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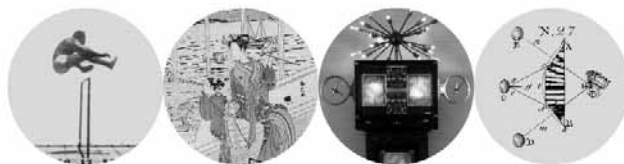
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Stephen Melville

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Throughout autumn 2006 the de facto entry or title wall at the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio was wholly occupied by a single image of two framed works, resting on felt pads and turned face to the wall they are photographed leaning against. The photograph belonged to and announced the second of the three shows that opened off the Wexner's long ramp – a show called *Twice Untitled and Other Pictures (looking back)*, curated – magnificently – by Helen Molesworth.¹ The untitled pictures in this photograph are themselves looking back – that is, they are faced not forward but the other way – and at the same time they are also arguably looking back, making of themselves something like two eyes that opaquely return the viewer's gaze – a description that might have struck viewers as broadly true of much and perhaps all of the work in the show thus announced. That show was itself a retrospective of the work of Louise Lawler, so it's that sense of 'looking back' that might seem the primary reference of the title's parenthetical term.

This entry piece is in many ways a typical Lawler work – a notably blunt and frontal photograph of works of art in a particular institutional situation. But it's also not entirely characteristic – it does not, for example, show her standard sharpness of focus, so the labels on the back of the works are, unusually, not wholly legible.² It's as if the suppression of the words one expects to find on a title wall is continued in the image itself (or perhaps it's better to say that the absence of entitling words on the wall extends their elision within the photograph). This may be somewhat surprising given the widely shared sense of the essentially and relentlessly discursive nature of the institutional critique with which Lawler is so closely associated.

Words did, of course, show up eventually – on the ramp wall at the entrance to the show proper, where one finds both the show's full title and an

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opening explanatory text. It's notable that Lawler's name did not in fact figure in the show's actual title. This quiet absence is, of course, readily readable as underlining her general more or less 'documentary' absence from her work.

This opening play with title and announcement opens up an apparent self-consciousness or self-reflexivity that seems to be a continuing feature of the show – in, for example, the two video monitors that show live images of the visitors and in the presence of a number of works made during the installation and opening of Molesworth's *Part Object, Part Sculpture* at the Wexner Center the previous winter. We are, of course, used to this kind of thing, which means we have pretty well-habituated responses to it, either applauding its broadly political point or refusing its empty ironies or evasive artworld narcissism. A part of what we may sense here is a palpably postmodern conflation or complicity of curators and artists that's been around long enough that we need pay it no particular mind and simply go with the experience.

Doing that, one will likely have found no particular surprises in the show itself. The first of its two galleries was loosely devoted to Lawler's early work – black and white photographs, framed and matted, of art in auction rooms or in museums or in private collections, so many exercises in what one might call 'point-and-shoot institutional critique', where the point seems to lie very exactly in the pointing, always supplemented by some bit of text, hovering between title and caption, that makes sure you get it. Often the title is bluntly, if also laconically, descriptive: 'Lot Number 22', or 'Arranged by Donald Marron, Susan Brundage, Cheryl Bishop at Paine Webber, Inc., NYC, 1982'. And sometimes it seems mildly more ambitious, listing, for example, Christie's officers. These titles and captions evidently mean to secure the institutional point, but they fall well short of the work presumably done by, for example, Hans Haacke's more elaborate displays of institutional connectedness. Somewhere in the early 1990s Lawler's work changes in certain respects that became most prominent in the second gallery – she shifts to color and a larger format, the frames and mats mostly drop away in favor of the shiny surface of the photographic museum box; the pictures become lush and in some ways looser. The range of situations photographed becomes somewhat broader and more, as it were, contingent or occasional – no longer a matter simply of achieved conditions of display in fixed institutional contexts but also of more momentary or passing states – packed, unpacked, awaiting hanging. Lawler seems also to negotiate the relation between documentary distance and the work or object photographed in slightly different ways that one tends, I think, to take as reflecting an increased interest of some sort in the actual work photographed. But this is at best delicate and hard to pin down. Critics, in the catalogue and elsewhere, have tended to speak of a certain poignancy in this more recent work, as if what were essentially dead things in the earlier work appeared now touched with a modicum of life. It is perhaps this that allows the appearance within Lawler's work of a piece like 'War Is Terror', a photograph of Margaret Cameron's picture of Julia Duckworth hung in a way – in the midst of a life – one imagines Lawler to approve of.

