In what ways do site-specific performances of everyday acts disrupt or expose closed systems of public space, and what do their differing modes of mediation reveal about the limits of resistance?

Figure 0. Collage created by the author from images cited throughout the essay.

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Abstract

This essay investigated how late twentieth-century site-specific performances of everyday acts operated politically within their urban public setting without overtly declaring protest. This research was motivated by practice-based questions about how walking, pausing or falling could disturb the rhythms and expectations that structure public space, and what such embodied interruptions reveal about spatial power.

The research used theory-led analysis of Richard Sennett's concept of closed urban systems and Michel de Certeau's notion of tactics as a form of embodied resistance. Public space and performance theory functioned as analytical parameters through which site-specific works were examined, focusing on the political implications of the body, the integrity of site-specificity and each work's capacity to disrupt, or reveal, spatial closure. Vulnerabilities through bodily risk were assessed as mechanisms through which resistance became spatially legible.

The analysis found that these performances temporarily opened closed systems by interrupting norms of circulation, compliance, use and visibility. However, mediation revealed the limits of such resistance. Once displaced from their sites, embodied acts no longer produced spatial friction directly, but instead exposed the conditions under which openness had been momentarily achieved.These findings reframed openness as a contingent, embodied achievement rather than a fixed spatial quality, with implications for how spatial designers can understand site, agency and the politics of everyday acts.

Walking, Pausing, Falling: In what ways do site-specific performances of everyday acts disrupt or expose closed systems of public space, and what do their differing modes of mediation reveal about the limits of resistance?

As a dancer who has devised, performed and observed site-specific work, I am interested in how intentional bodies operate politically within urban space without overtly declaring protest. My research comes from practice-based curiosity and is situated at the intersection of performance studies and public space theory. My own experience of working with pedestrian movement and task-based scores prompted questions about how everyday actions of walking, pausing or falling could subtly disturb the rhythms and expectations that govern public space. This research develops from that practice-based interest, situating embodied performance within theories of public space and everyday life.

My essay asks: *in what ways do site-specific performances of everyday acts disrupt or expose closed systems of public space, and what do their differing modes of mediation reveal about the limits of resistance?* To frame this question, I draw on theories of the public realm developed by Richard Sennett, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and Erving Goffman, understanding public space as a contested field structured by regulation, representation and lived practice. I also draw on Ben Highmore's account of everyday life as a site of political possibility, using de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' as a working definition of embodied resistance.

While I won't critique these works as performance art pieces, I employ the writings of site-specific and performance theorists, including Antony Howell, André Lepecki and Paula Serafini, to analyse their spatial and political effects. These frameworks help contextualise the works and clarify how different critical positions might read their actions, sites and afterlives in relation to the question of resistance.
I will analyse each case through shared parameters. The everyday act, the political implications of the body in that setting, the integrity of site-specificity, and the work's capacity to disrupt or reveal spatial closure. Finally, by considering mediation, I argue that while these works momentarily open closed systems through embodied encounter, their continued circulation reveals both the reach and the limits of resistance once lived spatial friction is transferred into representation.

1. Public Space as a System Under Pressure

Public space, as understood through late-20th-century theory, isn't a neutral backdrop but an active field of negotiation, performance and contestation. Rather than treating it as a static setting, in this review, I approach public space as a system shaped through use, regulation and interruption. Building on Richard Sennett's reworking of Arendt, Habermas and Goffman, I situate this review away from idealised models [1] and toward an urban public realm defined by density, anonymity and embodied encounter.

