

VIOLENT LENS: SOCIAL MEMORY AS DOCUMENTATION IN  
PERFORMANCE ART (A COMICS BASED ANALYSIS)

by

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A THESIS

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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

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(A Comics Based Analysis)

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Despite their obvious visual differences, photography and comics both work to represent a snapshot of a moment, a reality — documentative or imagined. Three notable contemporary performances from the United States: Chris Burden’s Shoot, Joe Deutch’s untitled Gun Piece, and Cassils Becoming an Image reached their notoriety after the original, live performance. Photographs, news articles, and word of mouth acted as a funnel, allowing for the expansive consumption of works initially only viewable to a select audience. In the progression from liveness to memory, these performances were filtered through the documentary efforts used to capture the pieces in real time. Photographs and other documentative efforts become replacements for the real: an honest, objective snapshot of a past moment. Like photography, genres of the comic form such as memoir and journalism work to document memory and real events through illustration. Instead of a chemical process to reveal the light and shadows in a given moment—creating the illusion of objectivity in photography—comics carries the mark of its maker. By donning its representation of reality—coded through style, composition, and form—as the author’s truth, not the objective truth, comics bears its biases as a key part of its visual communication. By investigating Shoot, Gun Piece, and Becoming an Image—all pieces reliant on documentation to reach their audience—through the comics form, this thesis aims to reveal the imagined seamlessness that tenuously holds liveness, documentation, and memory together as one.

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

### Origins of a Constructed Theoretical Groundwork: Documentation and Mediation

The very first iteration of this thesis was born out of a need to create a longform comic and an interest in contemporary performance art. I knew I didn't want to write a traditional longform essay, and I struggled to think of a particular theme or work on which to perform an in-depth literary analysis. I spent each term of 2022 creating comics for various English and Art classes, quickly finding energy in a form I had so long enjoyed as a consumer. I felt particularly confident in my ability to translate my identity and philosophy through the comics page. I took special interest in memoir comics' ability to depict queerness and expansive gender identity through the eyes of its creator. This interest launched me into a comics-based exploration of performance art, a form often utilized to disperse political or identity-based ideas born from suppression and oppression.

To create a comic about specific performance pieces, I needed to work with pieces that had pre-existing documentation. This led me to research performance art theory — where I found plenty of existing discourse on performance art's relationship to both liveness and documentation. I quickly learned that many pieces of performance art were specifically designed *for the camera* — not just the audience in front of the artist. This changed my perception of how documentation could exist both as an intentional component of the artwork on behalf of the performance artist *and* as a more removed, “objective” capture by an audience member or bystander. I became fascinated by the idea of altering a viewer's perception of reality through a carefully controlled stream of information — a phenomenon we are all quite used to both politically and socially. Thinking back to my course studying performance art, I realized that nearly all of the pieces I found most interesting were designed to be documented. Finding

confidence in the beginnings of an emerging methodology, I began to piece together the overarching themes of what my thesis would become.

Now that I had the big three of my thesis: comics, performance, and documentation, I needed to create a theoretical framework that would *justify* these three elements existing together as one. Through this framework, I created a set of criteria that allowed me to select the performance pieces I would ultimately utilize within my comic. Since I would be focusing on performances that centered their relationship to documentation, justifying Performance Art and Photography together felt only natural. One of the texts I relied upon — which sort of became my performance art bible — was *Perform, Repeat, Record*, which contains essays from various performance theorists and artists. One of the pieces discussed in *Perform, Repeat, Record* that stood out to me was Vito Acconci's 1969 *Blinks* performance. He wrote out a set of rules for himself:

Holding a camera, aimed away from me and ready to shoot, while walking a continuous line down a city street.

Try not to blink.

Each time I blink: snap a photo.

and did exactly as he wrote (Acconci qtd. in Auslander 53). In the final documentation of the piece, the photos contain no image of the performance itself — only the *results* of the performance. This one quickly becomes a paradox — since it's a series of images of a performance, documented by the performer, that only became viewed as a performance after the photographs of said performance were published and put on view in a gallery as a work of performance art.

It's confusing that the documentation can be the performance can be the documentation. But this confusion is exactly what I held onto — knowing that my comic would be replicating both existing and imagined documentation of performances designed to be *known through their images*. Feeling like I had well justified the connection between photography and performance, my final step before creating the comic was to justify the comics form itself. Because I've been lucky enough to take courses with some incredible comics scholars, I came into this project with an understanding of comics theory and the uniqueness of the form.

Comics create a visual roadmap for compulsory storytelling, providing the reader with illustrations and texts, but leaving gaps for your own narrator to assist in the storytelling. Comics does this, in part, through the use of the gutter: the empty space between panels we often take for granted. The gutters allow you to bridge gaps through your own memories and understanding of the narrative, leaving literal and physical space between illustrated moments that your brain has to work to fill. I realized I had a narrative link: Just as a comics creator selectively limits the visual information the reader receives in order to craft a narrative, performance documentation can exist as a full-length video or a single photograph of a work, offering different degrees of context. The other component of comics that makes it so unique is the artist's ability to visually self-identify: illustrating themselves how they want to be seen. It's easy to try to convince someone of who you are in written word, but the reader will always privilege their visual imagination when no visuals are given.

After assembling my theoretical framework, I created a set of criteria for the pieces I would focus on in my comic. The criteria are as follows:

- Intentional relationship between the artist, performance, and documentation
- Documentation as performative rather than incidental

- Emphasis on American masculinity and the relationship between violence and sensationalism
- Contemporary pieces that focus on the American spectacle of violence through a 20th/21st century lens
- American media + violence
- SOME form of documentation must exist
- Queerable

The three pieces I chose to examine in my thesis are Chris Burden's *Shoot*, Joe Deutch's untitled *Gun Piece*, and Cassils' *Becoming an Image*. Chris Burden, an influential contemporary artist working primarily with performance and sculpture throughout the late 20th century, found social notoriety in 1971 when he had a friend shoot him in the arm in front of a live audience. Joe Deutch, a former UCLA student, staged a russian roulette suicide in 2004 for his advanced performance class that incited the swift departure of then-faculty member Chris Burden. Cassils, contemporary transmasculine visual and performance artist, attacked a series of 2000 pound clay blocks in complete darkness for a live audience throughout the mid-2010s. From each piece, there exists at least one photograph taken in the liveness of the event. For Deutch's piece, all that exists is one image. For Burden, a select few photographs and an eight second video clip were all that was published from *Shoot*. Cassils produced scores of photographs—as well as sculptures, soundscapes, and installations—from their *Becoming an Image Series*.

My intention in examining pieces that use the performance art form *and* documentary efforts to emphasize the presence of the dominant culture is to deconstruct their social impact through visual analysis. Where does the power of physical violence, especially that of a gun, come from? Is it visual? Auditory? Fear? Certainly in Deutch and Burden's case, in which only a



select few viewed each performance, the visceral shock factor in each piece launched their social notoriety. When does violence become sensationalized entertainment? Even if that violence is fabricated or highly controlled, designed for the viewer? When does controlled violence exit the realm of entertainment and enter the realm of lasting trauma and fear?

### **Narrative Authority: The Reader, the Artist, and the Author**

While essential to the inquiry of this thesis, these questions are impossible to universally answer. Each original audience member of *Shoot, Gun Piece*, and *Becoming an Image* perceived the performance in line with their own experiences, values, and teachings. Each secondary audience member—those of us unable to view the performances in their liveness and instead have digested them through mediated forms of documentation—brings the same phenomenology to their unique understanding of the work. Our own experiences often complete narratives without involvement from our conscience. The desire to finish a story is irresistible — so much so that our imagination will take massive leaps and bounds to provide narrative closure, even if that closure is purely imaginative. Comics create a visual roadmap for compulsory storytelling, providing the reader with panels and (sometimes) text, but leaving gaps for one’s own narrator to assist in the storytelling. While I wanted to capture and communicate this through the analysis of the performances within my thesis, I can only truly grasp my own limited and mediated experience with the pieces — as can you, distilled through *my* understanding.

By exploring performances by both the dominant and subversive culture, I hope to invite comparisons between each piece as it is relevant and personal to the *reader* of the comic. The irony of mediation upon mediation in this thesis: from original performance to original documentation, to dispersal of documentation and subsequent mediation, to the recreation of both the original documentation and imagined events in illustrative form create a landslide of

possible errors, inaccuracies, biases, and falsehoods. How could I strive for accuracy when I did not experience the performances firsthand? Is this inaccuracy—despite the countless hours of research I did on the artists and their work—dishonest and misleading? Should you trust me to tell these stories? I am no more of an authority on these works than you; my research does not—despite my best efforts—increase my proximity to the artists or the performances. My perception of proximity has certainly changed through the creative and intellectual process, but I am no closer with Chris Burden or Cassils or Joe Deutch than I was when I began the process.

Thus lies the essence of this thesis: narrative authority is controlled by the audience. Artists may limit or manipulate their work to reach a certain outcome—as Burden and Cassils did by selecting specific photographs to represent their performances—but only the individual viewing the work can understand it within their own ways of knowing and being. My analysis and view of these pieces are solely mine, yet they are communicated to my audience in an academic and digestible format.

### **Through the Filtered Lens: Trans and Queer Identity as a Requisite of my Thesis**

The compulsory inclusion of my identity within my comic necessitates the inclusion of queerness and transness. I cannot separate myself from my artwork — since my comic becomes me and I become my comic. Transness is indefinable as a monolith; it lives free from definition by the dominant culture. Transness is corporeal, emotional, intellectual, intimate, removed, indefinable. Transness is languageless yet transness is a language. Cassils' chapter lives as my own transness on the comics page: the rage, the clay, the flashing camera (mind you, the *illustrations* of these things) are visual depictions of my genderless intellect and form. From a psychoanalytic perspective, I am the subject to which I have transferred my concept of 'self' onto the object of Cassils' performance and the chapter in which I analyze it.

By queering the analysis of each performance in my thesis, I hope to invite a critical lens onto the glorification and entertainment of violence within the American psyche. For the purpose of this thesis, queering will refer to the placement of Burden and Deutch next to Cassils, inviting analysis and comparison between each of them. This thesis is also queered by my perspective as a nonbinary individual fascinated by the rawness of performance and its ability to evoke deep emotion and responses.

While Burden and Deutch explore violence through a dominant cultural lens, Cassils interrogates the underbelly of sensationalized violence in *Becoming an Image*. The darkness, physical attacks rather than the mechanization of a gunshot, and emphasis on the auditory discomfort of the grunts and groans born of Cassils labor all invite a more personal, vulnerable viewing of *Becoming an Image*. An ode to the construction of trans identity—endless and malleable—as well as a poignant reminder of daily violence against trans bodies, *Becoming an Image* makes the phenomenon of violence personal, unlike the flippancy and humor of *Shoot* and *Gun Piece*.

Comics hold a home for transness that many other forms cannot: a space where the trans body can be manipulated by line and form on the page. The trans artist can mediate their appearance in order to appeal to their audience or themselves — pieces that come to mind include *Spellbound: A Graphic Memoir* by Bishakh Som and Julia Kaye’s weekly web autobio comics, *Super Late Bloomer*. In comics form, the trans body can become depoliticized based on learned assumptions regarding physiology and appearance. This intentional inauthenticity forces viewers to confront the trans body in comics as a legitimate corporeal form self-defined and self-guided by their creator. Comics allow for the limitless illusion of reality, even if that reality is clearly fabricated or inspired by impossibility. The impossibility of comics — their ability to

communicate visual events and histories that would present a film or animation studio with endless financial and technical burdens — allow queerness to thrive on the page with limitless visual constrictions.

