neighbourhood," 49.

³⁴ Benjamin Weissman and Paul McCarthy, "Paul McCarthy," *BOMB*, no. 84 (Summer 2003), 36.

³⁵ Robert Rand Shane, "Commodity and Abjection: A Psycho-social Investigation of Pop Culture Imagery in the Artwork of Paul McCarthy" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2009), 34.

³⁶ Rugoff, "Mr. McCarthy's Neighborhood," 52.

McCarthy's Bodily Fluids and Flesh

McCarthy's deviation from Kaprow is also seen in his defilement of popular consumer products, such as Heinz Ketchup and Miracle Whip in *Sailor's Meat*. I believe that his subversion of these products were a way for him to reject civilized behavior. Heinz Ketchup, Miracle Whip, in particular, and raw meats spoiled, polluted, and contaminated the hotel room by escaping from inside McCarthy's body onto the mattress and then back onto his body through his sexual acts with the products. He literally ruined the bed through his fornication with these items. Heinz Ketchup, Miracle Whip, and meats were materials throughout his performances that reference bodily fluids and flesh. These objects are patently American and associate consumption with mass- or over-indulgence by Americans. These products, representing bodily fluids and flesh, allowed the inside of his body to be exposed to his audience. "Their symbolism both complements and complicates his work, allowing it to be understood as pointed social critique."³⁷ In this section I will discuss McCarthy's use of meats as surrogate phalluses, and his adoption of Heinz Ketchup and Miracle Whip in his performance.

McCarthy's selection of meats like hotdogs and sausages can be read as alternative phalluses. Art historian Amelia Jones comments on McCarthy's love for his male organ in her essay "Paul McCarthy's Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity." She suggests that his fixation on the phallus is directly related to paternal function. He admits an interest in the patriarch and the family structure, which revolve around authority. She then relates this to Freud's model of the Oedipus complex and fear of castration. She also argues for masculine subjectivity as stated by Judith Butler in her 1993 book *Bodies that Matter*. This means that he

³⁷ Cary Levine, "You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy's Food-Flinging Frenzies," *Invisible Culture, An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, no. 14 (2010): 54, http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_14/levine/index.html.

“fears the loss of control that underlies the mechanisms of patriarchy in Western culture.”³⁸ I believe this is why he portrayed both masculine and feminine roles and included other phallus-shaped objects in this performance: to establish his dominance as a man and the main character within the performance.

McCarthy’s earlier works also focused on bodily fluids. *Ketchup Sandwich* (1970) was an installation piece, and the first time he adopted the condiment in his work (Figure 11).³⁹ Ketchup became a staple in McCarthy’s performances, sculptures, drawings, and photography. As discussed in the previous section, this material has been understood as a signifier for bodily fluids, specifically blood. Art critic and writer Cary Levine argues that “ketchup has become known as a symbol of American capitalism, because of its consumer implications and the popularity of the processed product.”⁴⁰ *Heinz Ketchup Sauce* from 1974 was McCarthy’s first video performance that utilized food, and provided insight into the way in which ketchup began to be adopted in his work. In this piece he performed various sexual activities with a bottle labeled Heinz Ketchup. McCarthy shows the same product again in *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight*, at the beginning of his performance. “The condiment, which was loaded with cultural significance, intermingles with McCarthy’s body.”⁴¹

Theorist Roland Barthes stated in his essay “Toward a Psycho-sociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” “When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies. That is to say that it

³⁸ Amelia Jones, “Paul McCarthy’s Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity,” in *Paul McCarthy* (New York: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000), 128-130.

³⁹ Filipa Ramos, “Paul McCarthy’s ‘Pig Island: at Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan,” *Art Agenda*, (June 19, 2010), <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/paul-mccarthy-s-pig-island-at-fondazione-nicola-trussardi-milan/>.

⁴⁰ Levine, “You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy’s Food-Flinging Frenzies,” 58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

is not just an indicator of a set of more or less conscious motivations, that that is a real sign, perhaps the functional unit of a system of communication.”⁴² To think about ketchup in Barthes’s terms is to conceive that because Americans buy and consume ketchup, we are making a conscious choice of communication. We are stating that this is the product that we need. A company like Heinz produces more to fulfill our needs or demands as consumers; therefore expanding the market for Heinz and making ketchup a real sign of our American system of communication. I believe that ketchup became a sign for consumer culture, and McCarthy interrogates this notion in *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight*.

In the Barthesian sense, food can be understood as a system of communication that is a discursive system beyond the nominal. The cultural specificity to ketchup came to represent a complex network of post-war food politics. “Ketchup was able to become the complex web of signification that it is in McCarthy’s work because of specific political and economic conditions that emerged after World War II.”⁴³ Levine argues that “McCarthy’s approach to performance evoked sociological theories of contemporary consumption that informed the evaluation of pop and popular culture. Pop still had resonance in the mid-1970s and McCarthy understood this when he turned his attention to food in his performances.”⁴⁴ The popularization of commercial food products that occurred after the World War II was largely indebted to advertising and mass production. This ushered in the “age of individualization and informalization through increased freedoms and the loosening of class divisions by the influx of product choices available to everyone . . . in supermarkets.”⁴⁵ Because McCarthy recognized the popularity of mass-produced

⁴² Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption.” in *Food and Culture*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 2008), 29.

⁴³ Robin Wolf, “When is Ketchup just Ketchup?: Toward a Sociological Reading of Paul McCarthy’s Early Video Art” (Thesis, Stony Brook University, 2011), 17.

⁴⁴ Levine, “You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy’s Food-Flinging Frenzies,” 55.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

items like ketchup, but he reversed the optimistic view of the products by aggressively defiling them. Ketchup and Miracle Whip became visceral objects that metaphorically leaked out of McCarthy's body.