In this framework, I see public space as a dynamic, contingent environment, shaped equally by lived practice and its architectural form. Sennett's argument for open, adaptable urban systems (2017)[2] provides an important foundation moving forward: rigid, closed designs suppress the vitality of public life, while porous environments invite unpredictability, friction and exchange.[3] The types of closures I'm interested in for this research are systems that regulate movement, tempo and behaviour through design, ownership or observation, producing predictable circulation and use. This tension between designed stability and lived improvisation becomes crucial for understanding how performance artists intervene in the city, using everyday acts not simply as gestures of expression but as methods for opening closed spatial systems.[4]

Habermas's account [5] of the public sphere extends this conversation by decentring the physical site and locating discourse wherever critical debate can be enacted. This is significant for performance, as it suggests that 'publicness' isn't fixed by ownership or designation, but emerges through acts that make power visible, disputable or shared. Goffman's performativity (1959)[6] layers how emphasising daily gestures of walking, waiting or looking are socially scripted behaviours through which individuals navigate and negotiate the public realm. Diaz picks up that Sennett's adoption of Goffman forms more of a cultural than an explicitly political programme. A constructive distinction for my research, where cultural acts in public space often acquire political charge through spatial friction rather than overt declaration.

What emerges across the literature is an understanding of public space as both structured and porous, regulated yet open to interruption. Closed spaces, whether architecturally fixed, commercially-designed or socially-coded, thrive on predictability. Open systems cultivate adaptability and invite reinterpretation. It is in the cracks between these conditions that we will see performance intervene.

I believe that the performance artists I have chosen employ "everyday life's apparent banality, a depth beneath its triviality,"[7] or what Ben Highmore might describe as the texture of the everyday to anchor their works. Finding the resistant potential in ordinary acts such as walking or pausing to exercise their point. These gestures become tools for re-signifying public environments, unsettling normative behaviours and exposing invisible structures of control. Such acts align with Diaz's description of Sennet's notions of political agency, where resistance is not solely located in spectacular protest but in minor, embodied negotiations that challenge how space is meant to be used.

This review uses a setting of public space, particularly its frictions and closures, as the conceptual ground for analysing performances that manipulate or subvert daily acts. Through this lens, site-specificity is not a contextual detail but the central mechanism through which these works open, disrupt or reorient public systems.

1. Ie. The ancient Greek agora or Roman forum.
2. Richard Sennett, "The Public Realm," in *The SAGE Handbook of the 21st Century City,* ed. Suzanne Hall (SAGE PUBLICATIONS, 2017, 521-533.
3. Luis Diaz, "From the fall of Public Man to Big Society",Lecture 4, Contemporary Concerns, AIA573 Architecture Criticism, 2024–25.
4. Arendt's notion of public discourse among equals (1958) reveals how visibility and plurality underpin the political potential of shared space. Yet, as Luis Diaz's summary of Simmel suggests in his 2025 lecture, the urban condition also risks sliding into a blasé detachment of overexposure to stimuli. Public life could be seen to fluctuate between engagement and withdrawal, an instability that performance practices are particularly well-positioned to exploit.
5. Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, New German Critique, no. 3 (1974): 49–55
6. Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Allen Lane, 1969
7. Quoted in Ben Highmore, "Dwelling on the Daily: On the Term Everyday Life as Used by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau," *Daidalos* 75 (2000): 40, citing Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 1984), 37.

2. Everyday Acts as Spatial Intervention

Ben Highmore's *Dwelling on the Daily*[8] provides us with a useful theoretical foundation for understanding how everyday life functions as both a site of constraint and a stage for creative resistance. By drawing heavily on Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*[9] and Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*,[10] Highmore frames the everyday not as a banal context but as an active, contested field where the political, the habitual and the embodied meet. His argument is grounded in the proposition that the everyday is best understood through the concept of "the dwelt".[11] An active domain that cuts across public/private, inside/outside, routine/accidental. This shift resists the tendency to confine the everyday to either the domestic or the urban street and instead positions it as the spatial and temporal fabric through which lived experience unfolds.

A central thread to Highmore's work is Lefebvre's notion of commodified time. Time that can be spent, wasted, earned or sold. Highmore emphasises how capitalist modernity attaches itself to the most mundane routines, appropriating even leisure into a continuation of work "by other means,"[12] so by distancing itself from the durational and repetitive textures of everyday life that Highmore articulates. The value of his account lies in reframing these overlooked spaces and practices as potential sites of meaning-making, critique and social encounter.