To depict these bodies—real and imagined—on the comics page creates yet another layer of mediation between the original and the imagined. In their obvious artifice, comics are honest. Just as I've told you, dear reader, that I've never witnessed any of the performances I examine in their liveness, you can discern illustration from real. The comic is no more than lines on a page, and yet the visuality of the narrative is complete in its ability to communicate a story (or at least I hope so!). Even though I crafted the narrative and the images, deciding what to tell you and what to omit, your experience of reading the comic will be wildly different from other readers. Comics hold the ambiguous as sacred: the gutters allow you to bridge gaps through your own memories and understanding of the work. Your perception of the narratives that occur are likely different from mine — just as the original viewers of the performances must have felt. Just as a gunshot can be triggering or benign, based on your personal history, the gaps of information on a comic page can communicate wildly different narratives. It is your compulsory intellectual work when reading a comic that completes the narrative.

### **The Reader and Writer as One: Self-Analysis of the Comics Page**

The compelling nature of comics to retell these performances does not stop at your intellectual labor to 'close' the narrative gaps. Despite their 2D nature, comics invite the senses to join in storytelling. Think back to comics you may have read as a kid or casually — superhero or action comics. **BAM! KABLOOM! KACHOW!** How does your mind recognize these letters? Did you read them as sound, or as the words? How about these? **\*cough cough\*. Chirp!** Comics have the ability to create a sensory richness that prose cannot replicate. Sound effects

become both visual — as the onomatopoeia take up space within the comic panel — and written; sounds formed from letters that your mind pieces together without thought. This high level of engagement that comics evoke expands beyond the impact of prose and film— two categories comics are often stuffed into by likeness. However, the combination of your labor as a reader and my labor as an illustrator and visual storyteller allow us to create narratives together. I may not know your takeaway from the comic (but please come find me and tell me), but our collaborative intellectual effort allows for countless meanings to arise from the narrative.

Of course, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to self-analyze (not to mention that it's required), so please read the comic first if you'd like to be responsible for the first round of deconstructing the work. To spare you from a panel to panel analysis of each chapter, I've taken the liberty of identifying particular panels and sequences to discuss from each section of the comic.

I worked on each chapter sequentially, beginning with Burden and ending with Cassils. Each chapter was designed with the intention of placing the reader in the position of a live audience member, with the obvious caveat of neither you nor I actually being present for any of these performances. For Burden I focused on the anticipation leading up to the shooting; for Deutch I focused on the consequences of his non-consensual auditory terrorism; for Cassils I focused on the liveness of constructed blindness and its transference of bodily awareness from performer to viewer.

### *Chapter One*

Burden was often meticulous in disseminating documentation from his works. In an interview with artist Doug Aitken, Burden highlights the dissemination of his work as thought, or personal propaganda, purporting it to be the most important aspect of his performances. Burden

describes live viewers of his work as an active part of the performance: engaged in what he describes as “cultural terrorism” (Burden qtd. in Aitken, 2006). I hoped to emulate the active participation of an audience member primed with anticipation: knowing exactly what is to occur, where, and when. This knowledge does not alter the reality of a gunshot, especially one taking place mere feet from where you stand. Page four and the full splash on pages 5 and 6 seek to elongate this tension, drawing out the moments before the gunshot to replicate the suspense that must have taken place in the F-Space gallery on November 19th, 1971. I wanted to counter this suspense with panels after the gunshot relying on stiff and allusive imagery, much like that which Burden provided. Page 8 contains four distinct types of images: A replication of a photograph of Burden receiving wound care immediately after the shooting, headlines from the event, an image of hands splicing film in a dark room, and an illustration of Burden’s book in which the first *Shoot* images were published. These four images are less temporal and replicatory of sensory experiences than the rest of the chapter: the removal of presence begins immediately after the shooting takes place. The isolated images communicate with one another but also stand distinctly apart, paneled off in their respective corners. Burden’s book becomes its own panel; a container within a container that lays unopenable on the comics page. Burden’s stiff face is an immediately recognizable replication which lacks character and style, giving the reader little extra interpretation — just as Burden did in the publication of *Shoot*’s documentation. The newspaper headlines themselves are contained, existing as another replication of the performance that has everything and nothing to do with the liveness of the event. Each rectangular panel acts as its own form of documentation and mediation, all within the container of *my* replication of each of the images. This example of documentation within documentation on page eight speaks to Burden’s meticulous construction of reality within *Shoot*.

## *Chapter Two*

While Chapter One revolves around existing visual documentation, Chapter Two exists in a highly speculative space focused on the psychology of violence and consent in performance. Burden invited each of his audience members to *Shoot* with an explanation of what would occur. Deutch, on the other hand, relied on the ignorance of his audience to execute *Gun Piece*. Like Chapter One, I wanted to replicate the experience of an unwitting audience member through the comics form. Next to zero documentation exists on behalf of *Gun Piece*—the title itself was coined by local media outlets following the 2004 performance. The only image I was able to locate is that of Deutch lifting the model (the realness of the gun hotly debated) pistol to his head. Every other image in this chapter is speculation, imagination, and design. By juxtaposing the experience of an imagined *Gun Piece* viewer and an imagined *Shoot* viewer, I hoped to invite conclusions on the impact of consensual involvement in violence-based performances. A regular class day for a graduate student and a planned evening to view a friend being shot are two wildly different events, and I hoped to convey this through the parallel narratives present in Chapter Two. This Chapter was the most difficult to illustrate due to the imagination of it: to me, each detail increased in meaning since I became wholly responsible for telling the story as I wished to do so. Burden and Cassils' meticulous documentation becomes integral to my retelling of their narratives just as Deutch's lack of documentation creates its own intricacies in my retelling of *Gun Piece*.

## *Chapter Three*

Finally, Chapter Three includes heightened attention to the auditory experience of performance and its importance in relation to the sparseness of visual information. The full spread on pages two and three are inspired by the full spread on pages 220 and 221 of Alison

Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home*. Where the multitude of panels are tightly contained in *Fun Home* to emulate the strictly contained and highly temporal isolation of intimacy between Alison and her father, the high number of nearly indistinguishable panels on pages two and three seek to blend time and space. The darkness of the page echoes the darkness of the performance space interspersed with short bursts of overwhelming brightness as the photographer flashes their camera: an arm, a leg, a head, a fist, burned into the eyes of the viewer as an image rather than a continuous moment. Plunged into near-total darkness, the viewer and the reader must rely on sound, or the textual sound effects of the comics form, to create an auditory and spatial landscape that makes Cassils make sense. There is no one way to do this. There is no one way to understand the sound of flesh against clay against sweat against blood against teeth against grit against mind. There is no one way to hear grunts of exhaustion and shrieks of effort. There is no one way to see a body that exists in a split-second flash. There is no one way to see a trans body that exists in a split-second flash. There is no one way to see a trans body. There is no one way to be trans.



## Literature Review

### *Comics Theory*

Because comics studies is a relatively new field, and popular comics as they are known today originated in the United States and Europe, much of foundational comics theory comes from a western perspective. Many scholars since then have used foundational comics theory to analyze works through feminist, post-colonial, and queer frameworks. While I have applied these frameworks to my own analysis of performance art pieces, I have also strengthened my theoretical framework with Charles Hatfield's *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* and Ann Miller's *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, both essential works in the study of reading comics. The first chapter of Miller's book incorporates the French style of comics and comics analysis, drawing heavily on theorist Thierry Groensteen's work. Groensteen has many books on comics theory; Miller's chapter largely distills Groensteen's work and applies it to comics examples, making the theorization more accessible. I have reviewed the introduction to Groensteen's 2007 book, *The System of Comics*, to be used as an accompaniment to Miller's work to strengthen my own comics analysis within my thesis. Comics studies are dominated by the importance of 'codes,' or forms of communication, meaning, and interaction within the text. The first chapter of *Reading Bande Dessinée* engages with visual aspects of the comic, such as layout and panel design, as a system for understanding deeper meaning within the text. Hatfield's *Alternative Comics* uses a different approach, focusing on the interaction between codes and the tensions that arise therein. Both texts assist in providing a deeper understanding of comics through their guide-like structure of reading and understanding graphic texts.

## *Performance Theory*

Like comics studies, performance studies are a more recent and rapidly evolving theoretical field. Foundational theoretical performance texts often emphasize the many factors of artistic agency and embodiment: colonialism, postcolonialism, gender, politics, and race. Many of the theoretical performance texts I use will provide relevant cultural theory that will supplement the layout-based focus of comics studies. Professor and performance theorist Diana Taylor's 2003 book, *The Archive and The Repertoire* places performance studies in the frame of its cultural impact throughout the Americas. Taylor defines the stakes of performance throughout history and places it in the context of "social memory and cultural identity" (Taylor XVIII). By associating performances with their specific and broader cultural implications, Taylor examines the stakes of performance and its relationship to colonialism in the Americas. Throughout this history, Taylor weaves opposing viewpoints of performance theory and defines it through cultural specificity. Taylor's has strengthened my analysis of these performances and bolstered my evaluation of performance theory in my thesis.

The central debate in the field of performance studies pits embodiment against documentation. In her essay "'Presence' in absentia," art theorist Amelia Jones argues that the documentation of what she calls "body art" holds equal weight to the viewership of live performance (Jones 11). Jones argues that a viewer's absence is a "largely logistical rather than ethical or hermeneutic" problem, and that absence can actually allow the viewer a more holistic understanding of the performance (Jones 11). Jones proposes that a viewer's ability to reference a performance's documentation in tandem with patterns of history allows for a deeper understanding of the piece's 'meaning' than a live viewer, regardless of their historical and political knowledge. Furthermore, Jones claims that "there is no possibility of an unmediated

relationship to any kind of cultural product,” including live performance art (Jones 12). I have incorporated this central claim into my discussion of performance theory and the debate between liveness and documentation.

Jones’ essay “Chris Burden's Bridges, Relationality, and the Conceptual Body” focuses on social relationality and the conceptual connotations of Burden’s body in her essay. Notably, Jones focuses on Burden’s frequent integration of audience members into ‘his’ performances. Jones describes this as social relationality, dissolving the notion of ‘ownership’ in performance art by positioning Burden’s work as social works rather than one individual’s doing. Jones takes a feminist and decolonial approach to analyzing Burden’s work, emphasizing the masculinity deeply infused in the artist’s performances. Jones applies this feminist reading of Burden’s art to his exploration of social power and relationships through performance work.

Jones’ analysis of Burden’s broader social and artistic influence lays essential theoretical groundwork for my investigation. Jones’ understanding of both social and mediated relationality in Burden’s work applies to my direct analysis of *Shoot* as well as form a woven and continuous theme throughout my thesis. Particularly, Jones’ emphasis on Burden’s mediated violence and its broader social impacts and implications has served my analysis of both mediated performances and comics as an inherently mediated form.