Nothing in such an account of the show goes significantly beyond the point-and-shoot starting place, and it does seem to capture well enough what it means to see her work within the ambit of 'institutional critique'. It's a description that finds its negative mirror-image in some viewers' sense of being manipulated or trapped in an insider's game or a play of ironized but otherwise empty mirrors. What it does not capture is the feeling you may well have that you've seen something more or other than this – and that's a feeling you may not know what exactly to do with, since it seems clear that you shouldn't somehow come out saying that she's a terrific photographer (which she is) or that these are 'great photographs' (as if that meant something clear). It's as if the work itself has been somehow missed or too simply assumed – as if 'the work itself' were somehow not in question or perhaps as if you were deprived of any means of registering it.

The opening image is interesting as an announcement of the exhibition. It shows two pictures whose labels are unreadable; each might be 'Untitled' and so together they would be twice 'Untitled', or they might together be a single piece ('Untitled') that is then actively de-titled by Lawler's unfocused camera, so twice untitled that way. That Lawler's titles sometimes work this ambiguously – and more generally that they have distinct ways of working – is worth noticing, as is the fact that 'Untitled' is not really a proper Lawler title at all. Titles and un-titles offer a promising way into the show: One will inevitably remark, for example, that for all the proliferation of Lawler's titles, few of the works she photographs are identified. More pointedly, one will in this instance discover that although this large image is the uncropped source for the work 'Twice Untitled', it in fact appeared here as 'Please Play Attention', with the wall label including tear-off strips with the web address, http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/083106Z.shtml, directing the viewer to Keith Olbermann's eloquent and passionate attack on Donald Rumsfeld. So the work was not in fact 'Twice Untitled', but was instead made out of an odd kind of repetition that both continued and displaced that work.

The show itself was filled with repetitions and doublings, so much so that once they are noticed it's hard not to try to classify them in some way. For example, one might distinguish:

1. Pairs: that is, two pictures sometimes hung together, more often fairly well separated, that appear to be very nearly the same picture. Typically considering these pairs leads to noticing their differences as pictures, and this tends to push one toward formal observations. So the pair 'Sentimental'/ 'Unsentimental' seems to turn on the shifting of the frame or edge (one can be briefly tempted to think they are the same photograph differently cropped), while the pair 'There/Not There' makes essentially the same shift of the camera's view more nearly count as discovery about depth in the photograph, and the two photographs of one of Dan Flavin's monuments for Tatlin seen through a Jeff Koons' vacuum cleaner piece, differing primarily only through a slight shift in the camera's view, seem to register a thought about photographic time, perhaps because of the apparent interruption of real vacuum cleaners in

the foreground and perhaps also because of their very particular, punctuating placement within the exhibition – the first behind you (you had to look back) as you entered the first gallery, and the second marking more frontally your entry into the second gallery. (The first of these images, entitled 'Past', in fact participates in a complex game of retrospection: having turned back once to see it, we find ourselves turned back again to view a paperweight whose contained image is an image of the bit of gallery we've just traversed as it appeared in *Part Object*, *Part Sculpture* at the Wexner somewhat less than a year earlier.) Two photographs, near and distant, of a Dégas ballerina in her vitrine make a fourth pair whose photographic weight seems both strong and harder to phrase. Another pair of sorts – two photographs of HVAC units awaiting installation, bled across the boundary between *Twice Untitled* and a concurrent show, *Shiny*, in which Lawler was also represented. The large color print 'Artichoke' was repeated, its point of view once again displaced, as a small black and white photograph, framed and matted and called 'Introductory Still Life', next to one of the show's two main points of entry. The other entry was marked by the standard wall text – and both 'Artichoke' and 'Introductory Still Life' picture the flower arrangement placed before the title text at *Part Object's* opening. It's hard to even know how to begin working out the complexities of this.