Neuancing Lefebvre's larger-scale critique of commodification, de Certeau suggests a more tactical form of micro-politics. Highmore consolidates de Certeau's distinction between strategies (the hierarchical institutional structures) and tactics (the inventive, often resistant "arts of doing"[13] such as remembering, walking or speaking). Tactics which operate within constraints but never fully capitulate to them. Small-scale acts of reappropriation or resistance that play within existing systems while subtly unsettling their expectations.[14]

Highmore's emphasis on visibility and the infra-ordinary, "how to accord significance to the seemingly insignificant",[15] is additionally poignant to these case studies. His claim that attention to the everyday requires "a different pacing and a different form of listening"[16] resonates with works that detach habitual movements to reveal underlying spatial politics. Ultimately, situating the everyday as a site where autonomy, resistance, spectacle and constraint are continually negotiated.

His framework provides a conceptual bridge to Sennett's distinction between open and closed systems, lending its vocabulary for analysing how performances interact with, and reveal, the political conditions of public space. This framework allows these everyday acts to be read not as unconscious behaviours, but as tactical interventions of resistance, gaining political force through attention, duration and mere bodily presence in the public realm.

8. Ben Highmore, "*Dwelling on the Daily: On the Term Everyday Life as Used by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau*," Daidalos 75 (2000)
9. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), 39–42.
10. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 29–31.
11. Ben Highmore, "*Dwelling on the Daily: On the Term Everyday Life as Used by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau*," *Daidalos* 75 (2000): 38
12. Ibid: 40
13. Ibid: 42
14. Moving forward, when I refer to acts of resistance, this can be understood as de Certeau's 'tactics' made politically legible through their effects. Be that, the disruption of circulation, the exposure of bodily vulnerability or visibility, or the subversion of normative expectations within these systems. This will prove conceptually valuable for my research, as it suggests a lens through which bodily action in public space becomes a form of lived critique. As such, it will form one of the four parameters through which I review the impact of my chosen interventions.
15. Ben Highmore, "*Dwelling on the Daily: On the Term Everyday Life as Used by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau*," *Daidalos* 75 (2000): 39
16. Ibid: 39

3. Site-Specificity in Resistance

In his chapter *Time and Space*,[17] Anthony Howell argues that performers draw on space through movement, stillness and relational geometry, treating the performance environment as an extension of temporal expression. The space isn't just setting, but an active contributor with whom rules, constraints and possibilities shape experience. This conceptually aligns with Sennett's insistence that spatial form actively structures behaviour, framing what kinds of movement, encounter and agency are possible. For Howell, authentic performance demands real, lived spatial conditions rather than representational scenography; the architecture of the setting participates directly in meaning-making. The chapter ultimately positions time and space as co-constitutive forces in performance, shaping both performer behaviour and audience perception.

Howell would say that performance requires the authenticity of "real"[18] rooms, objects and material contexts and that representation dilutes experiential truth, stating that "space needs to be appropriate to concept".[19] This implies that the spatial site of a performance cannot operate merely as a symbolic container or setting, but must actively participate in the meaning of the work. Its material conditions, constraints and accidental contingencies shape the performance as much as the performer themself. Continuing this logic, space becomes a co-performer, an agent that produces friction, resistance or revelation, and whose lived specificity anchors the integrity of the piece. For Howell, authenticity emerges not from aesthetic effect but from the fusion of performer, site and action in real time. The closer a work comes to staging itself within reality (or Highmore's textures of everyday life), the more rigorously it resists theatrical mediation and representation.

Howell's emphasis on real, lived spatial conditions clarifies that not all uses of everyday acts can function as resistance, but only those grounded in specific sites where material constraints, risk, and encounter actively shape the work and its duration. This prompts us to look next at the body's response to these conditions and how movement and stillness can function as negotiations of space rather than abstract gestures of resistance.

