

Walead Beshty  
Work in Exhibition  
2011–2020

Edited by Lynn Kost

Kunst Museum Winterthur  
MAMCO Geneva

Koenig Books

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**Foreword****Konrad Bitterli, Director Kunst Museum Winterthur****Lionel Bovier, Director MAMCO Geneva**

Walead Beshty's work combines essential strategies of contemporary art practice, while questioning art as a *practice*. The artist takes a radical approach to all aspects of the system of production and presentation of art, through theoretical and practical interventions into the cycles of handling and dealing with artefacts, from the studio to the gallery, museum, and private collections.

During the 1960s–1970s such approaches have been summarized under the term of "Institutional Critique," but they concentrated mostly on the conditions of presentation in museums and galleries. Beshty's work goes beyond theoretical ideas by addressing the art system as such: its production processes, its shipping and handling procedures, as well as its modes of presentation and the sale of artworks. Art is thus considered as part of the economic as well as the social system and the work itself makes this condition visible.

Since Marcel Duchamp declared a bottle rack or a urinal a piece of art, the everyday has entered the art world. Beshty injects his work with reality, not by transforming everyday objects into artistic artefacts, but by exposing their position within an ecosystem of production. When he allows film to go through airport X-ray systems, he not only raises questions fundamental to our global world and its systems of surveillance and security, but he also uses them to produce the work itself.

Beshty also pays tribute to the so called "neo-avant-garde" of the 1960s. If his work often seems to look like Minimal and Conceptual art, the differences are clearly stated when he has technical staff handle the precious surfaces with bare hands, leaving traces of the handling on the pieces as part of the process the work goes through in the art system. Similarly, his procedural works like the series of *FedEx* works are marked by their transit, evolving through time and exhibition and thus changing between regular goods and art objects depending on their context.

This combination of historical references and new artistic strategies made Beshty's work a logical choice for both MAMCO (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain) in Geneva and the Kunst Museum Winterthur. Minimal and Conceptual art are important pillars of the collections of both institutions. At MAMCO these movements are always somehow present in the museum's narrative and presentations, even when they are questioned by artists such as Rasheed Araeen or Charlotte Posenenske.

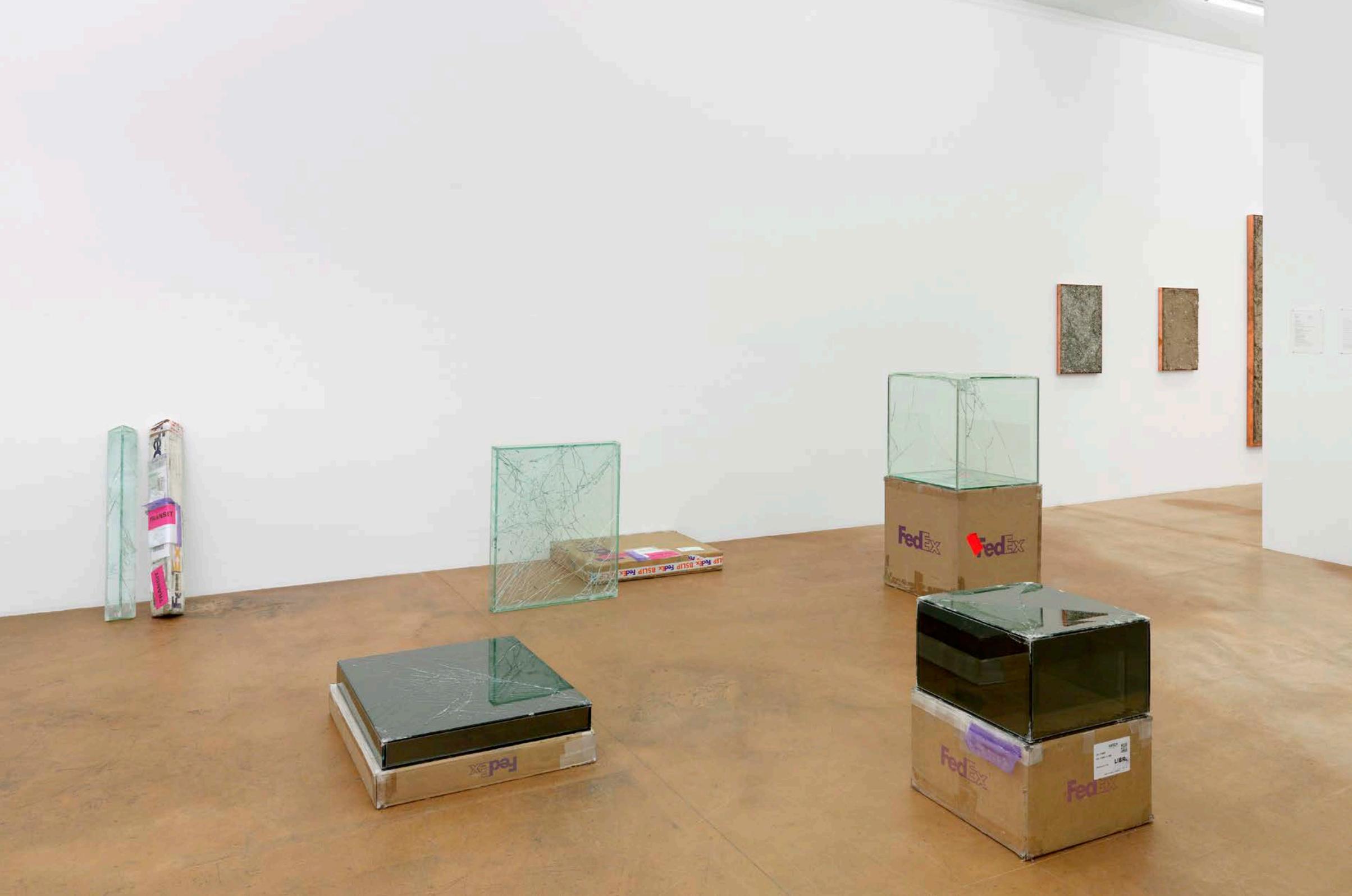
At the Kunst Museum Winterthur the self-referential approach of Minimal and Postminimal art has been reinvigorated and reinterpreted in recent years through major exhibitions by Rita McBride, Katinka Bock, Karin Sander, Thea Djordjadze et al.

We are very proud to be able to present, through this collaboration, the first major exhibition of Walead Beshty in Switzerland and the present publication.

We would like to thank the artist for his enthusiasm as well as his galleries for supporting the exhibition and the publication: Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York; Petzel Gallery, New York and Berlin; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; and Thomas Dane Gallery, London and Naples. We are also thankful to the generous collectors who have lent works to our exhibitions. MAMCO's exhibition has received the support of the Fondation de bienfaisance du Groupe Pictet. Kunst Museum Winterthur is grateful to its sponsors Credit Suisse and Senn, St. Gallen, as well as for the contribution of the US-Embassy in Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The Kunst Museum Winterthur is funded by the Kunstverein Winterthur, the City of Winterthur and the Canton of Zurich.











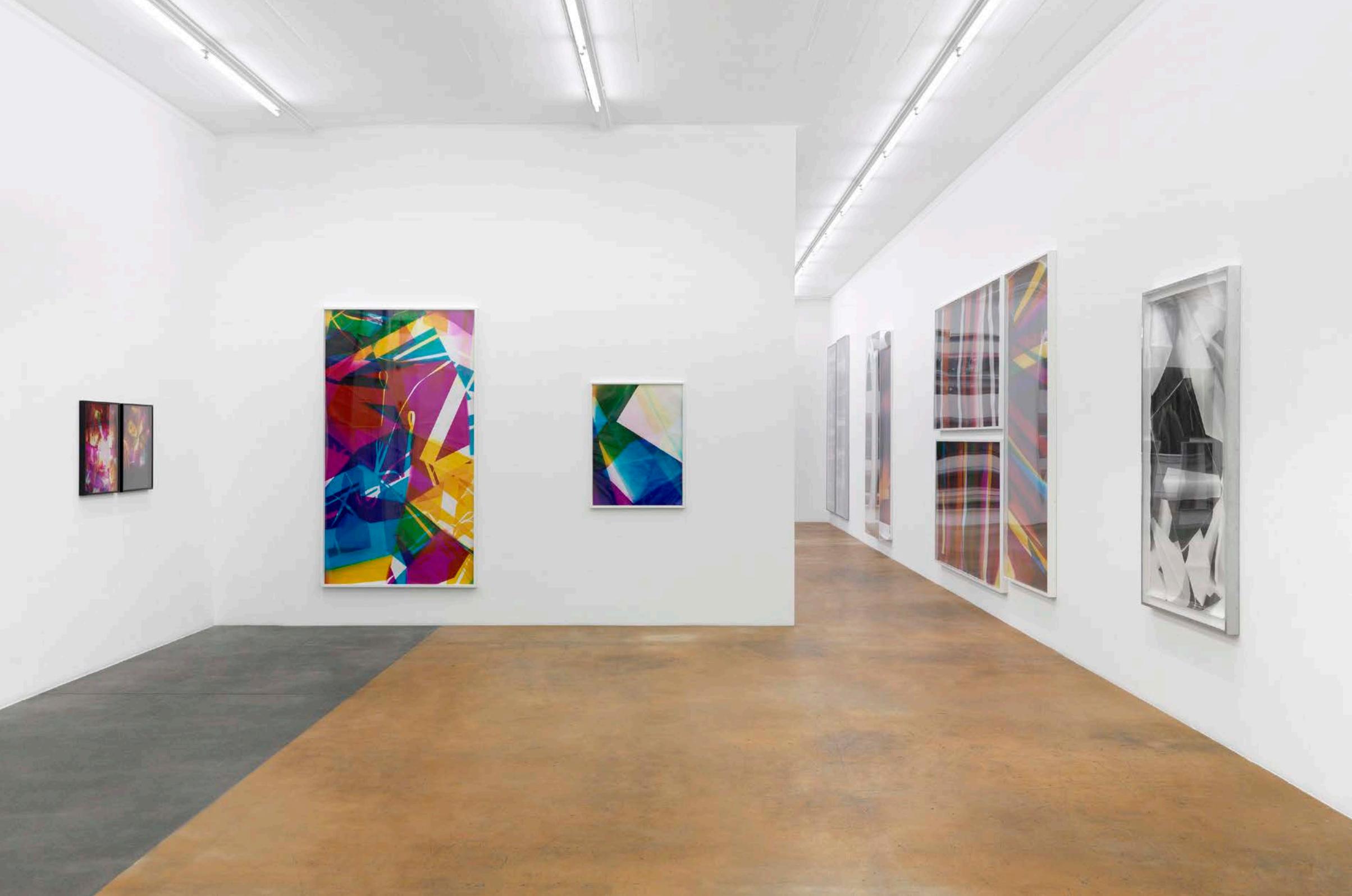






























Everywhere one turns, the need for greater transparency seems grave. In recent days, the President of the United States was impeached on two counts, including obstruction of Congress: “Donald J. Trump has directed the unprecedented, categorical, and indiscriminate defiance of subpoenas issued by the House of Representatives pursuant to its ‘sole Power of Impeachment.’” The catalyst for the investigation—Trump’s shakedown of Ukraine for personal political gain—would never have come to light were it not for a whistleblower deep in the national security apparatus. That security apparatus, in turn, has secretly carried out (and almost certainly continues to carry out) the most expansive and invasive surveillance and dataveillance in the country’s history—a fact revealed only through a “treasonous” exposé by would-be whistleblower Edward Snowden. The situation is little better outside the United States or in the private sector, as companies such as Facebook facilitate and profit from covert influence campaigns that corrupt individual lives and entire democracies. For good reason, “demands for more transparency are more widespread than ever, in fields as diverse as corporate and public administration, finance, scientific research, sports, technology, media, and healthcare.”<sup>1</sup> To this list we must add the fields of art and architecture. To cite but one of numerous recent reports:

When the de Young Museum re-opened in Golden Gate Park in 2005, transparency was built into its architectural design, with glass walls enabling people to see inside the museum from the outside and outside from within. ‘We aim to carry that metaphor into everything we do,’ said Robert Futernick, the associate director of the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, which comprises the de Young Museum and the Legion of Honor.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, not only are art and architecture among the diverse fields demanding greater transparency, art and especially architecture have served as privileged emblems of the very transparency to which other fields aspire. Thus, Foster + Partners proudly and symptomatically proclaimed vis-à-vis their design for a new glass dome atop the German Reichstag: “Emphasizing values of clarity and transparency, the glazed cupola is a new landmark for Berlin, and a symbol of the vigor of the German democratic process.”<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, transparency as a model—perhaps the model—for self-knowledge, morality and politics has never been more ripe for abuse. As summarized by the editors of a recent anthology in critical transparency studies: “releasing documents and figures alone can hardly count as a guarantee for accountability, and besides, this overflow of data can even be seen as a strategy of opacification. Quite often, transparency is only affected, simulated, through deliberate practices of data-flooding (‘drowning in disclosure’) no average citizen can make sense of.”<sup>4</sup> The true measure of transparency’s power may lie in its exploitation. Under these conditions, how does one come to terms with—let alone produce art that can engage critically, sensually, and affirmatively to—transparency as an ethical ideal and politico-economic weapon?

This is the question that has subtended the art and writing of Walead Beshty. Beshty has charted a path between the naïve embrace of transparency as an ideal and its cynical rejection as mere ideology. Exemplary are his *FedEx* works (2007–) (→ p. 12). The series was born of a fierce interrogation of the juridical-economical regime in which an abstract volume of space—specifically the proprietary dimensions of FedEx boxes—transmogrifies into corporate private property. Beshty’s intervention does more than speak truth to power. As the artist explains: “I tend to favor things that play with structures affiliated

with power, to point at their indeterminacy, whether it be the functioning of state power, like the photographs or X-rays, or corporate power, with FedEx.”<sup>5</sup> In his first *FedEx* works, Beshty produced laminated glass cubes in FedEx’s proprietary dimensions. He stipulates that the glass cubes be shipped to their destinations—exhibition venues, galleries, collectors’ residences, etc.—in the corresponding FedEx boxes, which become part of the work and serve as quasi-pedestals for the glass component. Because the boxes are shipped unprotected, the glass cubes accrue cracks and, over time, their structural integrity is threatened. Shipping stickers, FedEx waybills, and customs forms added to the boxes are considered part of the work. Shipping information agglomerates in the titles. The result are works such as *FedEx® Large Kraft Box ©2005 FEDEX 330508 REV 10/05 SSCC, International Priority, Los Angeles–Brussels trk#865282057975, October 27–30, 2008, International Priority, Brussels–Los Angeles trk#866071746396, December 8–9, 2008, Standard Overnight, Los Angeles–New York trk#774901659423, November 4–5, 2015, Standard Overnight, New York–Los Angeles trk#775241449093, December 21–22, 2015 (2008–)*, which, as of 2019, is deeply fractured and fragile. Once put into circulation, the boxes’ infrastructural transparency is registered through the material destruction of their literal transparency. The fracture of the glass, in turn, threatens the very circulation of the work.

Infrastructural transparency—specifically supply chain transparency—is an emerging trend in corporate responsibility. Spurred by the April 24, 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh—which killed over 1,100 garment workers and injured more than 2,000—the fashion industry has recently introduced notable supply chain transparency through “The Apparel and Footwear Supply Chain Transparency Pledge,”<sup>6</sup> the “Fashion Transparency Index,”<sup>7</sup> and reports such as the Human Rights Watch’s “Follow the Thread: The Need for Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry,”<sup>8</sup> among numerous other measures proudly touted by a sector built on generations of worker abuse. Beshty’s *FedEx* works do not attempt to introduce comparable transparency to the art market, which is likely the most opaque and least regulated legal multibillion dollar market on the planet. But like nearly all of Beshty’s works, their production, circulation, and exhibition as artworks are not incidental to the work, but constitutive thereof.

The *FedEx* works do not merely circulate; their circulation is the work: the ever-changing cracks, waybills, and titular shipping information constitute the work no less than the glass, silicone, cardboard, and (immaterial yet proprietary) dimensions. And in this regard, they have nothing in common with, say, H&M’s new “consumer-facing transparency layer,” in which a click on the “product sustainability” tab on a webpage or a scan of the product price tag in stores reveals that, for example, a pair of pink children’s leggings were made in Bangladesh by some of the nearly 9,000 workers in the Jinnat Apparels & Fashion Ltd and/or the Jinnat Knitwear Ltd plants in Gazipur, a dense manufacturing neighborhood near Dhaka.<sup>9</sup> At H&M, product and transparency are discrete spheres. In this instance, the product includes a bunny print motif on the knees topped by attached bunny ears; is available in light pink (Cotton 95%, Elastane 5%) or dark gray (Polyester 63%, Cotton 33%, Elastane 4%); and is shipped, sold, and worn worldwide. “Transparency,” by contrast, “means knowing how and where our products are made and sharing that information wherever possible”<sup>10</sup>; includes multiple tiers of information (from raw material sourcing to garment production); is itself the product of three years of effort by forty (highly skilled) workers in capitalist centers from Hong Kong to Stockholm; and is sustained through a series

of unspecified global information networks. Transparency, roughly, is the metadata attached to products whose manufacture and circulation are otherwise inscrutable. In Beshty's *FedEx* works, by contrast, product and transparency are one; their mutual imbrication is the source of their aesthetic and ethical complexity.

In the earliest *FedEx* works—Beshty has since also made them in laminated Mirropane and polished copper without boxes, so that any handling by the couriers imprints onto the surface of the work by oxidation—clear laminated glass cubes enabled the registration of one kind of transparency (circulation in a corporate shipping network) in another kind of transparency (glass). The two are categorically inextricable. If an H&M product arrives damaged, it is eligible for an exchange or full refund. (In the event of returns, customers who forego pre-paid labels are encouraged to use a traceable carrier such as USPS, UPS or FedEx.) If a *FedEx* work by Beshty does not arrive damaged or otherwise altered, the work has been violated. In order to wear an H&M product, all packaging and labels are removed and discarded. Packaging and labels are integral parts of a Beshty *FedEx* work. H&M's consumer-facing transparency layer is available everywhere and immanent nowhere. Beshty's transparency is embedded in the materials and titles of each individual *FedEx* work, which are subject to transformation as a condition of their display. H&M's supply chain transparency faces the consumer but does not encompass the consumer or the point of sale; it enacts an absolute division between production and consumption. Beshty's *FedEx* works are produced through their circulation and exhibition; the sale and ownership of the work plays a determinative role in its existence. H&M's transparency applies almost exclusively to low-paid, unskilled labor in developing countries; there is no comparable transparency for high-paid, high-skilled labor. Beshty's works—beginning with the *FedEx* works and extending throughout his oeuvre—encompass every individual and entity that comes in contact with the work; rather than reify divisions in labor through selective transparency, Beshty's art, as we will see, dissolves them through forms of transparency that are perilously indiscriminate. For H&M, “supply chain transparency creates greater accountability for both ourselves [H&M] and our business partners,”<sup>11</sup> an ethical ambition that is laudable even as it is self-serving and fragmentary. For Beshty, ethics lie elsewhere.

Infrastructural and literal transparency are but a part of the ethical transparency that is Beshty's stated objective: “a key to my understanding of the politics of aesthetics [is] to make the production of the work transparent, simple. This externalization runs throughout my work, it's part of the *FedEx* works, and the X-rays explicitly, it's a way to



a) Michael Asher, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, California, USA, January 26–April 12, 2008.

make the production public and active. [...] I simply try to make work that considers how it materially came into being, whose appearance is directly and transparently linked to that coming into being.”<sup>12</sup> Beshty's *FedEx* works harbor few mysteries; their appearance and title at any given moment are the result of procedures made as transparent as possible to the viewer. As Beshty wrote in a related context: “Transparency was an ethical choice intended to be felt at the point of reception, realized [...] in terms of the agency of the audience.”<sup>13</sup>

Thoroughly cracked and corporatized, valued as artwork because of their transparent circulation, the *FedEx* works are neither pure nor utopian. For Beshty, “there is no place ‘outside’ of economic transaction. [...] Yet art's radical proposition is its greater capacity for transparency (as transparency is a core artistic value) and its ability to articulate its own implication within such a system of exchange.”<sup>14</sup> In the case of the *FedEx* works, their ethical transparency is inextricably bound up in physical breakage, capitalist overreach, and a robust art market. But they are indubitably bound up in ethics. For Beshty, ethics are not a measure by which one can justify a work; rather, ethics “function as a methodological approach which can address the aesthetic conditions of an artwork in light of the effects it produces on the social field of which it is a part.”<sup>15</sup> The *FedEx* works are exemplary of a methodological approach in which a social field materializes in and through an artwork to produce an ethical transparency that assumes ever-changing form in the artwork. The method is not reflexive so much as recursive. And if the *FedEx* works are exemplary, they are hardly alone. Beshty's wide-ranging oeuvre encompasses diverse instances of this singular method united in an adherence to a complex ethics of transparency—ethics and transparencies immanent to each body of work, perhaps even to each individual work. For as Beshty asserted in his review of Michael Asher's 2008 exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art—where Asher rendered the institution transparent through the erection of the stud walls of every prior exhibition—“It is the assertion of any trans-historical proposition of ‘transparency,’ ‘exhibitionality,’ or ‘institution’ (whether it is defined in the instrumental use of architecture or certain modes of exegesis) that Asher's work summarily dismisses.”<sup>16</sup> Beshty's work similarly dismisses trans-historical claims to transparency. And, like Asher, it does so summarily and immanently: always through a specific body of work and in relation to a specific social field. And so, before we can explore other bodies of work, it is imperative that we map the social field of transparency today and its stark evolution over the past century.