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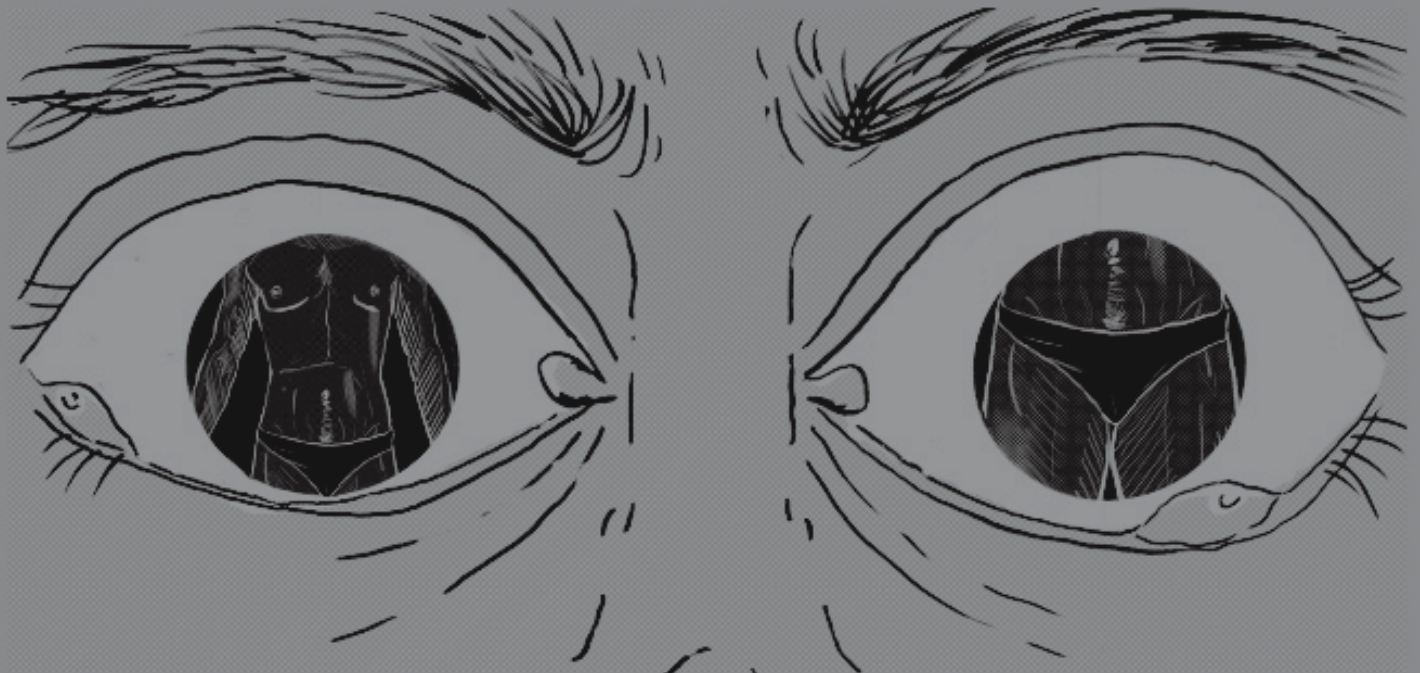
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## **Appendix: The Comic**

# Violent Lens

SOCIAL MEMORY AS DOCUMENTATION  
IN PERFORMANCE ART



Annika Mayne

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of English  
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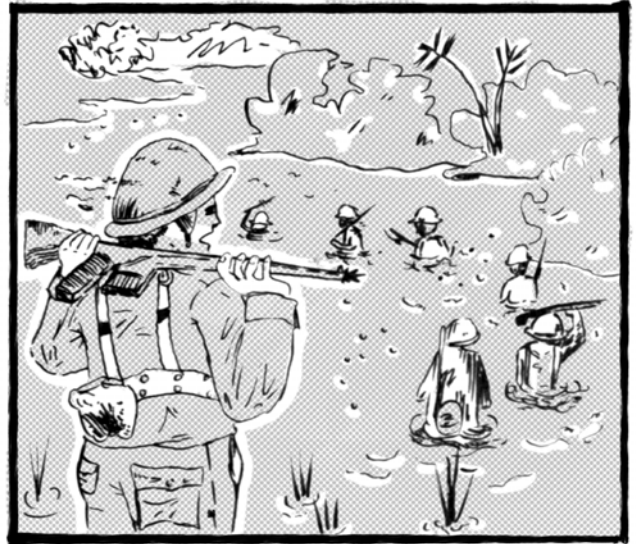
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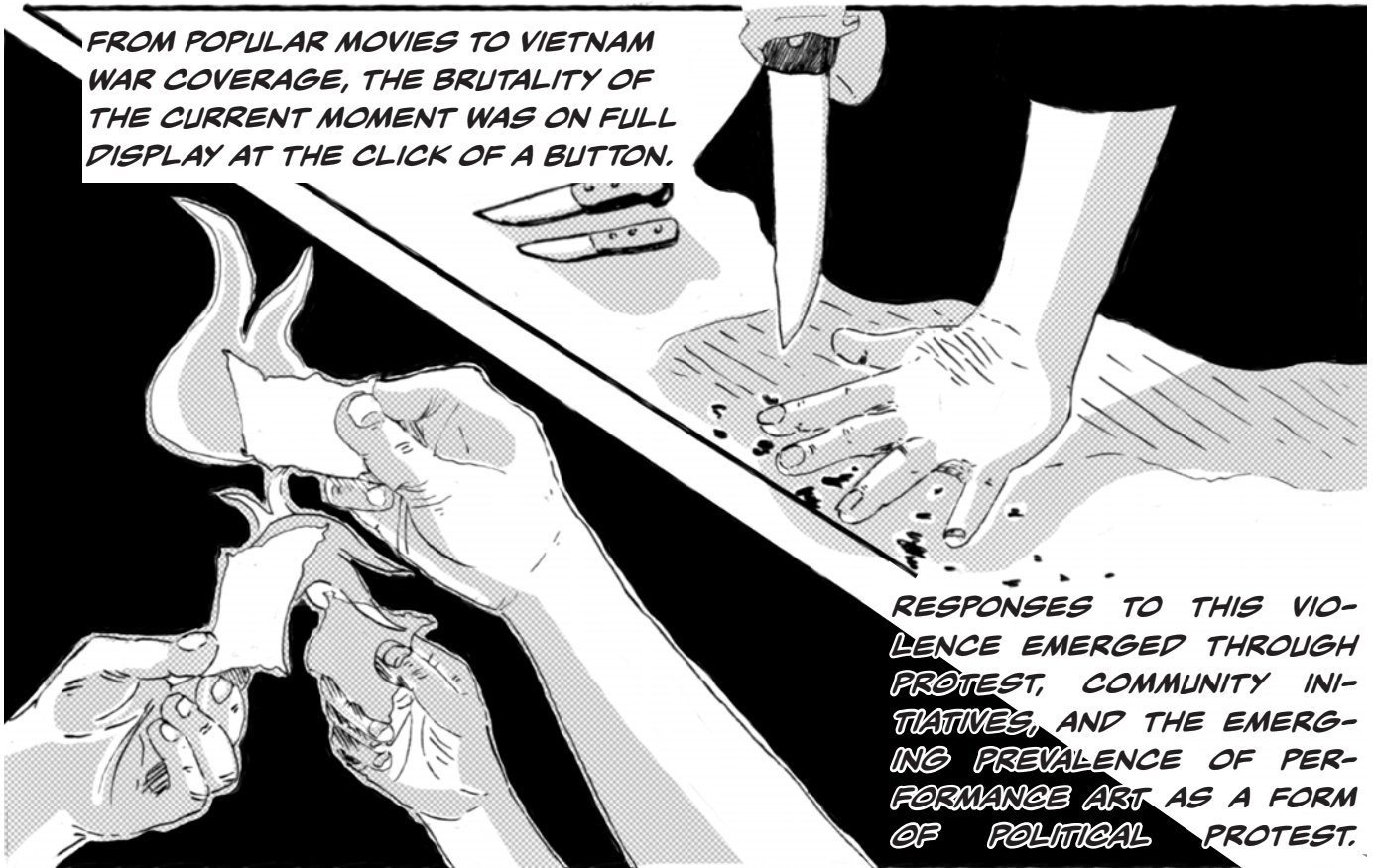
# CHAPTER I

Chris Burden

**IN 1971, VIOLENCE RULED AMERICA FROM THE SCREENS.**



**FROM POPULAR MOVIES TO VIETNAM WAR COVERAGE, THE BRUTALITY OF THE CURRENT MOMENT WAS ON FULL DISPLAY AT THE CLICK OF A BUTTON.**

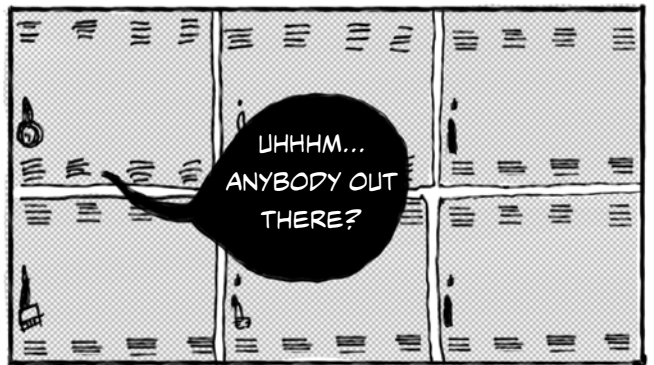
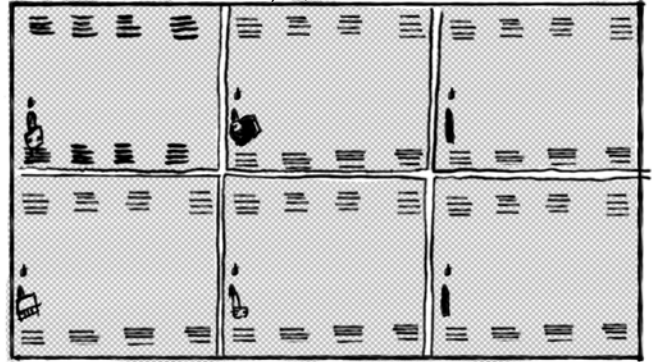


**RESPONSES TO THIS VIOLENCE EMERGED THROUGH PROTEST, COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, AND THE EMERGING PREVALENCE OF PERFORMANCE ART AS A FORM OF POLITICAL PROTEST.**

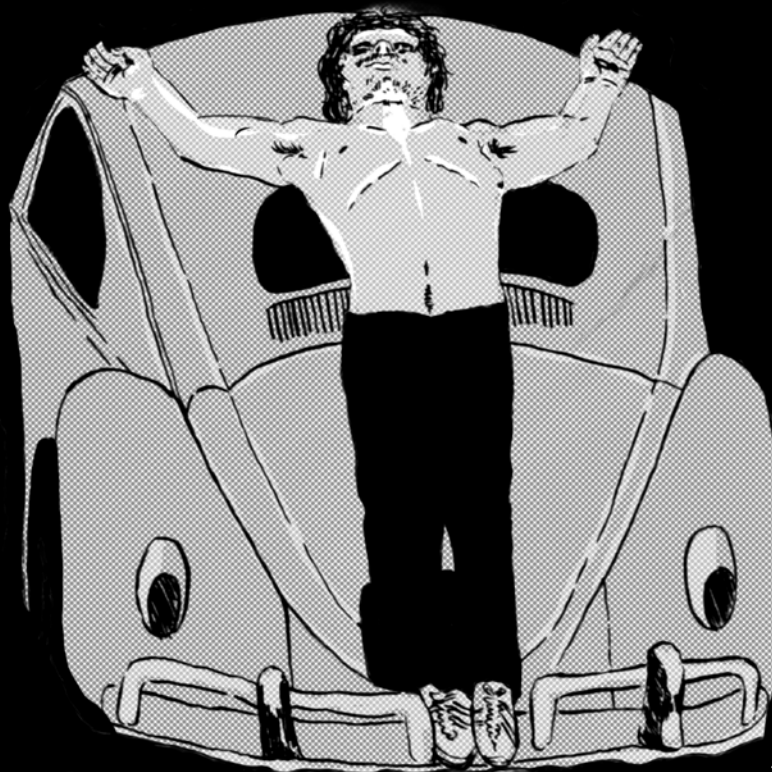
ONE YOUNG ARTIST PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE SPECTACLE OF VIOLENCE WAS CALIFORNIAN CHRIS BURDEN.