17. Anthony Howell. *The Analysis of Performance Art: a Guide to Its Theory and Practice*. Vol. 32. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1999.
18. Ibid. 177
19. Ibid. 177

4. Movement, Stillness and the Politics of the Body

In *Exhausting Dance*,[20] André Lepecki diagnoses a critical gap between contemporary choreographic practices and the discourse that evaluates them, arguing that critics rely on an inherited definition of dance as continuous movement, flow and rhythmic mobility. His intervention reframes stillness, interruption and reduced motility not as deficits or provocations but as politically charged strategies that dismantle the presumed status of movement. Through a cross-disciplinary methodology that includes visual art, performance and philosophy, Lepecki positions choreography as a field that can interrogate broader political structures, especially a modern imperative to be constantly in motion. The introduction positions this "exhaustion of dance"[21]as both artistic tactic and theoretical tool, expanding choreography beyond disciplinary boundaries and aligning it with philosophical questions about embodiment and resistance. Here, we can read stillness emerging as a radical, anti-normative gesture, disturbing dominant spatial, political and kinetic expectations.

In *Performance Action: The Politics of Art Activism*,[22] Paula Serafini similarly approaches politics not as a fixed institutional system, but as a shifting, contested field shaped by disagreement, multiplicity and the continual redefinition of public life. Drawing on contemporary political theorists,[23] she emphasises "dissensus"[24] as a core mechanism through which politics becomes visible, foregrounding subaltern publics and alternative forms of collective force that challenge dominant powers of visibility and participation. Within this framework, art activism functions as a material and discursive practice through which public space can be re-signified, disrupted and re-imagined. Political action, for Serafini, is enacted not only through speech or representation, but through embodied interventions that reconfigure who is seen, heard and recognised within shared environments.

Like Lepecki, Serafini places the body at the centre of political interruption. She sees embodied action as a means of unsettling dominant social tempos and spatial choreographies. Where Lepecki focuses on the choreo-political force of stillness and reduced movement, Serafini pushes this logic into the broader field of public life, arguing that interruptions of movement also function as acts of dissensus. These are affective and spatial acts that challenge the consensual organisation of space and expose the unequal distribution of agency within it. Her framing resonates with Howell's emphasis on the material specificity and lived reality of site, yet diverges by resisting notions of spatial purity or neutrality. Instead, Serafini insists that conflict, inequality and uneven representation are fundamental conditions of public space, shifting attention away from whether a site is appropriate and toward what is contested, who is excluded, and what is at stake in acts of occupation or refusal of the status quo.

Read together, Lepecki, Serafini and Howell complicate the conceptual terrain of how performance operates through movement and stillness, site and dislocation, visibility and withdrawal, to articulate competing claims to public presence. Howell's insistence on real spatial conditions highlights how material constraints, risk and encounter shape performance, while Lepecki reveals how withholding movement can interrupt dominant temporal and spatial systems. I interpret Serafini as deepening this by situating such interruptions within political struggles over visibility and participation, framing performance as a mode of dissensual appearance that reorders the existing. For her, performance becomes a means of exposing how public space is actively produced through inclusion and exclusion, rather than a backdrop for action.

20. André Lepecki. *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. London;New York;: Routledge, 2006;2005;
21. André Lepecki. *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. London;New York;: Routledge, 2006;2005; 22
22. Paula Serafini. *Performance Action: the Politics of Art Activism*. 1st edn. Vol. 1. Abingdon: Routledge, 2019;2018;
23. Such as Amin and Thrift, Mouffe, Fraser, Butler and Rancière.
24. "The act of dissensus, a breaking of the consensus, argues for equality that reverses this unequal distribution of political—and artistic—participation" Paula Serafini. *Performance Action: the Politics of Art Activism*. 1st edn. Vol. 1. Abingdon: Routledge, 2,019;2018; 18

Crucially, Lepecki and Serafini together demonstrate that resistance in public space is not universally accessible, but unevenly distributed according to visibility, vulnerability and risk. The capacity to pause, interrupt or refuse movement without sanction is politically conditioned, complicating Sennett's more optimistic claim that public space universally enables friction and encounter. Rather than assuming equal access to public presence, these frameworks foreground how bodies are differentially permitted to occupy, disrupt or remain still within shared environments.