## II. Transparency's Ideological Drift: Law, Government, Architecture, Art

According to legal scholar Jack Balkin, who coined the term, “Ideological drift in law means that legal ideas and symbols will change their political valence as they are used over and over again in new contexts.”<sup>17</sup> This deceptively simple proposition has dramatic implications. For example, as Balkin noted already in the early 1990s: “The concept of the ‘colorblind’ Constitution, offered by the first Justice Harlan in 1896 as a progressive (and even radical) argument against Jim Crow, has by 1992 become the rallying cry of conservatives who seek to protect white males from racial oppression.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, proponents of the First Amendment and free speech have been forced to reckon with the seizure of that ostensibly timeless ideal by corporations, and the enshrinement into law of that seizure in cases such as *Citizens United* (2010). Legal concepts such as color blindness and free speech continue to serve progressive ends; but their dominant political valence has drifted from left to right, from the empowerment of the oppressed to the fortification of entrenched powers.

Building on Balkin, legal scholar David Pozen has traced transparency's ideological drift in the United States from a progressive to a more libertarian or neoliberal ideal over the course of the last hundred years.<sup>19</sup> In the famous 1913 formulation of future Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis: “Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.”<sup>20</sup> Brandeis

and other advocates of transparency (or “publicity”) understood themselves to be promoting values such as bureaucratic rationality, social justice, and trust in public institutions. The same spirit animated legislation in the 1960s and ’70s, above all, the 1967 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which allows any person to request any federal agency record for any reason. The transparency reformers of the 1960s and ’70s, like their Progressiv Era forebears, “assumed a symbiosis between making government more visible in its procedural norms and making government more responsive and redistributive in its substantive outputs.”<sup>21</sup> Good government was transparent and transparent government was good.

Over the last several decades, the stature of transparency as a democratic ideal has only grown; but the relationship between transparency and democracy has been transformed to the point where its ideological valence has drifted from progressive to libertarian or neoliberal. Pozen documents this drift across a range of public policy and government initiatives, from open records law and campaign finance regulation to consumer protection, targeted transparency, and open data. A few specific examples are warranted. First, the “crown jewel of transparency,” namely, FOIA. As Pozen argues: “FOIA’s original creators and amenders envisioned its core users as being left-leaning investigative reporters. [...] Today, commercial requesters—including a cottage industry of data brokers and information resellers—submit over two-thirds of the FOIA requests to agencies ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)”<sup>22</sup>—not to make those agencies more responsive and efficacious, but precisely the opposite: to hinder or outright cripple the capacity of the EPA to protect the environment, the FDA to monitor food and drugs, and the SEC to oversee financial markets. In theory, any individual has the right to request any federal agency record for any reason; but the gap in resources between individuals (including investigative reporters) on the one hand, and major corporations, on the other, is so vast as to render FOIA a politico-economic weapon wielded largely by corporate interests. Worse yet, the hypothetical accessibility of all federal records has induced, in part, an explosion in the number of classified documents (which are not vulnerable to FOIA requests), thereby limited the scope of FOIA for its intended constituency: left-leaning investigative reporters.

A second example is more immediately relevant: targeted transparency. The disclosure of product information in standardized formats as a means to safeguard the public from exploitative practices was part of the transparency mandate in both the Progressive Era and the 1960s and ’70s. But under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, disclosure schemes—that is, information and education proffered as alternatives to regulation—were weaponized as a means to minimize government interference with the market.<sup>23</sup> Rather than regulate the use of consumer data for example, the government requires that corporations disclose how they utilize user data in user agreements read by no one and so subject to the endless abuses we now witness. This shift in onus from government regulation to consumer education is also evident in the seemingly meritorious efforts toward supply chain transparency, another tool to ward off government regulation. References to government or regulation are conspicuously absent in the transparency literature promulgated by H&M and nearly all other corporations.<sup>24</sup> Even in the best of circumstance—that is, even when user agreements, consumer-facing transparency, and so forth are legitimately transparent—there is a twisted abrogation of responsibility on the part of the government and corporations: no longer is it necessary to act morally, they need only

act transparently; the market will safeguard morality. Questions of morality—the conditions under which humans labor as regulated (or not) by society—yield to a dubious ethics anchored in the whims of the consumer and the power of the market: in short, a libertarian or neoliberal morality masquerading as ethical consumption.

Current efforts to render the art world more transparent are trapped in a similar quagmire. On the one hand, who can question the importance of efforts such as “Art/Museum Salary Transparency,”<sup>25</sup> a spreadsheet launched in June 2019 that has attracted over 3,300 submissions by art world professionals disclosing institution, role, department, city, starting salary, current salary, and other vital information? Indeed, the revelation that unpaid internships were the norm in prestigious and wealthy institutions has helped catalyze immediate (if insufficient) change. Here, Brandeis’s sunlight takes the form of a Google spreadsheet. Or, as Hyperallergic reported: “Transparency can be radical, especially in an industry as financially oblique as the art world.”<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, industry transparency remains the prime mechanism to forestall government regulation. As Clinton Howell, president of the International Confederation of Art and Antique Dealer Associations, asserted: “Top-down government regulation would be a huge threat to transparency. It would make inappropriate decisions about how to ‘regulate’ the art trade, based solely on popular support.”<sup>27</sup> Such is the power of transparency that even its neoliberal enemies feel compelled to defend their stance in the name of “transparency.” And such is the ideological drift of transparency that it can now be marshalled against precisely the regulation advocated by Brandeis and other reformers. Transparency, finally, is not a timeless value. Rather, it is the very ground on which competing values must be contested.

The fate of transparency in modern architecture and art parallels that in U.S. law and government—for both were born of progressive impulses and subject to the same neoliberal forces. To begin, Brandeis’s metaphor of sunlight as the best disinfectant must be taken literally in the case of modern architecture. Not only do the origins of modern glass architecture lie in nineteenth-century greenhouses (by way of Joseph Paxton’s 1851 Crystal Palace in London), but, as Paul Overy has argued, interwar glass architecture was inextricably bound up with discourses and practices of hygiene. Exemplary was the Zonnestraal Sanatorium designed by Johannes Duiker and Bernard Bijvoet in the mid-1920s and completed in 1931. A modernist concrete and glass construction, the rehabilitation center for tuberculosis patients equated transparency, health, and sunlight in the most explicit manner possible: Zonnestraal means sunbeam. It is no coincidence that Lever House (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, completed 1952), among the first glass towers in New York, was built for a corporation that sold soap (a far better disinfectant than sunlight).<sup>28</sup>

Designed by Gordon Bunshaft and Natalie de Blois, Lever House followed the principles of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who invested much more in transparency than health. In response to a 1933 questionnaire, “What would concrete and steel be without plate glass?” Mies averred: “The glass skin, the glass walls alone permit the skeleton structure its unambiguous constructive appearance and secure its architectonic possibilities. [...] Now it becomes clear again what a wall is, what an opening, what is floor and



b) Zonnestraal Sanatorium, designed by Johannes Duiker and Bernard Bijvoet, 1925–31.

what ceiling. Simplicity of construction, clarity of tectonic means, and purity of material reflect the luminosity of original beauty.”<sup>29</sup> This is the transparency that, in Anthony Vidler’s compact formulation, has haunted modernity:

Modernity has been haunted, as we know very well, by a myth of transparency: transparency of the self to nature, of the self to the other, of all selves to society, and all this is represented, if not constructed, from Jeremy Bentham to Le Corbusier, by a universal transparency of building materials, spatial penetration, and the ubiquitous flow of air, light, and physical movement.<sup>30</sup>

By the time Le Corbusier and SOM introduced the first glass curtain walls to New York, however, literal transparency was beginning to yield to other uses of glass. Most notably, the glass curtain façade in Mies’s Seagram’s Building (1955) was constructed not out of transparent glass and steel, but rather bronze and specially tinted pink-gray glass “in order to engage the perceptual apparatus of the modern viewer,”<sup>31</sup> as Felicity Scott has argued. Within a few decades—helped along by a shift in architectural discourse from “literal” to “phenomenal” transparency, that is, from transparency as a material reality and ethical ideal to transparency as mere formal game<sup>32</sup>—the glass curtain wall yielded to mirrored façades and surfaces. In Frederic Jameson’s famous critique of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles (John Portman, architect, completed 1976), the mirrored exterior “repels the city outside, a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses.”<sup>33</sup>

The twenty-first century return to transparent glass as the default condition of cultural, commercial, and residential luxury buildings has completed the ideological drift of architectural transparency. A century ago—in the glass stairwells and glazed façades of his Fagus factory (1911) and model factory for the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne—Walter Gropius publicized transparency under the banner of daylight, fresh air, and hygiene for workers, and tectonic clarity and material purity for architects. The twenty-first century counterpart can only be the glass stairwell and glazed façades of Apple stores,



c) Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, designed by John Portman, completed 1976. Exterior View, East.

above all the glass cube on Fifth Avenue in New York, staffed by workers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As recounted in corporate hagiography: “Steve Jobs opened the store in 2006 and personally welcomed the first customers to enter the cube. Since then, Apple Fifth Avenue has had over 57 million visitors, more annually than the Statue of Liberty or Empire State Building. The glass cube has been a beacon and an important focal point for product launches starting with the first iPhone in 2007.”<sup>34</sup> The Bonaventure, for Jameson, was the “symbol and analagon” for our incapacity “to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.”<sup>35</sup> The Apple store on Fifth Avenue is not an abstract “symbol and analagon” but an integral part of corporate branding and the literal focal point for the product launches that

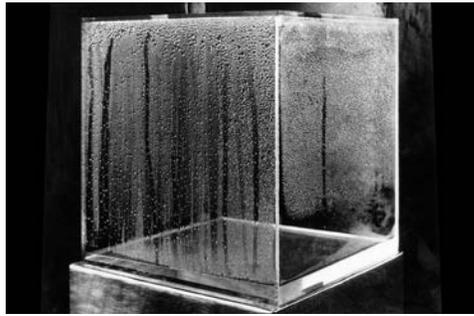
cemented global multinational and decentered communicational networks as the dominant infrastructure of our subjectivities. Stated bluntly, millions of customers a year enter Apple’s transparent cube in order to purchase the most ubiquitous and powerful black box in human history.