5 DAY LOCKER PIECE, 1971



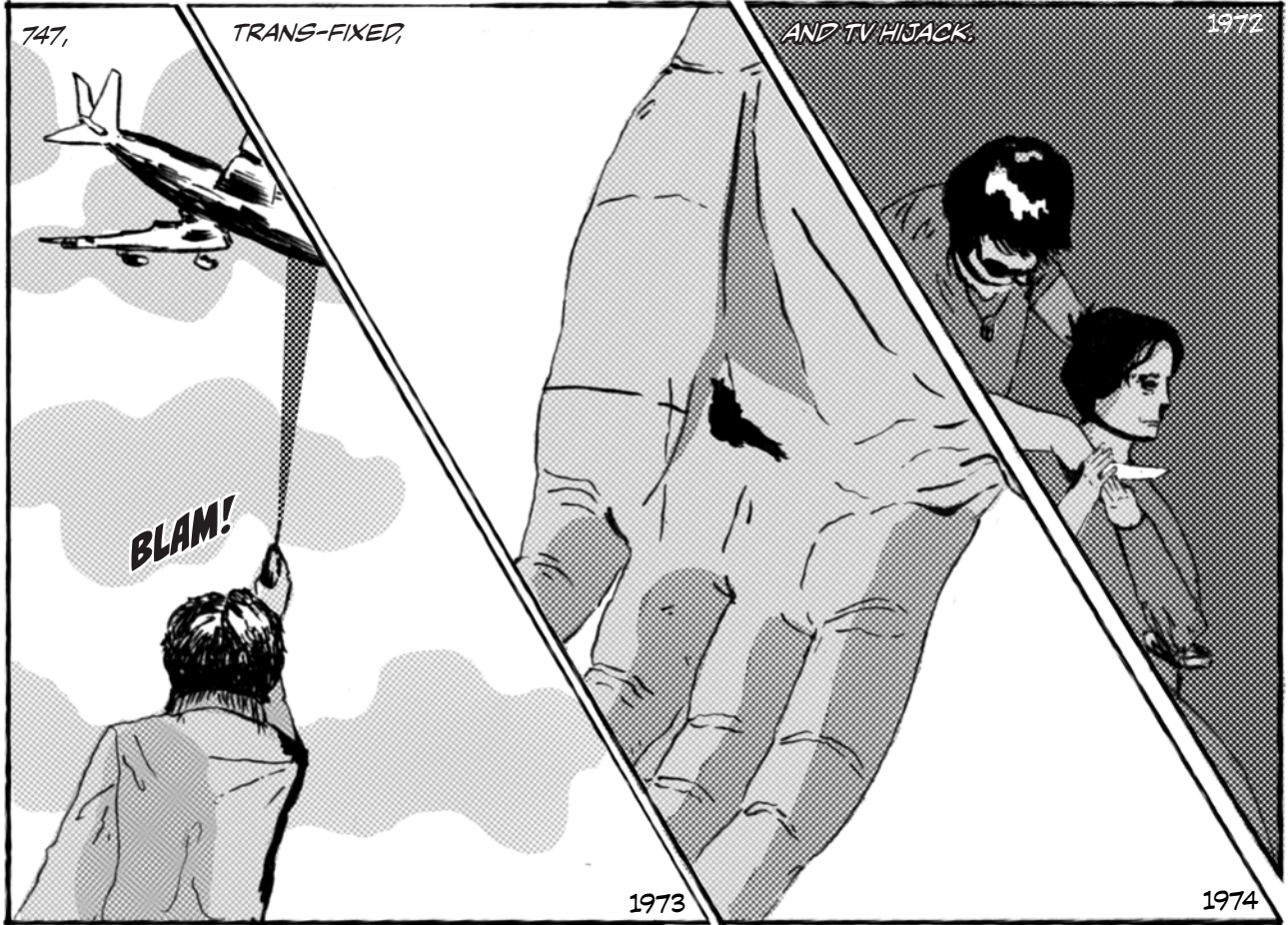
HE QUICKLY BECAME KNOWN FOR PUSHING HIS BODY TO PHYSICAL LIMITS...



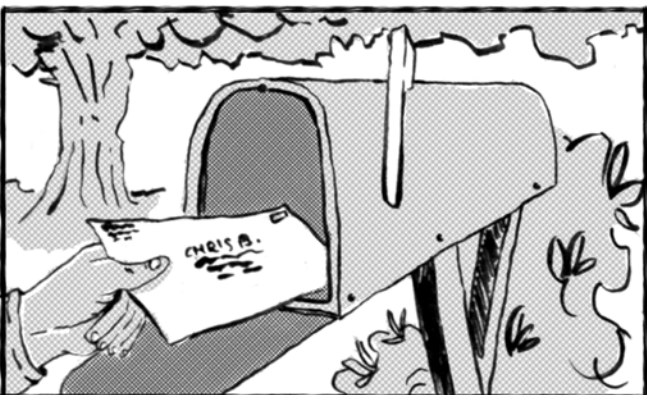
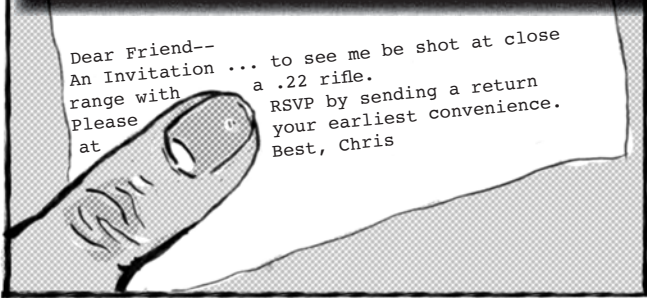
TRANS-FIXED, 1974

...AS WELL AS THE LIMITS OF WHAT WAS DEEMED SOCIALLY OR LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE.

NOTABLE WORKS INCLUDE:



INTERESTED IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE AND THE PREVALENCE OF GUN VIOLENCE IN BOTH NEWS COVERAGE AND POPULAR VISUAL MEDIA, BURDEN BEGAN PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW PERFORMANCE HE WOULD ENTITILE SHOOT.

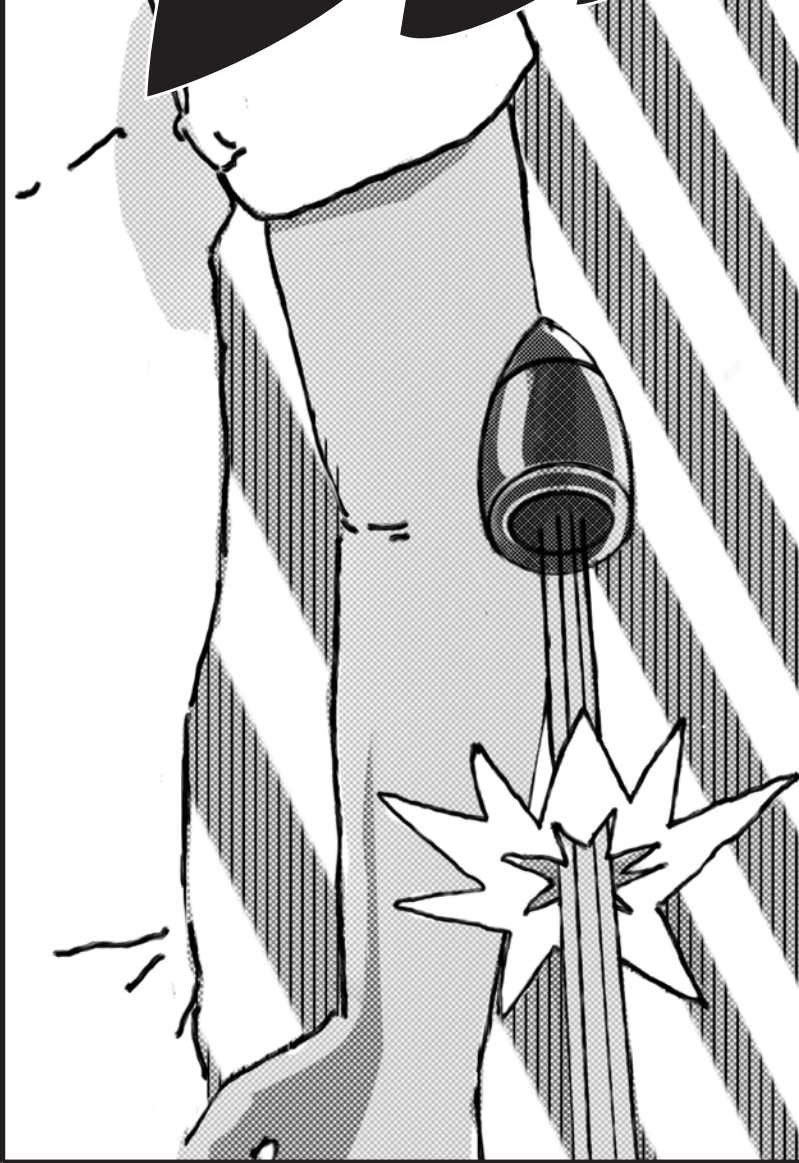








**\*BLAM\***







THE MAN WHO SHOT BURDEN

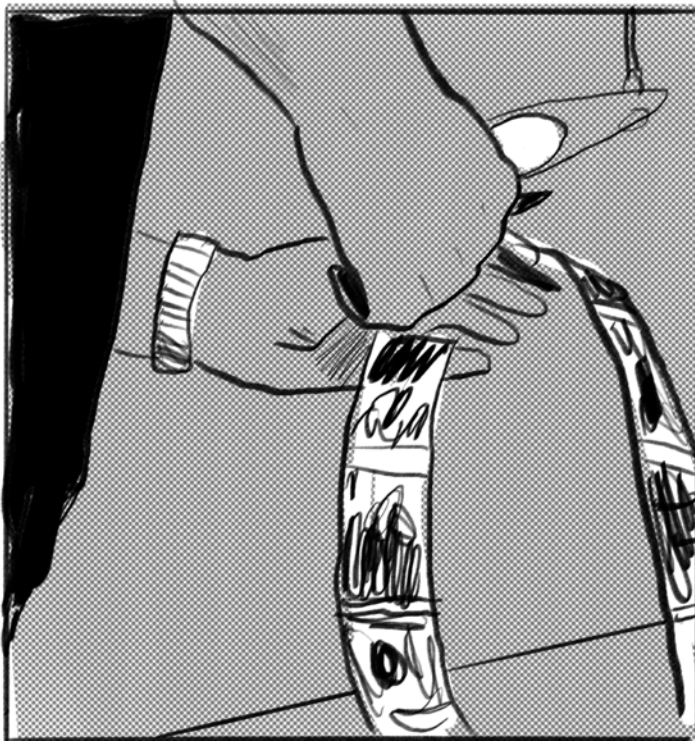
## Shot in the name of art

Chris Burden: Why 'extreme' artist was shot, kicked, and crucified

## Shoot and a bad boy reputation

The man who took a bullet for the sake of art

DESPITE ITS RAPID RISE TO CULTURAL RELEVANCY--AND ITS ENDURING PRESENCE IN THE STUDY OF ART HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE ART--SHOOT IS SPARSELY REPRESENTED BY ITS DOCUMENTATION.



BURDEN'S SELF-TITLED BOOK, PUBLISHED IN 1973, CONTAINS ONLY A FEW PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE PERFORMANCE ITSELF.

# CHRIS BURDEN

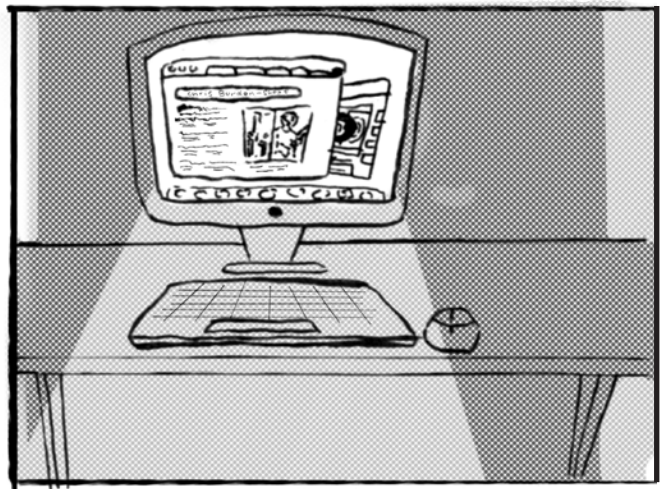
## 71-73

A GRAINY EIGHT SECOND VIDEO CLIP IS THE CLOSEST REPLICATION OF PRESENCE AND PROXIMITY TO THE LIVE PERFORMANCE.