2. Diptychs: two pictures shown together as a single unit. 'Between Reagan and Bush', pairing a photograph with a fancy menu painted directly on the wall, and 'Nipple', pairing two separately framed matted images, one a general shot of two classical male nudes and the other a detail of them (with each bearing its own 'subtitle' embossed on the mat – 'Does He Get Enough Attention?' and '*nipple*'), are the pure cases. Related instances would include side-by-side pictures of work evidently hung in the same auction show room and similarly side-by-side pictures of arrangements at Paine Webber. Doublings of this kind seem typically and unsurprisingly to foreground sense rather than form. In the case of the Paine Webber pictures, some part of one's working through that sense may well include noticing that works by Lichtenstein and Rosenquist have been hung above the office copier, wondering whether this is the arrangers' joke or Lawler's, and then noticing that the Longo in the other photograph, with the city view through a window to the left reflected all across its glass surface is from the 'Men in Cities' series – surely Lawler's own joke. This might lead one to the further thought that jokes aren't owned that way but are shared in their relaying, collaborative in their getting or not getting. A jokiness of this kind seems a frequent feature of Lawler's pictures; they present themselves as things to be gotten or not gotten, and viewers tend to have fairly strong feelings, one way or another, about being placed in that position.
3. Relays: images in which the rhyme of particular elements is so pronounced as to all but explicitly invite comparison. The pink of the menu in 'Between Reagan and Bush' recurred on the Wexner ramp wall, as the extended ground for the very small sentence 'Once there was a

boy and everything came out OK', which itself recurred as the title to a photograph elsewhere in the show; the photograph of Longo's 'Men in Cities' at Paine Webber recurs, along with a Stella not visible in that shot, in a color image of the same reception area in one of Lawler's paperweights, and the bright Protractorish Stella that shows up there was a recurrent presence in the show, perhaps because the Stella of 1958 was the object of the other adjacent show at the Wexner, and so on. Following the trail of such relays would not have landed you in front of every single work in the exhibition, but it would have come surprisingly close.

At some point the effort at classification breaks down, and relation becomes general. Many of Lawler's photographs were of an earlier show in the same space, so they also repeated the space itself – as in the image of a Gonzalez-Torres light bulb piece spread out on a quilt awaiting hanging on the very wall on which the photograph of it now hung, the photographed wall's seam in explicit relation to the wall's actual seam, except that the whole has been displaced one unit down the wall . . . A photograph of a large Stella reflected on a glossy museum floor hung the full length of the gallery opposite a photograph of a Richter lying on its side awaiting hanging, itself hung above one of the Wexner's rare, structurally determined, patches of glossy floor and strikingly reflected in it (it's Ema nude on the stairs and it just happened – just happened? – to be hanging in the Wexner next to Eisenman's famous dead-end flight of stairs . . .).

Lawler's titles are so mobile as to need a whole paragraph to themselves. Sometimes they appear outside the work on the gallery label; other times they appear internal to it, embossed on the mat. They migrate easily from work to work and often cannot be sharply distinguished from captions or comments on the work, and one may sometimes be inclined to take them as independent works that just happen to be in intimate relation with another work's title. One of the images from Christie's bears as its impossibly long 'title' Christie's full statement of the conditions of sale. One can be very tempted to read every apparently single piece as itself a verbal/visual diptych of sorts, an image and a title paired for the moment, the title always ready to move on, be inscribed elsewhere. . .

This is perhaps enough to allow one to say that Lawler's is a distinct practice that draws on a logic of repetition and displacement deeply responsive to the terms Douglas Crimp and Craig Owens initially proposed for the appropriation work of the Pictures group. This is hardly a surprising thing to notice about her work; this is, after all, its first context. That it is particularly close to the punning accretive plays of sense and form that shape a work like Laurie Anderson's *United States* may be mildly surprising. What ought to be more surprising is how little attention has been given to the specificities of her practice even given the general awareness of her proximity to Anderson, Levine, Longo, and Sherman.

That Lawler's work can generate and sustain this kind of internal and external relation must point toward some further features of the individual