But even amidst the initial dissolution of modern glass architecture in favor of postmodern mirrored surfaces, the ideal of transparency blossomed in the 1960s and ’70s alongside FOIA and other legislation passed to pierce the shell of shadowy institutions. Exemplary is the oeuvre of Hans Haacke. From the 1920s through mid-century, Constructivists like Naum Gabo and László Moholy-Nagy employed materials like glass and plastics to render structure transparent and open artworks to their surrounding environments. Haacke inflected this legacy through systems theory so that the work was in dialogue with its environment and the environment was manifest in the work. For *Condensation Cube* (1965), Haacke introduced water into a large, sealed, transparent acrylic cube. Because of the temperature differential between the inside and outside of the cube, water vapor condenses into droplets that run down the walls of the cube, taking on random forms. As Haacke explained: “The conditions are comparable to a living organism which reacts in a flexible manner to its surroundings. The image of condensation cannot be precisely predicted. It is changing freely, bound only by statistical limits.”<sup>36</sup>

Around the time Congress passed FOIA, Haacke began to align transparency more explicitly with the art world muckraking for which he has become famous. Representative is *MOMA-Poll* (1970), produced for Kynaston McShine’s landmark “Information” exhibition, and one of many polls Haacke has developed over the decades. *MOMA-Poll* comprised two transparent boxes aesthetically reminiscent of *Condensation Cube*. The boxes are outfitted with: photoelectric counting devices; a sign with the query: “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina Policy be a reason for your not voting for him in November?” (the Rockefeller family helped found MoMA and was well-represented on its Board of Trustees); and color-coded ballots issued to visitors and keyed to their fee status (full-fare, members, family free day, etc.). Visitors were instructed to place their ballot in the left box to vote Yes or in the right box to vote No. The color-coded results (obscured by the ubiquitous black-and-white documentary photographs of the piece installed at MoMA) not only provided an approximate real-time tally—a task performed more accurately by the photoelectric counting devices—but also a visual summary of the sociological constitution of the polled population. Transparency here functions in at least a four-fold manner. The literal transparency of the boxes allows visitors to see the color-coded result; the color-coded results allow



d) Model factory for Werkbund Exhibition, Cologne, designed by Walter Gropius, 1914. Exterior and stairwell.  
f) Apple Store, Fifth Avenue New York, designed by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, structural glass engineered by Eckersley O’Callahan, 2006. Restored by Foster + Partners, 2019.



e) Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, 1965.  
h) Hans Haacke, *MOMA-Poll*, 1970.

visitors to see the sociological makeup and political leanings of the museum goers; and the question itself renders transparent the dubious political imbrications of the museum's founding family. *MOMA-Poll* thus aligns neatly with the 1960s and '70s ideals for administrative transparency, ideals recently renewed in protests against the Sackler family and in works like Forensic Architecture's *Triple-Chaser* (2019) directed against Whitney board member Warren Kanders. But *MOMA-Poll* harbors another charged transparency, one that sits less comfortably in the present. Because the work mimics voting procedures yet perverts the privacy of the voting booth and ballot box, as Julia Bryan-Wilson argues, "Haacke's desire for transparency is extended from the question itself—which brings to light a relation between the state and the museum—to the viewer's political leanings."<sup>37</sup> *MOMA-Poll* does not resemble voting in a democracy so much as "voting" in a totalitarian regime or strongman

dictatorship. Haacke's turn to computers as the default mechanism for his more recent polls have replaced the surveillant intrusion of transparent ballot boxes with that of computers and, more ominously, has helped normalize museum visitor data mining, which contributes to the corrosive erosion of privacy pervasive today. Like FOIA, *MOMA-Poll*'s current legacy may prove radically at odds with its original intent.

Beshty is well versed in this history. In July 2008, he checked into the Bonaventure Hotel with a bag and two books: Patrick Beaver's *The Crystal Palace* (1973) and Jameson's *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991).<sup>38</sup> Also in 2008—as his *FedEx* works began to inscribe infrastructural transparency into their own literal transparency—Beshty published a pointed criticism of the United Nations Secretariat Building (Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier, architects, completed 1952), the first glass curtain wall structure erected in New York:

Brecht famously stated that the image of the exterior of a factory could tell you nothing of the lives it contained. The secretariat was no different, despite its glass façade. When the lighting conditions of the secretariat building were reversed by night, after working hours, the modular interior was displayed devoid of its labour force. Corbusier allowed this desire to see in, without revealing anything more telling than what the reflective modular exterior offered by day: a procession of blank boxes.<sup>39</sup>

And he is a close reader of Dan Graham, who offered among the most trenchant criticisms of architectural transparency precisely at the moment of its postmodern dissolution:

At the same time that glass reveals, it conceals. [...] The glass's literal transparency [...] is a paradoxical camouflage; for while the actual function of a corporation may be to concentrate its self-contained power and control by secreting

information, its architectural facade gives the illusion of absolute openness. The transparency is visual only; glass separates the visual from the verbal, insulating outsiders from the content of the decision-making process, and from the invisible, but real, interrelationships linking company operations to society.<sup>40</sup>

And like Graham, Beshty interrogates transparency as he deploys it. For Beshty, transparency is not only an ideal; it is the contested social field registered in and inflected by his work. Beshty has aligned the aesthetic conditions of his art with the complexity and contradictions of transparency today. This is his ethics. It is an ethics embedded and manifest in his work. And it is to the work that we now finally return.

### III. An Ocean of Disclosure

In order to grasp the dialectic at play in Beshty's work, it is helpful to establish the limit of transparency in his writing and art. A prolific critic and interlocutor, Beshty occasionally invests too much in transparency as an ideal: "I suppose [the work] is also about the notion of the democratic, direct democracy is based on the idea of total transparency."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, there are projects that Beshty has proposed and abandoned—such as a multivolume publication of all his email correspondences—that indeed approach total transparency. But in the bodies of work that reach fruition, Beshty never produces "total" transparency. In nearly every body of work, Beshty imbricates transparency within complex procedural, intellectual, and perceptual occlusions.

Such productive involutions are on vivid and intricate display in *A Partial Disassembling of an Invention without a Future: Helter-Skelter and Random Notes in Which the Pulleys and Cogwheels Are Lying around at Random All Over the Workbench* (2014) (→ p. 120, pp. 244–247), which is, among other things, the documentation of every object that entered or left Beshty's studio over the course of twelve months: October 9, 2013–October 8, 2014. (The title is borrowed verbatim from a lecture by the avant-garde filmmaker and photographer Hollis Frampton.<sup>42</sup>) Such documentation can take many forms and, under the name of "inventory control" or "stock management," is a regular feature of commercial enterprises and art institutions alike. Today, nearly all inventory control systems are digital and involve some combination of management software, barcodes, radio-frequency identification tags, and the like. Beshty opted for a different approach.

*A Partial Disassembling...* documents the workings of Beshty's studio through two separate channels. The first, previously mentioned, comprises every object that entered or left the studio over the course of a year: lamps, ladders, pliers, assorted electronic cables, dustpans, razors, keys, glass jars, plastic containers of all kinds, gloves, pens, and numerous items less readily identifiable. The second but by no means secondary channel encompasses every piece of disposable cellulose-based material that came through the studio: newspapers, invitations, private correspondences, announcements, printouts of emails, gallery invoices, drug prescriptions, wooden crates, and endless expanses of cardboard boxes. The cellulose-based material was treated with a photosensitive solution mixed from ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide—a version of the cyanotype formula discovered by John Herschel in 1842, practiced by artists such as Anna Atkins (in the 1840s) and Christian Marclay (in the 2000s), and exploited in industrial quantities for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as "blueprints."<sup>43</sup> Each object was placed on a treated photosensitive surface and exposed to light. The results were cameraless photographs ("photograms") in which the life-size shadows of objects appear white

or light blue against a darker Prussian blue ground. (The diversity of material supports, solution saturations, and exposures account for the wide variability of blues.) *A Partial Disassembling...* has been exhibited twice, but never in full: the most complete presentation was at the Barbican Centre, London (2014); five years later, approximately one third of the piece was on display at Petzel Gallery, New York. The total work encompasses over 11,460 individual cyanotypes exhibited over roughly 15,000 square feet, enough to fill the walls of a large commercial gallery several times over.

The initial impetus behind the work was total transparency: “I try to be transparent.”<sup>44</sup> But even as the work was still in progress, Beshty recognized that the drive toward total transparency could yield its opposite: “I like that there’s an almost infinite regress into the details of the work and that it’s so materially transparent that it becomes opaque and overwhelms the viewer with relevant information.”<sup>45</sup> Asked about the term “transparency” as used by politicians to indicate openness and honesty, Beshty responded: “In the politics of aesthetics, power can be as much about concealing as revealing the process of how something is made... *A Partial Disassembling...* is about inverting that and trying to turn that idea of total disclosure into the product. It’s a work that self-narrates, but because there’s an excess of information, the narrative is both totally transparent and totally incomprehensible.”<sup>46</sup> The deliberate practice of data-flooding as a countermeasure against disclosure requirements is often referred to as “drowning in disclosure.”<sup>47</sup> The most infamous recent instance of drowning in disclosure was the 55,000 printed pages of emails turned over by Hillary Clinton in 2015. As she and her detractors were well aware, the emails could have been delivered electronically with far greater ease; but electronic emails would also have been far more amenable to digital search. Had Beshty completed a print edition of his complete email correspondences, he and his electronic interlocutors would most likely have been spared any embarrassment as no one would bother to read the tens of thousands of printed pages. Ironically yet symptomatically, printed bound volumes are safer than encrypted cloud storage for voluminous and monotonous information. Beshty conceived of *A Partial Disassembling...* at the precise moment he abandoned the email project.

The excessive disclosure in *A Partial Disassembling...* speaks to the total transparency effected by corporate data mining and state surveillance even as it mimics countermeasures against voluntary and unauthorized disclosure. But the primary aesthetic pleasure in the work lies elsewhere. Because cameraless photographs capture not the reflections of surfaces but the relative translucency and opacity of things, many of the thousands of cyanotypes pose visual riddles that the viewer must decipher. White rectangles, squares, and triangles abound and yield few clues as to the objects that left the unembellished geometric traces. White lines that spool or snake their way across an undifferentiated blue surface can occasionally be identified as a vacuum cleaner hose, an electronic charger cable, or a bungee cord. Just as often, they resist identification. Even more prevalent are the nebulous masses that could be the shadows of plastic bags, reams of cloth, or quite literally anything whose material presence leaves irregular, formless traces. The outlines of several transparent cubes could recall the cubes of Haacke or Beshty were we not too busy solving the riddle of their identity. For the thousands of readily discernible objects, identification hardly forestalls meticulous inspection. This is especially true of translucent and transparent objects. Never has the geometry of a plastic bottle of mouthwash appeared so rigorous, nor the curves and irregularities in a plastic spoon so sensuous. We study the traces of light and shadow that have fallen through the ridges in a plastic cup, the unmodulated blades and grille of a fan, the complex patterns of overlain layers of

bubble wrap. We marvel at the number of pliers that came through the studio. And saw blades. And scissors. And and and. The variegated blue ocean of stuff approaches the sublime. (The installation at Petzel Gallery, barely a third of the total, all but demanded the negative pleasure integral to Kant’s conception of the sublime, which derives from a failure in our power of judgment, which is then judged.) And yet we are regularly rescued from sublime terror through the voyeuristic picturesque: invoices, emails, drug prescriptions, and the like are perfectly legible—so long as we ignore the traces of objects and focus only on the material support.