*BURDEN DESCRIBES THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF HIS EARLY PERFORMANCES AS "ICONS"...*

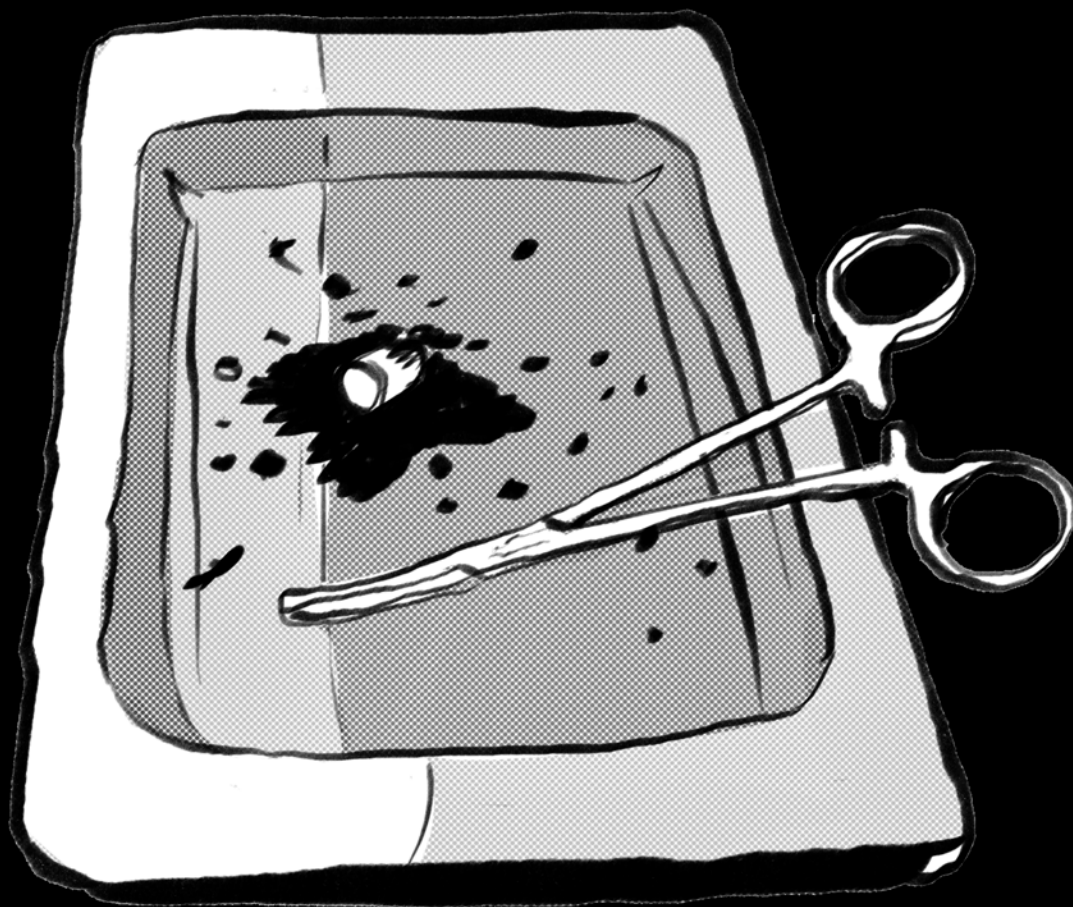


*...IMPLICATING THE HERCULEAN TASK OF COMMUNICATING THE ESSENCE OF AN ENTIRE LIVE PERFORMANCE IN A FEW STILL IMAGES.*



*WHAT MIGHT BE MISSING?*

*WHAT WILL WE NEVER SEE?*



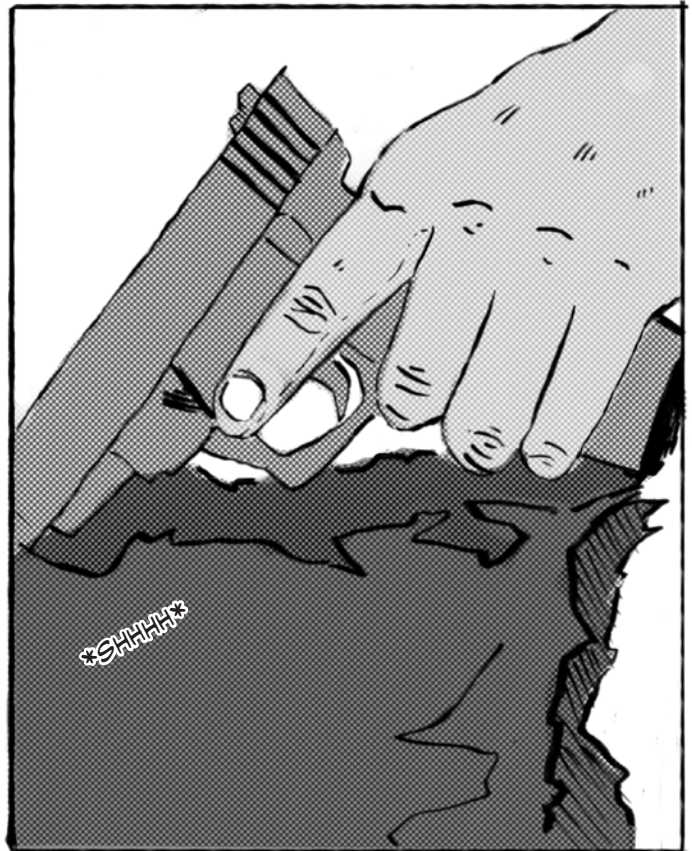
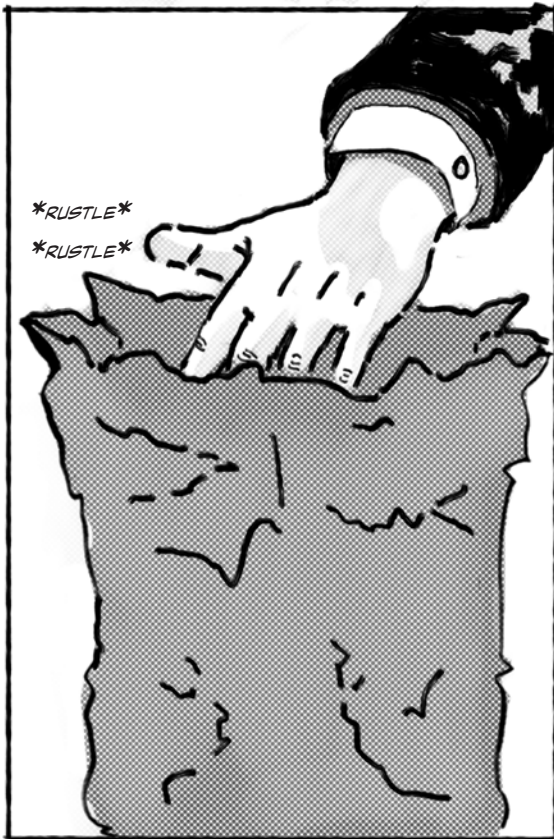
*WHOSE STORY IS LEFT UNTOLD?*

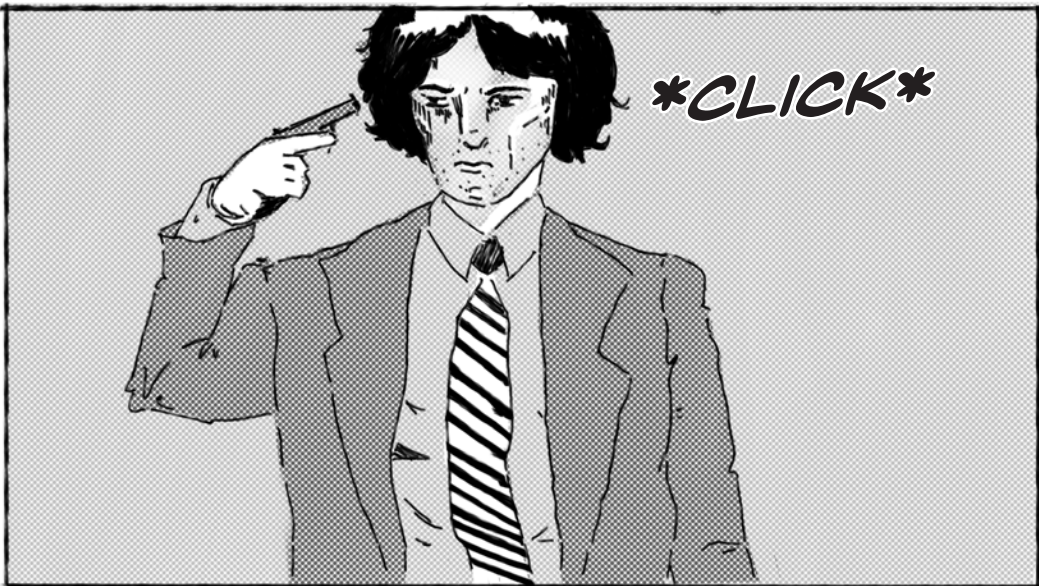
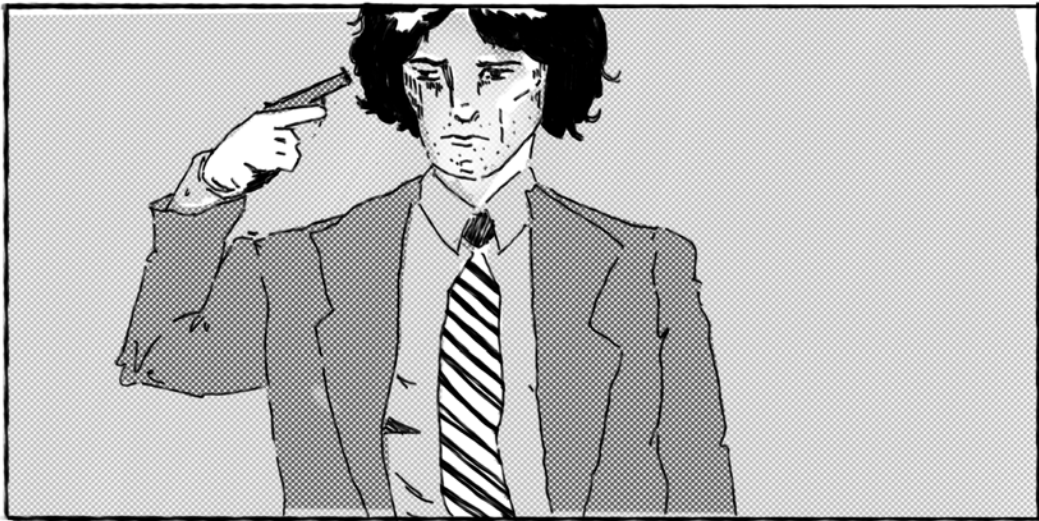
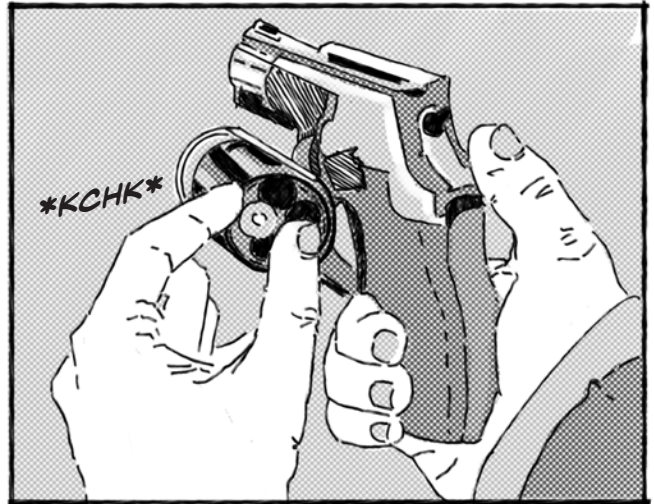
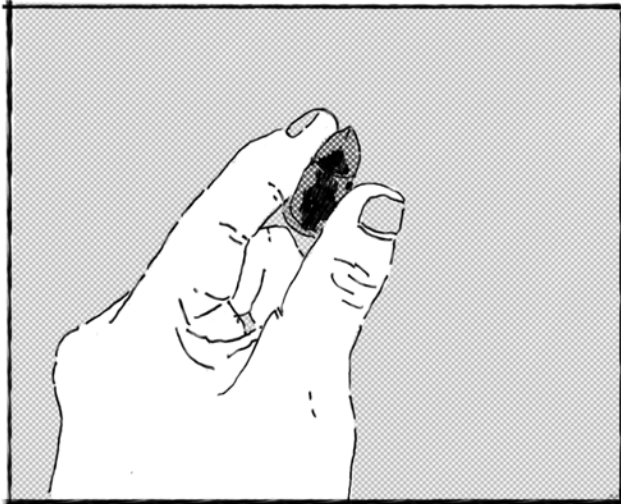


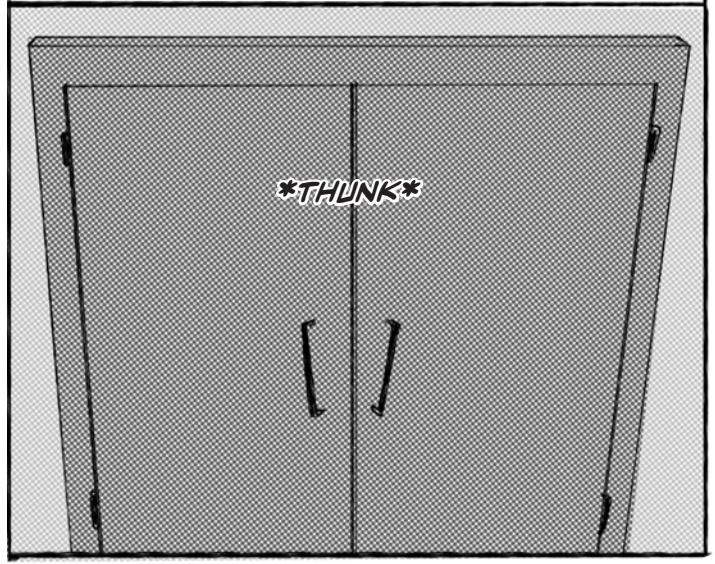
# CHAPTER II

Joseph Deutch

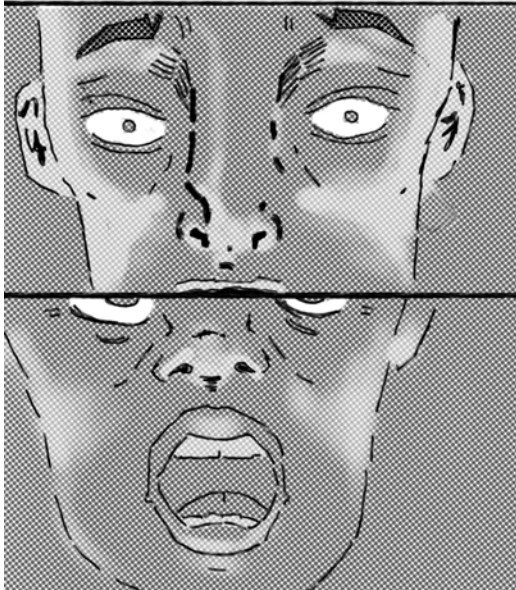
NOVEMBER 29TH, 2004. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES.  
M.F.A. PERFORMANCE ARTS CLASSROOM.



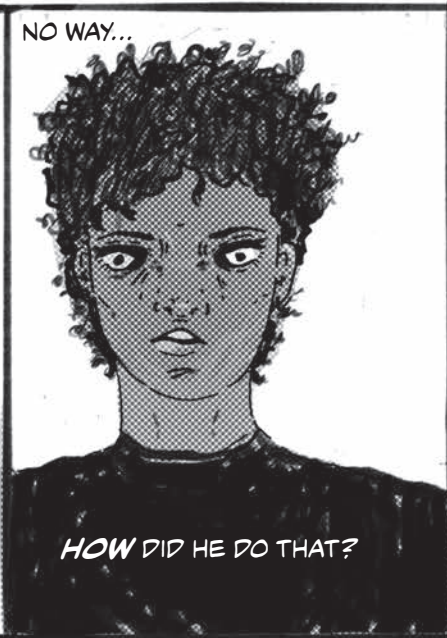
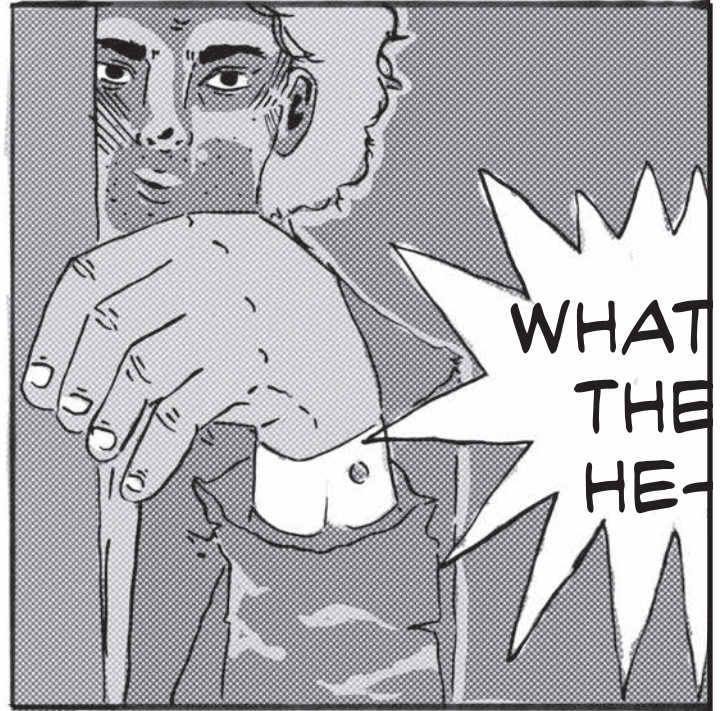




**BLAM**



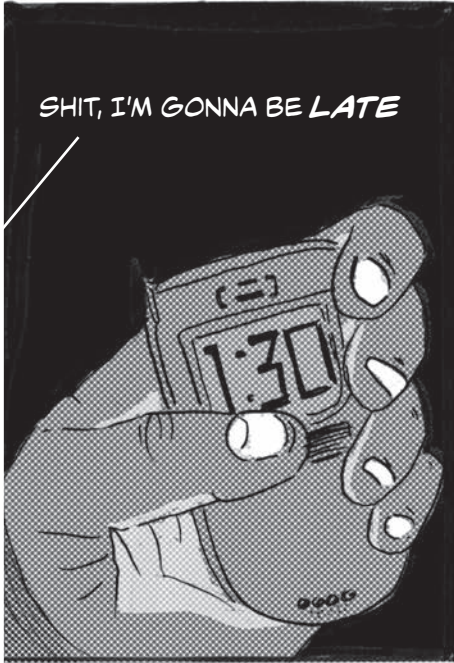




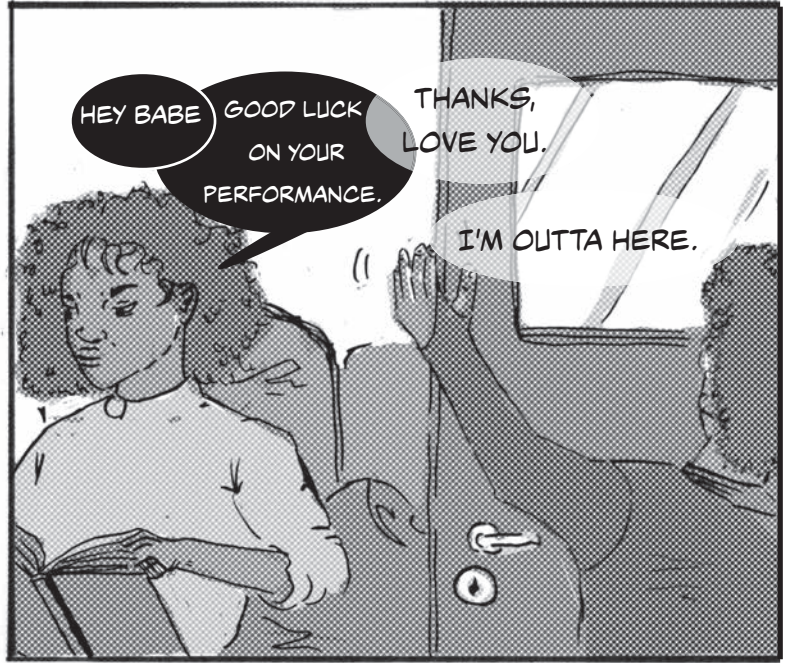
**NO EXPULSION FOR GUN-WIELDING ART STUDENT**  
**Gunplay, as Art, Sets Off a Debate Going Out With a Bang**  
**The 'shot' heard 'round UCLA**  
**Gunplay as Performance Art Leads 2 UCLA Professors to Quit**



EARLIER THAT SAME DAY...



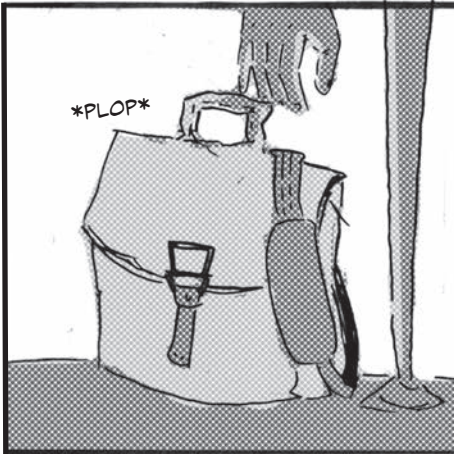
SHIT, I'M GONNA BE LATE



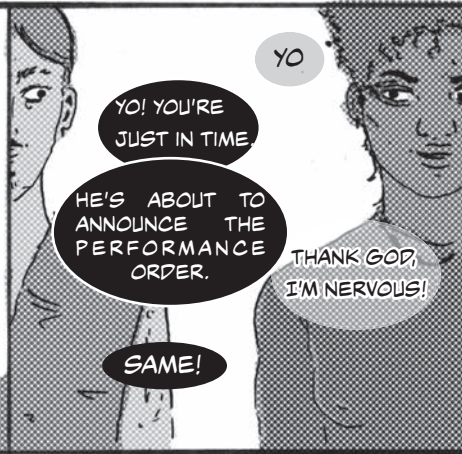
HEY BABE GOOD LUCK ON YOUR PERFORMANCE.

THANKS, LOVE YOU.

I'M OUTTA HERE.



\*PLOP\*



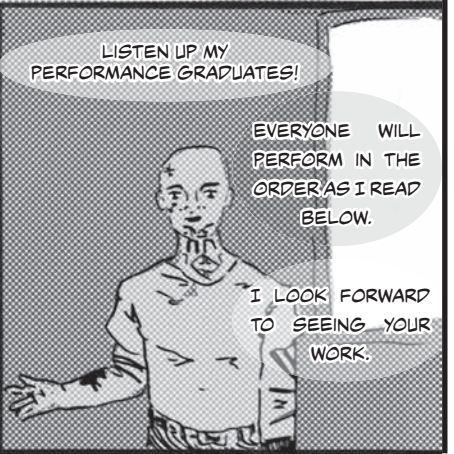
YO! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME

HE'S ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE THE PERFORMANCE ORDER.

SAME!

YO

THANK GOD, I'M NERVOUS!



LISTEN UP MY PERFORMANCE GRADUATES!

EVERYONE WILL PERFORM IN THE ORDER AS I READ BELOW.

I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR WORK.



FIRST UP...

...JOE DEUTCH.



I'M READY.

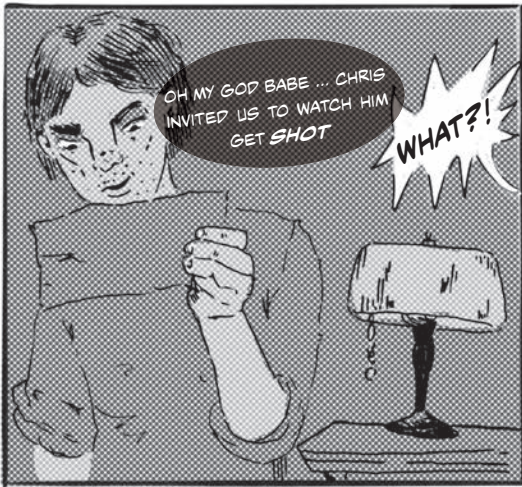


BEERS AFTER?

OH YES.

HI EVERYONE. MY NAME IS JOE DEUTCH.

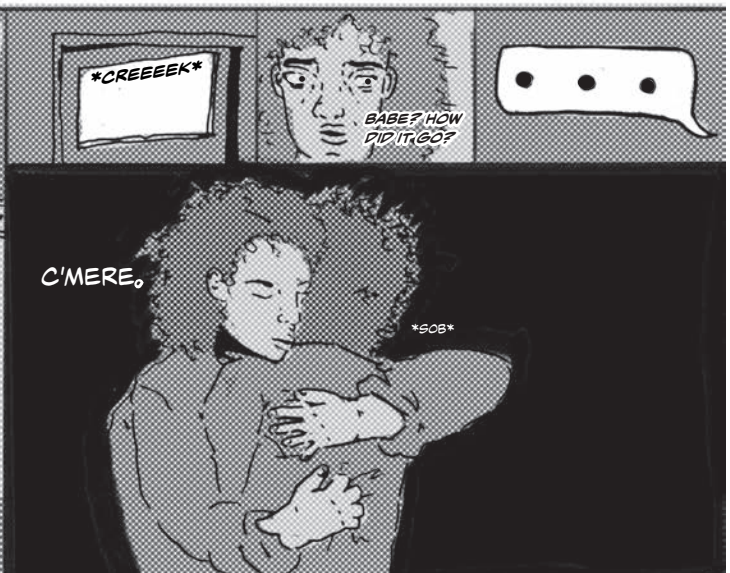
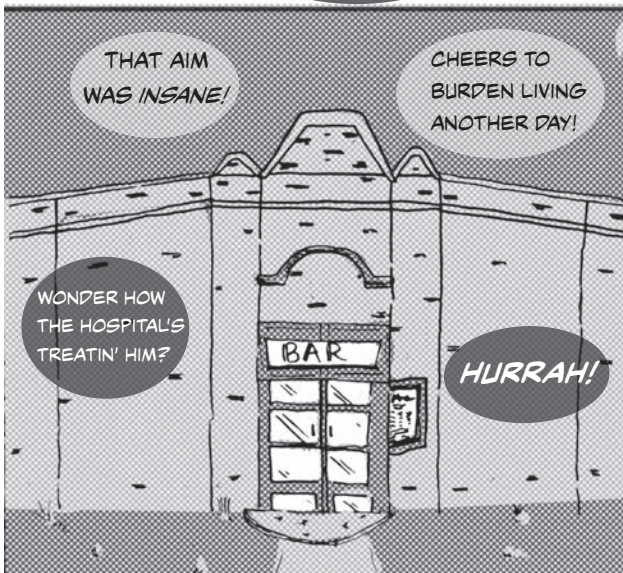
I HOPE YOU ENJOY MY PERFORMANCE.



HI EVERYONE.

MY NAME IS CHRIS BURDEN.

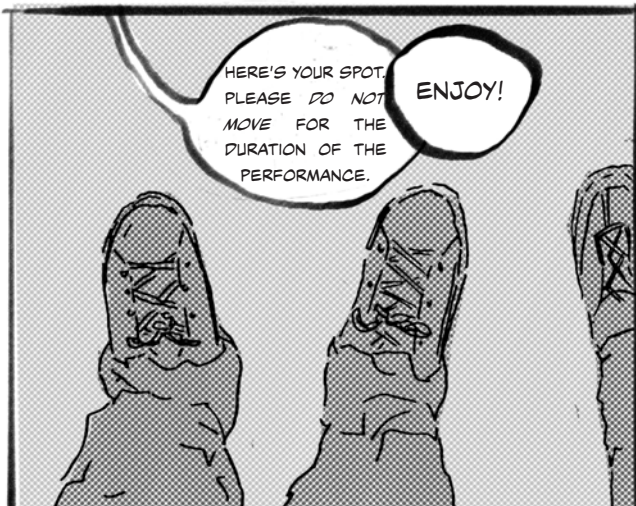
I HOPE YOU ENJOY MY PERFORMANCE.





# CHAPTER III

Cassils



**\*CLICK\***

SMACK

\*GRRRR\*



RAHHH!



\*GRUNT\*

SLAP

SMACK

\*GRRRR\*



RAHHH!



\*GRRRR\*

\*GRUNT\*



SMACK

SLAP



RAHHHH!

\*GRRRR\*

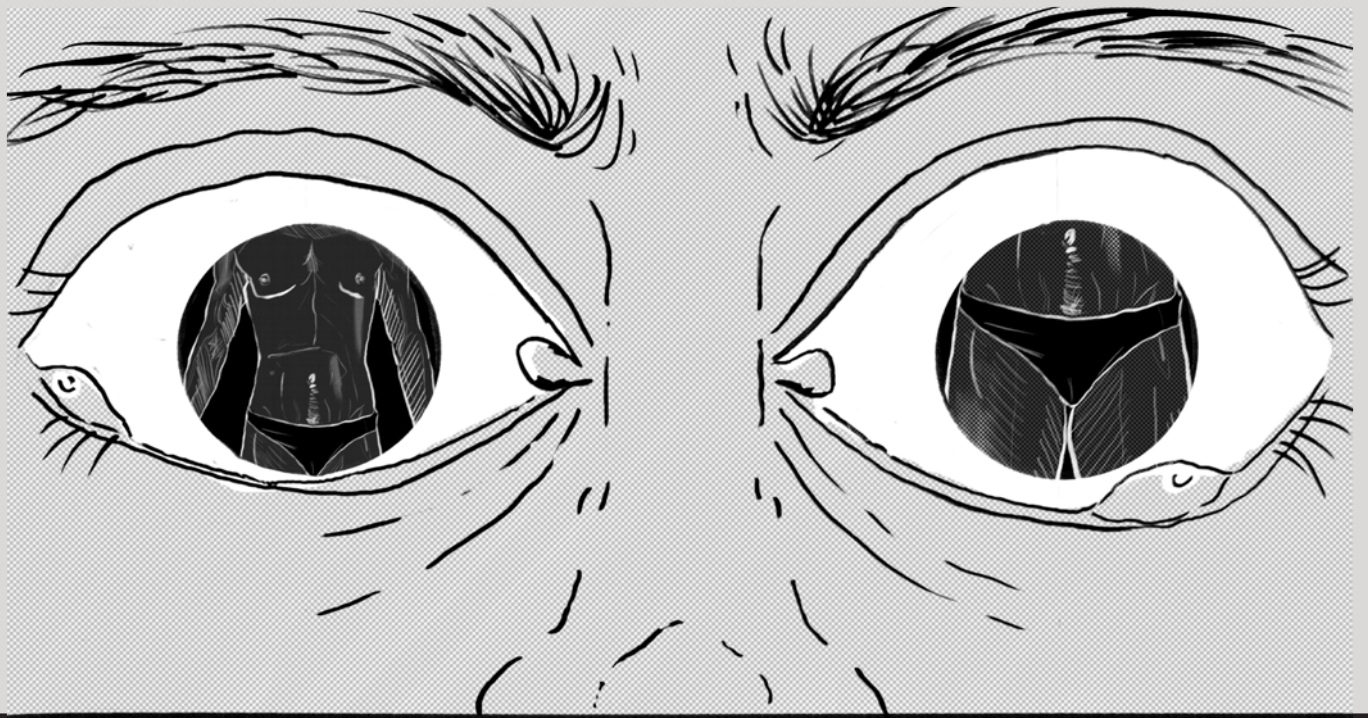
SLAP



\*GRUNT\*

SMACK

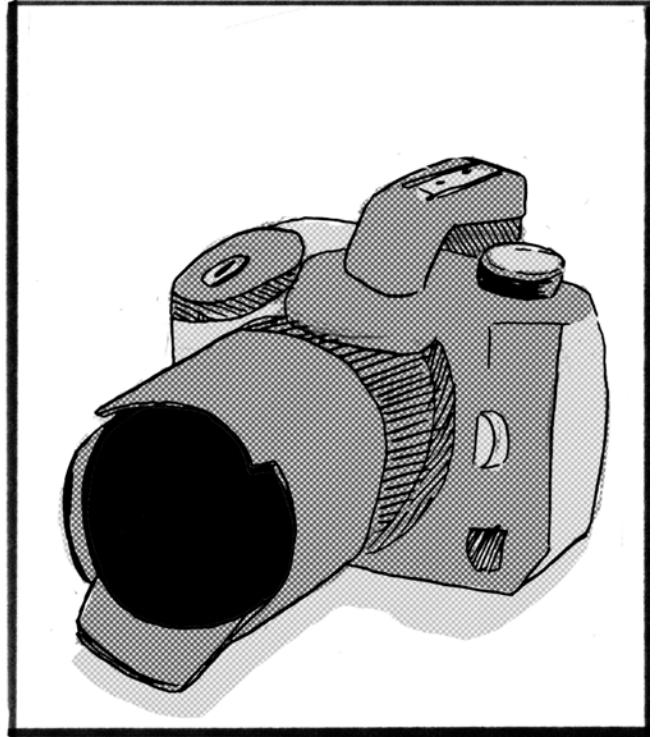
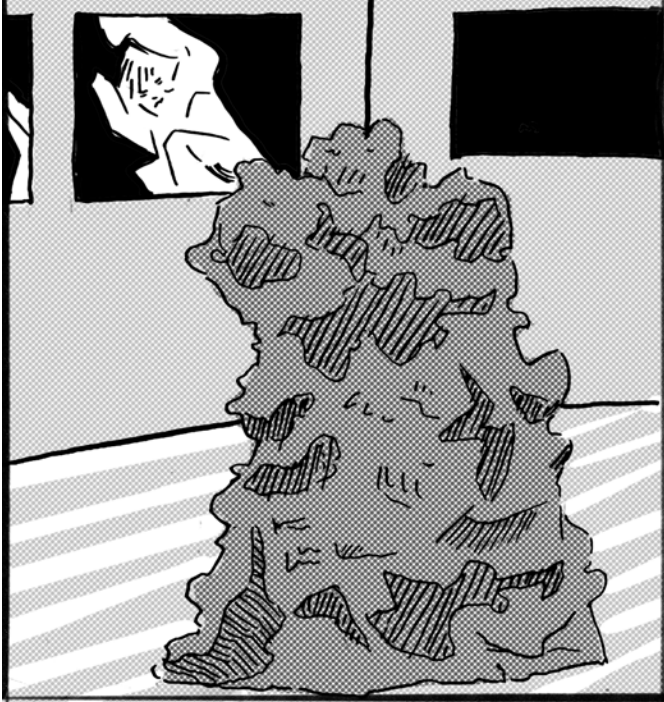
\*GRUNT\*