Sex Sells

Along with enacting gender in his work, McCarthy also referenced the growing sexualization of food advertisements and the soft-core pornography industry in Los Angeles. His appropriation of the film still of *Bow Bride* from Russ Meyer's 1963 film evidences this. Sexual imagery and innuendo in food advertisement played a role in what consumers purchased during the 1970s (Figure 12). Instead of an image of a stay-at-home mom cooking dinner for her family, advertisements began to include figures in less and less clothing. They also included males, females, or both in reclining or suggestive positions. Some advertisements would relegate the product to the border or the margins of the image. Sex sells products. This is an issue we continue to see today in advertisements. McCarthy's performance hints at the sexualization of products through his display of the ketchup bottle in the beginning of *Sailor's Meat*. He posed on the bed with the Heinz bottle in hand, with the label facing outward towards the viewer, much like what a display model would do to sell an item.

Complementing the sexualization of consumer products was an equally intense commercialization of sex during the 1970s, fueled by a series of Supreme Court rulings against censorship that proved a boon to producers and distributors of pornographic material. By the mid-1970s, middle-class Americans consumed their version of "hippy-driven free love through an influx of sex-advice books, erotic novels, sexually explicit theater, and soft-core porn films,"

like *Europe in the Raw*.⁴⁶ As Cary Levine acknowledged, “Proponents of social constructionist theory challenged the Freudian opposition between ‘natural’ desire and ‘cultural’ repression upon which the sexual revolution was founded. In 1973, sociologists John Gagnon and William Simon examined how the physical activities of sex were learned, and integrated into larger social scripts and social arrangements. Meaning and sexual behavior come together to create sexual conduct. Their approach was later reinforced by the work of Michel Foucault. He linked such arrangements to “entrenched power structures and bio- political systems of control.”⁴⁷ Much like the abundance of food offered in supermarkets, the expansion of sexual choice and access were seen as enhanced, and beyond systems of control during the 1970s.

McCarthy played off this notion of sex and food consumption with his appropriation of the film still from *Europe in the Raw* and his fornication with Heinz Ketchup, Miracle Whip, and raw meats in his performance. The sexualization of food pushed during the 1970s paralleled the rise of soft-core pornography films. These films contained nudity and sexual activity, and less sexually explicit than hardcore pornography, but also less regulated and restricted than the latter. Soft-core films went to great lengths to obscure explicit sex scenes, by genital covers and camera angles. McCarthy’s performance obscures explicit sex through his use of the crutch pad as a detachable penis and the fact that he is both the female protagonist and the male sailor. This allowed him to act overtly sexual without becoming illicitly sexual. He kept his performance within the limits of a soft-core porn film.

By the middle of his performance, McCarthy appropriated the Miracle Whip jar as a surrogate vagina for his “detachable penis”⁴⁸ to penetrate. He used his freedom of expression to

⁴⁶ Levine, “You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy’s Food-Flinging Frenzies,” 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 59-60.

⁴⁸ Jones, “Paul McCarthy’s Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity,” 128-130.

push the sexualization of food products. Levine argues:

Sailor's Meat collapses food consumption and sex consumption, sexualized commerce and commercialized sex, literalizing a pervasive underpinning of post-1960s consumer culture and thus rendering it perverse. Both sex and eating are circumscribed by an elaborate array of protocols that determine appropriate times, places, and persons. Both depend on self-regulated, invisible, symbolic, and contradictory sets of rules, and both are controlled by a marketing industry that stimulates desires which are then restrained by the limits of propriety. Crucial to the proper functioning of each social system is the sense that such protocols, rules and limits are absolute. Food and sex can tolerably be mixed, but only under certain conditions and in certain contexts, which explains why eroticized food advertisements—or cookbook-style sex guides—are perceived as not only acceptable but ordinary, while McCarthy's food-fucking is almost unbearably offensive.⁴⁹

McCarthy's performance of *Sailor's Meat*, *Sailor's Delight* defiled consumer products that had become sexualized through advertisements. I feel that McCarthy was criticizing the obsessive behavior and over-indulgence of the American population through his actions in his performance. Heinz Ketchup and Miracle Whip were specifically highlighted, but these products were just two of "iconic" products that had become popularized through advertisement. These objects were patently American, and Levine argues that they referenced American capitalism, and their "symbolism complemented and complicated his work."⁵⁰ McCarthy also referenced the soft-core porn film still, *Bow Bride*, which related to the increase in popularity of sex-advice books, erotic novels, sexually explicit theater, and soft-core porn films during the 1970s. This performance stressed the sexualization of food and increased interest in sex related novelties as well, but also connotes a darker side, foreign to pop artists and others who used consumer products in their work. McCarthy focused on his body, its fluids, and its action, and allowed his body to leak out and contaminate the pristine conception of art associated with California during the 1960s and 1970s.

⁴⁹ Levine, "You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy's Food-Flinging Frenzies," 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

The Dark Side

The dark side of *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight* includes parallels to the Viennese actionists, which included Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, and Rudolf Schwarzkogler. These artists primarily worked in similar abject performance styles between 1960 and 1971. "This artistic group was born out of the horror of National Socialism and World War II, which killed millions and exiled hundreds of thousands. Awareness arose of the plight of the human being, whose suffering was made explicit through existentialism. Artists and groups began to express this through gestures, and in performances that involved action and destruction."⁵¹ Pushing further a revolutionary history and avant-garde legacy, Vienna provided a stage for artists to create virulent, experimental, and destructive art. This artistic movement was eventually banned in Vienna, due to its outrageous acts and content, and the artists eventually left the country for "artistic reasons."⁵²

Like McCarthy, the Viennese actionists utilized various objects, substances, and the body as medium. Through their actions and the direct application of the body, McCarthy and the Viennese actionists were trying to expand/destroy the definition of art. McCarthy's meats in *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight* had precedence in the performances of the actionists, but were not live animals that they involved. Otto Muehl's *Gym Lesson in Food* (1965) one performance that *Sailor's Meat* closely paralleled, showed the performer surrounded by an audience and smothered in various food products. The same year as this performance, Muehl stated that "the audience co-operates with the performer rather than becoming either actors or participants in the

⁵¹ Pilar Parcerisas, "Body and Revolution," in *Viennese Actionism: Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler*, ed. Pilar Parcerisas (Seville, Spain: Junta De Andalucia, 2008), 7.