In *A Partial Disassembling...*, there is no end to the aesthetic pleasure. And whether positive or negative, the aesthetic pleasure is bound up in politics and ethics: “The political implications of art lie in the second question (the ‘how does it create meaning?’ question), for art creates a transparency about how aesthetics elicit meaning, which can, after examination, be extrapolated and applied to daily life.”<sup>48</sup> In *A Partial Disassembling...*, the extrapolation to everyday life is obvious. Any reasonably astute viewer eventually recognizes the following: (a) *A Partial Disassembling...* presents too much and too little information to provide any practical insight into the workings of the studio, the production of the art, or the disposition of the artist; (b) we could gain vastly more practical information into the workings of the studio, the production of the art, and the disposition of the artist through the (unrealized) publication of Beshty’s emails, or, better yet, access to his smartphone, let alone with open access to the entirety of his digital shadow. *A Partial Disassembling...*, in other words, is not a true instance of contemporary drowning in disclosure. For Beshty has disclosed almost none of his “digital shadow” or “digital footprint,” defined by Wikipedia as “one’s unique set of traceable digital activities, actions, contributions and communications manifested on the Internet or on digital devices.”<sup>49</sup> The phrases “digital shadow” and “digital footprint” are especially apt as cameraless photographs are literally the traces of the shadows of objects (rather than their reflections) and are regularly likened to footprints. In Rosalind Krauss’s famous account: “The image created in this way is of the ghostly traces of departed objects; they look like footprints in sand.”<sup>50</sup> Not only is *A Partial Disassembling...* gloriously (or exasperatingly) unsearchable—a complete 1:2 scale record of the recto and verso of each object comprising 59 bound letterpress and digital offset volumes contains no index—but it almost completely avoids Beshty’s digital footprint. (The meager sampling of printed emails, invoices, and so forth are conspicuous reminders of their general absence.) In this regard, they have nothing in common with Hillary Clinton’s 55,000 printed pages of emails. Clinton produced the digital emails as material prints in an effort to avoid or at least defer digital scrutiny. Beshty has avoided the digital altogether. Or, better yet, he has substituted his material footprints and shadows for his digital footprint and shadow, just as he replaced the management software, barcodes, and radio-frequency identification tags of inventory control systems with the outmoded technology of cyanotypes.

But Beshty’s is hardly a nostalgic return to obsolete technologies in opposition to our digital present. *A Partial Disassembling...* does not wish away the digital in favor of nineteenth century photographic processes. Quite the contrary. The digital is everywhere: nearly every item that came in and out of the studio did so through supply chains, barcodes, and other thoroughly digitized technologies commanded by Amazon, FedEx, and other information technology behemoths. *A Partial Disassembling...* is not the materialization of the digital but rather the traces of a material world dominated by digital information: 11,460 cyanotypes of material shadows that parallel the strikingly absent terabytes of digital

shadow. This is among the hidden and profound meanings of Beshty's insistence on "materialist transparency."<sup>51</sup> It is, among other things, a transparency that reveals the material residue of our "immaterial" digital existence, the materialist shadow of a digital shadow.

#### IV. Material Residues of the Immaterial

No concept of any importance is free from the vicissitudes of ideological drift. Nor do concepts drift exclusively from left to right or even on a left-right spectrum. As Balkin argues: Normative and political valences may change with respect to many different types of evaluative schemas: left versus right, cosmopolitan versus isolationist, assimilationist versus nationalist, populist versus elitist, religious versus secular, and so on. Moreover, the scope and content of all of these benchmark concepts will be affected by the play of contextual change. The notions of 'left' and 'right' or 'liberal' and 'conservative' are themselves subject to drift, because over time the positions taken by those who identify themselves (or are identified) as conservatives and liberals tend to change.<sup>52</sup>

What makes Beshty's theory and practice of materialist transparency so potent is that it registers and challenges the ideological drift of both terms: "transparency" and "materialist." And there is no question that "materialism" has undergone dramatic ideological drift over the last century, one especially pronounced in the practice of cameraless photography, a centerpiece of Beshty's oeuvre. Beshty's first cameraless photographs belong to a series titled *Pictures Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light* (2005–2011) (→ pp. 24–27) and were directly (yet circuitously) indebted to László Moholy-Nagy. The famous Bauhaus artist has long been credited as one of the avant-garde "discoverers" of cameraless photograph in the 1920s. (In fact, the practice is as old as camera photography. What's more, we now know that Moholy-Nagy was introduced to the technique by the work of Bertha Günther, a student in the all-women Loheland School for Physical Education, Agriculture and Crafts. Furthermore, Moholy-Nagy's wife, Lucia, played an integral and largely uncredited role in the practice and theory of "László's" cameraless photography.<sup>53</sup>) Moholy-Nagy regularly used translucent and transparent objects to create abstract cameraless photographs—or, as he dubbed them, "photograms"—that partook of the complex transparency that permeated his oeuvre.<sup>54</sup> The attraction for Beshty must have been immediate. But the nature of the attraction is telling:

The titles of these works [*Pictures Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light*] refer to a series of unmade or lost works by László Moholy-Nagy. In early 2005 during a conversation with Moholy-Nagy's grandson, the absence of the crumpled paper photogram in the productions of the avant-gardes was speculated upon, a curiosity because it was a period marked by both a suspicion of figuration in artwork and the investigation of the materialist approaches to the production of the work of art. The grandson believed that Moholy-Nagy had in fact created a series of works using nothing more than crumpled photographic paper. Through the course of our discussion of these works, a title was hypothesized, 'Abstraction Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light.'<sup>55</sup>

As it turned out, Moholy-Nagy had made such a photogram, around 1938–43, and described it as "a diagram of forces,"<sup>56</sup> a title Beshty soon adopted for a major exhibition of his work.<sup>57</sup> What was a one-off experiment for Moholy-Nagy became the basis for one of Beshty's first major bodies of work and a core feature of his aesthetics and ethics.

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The trajectory from Moholy-Nagy to Beshty perfectly traces the ideological drift of materiality and handwork. Moholy-Nagy regularly included his own hand in his photograms, often in conjunction with a paintbrush, in order to register the fact that cameraless photography was a form of *Lichtnerlei* or painting with light, which did away with both paintbrushes and hands. As summed up by Man Ray, a fellow traveler in cameraless photography: "Is photography an art? There is no need to inquire whether it's an art. Art is passé. It must be something else. One must watch the light work. It's the light that creates. I sit before the sheet of sensitive paper and I think."<sup>58</sup> It is no coincidence that Moholy-Nagy embarked on cameraless photography around the time he made his so-called *Telephone Pictures* (1923), which he ostensibly ordered by telephone in three sizes from an enamel factory in Weimar, Germany. In avant-garde circles, the hand of the artist (ductus) was as passé as art. By contrast hands are all over works like *Cross-Contaminated RA4 Contact Print / Processor Stall (YMC/Six Magnet: Los Angeles, California, July 16, 2014, Fuji Color Crystal Archive Super Type C, Em. No. 199–023; Kodak Ektacolor RA Bleach-Fix and Replenisher, Cat. No. 8471484; Kreonite KM IV 5225 RA4 Color Processor, Ser. No. 00092174; 75914)* (2016). Crucially, this work is overrun not only by the hands of the artist, but also by those of studio assistants. And numerous other works by Beshty reveal the handprints of art handlers, FedEx couriers, gallery attendants, and others, as we will soon see. Where Moholy-Nagy and his cohort denied and denigrated the hand of the artist, Beshty insists on it even as he distributes it across the entire supply chain.

Materiality has drifted no less dramatically. For Beshty, photograms were an effort to fuse image and material support: "The photogram works began out of an attempt to integrate these dual understandings of photographic depictions—by using the paper itself to define the forms—and to ignore the division between 'image' and material."<sup>59</sup> For Moholy-Nagy, photograms accomplished the precise opposite:

Already with the photogram, the coarse material medium of pigment dissolves; the as-yet second order materialization of light becomes more immediate. The light is seized as direct radiation with nearly no transposition, fluctuating and oscillating. And if remnants of the material processes persist, the fact that the light-sensitive coating of the photogram transposes the light into a nearly immaterial [*stoffloses/wesenloses*] material clearly marks the future path toward a sublimated, optical form of expression.<sup>60</sup>

Here, we can recognize two types of drift. First, a single practice—abstract cameraless photography—has drifted from the quintessentially immaterial to the adamantly material. Second, the associations surrounding "materiality" have drifted. For avant-garde artists like Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray, "materiality" signified antiquated modes of artistic production anchored in painting, the hand of the artist, and the uniqueness of the artwork—all of which could be overcome through industrial manufacture (like the *Telephone Pictures*) and immaterial new media (like photograms and cameraless films). Much of this ethos survives in Conceptual Art and its "dematerialization of the art object."<sup>61</sup> But for post-WWII followers of Clement Greenberg, from abstract painters to members of the Film Co-Ops, "materiality" became a watchword in the struggle against virtual images, industrial capitalism, and the commodification of the artwork.<sup>62</sup> As avant-garde concepts, immateriality and materiality are fundamentally adversarial: immaterial avant-garde media took aim at bourgeois painting, just as material photography and film now challenge virtual image industries. So powerful is ideological drift, that a single technique—abstract cameraless photography—could oppose material painting in the 1920s and virtual images in the 2000s.



Like most critics working today, Beshty is subject to the ideological drift of terms like “materiality.” The materiality manifest in his work, however, cannot be reduced to an inversion of interwar immateriality (in which once-immaterial photochemistry appears material in the face of digital photography) or, worse yet, a reversion to nineteenth-century forms of materiality (oil painting or antiquarian photographic techniques practiced for their own sake).<sup>63</sup> Rather, Beshty recognizes the hegemony of information, data, the digital, and virtual images, and produces work around which the residual materiality and corporeality can agglomerate. If the interwar avant-garde championed the immaterial and the immediate post-WWII avant-garde advocated for materiality, Beshty leads a generation of artists whose work captures the material residue of the immaterial.