Lepecki's understanding of stillness as an active refusal of acceleration therefore provides a productive lens for analysing my case studies. Each work engages with normative spatial expectations while exposing the performer's body to specific forms of risk and vulnerability embedded within their urban and sociopolitical contexts. In these examples, stillness does not signal passivity, but functions as a charged interruption that makes the constraints, pressures and exclusions shaping public space itself visible.

Case Studies

In this section, I will examine how site-specific performances use everyday acts to engage with and momentarily open closed systems of public space. Each case is analysed through four parameters: the everyday act itself and its spatial or cultural significance, the body's political role in that setting, site-specificity and its integrity to the act, and the work's capacity to disrupt or reveal spatial closure. Mediation, documentation and re-staging are then considered as an additional layer, showing how these interventions continue to circulate and be interpreted beyond their original context. Do they continue to reveal spatial inequalities, or have their impacts been desensitised through over-representation?

Figure 1. Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, 1985, video still, LUX. Reproduced from LUX, accessed January 7, 2026. https://lux.org.uk/work/roadworks/. [25]

25. Figure 1. Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, 1985, video still, LUX. Reproduced from LUX, accessed January 7, 2026. https://lux.org.uk/work/roadworks/.
26. Ben Highmore, "Dwelling on the Daily: On the Term Everyday Life as Used by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau," Daidalos 75 (2000): 39
27. Tate, "Mona Hatoum: Roadworks," *Tate Research Publication*, https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/performance-at-tate/perspectives/mona-hatoum

Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks* (1985)

The work's site-specificity is inseparable from its political force. Performed in Brixton shortly after the uprisings of 1981 and 1985, *Roadworks* situates Hatoum's body within a neighbourhood marked by racialised policing, economic precarity and intensified surveillance. The pavement emerges not as neutral infrastructure but as a closed system organised around speed, circulation and compliance. By performing at rush hour, Hatoum directly confronts capitalist regimes of time-discipline, exposing how public space privileges uninterrupted movement while rendering bodily struggle invisible. Within this closed, efficiency-driven system, Hatoum's intervention operates tactically rather than oppositionally.

Rather than opposing this system from outside, I see Hatoum operating tactically within it. By moving at a pace incompatible with the commuter flow, she forces other pavement users to slow, divert or confront her presence, something Highmore would call raising the "horizon of visibility." [26] Briefly converting an anonymous journey into a site of friction and encounter, exemplifying de Certeau's tactics of micro-interventions. Walking no longer facilitates labour but interrupts it, exposing the violence implicit in urban systems that privilege efficiency and productivity over bodily endurance.

Hatoum's use of Doc Martens boots exemplifies what Anthony Howell identifies as the importance of genuine objects and real spatial conditions in performance. The boots operate simultaneously as physical constraint and symbolic charge, referencing punk subculture, police authority and violent skinhead groups.[27] Their weight isn't metaphorical but endured, anchoring the work in lived resistance rather than theatrical representation. The uneven pavement, public gaze and density of passers-by actively shape the performance, positioning the site as a co-producer of meaning rather than a backdrop.

Crucially, this intervention takes place in a context where bodily presence is already politicised. As a gendered and racialised body moving through a space marked by authority and brutality, Hatoum's risks aren't limited to self-inflicted injury or artistic marginalisation. Her slowed, obstructive walking invites harassment, detention or violence for occupying a public space in a non-compliant way. What Hatoum gains in return is not an expanded movement vocabulary but a temporary right to be visibly obstructing a system designed to erase such bodies from view. This asymmetry clarifies that the capacity to interrupt public space is inseparable from the power constructs that determine who can do so, and at what cost.

Taken together, *Roadworks* opens a closed system of public space by disrupting the commodified temporality of the commute and exposing the embodied costs of urban circulation. Hatoum's intervention does not seek escape from these systems but insists on friction within them, demonstrating how resistance can emerge through minor, bodily negotiations that momentarily reconfigure who is seen, slowed or made vulnerable in public space.

Figure 2. Trisha Brown, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970, 16 mm film transferred to high-definition video (black and white, silent). Performer: Joseph Schlichter. Source: MoMA.[28]

28. Figure 2. Trisha Brown, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970, 16 mm film transferred to high-definition video (black and white, silent), performer Joseph Schlichter; MoMA, object no. 70.2019.
29. Post-Stonewall, amid civil rights, feminist and anti-war movements.

Trisha Brown, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970)

Performed in 1970 on the façade of a SoHo apartment building, Trisha Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* reconfigures the everyday act of walking by rotating it ninety degrees, placing a harnessed performer in a slow, vertical descent. Walking, typically aligned with horizontal circulation and forward momentum, is reoriented into a suspended, gravitational negotiation. The work emerges from a politically turbulent New York,[29] yet it does not declare protest or opposition. Instead, I read its political force operating indirectly, through a quiet disturbance of bodily habit and urban expectation. In contrast to Hatoum, Brown's intervention displaces vulnerability to the descending performer. Whilst unsanctioned, it remains artistically permissible, in a context where risk is a spectacle rather than a reality.

Howell would see the choice of site as crucial. Performed on a private residential building rather than a public pavement, the work unsettles assumptions about where walking belongs and what it is for. By relocating this act onto a vertical surface, Brown detaches walking from its functional role within urban circulation systems. The building isn't treated as a backdrop but as a physical condition, actively reshaping movement, producing friction, risk and constraint. The work temporarily opens the closed logic of the pavement, not by interrupting commuter flow, but by revealing that the organisation of movement in the city is constructed and open to reorientation.

Highmore's conception of the everyday as durational and continually resetting helps frame this estrangement. Brown does not invent a new action but slows and reorients a familiar one, allowing time to be experienced as lived rather than measured. This durational emphasis aligns with Howell's insistence on authentic site engagement: the choreography is generated through real spatial conditions, with the building functioning as a structural partner whose materiality directly shapes the movement, dictating its commencement and conclusion on the task. The dancer's path inscribes the architecture, enacting what Howell describes as movement's capacity to write space through bodily negotiation.

Lepecki's framework further clarifies the work's choreo-political dimension. The extreme slowness of the descent and the restriction to a single downward plane resist the city's imperatives of speed, efficiency and continuous mobility. Rather than producing confrontation or blockage, Brown offers a calibrated refusal of acceleration. The work does not halt urban life, but briefly retunes it, inviting attention to modes of movement that fall outside capitalist temporal demands.

Unlike Hatoum's *Roadworks*, which forces friction through bodily obstruction, Brown's intervention operates through perceptual suspension. Its political significance does not lie in disruption, but in attunement. A temporary opening in which the norms governing movement, orientation and time are rendered strange, fragile and negotiable. In this quiet recalibration, the city is not opposed but momentarily re-experienced, revealing how even the most ordinary actions are shaped by systems that can be felt otherwise, even if only briefly.

Figure 3. Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void (Le Saut dans le Vide)*, 1960. Photomontage by Harry Shunk and János Kender. From the Yves Klein Archives.[30]

30. Figure 3. Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void* (Le Saut dans le Vide), 1960, Yves Klein Archives, accessed November 19, 2025, https://www.yvesklein.com/en/archives/#/en/archives/view/artwork/643/leap-into-the-void.
31. Whilst there was an original authentic 'leap', this was undocumented and the image we see is an accumulation of two things: the empty street and a falling Klein about to be caught by a group.

Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void* (1960)

Photographed in the Paris suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses in 1960, *Leap into the Void* presents Yves Klein suspended mid-air in an impossible free-fall, staged as documentary evidence of an everyday urban action. The image proposes a bodily refusal of gravity, safety and rational urban conduct. Yet I see the work's political charge lies less in the act itself than in its mediation: authored as a photomontage by Klein in collaboration with Shunk and Kender,[31] the photograph constructs an event for the street rather than emerging from it.

Highmore's account of the everyday helps contextualise this everyday act. Klein draws on a universal gesture of jumping or falling to transform the banal into spectacle, revealing how everyday actions can acquire meaning through image-making rather than lived duration. At the same time, the work exposes the instability of photographic truth, positioning the image as producer, rather than witness, of the event. In contrast to Howell's insistence on genuine objects, risk and material conditions, *Leap into the Void* deliberately suspends bodily consequence, replacing embodied vulnerability with symbolic transcendence. The suburban street does not operate as a lived terrain but as a representational idea, undermining the authenticity which Howell sees as essential to spatial performance.

Lepecki's attention to stillness clarifies the paradox as Klein's image captures a temporal suspension that never occurred, producing what might be called a fictional stillness. So, read alongside Hatoum and Brown, Klein's work marks a limit point within this research: rather than opening a closed spatial system through friction, interruption or durational exposure, *Leap into the Void* operates at the level of representation. Public space is not tactically reworked but aesthetically mobilised, demonstrating how resistance can be simulated, abstracted and circulated without requiring bodily negotiation or encounter. As such, the work clarifies the stakes of site-specific performance by showing what is lost when spatial politics are displaced from lived experience into image.

Figure 6. Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void (Le Saut dans le Vide)*, 1960, original photomontage by Harry Shunk and János Kender, © J. Paul Getty Trust/Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20), gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender; reproduced in "28 Fake Images That Fooled the World," The Guardian, April 12, 2025, accessed January 7, 2026.[34]

Rebecca Schneider[32] describes *Leap into the Void* as a work defined by temporal paradox rather than spatial encounter. The performance does not exist as a singular, completed act, but through a recurring relationship between action, re-enactment and documentation. Klein's original leap, inadequately witnessed, was later re-staged for the camera to produce a photographic document that could retroactively authenticate the event and circulate it to a future public. The resulting image performs a suspended present that never occurred, citing a past act while anticipating future belief. In this sense, you may understand the photograph becoming both witness and performance, preserving the leap as an endlessly deferred action that never reaches the ground. Schneider's account clarifies that Klein's intervention operates not through embodied negotiation with public space, but through exposing how public events are temporally and medially constructed. The "void" is therefore not only physical but conscious, marking the gap between what is seen, what occurred, and what is collectively accepted as public reality, where the artist's body becomes both "actual and imprecise",[33] and where documentation retroactively constructs the 'event.'

While all three works engage everyday acts to interrupt closed spatial systems, the risks attached are unevenly distributed. Klein's original leap may have harboured physical danger; however, through mediation, he mitigated corporeal threat in creating an image capitalising on a risk no longer experienced.

32. Rebecca Schneider, 2008 'Solo Solo Solo' *In After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*. 23-47
33. Ibid 26
34. Figure 4. Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void* (Le Saut dans le Vide), 1960, original photomontage by Harry Shunk and János Kender, © J. Paul Getty Trust/Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20), gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender; reproduced in "28 Fake Images That Fooled the World," *The Guardian*, April 12, 2025, accessed January 7, 2026. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/apr/12/28-fake-images-that-fooled-the-world.

Figure 4. Installation view of *Mona Hatoum: Early Works*, MCA Chicago, March 29–November 26, 2023; photograph by Shelby Ragsdale, © MCA Chicago.[35]

Mediation: Does Re-staging and Representation Continue to Open These Closed Systems?

My research has argued that everyday acts can function as tactical interventions only when grounded in specific spatial conditions, and that it is site-specificity which enables these acts to open, even if momentarily, otherwise closed systems of public space. Read through de Certeau's tactics, these acts work within limits to produce friction, delay or visibility rather than systemic overhaul. Across Hatoum, Brown and Klein, it becomes clear that the political force of these acts does not reside in gesture alone, but in the body's exposure to material limits, risk and encounter within an urban setting.

Hatoum's *Roadworks* clarifies how mediation reshapes resistance once the body is removed from the site. Presented through video and photographic stills, the work shifts from durational exposure and embodied risk to a suspended image of obstruction. The photograph does not operate as documentation, but as a spatial punctuation, containing Hatoum's slowed movement within a system demanding constant flow. Following Lepecki,[36] this enforced stillness concentrates rather than neutralises the work's politics, preserving bodily vulnerability as the residue of real exposure. At the same time, mediation displaces the original friction of the public encounter into a gallery-bound spectatorship, revealing how resistance persists unevenly once lived interruption becomes representation.

35. Installation view of *Mona Hatoum: Early Works*, MCA Chicago, March 29–November 26, 2023; photograph by Shelby Ragsdale, © MCA Chicago.
36. Lepecki André. *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. London;New York;: Routledge, 2006;2005; p.16

Figure 5. Trisha Brown Dance Company, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 2006, performance documentation (photograph), New York City. Tate Images [37]

By contrast, Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* has been repeatedly re-staged on institutional façades using different bodies and contexts. While these sanctioned re-enactments extend the work's visibility, Howell's emphasis on site-specific integrity suggests that such translations risk weakening the original spatial negotiation between performer, building and city. As the work becomes reproducible, its capacity to interrupt spatial closure shifts from embodied disruption toward formal display.

Klein's *Leap into the Void* sits uneasily within this framework. Constituted entirely through mediation, public space is mobilised representationally rather than negotiated bodily, simulating interruption without exposure to risk. As such, its circulation neither intensifies nor erodes tactical resistance, but instead exposes the limits of mediation where bodily vulnerability is absent.

Taken together, these cases refine Sennett's distinction between open and closed urban systems, demonstrating that openness is not a fixed spatial condition, but a temporary achievement produced through embodied interruption. Mediation does not negate resistance, but rather recalibrates it. What these works gain in accessibility is at the expense of their friction, vulnerability and encounter. Once removed from their sites, everyday acts no longer open systems directly, but instead reveal the conditions under which such openings were once possible, illustrating the possibilities and limits of resistance in public space.

This research has clarified for me how central site is to any meaningful intervention. In my own design practice, I have understood site analysis as a means of establishing limits and possibilities, but this work has added a criticality to my awareness of why, in order to design innovatively, you must first understand the histories, rhythms and expectations of a place. I now recognise that I have approached site analysis and design development with a dancer's lens, treating material constraints not as containers to work within but as collaborators that actively shape what can occur. As an Interior architect, this research reinforces the value of a human-first approach, where everyday actions such as walking, pausing or meeting are not secondary considerations but fundamental to programme and spatial organisation. Applying how bodies move, slow or encounter one another in space, will inform how I construct environments which invite friction and interpretation over uninterrupted efficiency. Finally, this research has encouraged me to think critically about mediation in design practice. Architectural visuals are often treated as neutral representations, yet they selectively portray how a space is imagined and inhabited. Being more conscious of what interactions and acts I choose to show will allow me to reflect more deliberately on what my work communicates, exposes or aims to rebalance.

37. Trisha Brown Dance Company, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 2006, performance documentation (photograph), New York City, in Tate Images, accessed [date], https://www.tate-images.com/I04570-Trisha-Brown-Dance-Company%27s-%27Man-Walking-Down-the.html.

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