⁵² José Lebrero Stals, "High Voltage," in *Viennese Actionism: Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler*, 5.

performance. To hinder interruptions during the action is similar to that of a gym lesson.”⁵³

Other actionists utilized bodies in a ritualistic manner. On June 4, 1962, Nitsch performed a work that was part of *The Blood Organ*. Nitsch and Muehl secluded themselves for three days in Muehl’s basement, until one of the basement walls was knocked out for the public to view their work. Nitsch’s work consisted of a slaughtered and flayed lamb on a white cloth in a crucifixion pose on a wall. Red paint was adapted to emphasize the bloodiness of the animal. This marked the first time Nitsch used real blood on a cloth canvas.⁵⁴ McCarthy preferred to use American popular cultural items like hamburger meat, hotdogs, Heinz Ketchup, and Miracle Whip for his performances, which suggested flesh and bodily fluids in a less realistic and brutal fashion. McCarthy also favored gauze in his performance, *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight*, to attach the crutch pad to his pubic region and wrap his upper leg and hip area. Signifying the healing of wounds and a healing aid, gauze is an item that was utilized quite often by the actionists, and can be seen in Nitsch’s work as early as 1960.

The Viennese actionists had two distinct phrases, and I believe that McCarthy’s *Sailor’s Meat* includes both phases. The first phase began with the early actions in 1962, and included Nitsch’s eight poured painting actions. The second phase began with the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS) held in London in September 1966. Artist and political activist Gustav Metzger invited the actionists to the symposium, which led to a presentation of their work on an international stage. At this point, Viennese actionists performances became more “radical and shameless, an art of direct action that attacked bourgeois values in an attempt to destroy them.”⁵⁵ Their actions then ceased to have symbolic content or dimensions, and became direct

⁵³ Judy Radul, “Just Try It: Thoughts on Art and Science Experiments,” *Public Access*, no. 25 (Toronto, 2002): 92.

⁵⁴ David Kilpatrick, “Sacrificial Simulacra from Nietzsche to Nitsch,” *Hyperion* 3, no. 3 (June 2008): 59.

⁵⁵ Parcerisas, “Body and Revolution,” 17.

manifestations of the body secretions, excretions, and bodily functions. They relied on the sexualized nude body for their works; as Muehl pointed out during this time, “pornography was a suitable means for healing society of its fear of genitals.”⁵⁶ *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* projected both of these phases: first by his appropriation of raw meats, ketchup, and Miracle Whip as flesh and bodily fluids, and second by his fornication with the objects. His performance parallels the Viennese actionists direct actions that attacked and attempted to destroy bourgeois values.

McCarthy acknowledged the difference between their actions and his own performances. In an interview with Marc Selwyn, he states “I think I found out about the Viennese in the early 1970s. Vienna is not Los Angeles. My work came out of kids’ television in Los Angeles. I didn’t go through Catholicism and World War II as a teenager, I didn’t live in a European environment. People make reference to Viennese art without really questioning the fact that there’s a big difference between ketchup and blood. I never thought of my work as shamanistic. My work is more about being a clown than a shaman.”⁵⁷ While there is a big difference between ketchup and blood and a clown and a shaman, it is visually obvious that McCarthy was influenced by their work. He was aware of their work several years prior to the creation of *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* and his performance incorporated both phases of the actionists.

McCarthy’s work not only reflected the aspects of the Viennese actionists, but also Los Angeles’s darker side, a side that dominated by myths of cultism and the murders by Charles Manson and the Family. This stands in opposition to the standard image of surfers, beach bums, light, and the aerospace industry in Los Angeles. This side rejected the optimism of finish fetish, light and space, and pop movements. Curator Paul Schimmel argued that “Los Angeles is caught

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁷ Selwyn, “There’s a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood, Interview with Marc Selwyn,” 134.

in a maelstrom, where the darker, angst-ridden side of contemporary life has little to do with the stereotypical cultural wasteland of sunny fun dreamland”; it is a bifurcated system composed of *noir* and sunshine.⁵⁸ *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* expressed the *noir* angst-ridden side of Los Angeles, and rejected the sunny optimism through the defilement of consumer products and object sexuality.

The term *noir* comes from film noir, which describes a specific Hollywood cinema genre during the 1940s and 1950s, characterized by deep shadows and dramatic angles that emphasized mystery, cynicism, and sexuality. McCarthy’s almost eighty-plus minute long performance can be read as a film because of its length, but I use the term more to reference the bifurcated attitude that has developed in Los Angeles between sunshine and *noir*. The sunny side of Los Angeles was conveyed through art movements like finish fetish. This movement evoked the warm clear sunlight and sparkling waves of the California atmosphere, and an interest in reflective, shiny surfaces. Artist Larry Bell recalls that the New York scene in the 1960s and 1970s was highly intellectual and was not his “kind of thing.” He loved the “ocean, girls, having fun, and drinking,” which was reflected in his luminous and chromatic work.⁵⁹ “This movement was elegant and simple, and included plastic and polyester resin materials.”⁶⁰ When McCarthy entered the art world, the sunshine culture was facing the challenge of the *noir* proponents.

The *noir* elements of *Sailor’s Meat, Sailor’s Delight* are expressed in McCarthy’s explorations of the taboos of sexuality, popular culture, and consumption. The combination of these elements differ from the cultural picture of Los Angeles produced in the previous decades

⁵⁸ Paul Schimmel, “Into the Maelstrom, L.A. Art at the End of the Century,” in *Helter Skelter, L.A. Art in the 1990s* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 19.

⁵⁹ Erik Verhagen, “L’art perceptuel selon Larry Bell/Larry Bell: on Reflections and Presence,” *Art Press*, no. 376 (March 2011): 39-40.

⁶⁰ Peter Plagens, “The L.A. Look,” in *Sunshine Muse: Contemporary Art on the West Coast* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 120.

by movements like light and space, finish fetish, and pop. This new *noir* side of Los Angeles art distinguished it from cultural production elsewhere, providing it with the opportunity to stand on its own and reject the burden of provincialism. Cultural critic Norman Klein likens the *noir* sensibility to the feeling of being lost in the wrong neighborhood without a way to call for help or walking down the street in an industrial area and feeling someone pointing a gun at your head.⁶¹ I believe *noir* can also produce the sensation of claustrophobia experienced in *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*. The hotel room that McCarthy performed in was dark and small with little to no natural light, and his actions were focused around the bed, as if the performer were trapped in a diminutive space. He also had his select audience view the performance on a monitor in a narrow corridor, again suggesting physical and psychological states of claustrophobia.

In Klein's essay for the *Helter Skelter* exhibition catalogue in 1992, and again in his book *The History of Forgetting*, he stated that "the most common images of Los Angeles since the 1960s are the city burning, the invisible city freeways, and smog."⁶² Klein believed that apocalyptic myths and general fear resulted in Los Angeles's dark side. In the 1970s a state of confusion and horror created by violent crime swept Los Angeles. Issues of war, sex, and violence were popular debate topics during the 1960s and 1970s. In reaction to these issues, Paul Schimmel contends, McCarthy's and Burden's work demanded a visceral rather than a purely intellectual response from the viewer. By using the body in their performances both artists raised issues of violence, pain, and endurance. Their work was hard to ignore, because they used debased raw subjects from everyday life to shock their viewers into another state of mind. They presented graphic explorations of violence – McCarthy used sexuality as well as violence – to

⁶¹ Norman Klein, "L.A. Noir and Forgetting," in *The History of Forgetting Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (New York: Verso, 1997), 80-1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 80-1.

question contemporary standards of obscenity. “These artists expressed their own dark personal concerns through their artwork about general sentiments of the society at large.”⁶³ Klein would agree that the artists created a much darker kind of work than the earlier light-filled, optimistic art of Los Angeles, through their freedom of expression to stress the taboos in society.

Writer Mike Davis argued in his book, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, that *noir* everywhere insinuated contempt for the depraved consumer culture, while the *noir* searched for a critical mode in which to write or make films. Davis’s book deals with literature and film, arguing that *noir* filmmakers went beyond generalized petty-bourgeois resentment against the collapse of the Southern California dream, by alluding to the repressed reality of class struggle. “Despite the postwar witch hunt that decimated Hollywood progressives, *noir* survived from the 1930s through the 1950s to re-emerge in a new wave in the 1960s and 1970s. Although recuperated as an ambience shorn of its 1940s radical affinities, *noir* has nonetheless remained the popular and, despite its intended elitism, ‘populist’ anti-myth of Los Angeles.”⁶⁴ His view of *noir* is not much different than Klein’s; they both paint an accurate picture of the reverse side of the “California Dream.”

Both McCarthy’s and Burden’s performances alluded to the *noir* side of Los Angeles. As I have stated throughout this thesis, *Sailor’s Meat*, *Sailor’s Delight* rejected the sunny myth of Los Angeles through McCarthy’s fornication with consumer products, artificially illuminated hotel room, aggressive sexual acts with consumer products and multiple phalluses, reference to soft-core porn, and how he pushed himself to the physical threshold of pain and nausea. Burden’s performances convey this same notion. His performances also focused on the human body and often required a considerable measure of physical endurance.

⁶³ Schimmel, “Into the Maelstrom, L.A. Art at the End of the Century,” 21.

⁶⁴ Mike Davis, “Sunshine or Noir?,” in *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006), 21.

While still working on his MFA at the University of California, Irvine, Burden shut himself in a locker for five days, with only the bare necessities for survival. This 1971 work is entitled *Five-Day Locker Piece*. This piece caused debate on whether he would graduate from the program. He did, and went on to create *Shoot* in 1971 in Santa Ana. He was pushed the pain threshold when a friend, who was a marksman, shot him in the upper left arm. He documented this performance by using a Super 8 camera for an eight second clip.⁶⁵ He explained that this was a reaction to the atrocities committed by both sides during the Vietnam War. In 1973, Burden repetitively broadcast short 5 to 10 second clips on local television in between commercial slots. One such performance was *Through the Night Softly*, where he crawled through broken glass, wearing only underwear, with his hands behind his back. He stated in an interview with Glenn Phillips that this was his way to thrash through the universe, and the pieces of glass were stars (Figures 13). He thought of the piece as an existential activity.

His physical endurance was yet again tested in *Trans-fixed* (1974) after his hands were nailed to the top of a Volkswagen parked in a garage then was slowly moved out onto the street.⁶⁶ His shocking performances were categorized as body art and regarded as part of a wider critique of an institutional definition of art. By 1978, Burden was appointed professor at the University of California in Los Angeles, and moved away from performance. He became more involved with installations that were informed by his interest in technology and engineering.

In *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*, McCarthy pushed the limits of his physical endurance and explored the thin line between pain and pleasure. McCarthy gagged himself several times and walked barefoot on top of the broken glass from a Miracle Whip jar and Heinz Ketchup bottle with his bare feet. The video conveys his rejection of civilized behavior, and his thoughts

⁶⁵ Glenn Phillips, "Chris Burden," in *California Video: Artists and Histories* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 62.