Exemplary are the diverse bodies of work anchored in photogram techniques. Moholy-Nagy famously printed few of his

own photographs and, by some accounts, was allergic to photochemicals, leaving the development of photograms to his wife Lucia or his students.<sup>64</sup> All of Beshty’s photograms are testaments to darkroom labor—either Beshty’s alone or a team comprising the artist and several studio assistants. Lest raw physical traces fail to give studio assistants, art handlers, etc., their due, Beshty has made photographic portraits of nearly every individual who has contributed to the production, circulation, and exhibition of his art: studio assistants, framers, art handlers, gallerists, receptionists, guards, couriers, curators, art historians, critics, and others—and exhibited and published these portraits without regard to ostensible rank or prestige. Most recently, he presented his *Industrial Portraits* (2008–) (→ pp. 134–141) as a digital video slide show, comprising thousands of scans from 35mm rolls of film. Whereas the signature “Moholy-Nagy” silently suppressed the work of many others, Beshty foregrounds the fiction of the authorial artist studio in numerous works and even in the URL of his website: [actionstakenunderthefictitiousname-waleadbeshstystudiosinc.com](http://actionstakenunderthefictitiousname-waleadbeshstystudiosinc.com). Beshty’s insistence on the actual work involved in the production, distribution, and exhibition of art thus entails a double rejection: first, a dismissal of virtual images bereft of history and labor; second, a refusal of the hand of the (wealthy male) artist, one that regularly elides the work of (often female or lower class) subordinates. And as in the *FedEx* works, this diversity of labor is not metadata separate from the work but registered as bodily and material residues in the works themselves.

Even in artworks untouched by other hands and absent all ghostly corporeal smidgens, there is a piercing tension between images of resplendent beauty and the material traces of their manufacture. Exemplary are the *Fold* works (2006–2012) (→ p. 31), another early series that has remained a staple of Beshty’s production. As the artist explains in the procedural text “On the Condition of Production of the *Multi-Sided Picture* Works”

(2008): the works “are photograms made from folding sheets of light sensitive photographic paper. The paper is cut and folded into basic 3-dimensional forms that have anywhere from 3 to 6 sides, and, using a standard color photographic enlarger, each side of the form is exposed to a specific color of light. [...] The process is conducted within a set of rules, and the rules are used to create chance compositions.”<sup>65</sup> The results—such as *Three-Sided Picture (RBY), January 7, 2007, Santa Clarita, California, Fujicolor Crystal Archive Type C* (2019)—are crystalline structures so lustrous, variegated, and saturated as to rival any dreamed by Paul Scheerbart, Moholy-Nagy, or other early twentieth century preachers of the gospel of colored light. Surely if ever an image seized light as direct radiation with nearly no transposition, fluctuating and oscillating, marking the future path toward a sublimated, optical form of expression, it is a *Multi-Sided Picture* by Beshty.

And then one grasps the creases. Not immediately: for they often coincide with the hard edges of the prismatic forms and remain nearly imperceptible; the whiteness of the paper presents like pure white light—just as the mounds of bright white impasto applied by Rembrandt transmogrify oil paint into pure luminous gleam. And rarely in reproduction: for the reduction in scale and the flatness of the repro photograph elide the materiality of paper. But one cannot look closely at a *Multi-Sided Picture* or a *Picture Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light* and fail to see the creases. At this moment, the iridescent crystalline world crumbles into a series of folds. And the paper creases do not merely bind the image to the material, they provide a glimpse—however incomplete—into the process of their creation. (The chance compositions could never be repeated by the artist just as they are virtually impossible to reverse engineer for the viewer.) This is Beshty’s materialist transparency. No mere assertion of materiality, the creases are the material residue of the nearly immaterial transposition of light. Seemingly transparent as to the means of production, the *Multi-Sided Pictures* are an open yet illegible book.



j) László Moholy-Nagy, *Diagram of Forces*, 1938–1943.



k) László Moholy-Nagy, *Photogram*, 1926.

The same fundamental dynamic is present in Beshty's *Transparency* works (2008–) (→ pp. 324–325), which grew out of another important early series, *Travel Pictures* (2006/2008) (→ p. 102). *Travel Pictures* are images of the no man's land that was the Iraqi embassy in East Germany, after the fall of East Germany and the occupation of Iraq by United States forces. East Germany had granted Iraq the plot of land for its embassy in perpetuity. Now doubly neglected, the embassy was a physical and geopolitical ruin. Beshty held on to the negatives, their message too blunt, and accidentally sent them through the X-ray machine at an airport. Imprinted by chance by the international security apparatus, the hybrid photograph-photograms now traced a convoluted path through competing layers of geopolitical power, neglect, and control. The *Travel Pictures* led directly to the *Transparencies*.

Beshty produces works like *Transparency (Positive) [Fujichrome RDPIII Provia 100F Em. No. 064–821: May 24–26, 2018 LAX/EWR EWR/LAX]* (2019) by systematically sending unexposed photographic transparencies through the X-ray machines of the airports on his itinerary, which are then enumerated in the titles. As Jason E. Smith's astutely notes, the *Transparencies* fused the two primary vectors of Beshty's production up to that point: cameraless photography (like the *Pictures Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light*) and the generation of form through circulation (as in the *FedEx* works). Even more, they rehearse an entire history of transparency as a modernist ideal. As Smith argues:

The literalization performed by the titles—the works reduced to the type of film support used—quickly spins out into a wider discursive field. The reference to transparency in the title cannot avoid invoking the machines in making these works, the X-ray machines whose function is precisely to render bodies transparent, stripping away surface, skin, and flesh in order to reveal the bones, the internal structure of the things, and people passing before its blind intrusive gaze. The X-ray machine is here made to replace a camera; what it 'films' is not a thing but film itself. The X-ray immediately begins to stand in as cipher for a classical modernism whose aesthetic logic and ethical imperative were defined by the drive or impulse to dismantle surfaces to get a long, clear look at their material supports.<sup>66</sup>

The *Transparencies* are at once a modernist dream that became a security nightmare and an intrusive image that reveals nothing. In the *Transparencies*, transparency has undone itself as an aesthetic logic and ethical imperative. Aesthetics and ethics are no longer the drive to dismantle surfaces and reveal material supports, but the ongoing negotiation of such drives and such supports. This is Beshty's materialist transparency.

## V. Digital

Beshty's photograms explore materialities and transparencies familiar from the historical avant-garde but in bracingly unfamiliar ways. In the great 1920s debate on photographic facture, for example, no artist or critic offered the solution arrived at by Beshty: a facture composed of creases and folds.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Moholy-Nagy regularly likened his photograms to X-ray photographs, but he never aligned either with disciplinary or security apparatuses, though X-ray images had already begun to discipline the medicalized body.<sup>68</sup> Beshty's photogram series—including *Folds*, *Pulls*, *Loops*, *Pictures Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light*, and *Transparencies*—are among the most beautiful and ingenious solutions to questions posed first and inconclusively by artists like Moholy-Nagy. And they open the door to questions the historical avant-garde could never envision. In sundry bodies

of work—including *A Partial Disassembling...*—Beshty interjects the digital into the same set of aesthetic and ethical concerns that yielded his dazzling photogram; and the results look and act like nothing Moholy-Nagy could have ever conceived. Most obvious is *Office Works* (2014–), a series of computers, printers, and scanners skewered like butterflies on lepidopterist pins—only unlike scientific specimens, the computer equipment is neither perfectly preserved nor entirely dead. The screen of the disemboweled computer still flickers in *Office Work (Apple iMac 24" Desktop Intel Core 2 Duo)* (2017) (→ p. 328); just as in *Office Work (Epson Perfection V550 Photo Scanner J252B)* (2017) (→ p. 291) the stepper motor and belt of the eviscerated scanner struggle to advance in a futile and jerky action that approximates an unremitting death rattle. Indeed, in their death throes, the office equipment gains an uncanny animacy. As Beshty explains:

There is a kind of anthropomorphism here, that [the computer devices] are produced so they convey a certain personality, just like dogs evolved from foxes and wolves to make people more comfortable, not only in their behavior, but also their appearance, how passive gentle traits within dogs went along with their eyes becoming larger, their faces baby like. I think of machines this way. So in a sense, I am squaring the circle, expanding these cute little subservient objects into upright figures. And to me, this act also feels horrific, or sad, they seem to suffer in becoming figures, and the dissection needed to make them stand up, their skewering on a pole, the separation of their parts, the exposure of their innards, is something of an abomination. [...] But in terms of their longevity, they will be much better maintained than they would otherwise, they have been saved from the ash heap.<sup>69</sup>

Material transparency here is a complex affair. It is not the exhibition of exenterated computer parts—for, as Baudelaire recognized, one cannot dismantle a toy to find a soul.<sup>70</sup> Nor is disembowelment a successful countermeasure against data access—for a hard drive can easily be inserted into another computer. Instead, it is an unusually blunt and violent presentation of the material residue of immaterial data. A materialist take on no ghost just a shell. A materialist shadow that will endure.

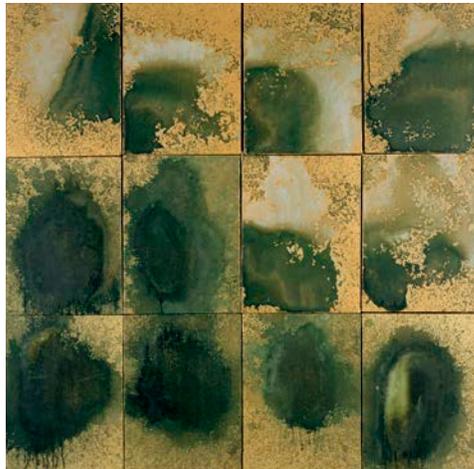
The skewered desktops, laptops, printers, and scanners are anthropomorphized and abject. But they are still inhuman. Along with tortured televisions like *Sharp LC-90LE657U 90-inch Aquos HS 1080p 120Hz 3D Smart LED TV* (2017) (→ p. 38), they are anomalous in Beshty's oeuvre. More common is the abject human residue of a seemingly immaculate (and oftentimes digital) world. Exemplary here are the manifold works in copper. Copper is a soft metal and oxidizes easily. Accordingly, a *FedEx* copper work such as *Copper Tube (FedEx® Tube ©2005 FEDEX 139752 REV 10/05 SSCC), International Priority, Los Angeles–Brussels trk#875468975 982, September 8–13, 2011, International Priority, Groot-Bijgaarden–Geneva trk#804219510690, May 17–24, 2019, Priority Overnight, Geneva–Winterthur trk#776185632 420, September 10–11, 2019* (2011–) (→ p. 306) is riddled not only with the shipping and tracking labels and scratches that betray its circulation among studio, gallery, and museum. It is also oxidized by the hands of laborers—including studio assistants, FedEx delivery personnel, and museums art handlers—who transport and install the work barehanded. Once installed, it must be handled like any other artwork. But as soon as it begins its transit to its next venue, the gloves come off and the human (and nonhuman) labor involved in circulation are registered in sweat, oxidation, scratches, and labels. Stated formulaically, in the *FedEx* copper works: materialist transparency = copper + sweat + scratches + labels. (The titular shipping information—at once part of the work and its metadata—serves as a bridge between material and digital transparencies.)