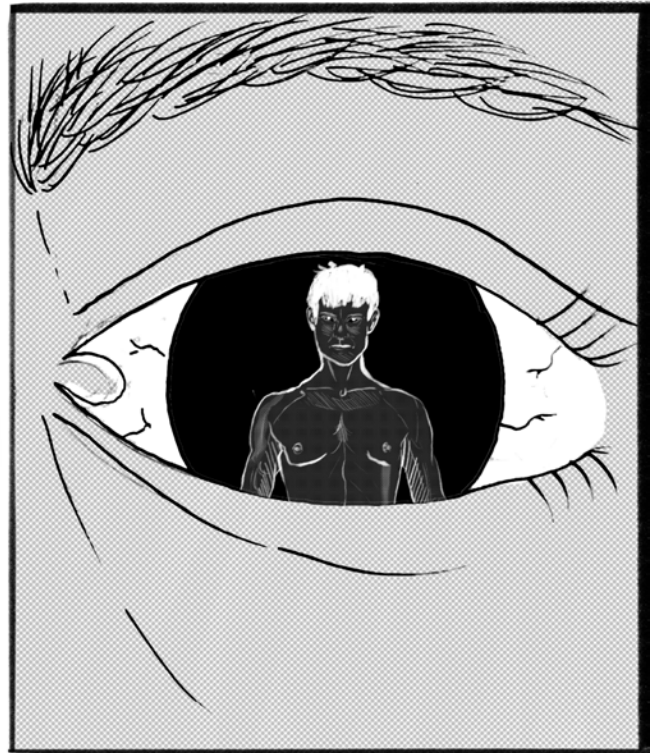
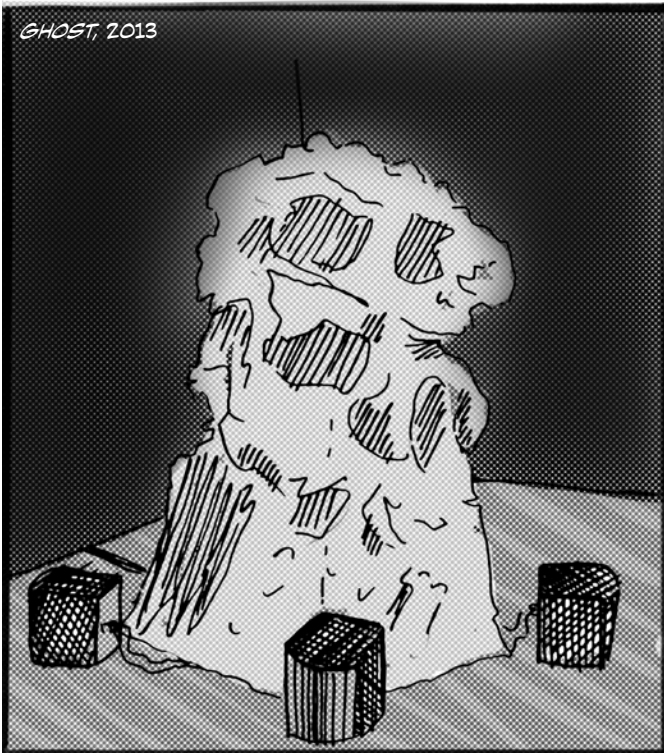
*BECOMING AN IMAGE WAS PERFORMED A NUMBER  
OF TIMES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.*

HOWEVER, DESPITE THE INITIAL LIVENESS OF THE PERFORMANCES,  
*BECOMING AN IMAGE* LIVES ON THROUGH THE  
PHYSICAL REMNANTS OF CASSILS' DOCUMENTATIVE WORK.

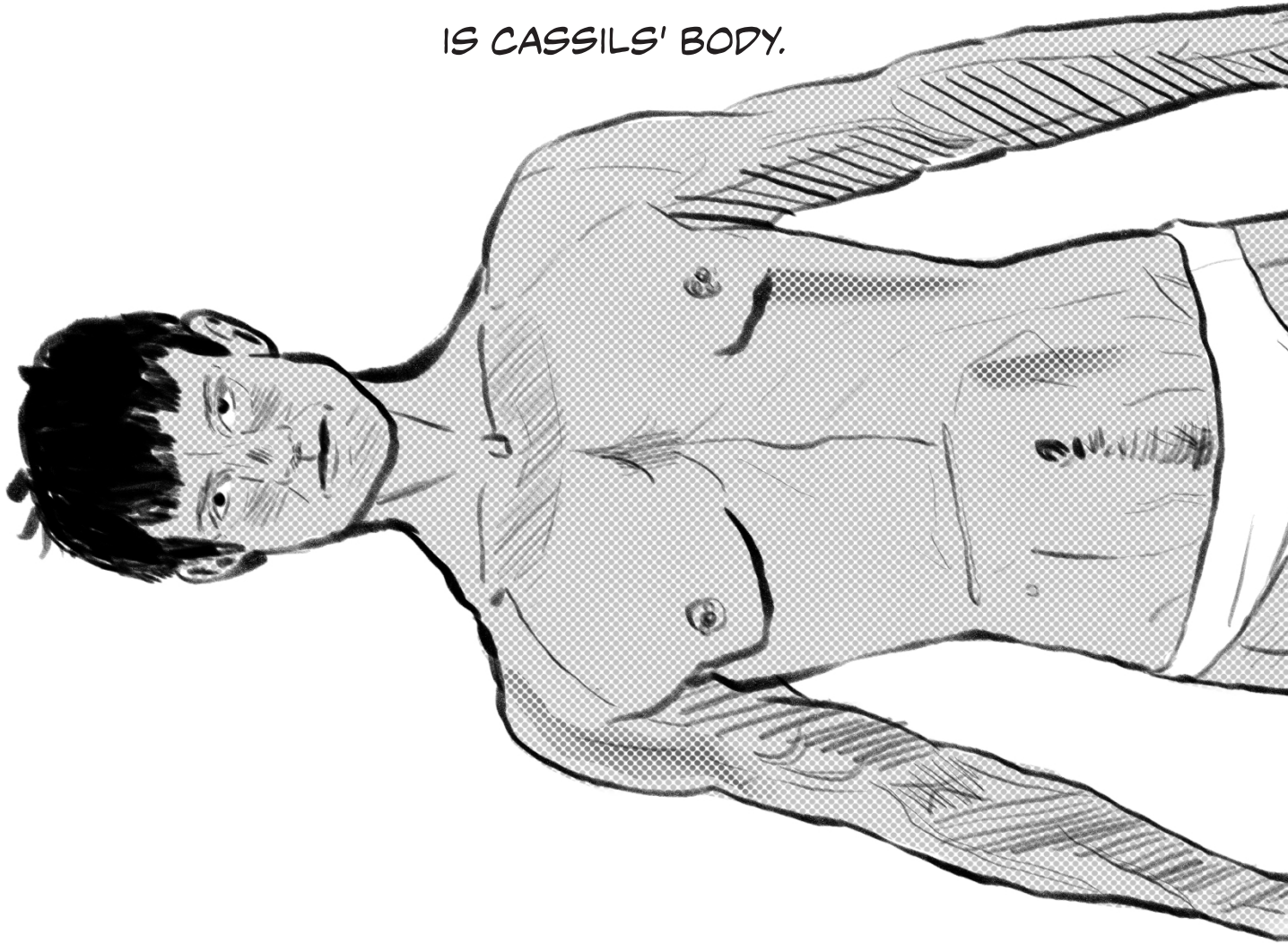
CLAY BASH, 2013



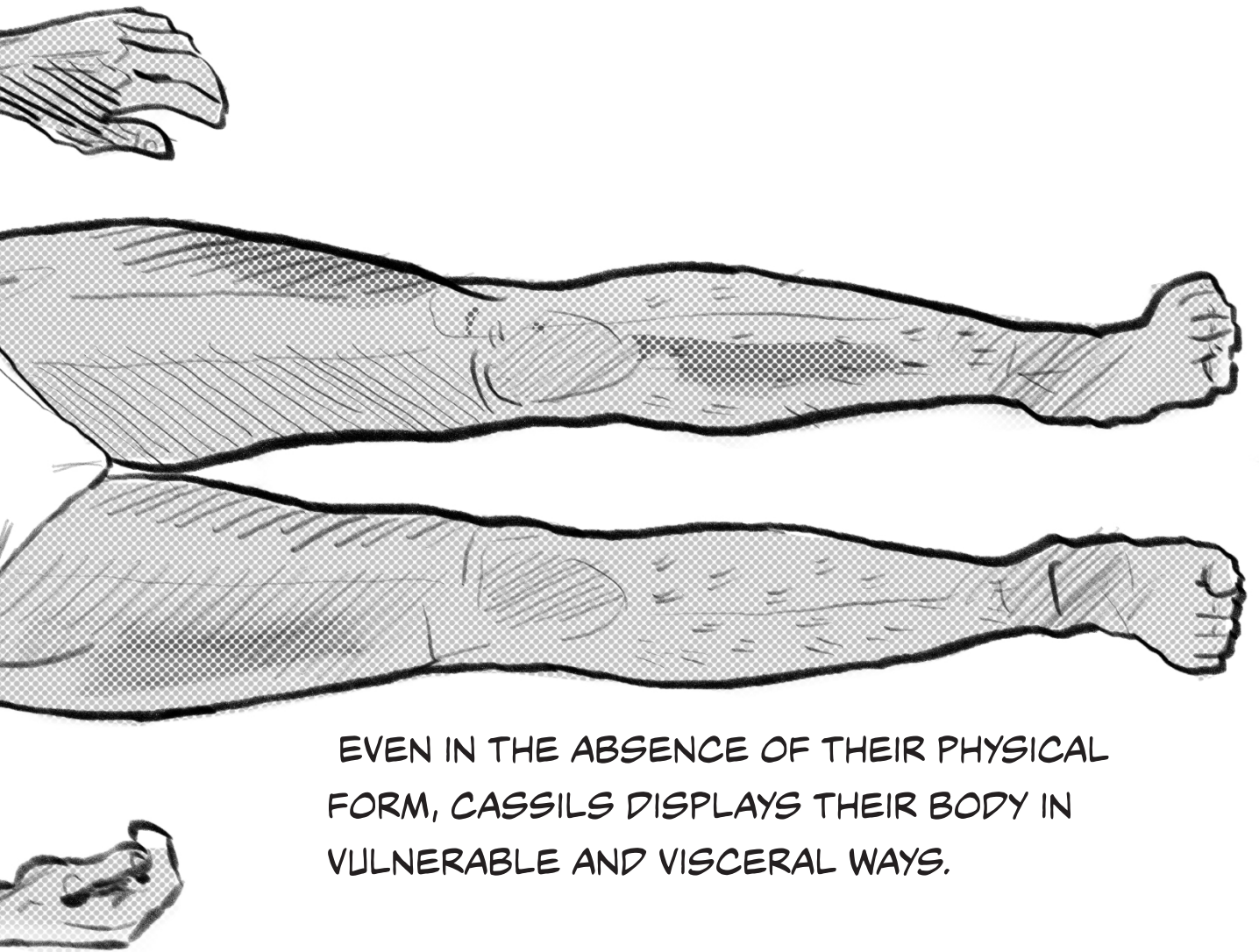
GHOST, 2013



CENTERED AT THE HEART OF  
BECOMING AN IMAGE  
IS CASSILS' BODY.



THE ECHOES OF THE PERFORMANCE  
THROUGH PHOTO, SCULPTURE, AND  
SOUND ARE ALL A PRODUCT OF CASSILS  
FLESH, MUSCLE, AND EXERTION.



EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR PHYSICAL  
FORM, CASSILS DISPLAYS THEIR BODY IN  
VULNERABLE AND VISCERAL WAYS.

THE TRANS BODY EXISTS IN ENDLESS FORMS:  
PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, ETHEREAL.



EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR NAKED FLESH AND CLAY, CASSILS  
BECOMES AN IMAGE WITHIN OUR OWN MINDS AND BODIES.