works themselves. An early photograph of Jasper Johns's 'White Flag' in Christie's auction room is perhaps as good a place to start as any. Such a room in advance of a major auction is an interesting place – a temporary collection that rivals that of many museums and in which any visitor off the street has an extraordinary physical proximity to work that is often visibly not in museum condition, more palpably material than under other conditions. Auction house staff are willing to take pieces off the wall for you on request (it's part of the business not to make rash assumptions about who's a potential buyer and who's just browsing), and many of the people around you really are looking to buy. You hear snippets of conversation everywhere, more or less surprising in their acuteness, irrelevance, vulgarity, and so on. One can be surprised to discover that Big Time Art can be expensive like a private jet (what you expected) or like a year of private college tuition (perhaps not entirely out of reach). All this can be fairly interesting. None of it enters into Lawler's photographs. What's there is very precisely there – a bit of Johns's starry encaustic field and the separate abutted canvas of stripes, the thin wood frame within which both are contained, in very sharp focus; the carpeted wall on which it temporarily hangs, in equally sharp focus; and the crisply legible label of details. The geometry of things in their arrangement is pronounced and salient, the Johns meeting itself along the distinct seam of the two canvases and edged equally cleanly against the wall on which the label sits squarely and neatly. Elsewhere in *Twice Untitled* a large color image of a Kusama awaiting installation appeared as if both photographically cropped and physically cut so as to align itself precisely with the edge of the wall on which it hung.

Edges count for Lawler.³ I think they matter to her even when they don't count (or at least when I can't make out how they count) – look, for example, at what she does with the table's edge in 'Artichoke' or 'Introductory Still Life'. The work is made to an extraordinary degree out of edges, out of the contingency of encounter they inevitably mark. If we take her presiding interest to be simply in frames (real frames, the metaphorical framing of institutions, etc.), we miss a crucial dimension of it. We do not, for example, see how a picture of a curator's hand on the wedge of 'Wedge of Chastity' finds its way into her work. But we get that in focus when we see that it's all a question of what touches on what and of what the shape and consequence of such touch might be. There's a thought not just about institutions but about art at work here – sometimes I think it's a dream of art showing itself as everywhere edged, and so, one might say, both self-possessed and permanently open to contingency. It is a thought about the intermittence of art's times and places, and it is a distinctively photographic thought as well, making itself out of its particular ways of cutting into and out from the world.

These remarks fall well short of a fully adequate description of Lawler's work, but they do, I hope, go some way toward saying what we see and so lay some ground for saying how it might matter. Rather than continue in this vein, I want to turn instead toward asking why we have had trouble producing such description and what difference it might make to have it available. That Lawler's work participates strongly in something well enough called

institutional critique and that it does so from a distinctively feminist standpoint is not in question. But we will not have any particularly consequential sense of what that means without some fuller view of what authorizes that critique. We can and should attribute the meanings we make out to Lawler, but their authority, their working the way they do – surely belongs to the work itself (if it does not, Lawler’s systematic effacing of herself either comes to nothing or is sheer imposture).

2

Among the edges that evidently interested Lawler in *Twice Untitled and Other Pictures* were those between it and the two other shows hinged around it in the Wexner Center – *Frank Stella 1958*, originally curated by Harry Cooper and Megan Luke at the Fogg Museum, and *Shiny*, a show lightly exploring the contemporary legacy of shininess in Warhol (‘Silver Clouds’) and Koons (‘Balloon Dog’) curated for the Wexner by Helen Molesworth. The edge between *Twice Untitled* and *Shiny* was soft, one gallery flowing into the next, *Shiny* repeating one of the works included in the Lawler show and including a further Lawler photograph of another pneumatic Koons piece at Blume, and *Twice Untitled* including among its images colored photographs of the Warhol balloons that then appear in *Shiny*. The edge between the Stella show and *Twice Untitled* was physically and otherwise much harder: one had to leave the Stella gallery and proceed up the Wexner’s sloping ramp to enter the Lawler; coming back down the ramp into the Stella gallery from *Shiny* and *Twice Untitled*, one was taken aback by the weight and sheer physical presence of the Stella paintings. At the same time the two shows appeared knotted into one another by the fairly strong presence of Stella within the Lawler works selected for *Twice Untitled*. It was an interesting proposition: three shows actively assembled in light of one another. That the sequence of shows might be taken as – indeed in some sense was – historical is clear enough, and one will perhaps be tempted to say that the wall that divided the Stella paintings from the rest of the work in the Wexner is a physical emblem of the difference between modernism and postmodernism.⁴ But the overall invitation of the three shows was less to produce narrative than to think through the sense of those we already have – to take up again, for example, Craig Owens’s claim that a certain ‘deconstructive impulse is characteristic of postmodernist art in general and must be distinguished from the self-critical tendency of modernism’ (1993, p. 85), or the apparently similar, but perhaps significantly differently framed distinction between a Conceptualist ‘self-reflexivity’ and a ‘Modernist self-referentiality’ advanced by Benjamin Buchloh (1990).⁵ It’s a question, then, of working through the vicissitudes of a range of terms – ‘self-criticism’, ‘self-reflection’, ‘self-consciousness’, ‘self-reference’, and so on – that appear closely related but whose actual sense and relation to one another remain obscure.

One might begin by simply noting that whatever the purchase of the term ‘self-criticism’ on our understanding of Stella’s painting and modernism

more generally, 'self-reference', either in the literal ways Stella might have learned from Johns or in the more abstract ways that seem to show up in the 'Black Paintings' (the key formula here would be 'deductive structure' – the thought that the stripes on the canvas follow from and in that sense refer to the limits of the support and even to the particular depth of that support), appear not in the least on Stella's mind in 1958. The two 'black paintings' that year produces do not answer well to the features 'deductive structure' means to capture, and indeed 'Morro Castle' strongly anticipates the moves within Stella's painting that will recur so strongly in the Irregular Polygons and lead Michael Fried to crucial revisions in that first formulation, registering the ways in which those paintings secure a difference between self-criticism and self-reference that the early series had at least flirted with collapsing.⁶ One way to extend the contrast would be to say that orienting one's account of Stella's paintings toward self-reference amounts to seeing them as performing an assertive kind of self-recognition, securing an identity that remains wholly closed within itself and thus 'autonomous' in a particularly (even peculiarly) strong sense, while the redescription forced by the Irregular Polygons entails an acknowledgment of painting's limits that both strongly implies a will to take those limits as its own and an admission that the fact of limit itself is integral to painting and cannot be overmastered by it (an acknowledgement of finitude, then). 'Autonomy' in this context does not mean independence from the world but something more nearly like painting's 'self-shapedness' – a somewhat awkward coinage perhaps, but one that is appropriately ambiguous, indicating, on the one hand, a shape painting could be said to have (a shape significantly like the shape of a self) and, on the other, painting's ongoing agency in relation to that shape (an agency not characterized by some remarkable freedom or transcendence but instead everywhere marked by the finitude that is a defining feature of selfhood). 'Self-criticism' would then attach to the demand that a painting be a painting utterly independent of any question of 'self-reference', and it's arguably that demand Stella is working through in 1958 (he's trying to make paintings). What appeared in 1959 and the immediately subsequent years as an answer to that question is importantly characterized by the way in which it made or appeared to make 'self-criticism' and 'self-reference' versions of one another.

A particular picture of 'self-consciousness' seems to make a fair amount of trouble for us in this area; it's a picture that ties self-consciousness to self-reflection, as if most of the time we were successfully conscious but might from time to time need or in any case be brought to some further state of 'self-consciousness' that would be a matter of something like a mirror inserted into consciousness, allowing itself to reflect on or otherwise picture itself. Some picture of this kind is assumed by the most standard defenses of minimalism, as for example in Robert Morris's often cited 1966 remark that:

The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the new aesthetic. It is in some way

more reflexive because one's awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work is stronger than in previous work, with its many internal relationships. One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions under varying conditions of light and spatial context. (1995, p. 232)

Morris's 'Mirrored Boxes' realize this picture in about as literal a fashion as one could wish.

There are other ways to define self-consciousness, but these ways have come to feel generally unfamiliar to us and we are not good at articulating them. One such formulation – and one that is maybe particularly relevant in this context because, like our standard picture, it does assume that 'self-consciousness' follows in some way on 'consciousness' – is advanced by G.W.F. Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977[1807]):

in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from otherness. As self-consciousness it is movement; but since what it distinguishes from itself is only itself as itself, the difference, as an otherness is immediately superseded for it; the difference is not, and it [self-consciousness] is only the motionless tautology of: 'I am I'; but since for it the difference does not have the form of being, it is not self-consciousness. Hence otherness is for it in the form of a being, or as a distinct moment; but there is also for consciousness the unity of itself with this difference as a second distinct moment. (p. 105)

The mere rhythm and syntax of this passage is almost as good a guide to its sense as what one would arrive at by really working through Hegel's argument and its vocabulary: self-consciousness is first of all movement, both as a shifting relation to what is other in the world and what is other within itself (as, for example, what it just was and now no longer is); differences keep happening and changing places but settle nowhere. Self-consciousness thus has two distinguishable but interlocked axes that help specify its distinctness as movement: on the one hand, self-consciousness is desire, and, on the other hand, it is what Hegel calls 'life', a certain kind of holding together over time and its changes. Stories about self-consciousness are stories about the interplay of, or work on, life and desire, ringing their changes.

Self-consciousness understood this way is not something superadded to consciousness; it's what consciousness discovers that it must have been all along in order to be consciousness at all, and within a picture of this kind 'self-criticism' is very close to what we call 'experience'. That 'otherness' shows in Hegel's account both as a condition for self-consciousness (it is, he says, 'a return from otherness') and its internal structure (a distinct moment always to be related to a second moment) underlines the finitude proper to consciousness shaped this way – self-shaped. It's a picture close to this that

must inform Clement Greenberg's way of talking about modernism and self-criticism, and it is unquestionably a view of this order, although arrived at along a very different, more Wittgensteinian path, that drives Michael Fried's arguments about both Stella and minimalism (that's why 'experience' emerges as both crucial term within and an argumentative ground for *Art and Objecthood* (1998[1967])).

It's hardly surprising that Jacques Lacan found useful instruction for psychoanalysis in this general stretch of Hegel. Lacan's particular point of appeal is the section immediately following the one from which I've quoted – the famous dialectic of Lordship and Bondage.⁷ Some of the work in *Shiny* gave us an interesting access to the general tenor of Lacan in this region. In that show, pieces by Rachel Harrison and Jim Hodges seemed to exploit modes of shininess closely bound up with the mirror and its reflectivity, whereas – in the show's most strongly marked contrast – Michael Minelli's faux-Meissen porcelains got their shininess by glittering, by being something like what Lacan refers to as 'points of light'. This distinction in kinds of shininess answers to a deep distinction in Lacan closely related to the ways we have of talking about or picturing 'self-consciousness'. As with Hegel it's a matter of something that in some sense comes first – in Lacan this is the Imaginary and its shiny avatar is the mirror – and something that follows it as a kind of achievement – the Symbolic and its point of light. As also in Hegel, the presumptively later stage shows itself, in its very achievement, as having been the actual underlying condition all along. So we'll say, if we follow Lacan, that the reflective mirrorlike availability of the self to the self ultimately depends on a self-shapedness that must be assumed and that can only be assumed as a limit on the claims of reflexive self-possession (its correlate is then that there be an Unconscious). In *Shiny*, it was Josiah McIlheney's pieces that appeared to take all this to a point of highest tension, mirrors tuned to pure reflectivity that nonetheless did not capture the viewer who thus found him or herself in a field of pure lucidity worked by an ungraspable opacity.⁸

3

So the claim must be that Lawler's edges – the ones within her photographs, the ones that mark their individual starting and stopping, and all the other edges they serve to make visible – just are Stella's limits returned though the divided history they partially enable (the barrier between his show and Lawler's less formidable than it may have appeared). And they return fully freighted with all the contingency and exposure photography can bear – and that included the contingency of the work's showing, with Stella and with the artists of *Shiny* in this case. There are good reasons to regret that the show did not travel – good reasons too to wonder what it might have been for it to travel, to extend its exposure in such ways. One might suspect that few if any of the collaborations in which it might have found or shown itself would have been as rich as this one proved to be, but collaboration as such belongs to

the work, a necessary consequence of its edginess, reinvented in its movement.

Feeling one's way into Lawler's work along its edges can significantly shift your sense of it. Certain worries you may have had about it evaporate; responses that initially seem appropriate come to appear partial or marginal, and you find yourself getting the particular shape of things more nearly right. *Twice Untitled* included, for example, two video monitors that were easily enough taken as moments of relatively familiar, even clichéd, self-reflexivity – the viewer seeing him or herself as viewer and so brought to some kind of presumably special, but finally empty, self-awareness. I'm not particularly fond of these monitors, but now I do find myself noticing that in fact I never faced myself in them, appearing in one at right angles to myself and in the other only at a distance and from the rear; the fact they registered was not my reflexivity but my being seen from elsewhere (a social fact, then, that one will perhaps turn toward a modern fact of surveillance but that might also be taken as tuned to general facts of sociability and exposure, the insistence of the third person). (One might say something similar about the shininess of Lawler's museum-box surfaces: they by and large do not present the viewer with a prominent image of him or herself, and such image as you may notice is more nearly a part of the picture than an image cast across it.)

By the same token, you may find yourself hearing a wider range of laughter than you first heard – not just the laughter that comes with the clear and sharp moments of feminist derision but also the other forms of laughter that come with jokes well told or that accompany what we cannot face any other way or that belong to the sheer good humor of life and talk and desire – as if the work set out to map the full range of sociability laughter tests and proves (exclusion, inclusion, shared life, mere passing encounter . . .). 'Untitled (dreams)', a paperweight with a photograph of Edward Ruscha's 'Dreams #1' and Roy Lichtenstein's 1963 'Ball of Twine' in Leo Castelli's apartment, includes in its supporting text a Haacke-like chronicle of how the two works found their way there; unlike Haacke, this bit of text includes the further remark that 'This will mean more to some of you than others.' Haacke's lists typically come across as transparent in both their force and meaning to right-minded people; Lawler's remark, by contrast, admits both the partiality of the work and the heterogeneity of its audience, thus pushing also toward a recognition of Haacke's 'transparency' as a particular and exclusive form of sociability. Some viewers take themselves to be, as it were, the butt of the joke here – take themselves as pointedly excluded by Lawler's remark – and it is an interesting question why they do so.

Another not uncommon response is a sense of being 'manipulated' that is often linked to a feeling that Lawler's work illicitly conflates the roles of artist and curator and so also allows itself to hover irresponsibly between the making of actual individual works and something sort of like installation, say the making of a situation in which the actual status of the work is rendered ungraspable, evasive. It was, I think, a major triumph of *Twice Untitled* that it in fact effectively emptied this response of any actual purchase. Lawler to a

high degree began as an explicit arranger of pictures, and it may be that this is still, suitably expanded, a good short-hand description of her practice. What *Twice Untitled* as an act of curation does, is to show what that practice is. Whatever the back-and-forth of artist and curator involved in the actual installation of the work, the show itself both preserves and makes visible the edge between art and its showing – the edge Lawler everywhere demonstrates as integral to art insofar as it has no form or fate apart from showing.

Our confusions of response in front of Lawler's work are interesting and serious – are in many ways what the work is about. We are asked by it what we are willing and able to make of such things as our selves and our experience and the objects we may claim to cherish within it. We may be content to recognize a certain well-established practice of critique, congratulating ourselves on our participation in it. Or we might equally take all this as amounting to no more than another moment of artworld self-indulgence and pseudo-political narcissism. We may even imagine ourselves massively disillusioned by this work, as if there have been revealed to us facts of class and commerce and taste that undo the claims and stakes of art as such. All of these are, in the end, so many ways of refusing or avoiding our experience, of allowing ourselves to be baffled in it. That existing social arrangements take an active interest in such baffling is of course a point of major political critique; that we should be so easily complicitous with it is perhaps the deepest ground of the work's poignancy.

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Notes

1. The catalogue, *Twice Untitled and Other Pictures (looking back)*, includes interesting and valuable essays by Rosalyn Deutsche, Ann Goldstein, and Helen Molesworth.
2. Despite their blurring, a little thought and patience identified both works as by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and that, of course, gave them a distinct and surprising emotional weight.
3. The work interestingly shares this interest in edges, however differently turned, with Sherrie Levine's silhouettes and photographic appropriations.
4. One might equally think the sequence of shows asked us to move across and so revise our sense of the difference between the minimalism that Stella sets in motion and Warhol's Pop – not the first time Molesworth has messed with this line.
5. A distinction of this order, under somewhat shifting nomenclature, is essential to Buchloh's (1990) work in this area.
6. These sentences summarize, with drastic economy, Michael Fried's major addresses to Stella's work, first in 'Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland,

Jules Olitski, and Frank Stella' (where the notion of 'deductive structure' plays a key role) and then in 'Shape as Form: Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons' (where it is significantly revised). Both can be found in Fried (1998[1967]).

7. It's perhaps worth remarking that 'self-consciousness' for Hegel has its first major unfolding in this section as a social fact (of sorts).
8. Those who know Lacan and enjoy his diagrams will want to play with the thought that in the famous Schema L the lower right corner marks the point of light and the intervening axis that binds identity and object is the edge of a mirror into which the 'barred subject' looks – the very support for that recognition thus also the barrier that underwrites it as misrecognition. Schema R extends this and invites the further thought that the diagrams themselves are flattenings of a Moebius strip made by fastening that lower right corner, appropriately twisted, back over the apparently initial position of that subject.

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