More subtle and striking still are the *Copper Surrogate* desktops. In order to make a *Copper Surrogate* desktop work, Beshty replaces the desks (→ p. 14) in an exhibition venue for the duration of the exhibit and has the gallery staff go about their usual business. By the end of the exhibition, the copper desktop is covered in formless smudges, ghostly handprints, constellations of rings marking cups of coffee, water, or more exalted beverages, and, finally, the deeper greenish corrosion or “patina” produced by forearms and elbows hard at work. In short: “Every mark or shade on these surfaces is a sign of [the] immaterial labor of the staff.”<sup>71</sup> This much is nearly self-evident. Viewers schooled in modern art will immediately recall the handprints and bric-a-brac left as traces of the existential self by Jackson Pollock in paintings like *Number 1A*, 1948 (1948). Pollock’s drip paintings, in turn, were cited and debased by Andy Warhol in his *Oxidation Paintings* (1977–), made by pissing on canvases covered in copper-based paints. Patient viewers-cum-readers can find vast troves of additional information in Beshty’s titles, which effectively replace the need for captions, wall text, or other metadata. For example:

*Reception 2* [Source: wood, laminate, and particleboard desk designed by Project-Space/Jonathan Caplan from the reception office at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York. Surrogate: WB72712B (produced in conjunction with

l) Jackson Pollock, *Number 1A*, 1948.



Jason Murison, Director), titled *Copper Surrogate (Desk, section 2: designed by Project-Space/Jonathan Caplan, 456 West 18th Street, New York, New York, June 26–August 18, 2014), conceived in 2013, produced in 2014, made of polished copper and powder-coated steel with the dimensions 145 3/16 x 226 1/8 x 30 3/4 inches as a singular object. Production completed by Benchmark Scenery Incorporated, Glendale, California from 48 ounce Electrolytic-Tough-Pitch C11000 Copper Alloy cut from 60 x 120 inch mirror-polished sheet, with formed corners where necessary, copper plated hardware, perimeter edge French cleat system, and separate black powder-coated steel support structures. \$42,933.00 production costs including travel and storage crates with floating lockable cleat system. Unexposed surrogates shipped by Crate 88 Incorporated from Los Angeles to New York, June 19<sup>th</sup> through June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014. Installed in place of Project-Space/Jonathan Caplan reception desk at 456 West 18th Street, New York, exposure through the duration of A Machinery for Living organized by Walead Beshty at Friedrich Petzel*

*Gallery, New York, closing August 8th 2014. Due to the length and shape of the surface, copper surrogate portion produced in four sections, section 2 is 31 x 87 7/8 x 11/2 inches. Section 2 has two cabinet surrogates with the dimensions 29 1/4 x 15 1/4 x 21 3/4 inches and two small drawer surrogates, each with the dimensions 3 1/8 x 21 3/4 x 21 3/4 inches.] (2014)*

m) Andy Warhol, *Oxidation Painting (in 12 Parts)*, 1978.

What is missing from the overly synoptic description “immaterial labor” and the overly lengthy title are the material artefacts that subtend most of the immaterial labor and that dictate the form of the original table and the configuration of the ultimate oxidation marks. These material artefacts are obvious to anyone who works at a desk. The material artefacts that leave no direct traces but condition the design of the desktop, the immaterial labor performed at the desktop, and the arrangement of oxidized traces on the desktop is, of course, the desktop computer. The holes in *Reception 2*, like those in the original wood desktop, are for computer cables. (*Reception 2* retains the outline of the original grommets, likely made of plastic, a material absent from the title.) Decades ago, the computer “desktop”—“The working area of a computer screen regarded as a representation of a notional desktop” (Oxford English Dictionary)—replaced actual desktops as the principal arena of immaterial labor. Hung on a wall, *Reception 2* orients itself vertically, like the notional desktop on a computer screen. But like other *Copper Surrogate* desktop work, it registers the traces of forearms, sweat, elbows, water, coffee, hands, grease, and other residues that surround the material desktop computers and the notional desktops thereon. Their radical material transparency occludes and corrodes the immaterial transparency once seen as the promise of the digital and now recognized as among its chief perils. If Pollock aligned the residue with psychology, and Warhol degraded it into scatology, then Beshty affiliates it with the material residues of digital bureaucracy, literally: bureau-cracy or rule by furniture. More than ever, we are ruled by a notional piece of furniture, a computer desktop. Beshty’s *Copper Surrogate* desktop work are a dazzling and corrosive image of our subjugation.

Beshty’s materialist transparency comprises the material residues of our immaterial digital present rendered so transparent as to become opaque: the literal and infrastructural transparencies shattered in the *FedEx* works; the ocean of disclosure in *A Partial Disassembling...*; the illegible instructions hidden in the creases of the *Multi-Sided Pictures*; the security apparatus registered and eluded in the *Transparencies*; and the handprints and patina in the *Copper Surrogate* desktop works. Astute viewers can find materialist transparency embedded deeply across Beshty’s incomparably sweeping and varied artistic, critical, and curatorial oeuvre—one whose depth and range were only hinted at in this essay. The breathtaking variety of works, materials, techniques, ideas, procedures, media, and formats testifies not only to a prodigious and polymathic mind, but also to the aesthetic and ethical imperative at the heart of materialist transparency. If nothing else, this essay has argued that transparency and materiality are not timeless aesthetic or ethical values. Rather, they are historically and politically contingent concepts subject to ideological drift, just as they are aesthetic and ethical strategies instantiated only through their imbrications in specific materials and techniques, individuals and infrastructures. The realization of materialist transparency at a given moment and in a given form is a matter of grave ethical and aesthetic concern. Walead Beshty has shown us that it is also a potential wellspring of profound aesthetic and ethical nourishment.