⁶⁶ Phillips, "Chris Burden," 64.

on consumerism, over-indulgence with sex and food, and the growing sexualization of food advertisements in California during the 1970s. McCarthy's and Burden's performances alluded to the growing fear of the idea of the apocalypse and the general notion of *noir* that was becoming again a stable part of Los Angeles literature and visual culture during the 1970s.

Conclusion

McCarthy's performance works continued the tradition of earlier performances by artists such as Yves Klein, Allan Kaprow, and the Viennese actionists. These artists privileged the body as a material of artistic expression, rather than traditional art materials such as paint and canvas. The ambiguity of the sunshine and *noir* environments of Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s particularly inspired McCarthy. This is where he was exposed to and involved with the film and television industry. This exposure eventually led to McCarthy acquiring and utilizing a video camera to document his live performances. His audience was exposed to transgressive acts, which were mediated by a television monitor. He adopted Heinz Ketchup, Miracle Whip, and raw meats, were widely promoted on television and were common and often comforting objects of consumption, as surrogate body parts and bodily fluids. These products were symbolically detached or leaked from the body to contaminate a clean and well-ordered civilized world.

Dismissing the recent history of contemporary art in Los Angeles, which celebrated the bright warm light and open spaces of the West and embraced new materials such as colored plastics and resins, McCarthy turned to an older cinematic and literary tradition in Los Angeles, *noir*. *Noir* proliferated in the 1940s and 1950s, and expressed the fears and anxieties of urban life

and was fraught with sexual tension. McCarthy appropriated of the film still *Bow Bride* from *Europe in the Raw* to represent the increase in the use of sex in entertainment and advertisement during the 1970s. This again suggested a bifurcated system that had developed in Los Angeles. A sunny side that was associated with surfers, beach bums, warm bright light, and the ocean contrasted to a *noir* side where the angst-ridden side of contemporary life was more focused on the freedoms of expression and utilization of sex and violence.

Throughout my thesis, I have argued that Paul McCarthy's performance *Sailor's Meat*, *Sailor's Delight* rejected the upbeat sensibility that characterized California art during the 1960s. Using Heinz Ketchup and Miracle Whip as bodily fluids and sexual secretion, his *noir*, vulgar performance rejected civilized behavior, and allowed his body to metaphorically leak out. His aggressive fornication and defilement of consumer products challenged and subverted Los Angeles's "sunny mecca of hedonism."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Schimmel, "Into the Maelstrom, L.A. Art at the End of the Century," 19.

FIGURES

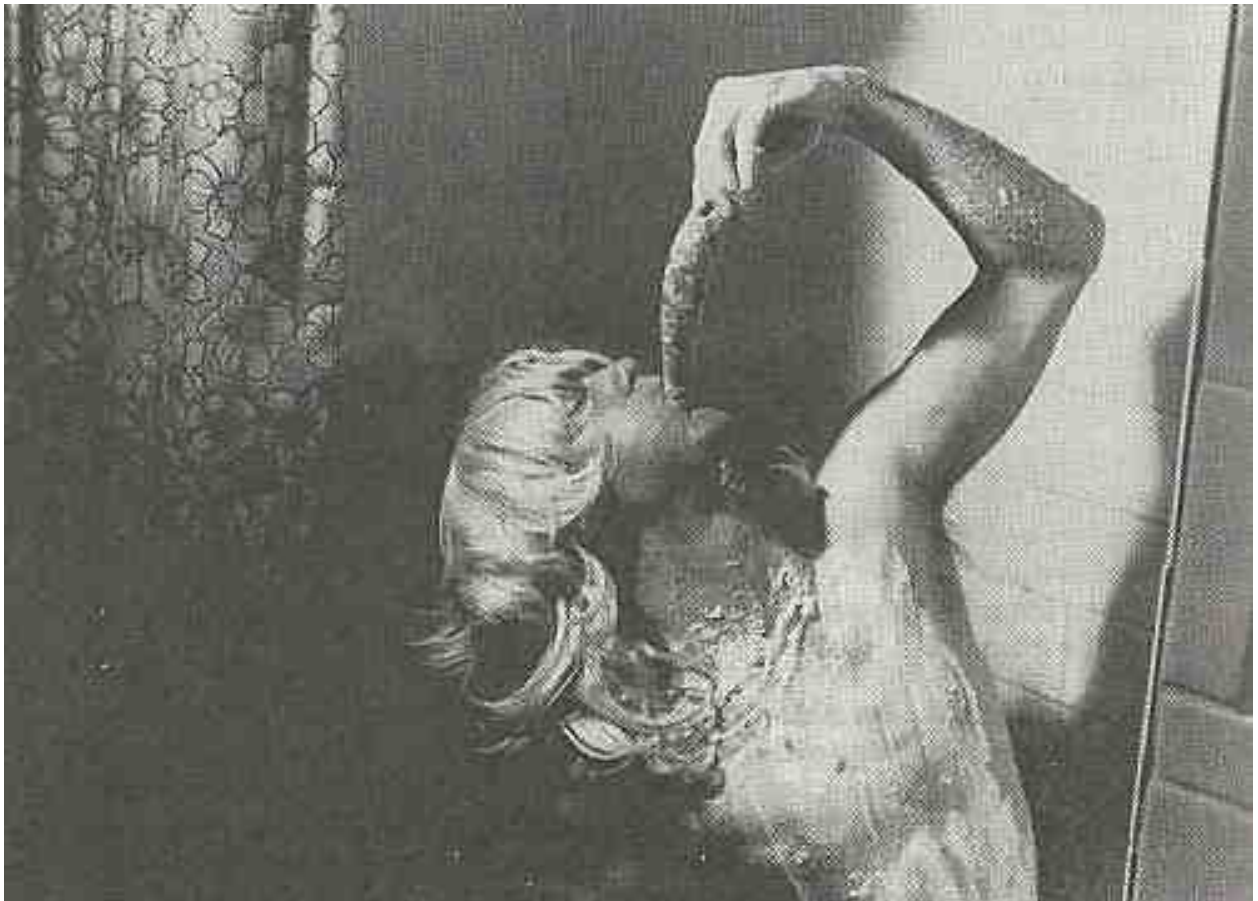


Figure 1. Paul McCarthy, *Tubbing*, July 1975, performance/video, Pasadena, California.

Source: <http://www.artperformance.org/article-tubbing-prelude-to-sweet-sailor-s-meat-paul-mccarthy-1975-videotape-113242620.html>.



Figure 2. Paul McCarthy, *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*, July 1975, performance/video, Pasadena, California, 82 minutes and 32 seconds.

Source: <http://sites.moca.org/blacksun/2011/09/27/paul-mccarthy-sailors-meat-1975/>.



Figure 3. Paul McCarthy, *Sailor's Meat, Sailor's Delight*, July 1975, performance/video, Pasadena, California, 82 minutes and 32 seconds.

Source: Paul McCarthy and Eva Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2004), 73.

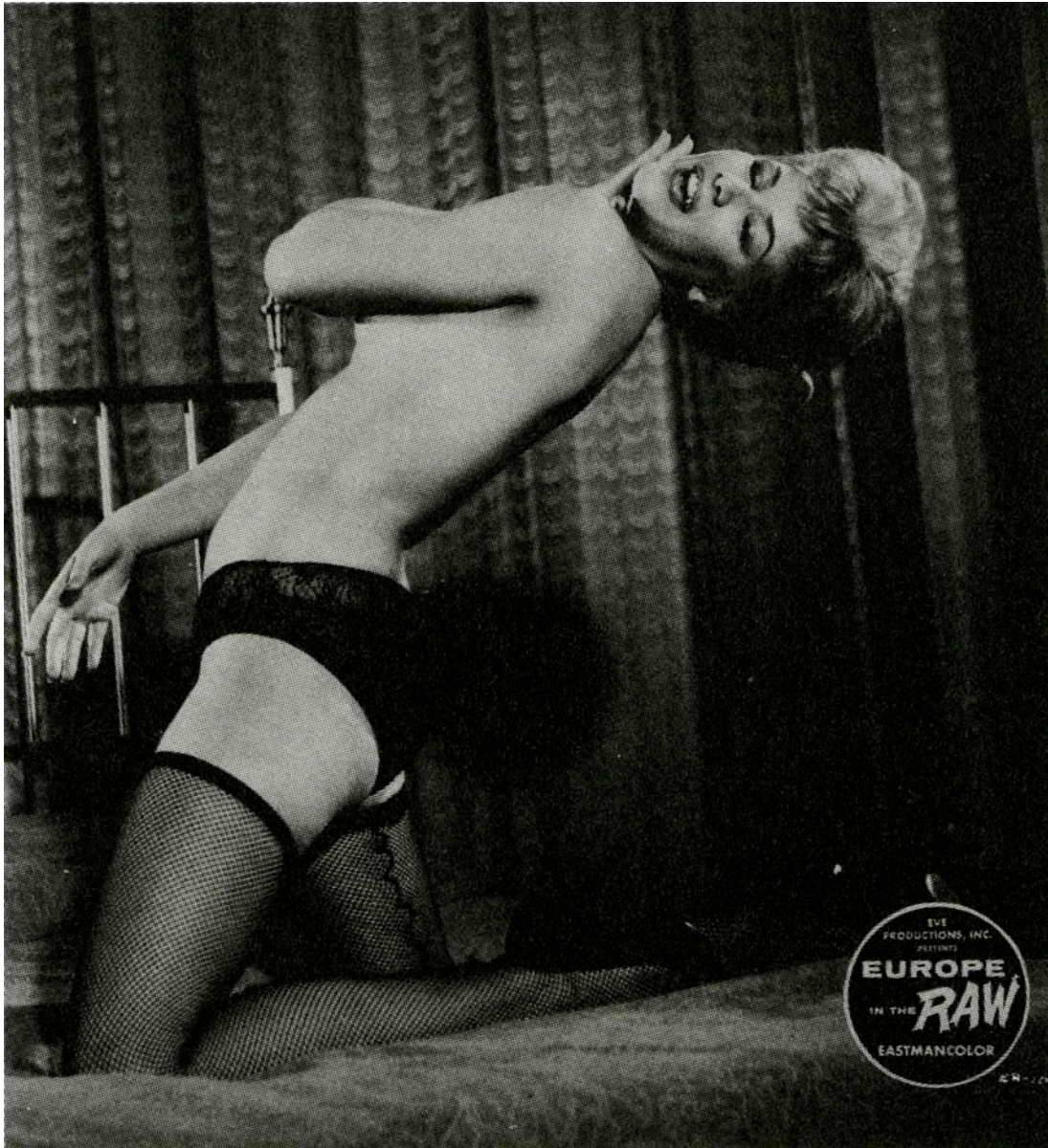


Figure 4. *Bow Bride*, Russ Meyer's *Europe in the Raw* Publicity Still, 1963.

Source: McCarthy and Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box*, 72.

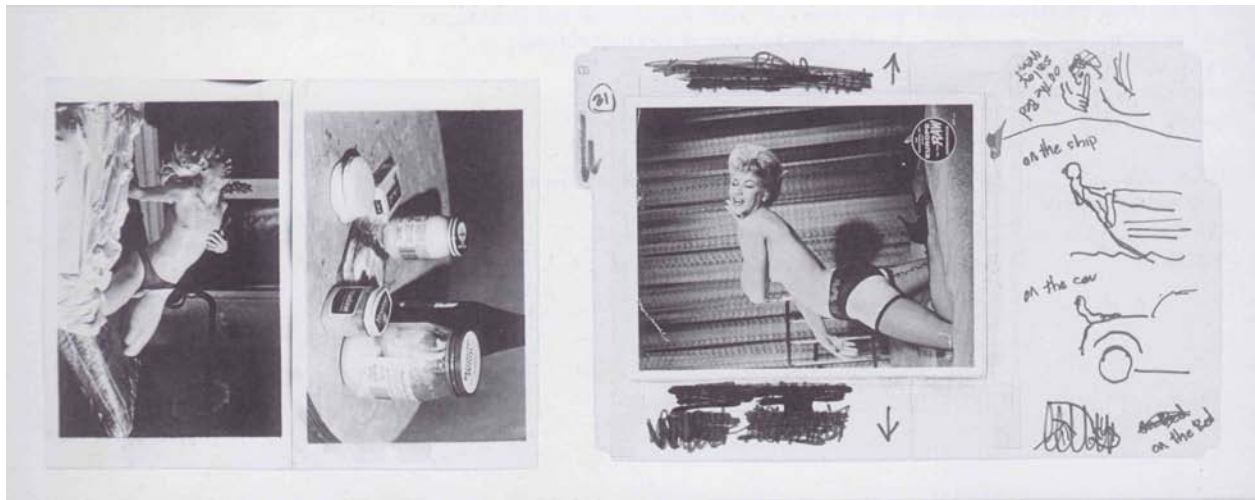


Figure 5. Paul McCarthy, *Sailor's Meat, Europe Raw*, 1975, 3 Vintage black-and-white photographs, Manila folder, Marker on paper, 15 7/8 x 37 1/8 inches.

Source: McCarthy and Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box*, 72.



Figure 6. Paul McCarthy, *Sailor's Meat Drawing*, 1976, Pencil, ketchup, adhesive tape on reinforced binder paper, 8 ½ x 8 inches.

Source: <http://sites.moca.org/blacksun/2011/09/27/paul-mccarthy-sailors-meat-1975/>.

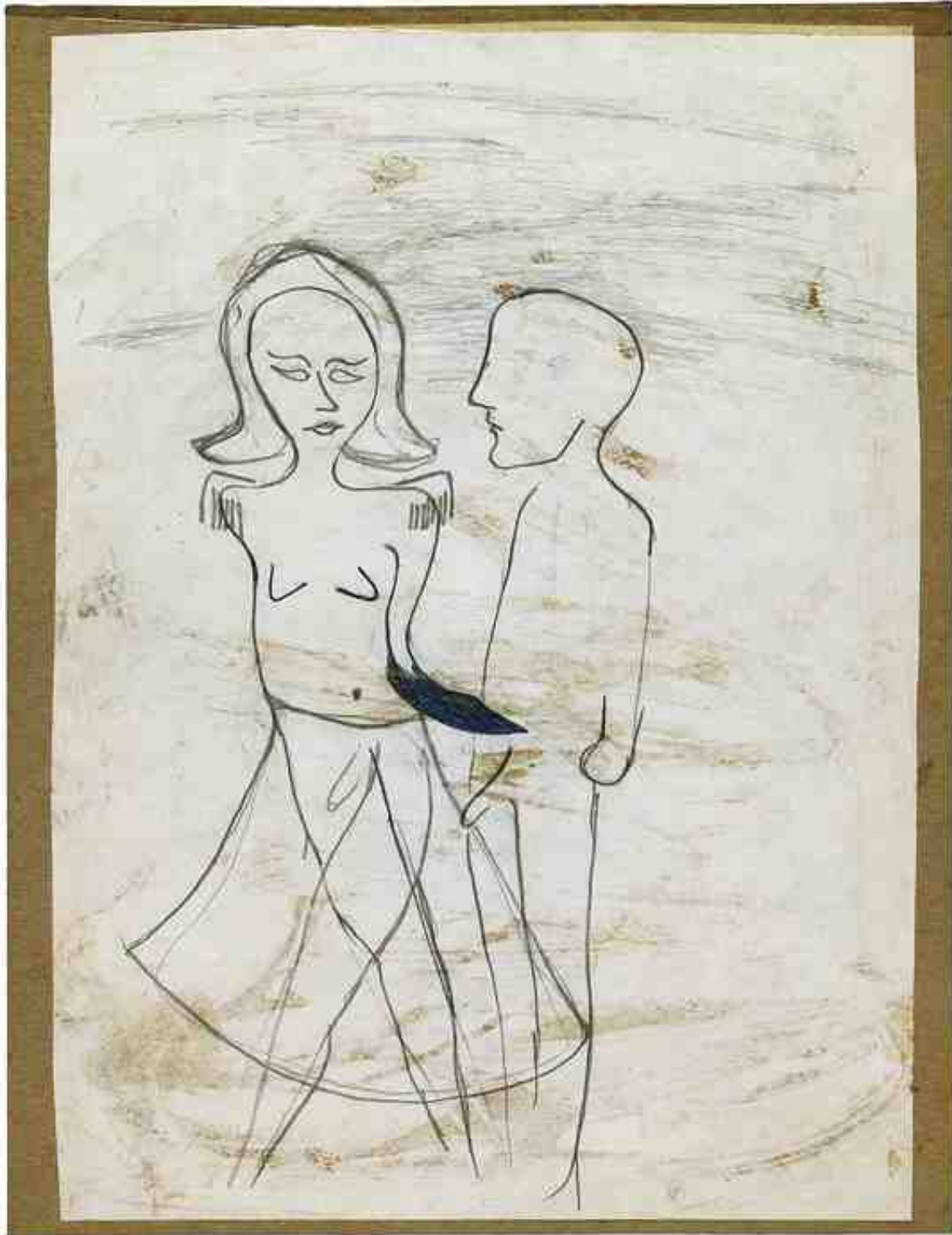


Figure 7. Paul McCarthy, *Sailor's Meat Drawing*, 1976, Pencil and pen on paper, back with glue residues, taped onto cardboard, 11 x 8 ½ inches.

Source: <http://sites.moca.org/blacksun/2011/09/27/paul-mccarthy-sailors-meat-1975/>.



Figure 8. Paul McCarthy, *Large Re-Drawn Sailor's Meat Drawing (Dona Suck and Sailor and the Boy)*, 1982, Charcoal, spray paint on paper, 201 x 140 inches.

Source: McCarthy and Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box*, 79.



Figure 9. Paul McCarthy, *Large Re-Drawn Sailor's Meat Drawing (Adam and Eve)*, 1982,

Charcoal on paper, 204 3/8 x 139 3/8 inches.

Source: McCarthy and Meyer-Hermann, *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box*, 80.

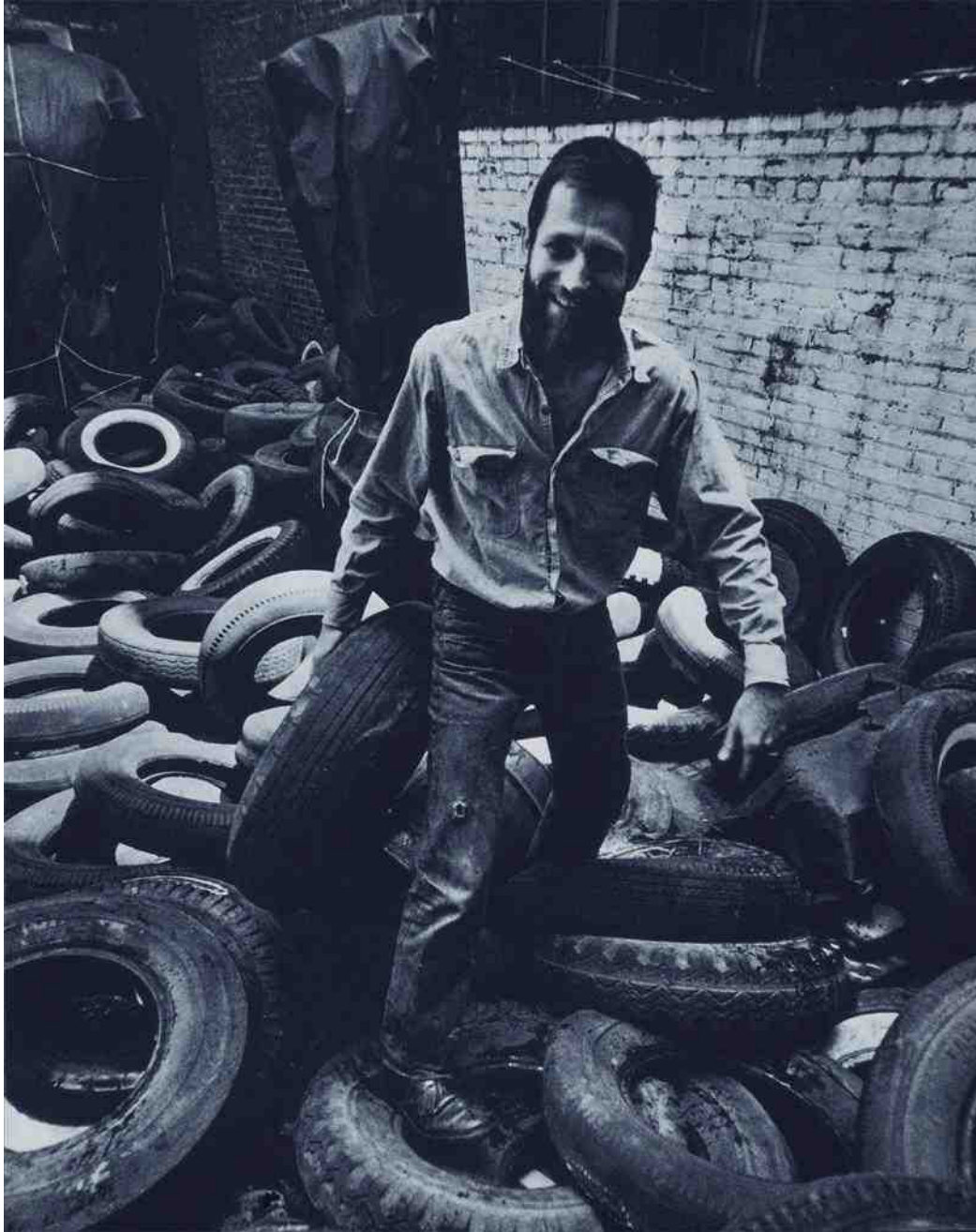


Figure 10. Allan Kaprow, *Yard*, 1961, Tires, Happening, New York.

Source:

<http://library.artstor.org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/library/welcome.html#3|search|6|All20Collections3A2020kaprow20yard|Filtered20Search|||type3D3626kw3Dkaprow20yard26geoIds3D26clsIds3D26id3Dall26bDate3D26eDate3D26dExact3D3126prGeoId3D>



Figure 11. Paul McCarthy, *Ketchup Sandwich*, 1970, Ketchup bottles and sauce installation.

Source: <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/paul-mccarthy's-pig-island-at-fondazione-nicola-trussardi-milan/>.



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Figure 12. Kretschmer Wheat Germ, *You Are What You Eat*, 1973, Magazine advertisement.

Source: <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/food-ads-1970s/9>.



Figure 13. Chris Burden, still from the TV broadcast of *Through the Night Softly*, 1973. Single-channel video, black-and-white, sound; 30 seconds.

Source: Glenn Phillips, *California Video: Artists and Histories* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 64.

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