- 1 Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä, "Transparency: Thinking through an Opaque Concept," in *Transparency, Society and Subjectivity: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.
- 2 Chloe Veltman, "Transparency Emerges as Theme in Museums' Shows and Design," *The New York Times*, September 16, 2010.
- 3 Quoted in Sarah Lookofsky, "Cults of Transparency: The Curtain Wall and the Shop Window in the Work of Dan Graham and Josephine Meckseper," in *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, ed. John Welchman (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 223.
- 4 Emmanuel Alloa, "Transparency: A Magic Concept of Modernity," in *Transparency, Society and Subjectivity: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2.
- 5 Beshty in Mikkel Carl, "Interview: Walead Beshty," Malmö Konsthall, www.konsthall.malmo.se/upload/pdf/Walead\_Beshty\_Interview.pdf.
- 6 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting\_resources/transparency\_pledge\_1\_pager.pdf
- 7 https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/fashion\_transparency\_index\_2019?e=25766662/69342298
- 8 https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/04/20/follow-thread/need-supply-chain-transparency-garment-and-footwear-industry
- 9 https://www2.hm.com/en\_gb/productpage.0808051001.html#modalSuppliers. Accessed December 19, 2019. See also Elizabeth Paton and Sapna Maheshwari, "H&M's Different Kind of Clickbait," *The New York Times*, 18 December 2019. As Paton and Maheshwari point out: "The sustainability tab won't tell you that Jinnat sprawls over seven floors, each the size of a football field, or that employees perch in front of whirring sewing machines making white cotton T-shirts, monitoring 337 high-tech embroidery appliances and snipping at stray threads. And you won't find out that this single company makes 400,000 pieces (roughly 110 tons) of clothing per day, or around 10 to 12 million units per month, up to a quarter of which will be bound for H&M."
- 10 See https://sustainability.hm.com/content/dam/hm/about/documents/en/CSR/2017%20Sustainability%20report/HM\_group\_SustainabilityReport\_2017\_FullReport\_en.pdf (page 21).
- 11 Ibid., 21
- 12 Beshty in Jacob Proctor and Walead Beshty, "Ibid.," in *Walead Beshty: Pulleys, Cogwheels, Mirrors, and Windows* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2009), 25. See also Jacob Proctor, "Toward Transparency," *ibid.*, 11–21.
- 13 The passage—pertaining to his editorial work and the reproduction of the artwork of others—reads in full: "Transparency was an ethical choice intended to be felt at the point of reception, realized both in terms of the agency of the audience (editorial transparency was a form of accountability of the producer to the receiver) and with regard to the accurate depiction of works of art, such that the viewer would know more precisely the difference between the original work and its presentation in the context of the magazine rather than tacitly assuming the nature of this difference in the general sense without qualification. This allowed a reader/viewer access to the logic behind the arrangement of things, a move that also served to denaturalize the aesthetic and editorial choices being made." Walead Beshty, "Against Distinction: Photography and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October*, no. 158 (2016): 75.
- 14 "Aesthetics and Distribution Case (1), Preliminary Notes on Art's Ability to Radicalize Academia," in *Walead Beshty: 33 Texts: 93,614 Words: 581,035 Characters: Selected Writings (2003–2015)*, ed. Lionel Bovier (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2015), 217.
- 15 "Toward an Aesthetics of Ethics," in *Ethics*, ed. Walead Beshty, *Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), 22.
- 16 "Parallax Views: Michael Asher at the Santa Monica Museum of Art," 122.
- 17 J. M. Balkin, "Ideological Drift and the Struggle over Meaning," *Connecticut Law Review* 25, no. 3 (1993): 871.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 David E. Pozen, "Transparency's Ideological Drift," *Yale Law Journal* 128, no. 1 (2018): 100–65.
- 20 Louis D. Brandeis, "What Publicity Can Do," *Harpers's Weekly* (December 20, 1913): 10. Quoted in *ibid.*, 102.
- 21 Ibid., 122–23.
- 22 Ibid., 124–25.
- 23 Ibid., 135–36.
- 24 See https://sustainability.hm.com/content/dam/hm/about/documents/en/CSR/2017%20Sustainability%20report/HM\_group\_SustainabilityReport\_2017\_FullReport\_en.pdf (page 21).
- 25 https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14\_cn3afoas7NhKvHWaFKqQGkaZS5rvL6DFxzGqXQa6o/edit#gid=0 Accessed December 23, 2019.
- 26 Zachary Small, "Museum Workers Share Their Salaries and Urge Industry-Wide Reform," *Hyperallergic*, June 3, 2019. https://hyperallergic.com/503089/museum-workers-share-their-salaries-and-urge-industry-wide-reform/ Accessed December 23, 2019.
- 27 Clinton Howell, quoted in Georgina Adam, "How transparent is the art market?" *Financial Times*, April 28, 2017. https://www.ft.com/content/77cb a886251b-11e7-a34a-538b4cb30025. Accessed December 23, 2019.
- 28 See Paul Overy, *Light, Air & Openness: Modern Architecture between the Wars* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).
- 29 Mies van der Rohe, quoted in Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 288.
- 30 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 217. Hardly the exclusive province of democracies, transparency was touted no less fervently in Fascist Italy. See Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "The People's Glass House," *South Central Review* 25, no. 3 (2008): 45–56.
- 31 Felicity Scott, "An Army of Soldiers or a Meadow the Seagram Building and the 'Art of Modern Architecture'," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 3 (2011): 336.
- 32 See Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 45–54; Rowe and Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal...Part II," *Perspecta* 13/14 (1971): 287–301. Today, we can recognize in the understated advocacy for phenomenal transparency both strategic brilliance (in the rejection of the International Style and the myth of transparency) and intellectual vacuity (in the weak appropriation of the formal and psychological ambiguity of abstract painting). For a thorough dismantling of Rowe and Slutzky's argument as it pertains to the historical avant-garde, see Detlef Mertins, "Transparency: Autonomy and Relationality," *AA Files*, no. 32 (1996): 3–11.
- 33 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 42. See also Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism*, Again (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 111.
- 34 Press Release, September 19, 2019. https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2019/09/apple-fifth-avenue-the-cube-is-back. Accessed December 23, 2019.
- 35 Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 44.
- 36 Hans Haacke, *Working Conditions: The Writings of Hans Haacke*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 6.
- 37 Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 193.
- 38 See Walead Beshty, "Production Notes: Studio Narratives and Some Transparencies," in *Walead Beshty: Natural Histories* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2011), back cover (beneath dusk jacket).
- 39 "Absolu Avec Vache (and the Spectre of the Gun)," in *Material Presence* (London: Aldgate Press, 2008), 28.
- 40 Dan Graham, "Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television (1979)," in *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 59.
- 41 Beshty in Walead Beshty and Friedrich Petzel, "Re: April Show/Interview," in *Walead Beshty: Procedurals* (New York: Distanz and Petzel, 2017), no pagination.
- 42 Louis Lumière allegedly described cinema as "an invention without a future." See Hollis Frampton, "The Invention without a Future," in *On the Camera Acts and Consecutive Matters* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 171. The resonances between Beshty's installation and Frampton's lecture and practice are too complex to unpack properly here.
- 43 See Mike Ware, *Cyanotype* (London: Science Museum, 1999).
- 44 Beshty in Katya Tylevich and Walead Beshty, "Invisible Transformations," *elephant*, no. 17 (2013): 131.
- 45 Beshty in *ibid.*, 126.
- 46 Beshty in Helen Sumpter, "Walead Beshty," *Art-Review* (2015): 99.
- 47 See Aarti Gupta, "Transparency under Scrutiny: Information Disclosure in Global Environmental Governance," *Global Environmental Politics* 8, no. 2 (2008): 4.
- 48 Beshty, "Aesthetics and Distribution Case (1), Preliminary Notes on Art's Ability to Radicalize Academia," 216.
- 49 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\_footprint. Accessed December 25, 2019.
- 50 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 203.
- 51 See, for example, Beshty in Tylevich and Beshty, "Invisible Transformations," 126; *Walead Beshty, 33 Texts: 93,614 Words: 581,035 Characters. Selected Writings (2003–2015)*, ed. Lionel Bovier (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2015), 86, 91, 329.
- 52 Balkin, "Ideological Drift and the Struggle over-Meaning," 874.
- 53 See Herbert Molderings, "László Moholy-Nagy und die Neuerfindung ses Fotogramms," in *Kunst und Fotografie*, ed. Renate Heyne (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2003), 119; Eckhardt Köhn, "Laszlo Moholy-Nagys Loheländerin: Bertha Günther und ihre Fotogramme," in *Lichtbildwerkstatt Loheland*, ed. Iris Fischer and Eckhardt Köhn (Fulda: Vonderau Museum Fulda, 2004), 41–44. Bertha Günther and the Loheland School have since seen noteworthy scholarly and curatorial attention. See esp. Sandra Neugärtner, "Utopias of a New Society: Lucia Moholy, László Moholy-Nagy, and the Loheland and Schwarzerden Women's Communes," in *Bauhaus Bodies*, ed. Elizabeth Otto and Patrick Rössler (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 73–100; Elisabeth Mollenhauer-Klüber and Michael Siebenbrodt, eds., *Loheland 100: Gelebte Visionen für eine neue Welt* (Fulda: Vonderau Museum Fulda, 2019).
- 54 See, for example, László Moholy-Nagy, "Photography Is Manipulation of Light," in *Moholy-Nagy: Photographs and Photograms*, ed. Andreas Haus (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 48. Among numerous scholarly and curatorial accounts of Moholy-Nagy's transparency, see Jeannine Fiedler and Hattula Moholy-Nagy, eds., *László Moholy-Nagy: Color in Transparency* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006); Nina Schallenberg, "Malerei der Transparenz," in *László Moholy-Nagy: Konstruktion*, ed. Nina Schallenberg (Cologne: Wienand, 2015), 8–27.
- 55 Beshty, "On the Conditions of Production of Pictures Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light (2005–)" (2008/11). https://www.actionstakenunderthe-fictitiousname-waleadbeshtystudiosinc.com/on-the-conditions-of-production-of-pictures-made-by-my-hand-with-the-assistance-of-light-2005. Accessed December 27, 2019.
- 56 See Renate Heyne and Floris M. Neusüss, eds., *Moholy-Nagy: The Photograms, Catalogue Raisonné* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 240–41.
- 57 "A Diagram of Forces," Malmö Konsthall and Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, 2011.
- 58 Man Ray in Jean Gallotti, "La Photographie Est-Elle Un Art? Man Ray," *L'Art Vivant*, no. 103 (1929): 282.
- 59 Beshty, "General Issues Pertaining to the Production of the Photogram works." https://www.actions-taken-under-the-fictitious-name-waleadbeshtystudiosinc.com/on-the-conditions-of-production-of-pictures-made-by-my-hand-with-the-assistance-of-light-2005. Accessed December 26, 2019.
- 60 László Moholy-Nagy, "Fotogramm und Grenzgebiete," *i102*, no. 21/22 (1929): 191–92. "Wesenloses" is the term Moholy-Nagy employs in an otherwise nearly identical version published in "Fotogramm und Grenzgebiete," *Die Form* 4, no. 10 (1929): 259.
- 61 See Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (New York: Praeger, 1972).
- 62 See Noam M. Elcott, "Darkened Rooms: A Genealogy of Avant-Garde Filmstrips from Man Ray to the London Film-Makers' Co-Op and Back Again," *Grey Room* 30 (2008): 6–37.
- 63 See, for example, Lyle Rexer, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2002).

- 64 See Hattula Moholy-Nagy, "The Photographic Record," in *Moholy Album: Perspektivwechsel auf den Fotostrecken der Moderne: László Moholy-Nagys Schwarzweissfotografische Arbeiten 1924–1937*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Göttingen: Steidl, 2018), 8.
- 65 Beshty, *Walead Beshty: 33 Texts: 93,614 Words: 581,035 Characters: Selected Writings (2003–2015)*. 156.
- 66 Jason E. Smith, "Securities and Exchanges," in *Walead Beshty: Selected Correspondences 2001–2010* (Bologna: Damiani, 2010), 14.
- 67 For excerpts from these debates, see Christopher Phillips, ed. *Photography in the Modern Era* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Aperture, 1989), 94–103.
- 68 See Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 69 Beshty in Beshty and Petzel, "Re: April Show/Interview," no pagination.
- 70 See Charles Baudelaire, "La Morale Du Joujou," in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 522–30.
- 71 See "Analysis and Comparison of Three Exhibitions by Walead Beshty," in *Walead Beshty: Procedurals*, (New York: Distanz and Petzel, 2017), no pagination. As made transparent in the catalogue, the essay was commissioned from CustomWritings.com, whose tagline is "The art of relieving students' pain." See also Beshty in Carl, "Interview: Walead Beshty".
- a) Michael Asher, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, California, USA, January 26–April 12, 2008, viewing southwest in installation. Photo by Grant Mudford. © Michael Asher Foundation.
- b) Sanatorium Zonnestraal, Hilversum NL. (designed by Johannes Duiker and Bernard Bijvoet, 1925–31). Historical Postcard.
- c) Westin Bonaventure, Exterior Elevated View, East, 1989, © 1989 Dennis O'Kane, image Courtesy The Portman Archives.
- d) Werkbundausststellung Köln 1914, Musterfabrik von Walter Gropius & Adolf Meyer. © Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin.
- f) Apple Store Fifth Ave NY. @ 2020 Apple Inc.
- g) Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, 1963–1965 Clear acrylic, distilled water, and climate in area of display, 12 x 12 x 12 in. (30.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm). Photo: Hans Haacke © Hans Haacke / Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York & ProLitteris, Zurich.
- h) Hans Haacke, *MOMA Poll*, 1970. 2 transparent ballot boxes with automatic counters, color-coded ballots, 2 transparent boxes, each: 40 x 20 x 10 in. (101.6 x 50.8 x 25.4 cm); Paper ballot, each: 3 x 2 1/2 in. (7.6 x 6.4 cm). Installation view: *Hans Haacke: All Connected*, New Museum, New York, October 24, 2019–January 26, 2020. Photo: Dario Lasagni, © Hans Haacke / Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York & ProLitteris, Zurich.
- i) László Moholy-Nagy, *Photogram*, 1926, Gelatin silver photogram, 23.8 x 17.8 cm. © Courtesy of The Moholy-Nagy Estate.
- j) László Moholy-Nagy, *Diagram of Forces*, 1938–1943, Gelatin silver print, photogram, 20.2 x 25.2 cm. © The Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Museum purchase funded by the S. I. Morris Photography Endowment 84.238.
- k) László Moholy-Nagy, *Photogram*, 1926, Gelatin silver photogram, 23.9 x 18 cm. © Courtesy of The Moholy-Nagy Estate.
- l) Detail from Pollock Jackson (1912–1956): *Number 1A*, 1948. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Oil and enamel on unprimed canvas, 68' x 8' 8" (172.7 x 264.2 cm). Purchase 77.1950 The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.
- m) Andy Warhol, *Oxidation Painting (in 12 Parts)*, 1978. Gold Ground, Each Part 16 X 12". Urine and metallic pigment in acrylic medium on canvas 48 x 49 inches. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich.