ROBERT MORRIS

MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS

ROBERT MORRIS

MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS

September 12 – November 14, 2015 CASTELLI

Maybe They Won't Find Out, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
46 x 32 x 72 inches

It Was Always Like This, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
66 x 59 x 39 inches

Jumpers, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
138 x 84 x 37 inches

She Never Knew Him, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
51 x 68 x 49 inches

Dunce I Dunce 2, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
67 x 58 x 40 inches

What Did You Expect, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
Dimensions variable

Keep It To Yourself, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
47 x 84 x 88 inches

Keep It To Yourself, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
47 x 55 x 77 inches

INTRODUCTION

by Carter Ratcliff

Robert Morris's new works are made of Belgian linen. Painters stretch this material and paint on it. Morris soaks a length of linen with epoxy resin and drapes it over a life-size mannequin. When the resin has dried, he frees the now-rigid fabric from its armature. A flat, blank surface has acquired the presence of a human figure or the power to evoke it. There are eighteen of these intricately configured husks. Some stand. Others are crouching, reclining, falling, soaring. Their collective title, *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*, alludes to skins shed and brittle enclosures outgrown, and of course shrouds are the garments of the dead.

For Otto, 2014–2015, is dedicated to Otto Lilienthal, famous late in the 19th century as "the father of flight." Before his death in a glider accident, in 1896, he managed to sail more than eight-hundred feet through the air. Lilienthal derived the designs of his aircraft from the wings of storks and other large birds, precedents recalled by the flaps Morris extends from the outstretched arms of this work's ascending form. See these flaps as wings and they look alarmingly stubby: the machinery of flight as a prediction of disaster. *For Otto*'s second figure has already sunk to the floor in a posture of despair. Strong lighting from certain angles gives the actors in these tableaux a surprising degree of translucence, even buoyancy. Yet an air of mourning persists.

Though the uppermost form in *Jumpers*, 2014–2015, could be rising, the grimmer implication of this title recommends that we see it as plunging to earth as inexorably as its lower, head-down companion. However, nothing is certain in the realm of seeing-as. Maybe these figures are extraordinary acrobats doing flips that Morris has caught in a three-dimensional equivalent of a freeze frame. For the works in this new series do not always promise death, at least not in the short term. The cantilevered surface in *Keep It To Yourself*, 2014–2015, may be a death bed for the one reclining there. Yet this figure could just as plausibly be robust and resting for a moment–not a happy moment, perhaps, given the slouching gloom of the other figure in

For Otto, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
91 x 68 x 37 inches

this group, but not necessarily a time devoted to "shuffling off this mortal coil," as Hamlet puts it in his rumination on suicide. Nor does shuffling off this mortal coil inevitably mean dying.

Snakes, lizards, frogs, lobsters, cicadas, and spiders are among the animals who shed their skins or shells or carapaces. They do it not to die but to live and grow larger. And to grow a new covering, which will be discarded in its turn. To present a molted skin or an abandoned exoskeleton as a shroud is to suggest that the passage of time is, in itself, a cause for mourning. Few artists join Morris in making this suggestion, which is to say: few artists show his willingness to grapple with life's temporal inevitabilities. And its stubborn ambiguities. *It Was Always Like This*, 2014–2015, prompts a question: like what? One figure in the group bearing this title is upside down with its feet propped against the wall. The other crowds around in helpless concern. What disaster joins these two in a single four-legged, two-headed configuration? Though Morris might have provided a hint, it is better that he didn't. Any hint would have led to the false reassurance of an explanation that, like most explanations of human dilemmas, puts readymade concepts in place of a fully felt engagement with the work.

Jumpers (detail), 2014-2015
Linen and resin
138 x 84 x 37 inches

But we should be cautious here. Talk about art and feelings can entangle us in the lofty snares of art-as-expression, the doctrine sustaining the Romantic poet William Wordsworth's claim that poetry "proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world."[1] This follows from Wordsworth's faith that, in every true poet, there is an essential self, a soul, with the power to shape the look of ordinary things into images of their deep and eternal natures. The exercise of this power communicates to its audience not only the timeless truth about visible objects but also that of the artist's inward self–the transcendent being Wordsworth's friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the infinite I AM."[2] As old-fashioned as they sound, the Romantics' speculations led directly to avant-garde claims about art and ultimate things.

Early in the 20th century, Wassily Kandinsky explained that his quasi-abstract imagery shows us "the internal truth only art can divine, which only art can express by those means of expression which are hers alone."[3] Several decades later, Piet Mondrian said that his sort of abstraction would "enlighten mankind, for it not only reveals human culture, it advances it." Beyond self-expression lay

Untitled, 1993
Graphite on paper
20 3/8 x 17 inches

the communication of essences that would, by the light of their historical logic, guide us to Utopia.[4] Having drastically revised Mondrian's geometries, Barnett Newman dismissed his socio-political millenarianism. "The self, terrible and constant," he declared, "is for me the subject matter of painting and sculpture."[5] Declarations of this sort may seem as passé as Romantic pronouncements from the early 1800s, and yet every contemporary artist admired for a signature style is being praised, implicitly, for creating and expressing a Self with a capital "S"—an "I AM" of Coleridgean proportions.

What about artists who carry on "institutional critiques" or "investigate" various political issues? Haven't they dispensed with the dubious metaphysics of Selfhood? No, for these photographers, videographers, and installation artists cultivate audiences willing to do two things at once: overlook their inefficacy in the arena of practical politics while lauding them for the superior Vision that gives them mastery over the metaphysics of the transcendent Insight. Guided by this mastery, these artists assume political stances so absolutely, so essentially correct that nothing more is necessary. To take a correct position is valuable in itself—or so we are invited to believe. Morris was a leader of the New York Art Strike against War, Racism, and Repression in 1970 and since then his art has often touched on the political and military horrors of our era.[6] Nonetheless, he nourishes no fantasies about the ameliorative effects of calling forth those horrors. And his refusal to develop a signature style makes it clear that he does not want us to see in him the image of an artist endowed with a Self geared up to supply essential Truths about its inner life, the ordinary world, or the path to Utopia.

Asked recently if he includes his writings in his oeuvre, Morris replied, "Writing, objects, images, performances. Made by R.M., or one of his selves, and he has to be held responsible."[7] The phrase "one of his selves" implies that Morris experiences himself as individual but manifold. Each group of works in his oeuvre implies a further aspect of "R.M." and the MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS are so unexpected that I'm tempted to say the artist could not have made these objects unless he had discovered—or invented—a new aspect of himself. So why not suppose that the linen casts were cast off by the artist, the elusive figure whose graphite rubbings of his own body, made early in the 1990s, left entrancingly detailed but largely unintelligible imprints on sheets of fiberglass and Japanese paper? Why not but, at the same time, why? Why this interpretation or any other? Supplying no solid clues, Morris puts meaning up for grabs.

He begins a short essay from 2004 by noting that "Marcel Duchamp spoke of the artist as half the equation. The artist makes the work and the audience tells him (or her) what it is. The artist's intentions count for nothing."[8] Or the artist intends to restrict the force of intention, charging the audience with a potentially unending task of interpretation it is free to accept or ignore. Duchamp left the range of permissible responses wide open by refusing to play the part of the artist as a transmitter of Truth. Artists who accept that part lay claim to an exalted sense of agency. When they act, revelations occur—so goes the metaphysically-tinged scenario—and if the audience resists enlightenment it has failed to play its properly passive part. Maybe it has refused to open itself to the Truth about the innermost nature of the Real, maybe it has fumbled its opportunity to be stunned by the sheer Rightness of the latest new look in art, but in any case its salvation is in doubt.

My idea of exalted agency is a reversal of Morris's "reduced agency," a strategy of restraint he attributes to Duchamp and others. From the time of the Renaissance on, painters have gloried in their command of the pictorial devices that place volumetric objects in spaces reaching from the picture plane to the distant background. In Cézanne late paintings, Morris sees that power deliberately rejected: the image flattens, space becomes shallow.[9] At about the same that the Analytic Cubists were exaggerating Cézanne's rejections to produce images even flatter and shallower than his, Duchamp was inventing his own versions of agency reduction: the use of chance procedures to make works of art and the designation of readymade objects as artworks, thereby obviating the need to make anything. Surrealist automatism, the composer John Cage's aleatory procedures, the choreographer Simone Forti's use of ordinary movement—in Morris's account, all these employed agency reduction to advance art into new aesthetic territory.[10] This is shifting terrain, not amenable to mapping. Nor is it heavily populated.

Morris finds evidence of agency reduction in the early work of Jasper Johns, who subjected painterly painting to a formal and emotional flattening by enclosing it within the pattern of the American flag and other readymade images. Johns's "lessons in the paradigm of a structural device that unfolded to complete the work" pointed the way to the preset patterns of Frank Stella's black canvases, wrote Morris in 2003. Furthermore, these Johnsian lessons "made minimal art possible."[11] Original form has long been taken as a sign of exalted agency. Morris acquired the minimalist label in the mid-1960s by refusing to display this sign. Instead, he built three-dimensional objects with the guidance of Euclidean readymades: the plane, the right

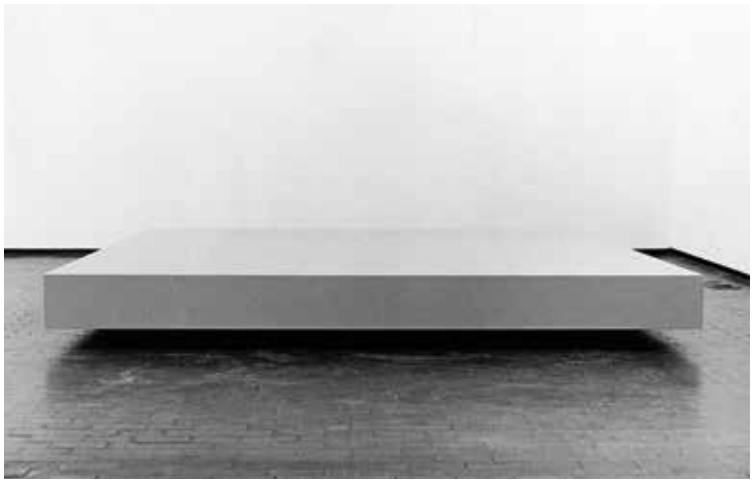
angle, the cube. This was not his sole episode of agency reduction. In the late 1950s and early '60s, for one of many examples, Morris accepted the part of an anonymous body in rule-governed, anti-balletic dances choreographed by Forti. And in 1963 he presented traces of his brain activity—an electroencephalogram—as a *Self-Portrait*.

Exchanging minimalist rigidity for "anti-form," Morris made sculpture of steam clouds and chaotic heaps of thread waste: materials that defy the very possibility of a shaping agency.[12] Taking rubbings of books and other objects in 1973, he ceded the determination of shape to the objects themselves, a renunciation even more complete in the body rubbings. For these later works allowed him to act only to the extent that he recorded images of his body as an inactive object. Blindfolding himself to make graphite drawings on paper, Morris took agency reduction to an extreme. For we consider the power to see the essential faculty, not just for artists but for everyone. To have a full sense of agency, to conceive of oneself an individual at home in the world and competent to function there, one must have one's sight. Morris could not have made the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* blindfolded, obviously, and yet they too resulted from agency reduction.

What Did You Expect, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
Dimensions variable

Arranging a manikin in a certain posture and covering it with a length of resin-soaked linen, Morris brings to mind the procedure Duchamp devised for *3 Standard Stoppages*, 1913-14. Dropping three meter-long lengths of string from a height of one meter onto strips of canvas, Duchamp glued them in place to preserve the randomly curving shapes into which they fell. Thus he established three variations on the institutionally ratified definition of a meter. Morris did not leave quite as much up to chance when he let a piece of linen fall over a waiting

manikin. As he has noted, however, it doesn't take much to charge a form or material with a figurative presence.[13] This effect does not always depend on resemblance. Toward the end of the 1960s, Michael Fried argued that some of Morris's starkly geometric pieces–the columns, in particular–have the bearing of human bodies.[14]



Slab, 1962
Plywood
12 x 96 x 96 inches

Imagining the play of materials that resulted in the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*, we realize how little sculptural fashioning of a traditional kind they required. The ghostly humanity of these objects emerged from the workings of chance inflected only slightly by deliberate action–the fall of the fabric adjusted here, the bend of a leg clarified there. In one of his essays, Morris suggests that a similar mixture of the random and the intentional might have yielded the *3 Standard Stoppages*. For how likely is it, he wonders, that threads dropped through the air could have assumed the "lovely parabolic curves" we see in this work? Surely Duchamp gave gravity's work a bit of a touch-up.[15] Agency reduction guides art into a region where intention mingles with its absence and it is often impossible to distinguish the parts they played in giving a work its shape.

Keep It To Yourself (detail), 2014-2015
Linen and resin
47 x 84 x 88 inches

In this gray zone, if anywhere, we come alive to the challenge Duchamp put to us when he said that it is up to the audience to complete a work of art. Improvising in the face of the mute eloquence of Morris's new works, we might note that the recumbent figure in *Keep It To Yourself* lies on a platform similar to his *Untitled (Slab)*, a ninety-six by ninety-six inch object made of plywood painted gray and first exhibited in 1962. It's a stretch, possibly, to describe one of the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* as the top surface of *Slab* reconfigured. Or possibly not. Morris's oeuvre is so rife with surfaces so remarkably disparate that we might say that the surface is his persistent theme and his oeuvre expanded as he subjected it to relentless permutations.

Threading our way back from the new works we find the flat surfaces of his most recent *Blind Time Drawings*, a series subtitled *Grief*, 2009. Further back are the facets of the *Melancholia* polyhedrons, 2002, equally flat, as are the screens where the images of *American Beauties & Noam's Vertigo* were projected, also in 2002. There are the flattened surfaces of Morris's rubbings; the polished metal surfaces of the bed, the table, and the chair in *Hearing*, 1972; the depicted planes in the drawings entitled *In the Realm of the Carceral*, 1973; and the actual but elusive planes of the mirrors that appeared in Morris work from 1961 to 1978.[16] Because they are so numerous and so various, surfaces in Morris's art outrun our impulse to join them to depths in some stable pattern of opposition. The *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* enclose interiors, of course, but only literally. We do not merely see, we feel that they owe their mournful lives not to their hidden depths but to the lively ambiguity of their outward shapes, the convoluted surfaces into which we read their attitudes and their gestures toward one another. Whether these figures are thriving or merely subsisting is difficult to say. They defy certainty on this and every other point, so skittish is their allusiveness.

House of the Vetti II, 1983
Felt, metal pipe, and grommets
89 x 157 1/2 x 36 inches

Strictly speaking, artworks do not count as utterances and so they can't contradict one another. Nonetheless, Morris performed something like a contradiction when he extricated felt from the other materials gripped in the inchoate clutches of his "anti-form" installations and arranged lengths of it in orderly configurations, some but not all of them geometric. If the work were truly untitled, we might not read human anatomy into the bilateral pattern of *Untitled (Shoulder)*, 1973. We need no such clue to find lushly female genitalia in the curves and crevices of *House of the Vetti*, 1983. (It's the title, which refers to a Pompeian building decorated with sexually-charged paintings, that requires explication.) These felt pieces encourage us to see surfaces in Morris's art not as forms but as

images of skin or flesh. Or the difference between form and image blurs as the language of our speculations infiltrates them both. Industrial-weight felt ordinarily feels lifeless. Let's propose that it acquires a silky sensuality from the form Morris gives it in *House of the Vetti*. Or should we say that the material's dour weight and color drain the sexiness out of this labial image? Things are clearer, it seems, when we turn from genitalia to bedclothes.

Restless Sleepers/Atomic Shroud, 1981
Two bed sheets and two pillow cases
Bed sheets 90 x 114 inches each;
pillow cases 19 x 35 inches each
Silkscreen on linen
Ed. of 5; 2AP

In 1981 Morris coated a skeleton with a mixture of oil and graphite, then wrapped it in a sheet to transfer its bony image to the surface of the fabric—a method similar to the one that generated the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*. There were also images of mushroom clouds, and pillowcases bore excerpts from a physicist's comments on the probable effects of nuclear war. *Restless Sleepers/Atomic Shroud*, as this foray into domestic furnishings is called, reminds us of a continuing danger that we often ignore but can hardly deny. Understand this work as performing the task of a public service advertisement in the cautionary mode and nothing could be more straightforward. But works of art do not carry out tasks. They assign us the task of completing them, whatever that might require in particular instances. Often it requires us to let the mind be idle while keeping an eye out for whatever sails into view. Contemplating the ghastly surfaces of *Restless Sleepers/Atomic Shroud*, we might observe that bedclothes and especially sheets are among the most intimately familiar surfaces in our ordinary surroundings. As we drift off to sleep, they are like second skins. By tattooing them, so to speak, with sinister imagery, Morris envelops the would-be sleeper in a nightmare of annihilation—the fate that has already come to the foreshortened figure in *Prohibition's End or the Death of Dutch Schultz*, 1989.

With this painting Morris transposes Andrea Mantegna's tempera-on-canvas image of the dead Christ to encaustic on a sheet of aluminum, where the crucified Savior becomes a gangster shot down by his colleagues. The lower half of the corpse is covered by a length—a surface—of fabric wrinkled with a finesse that evokes the history of drapery in Renaissance art and in the classical statuary Renaissance artists studied so attentively. Until now, we've been

looking at the way Morris's variations on the flat surface proliferate within his oeuvre. The *Dutch Schultz* painting's reference to Mantegna is among the innumerable points where this proliferation leads beyond Morris's work to the sprawling image-bank of art history. More points of this kind appear in the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*.

These figures have a distant family resemblance to the headless goddesses of the Elgin Marbles and their surfaces twitch with visual echoes of the anguished drapery enveloping so many marble bodies from the Hellenistic period. The new works have further affinities with *The Mourners of Dijon,* a group of eighty-two smallish marble sculptures made to adorn the tombs of a noble family in Burgundy. Completed in 1410, they are the work of three sculptors, most notably Claus Sluter, who invented the elegantly eerie style of drapery that envelops all the Dijon *Mourners*.[17] The art of Francisco Goya has an even weightier bearing here.

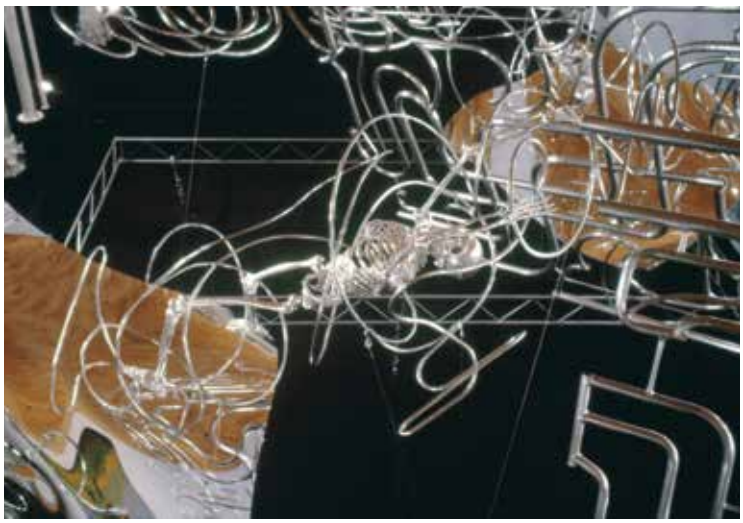
Since 1990 Morris has made drawings that mix diagrams of his various labyrinths with found images of Lindy Hoppers, pop stars, politicians, and atrocities committed in the recent American past. And there are motifs from Goya, among them shawled crones; a crouching beast; and *The Colossus*, a gigantic figure who sits on a distant horizon and directs his baleful gaze over his shoulder at us. The titles of the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* share an enigmatic informality with the scraps of language Goya attached to many of his later works, and several of these linen casts recall in three-dimensions the hooded capes worn by Goya's witches and weird spirits. Moreover, Goya shows flagellants and victims of the Spanish Inquisition wearing *capirotes*—pointed caps of the kind Morris placed on the heads of *Dunce 1 Dunce 2,* 2014–2015. The dunce caps are not only allusions to Goya. They are also permutations of the Morrisanian surface. Form and content stand apart from one another, refusing to merge. Nor will they consent to a decisive separation.

Dunce I Dunce 2, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
67 x 58 x 40 inches

No matter how intently we focus on the form of *House of the Vetti*, it remains a sexual image. Likewise, no matter how ingeniously we link the dunce caps to other surfaces in Morris's oeuvre, they are never merely planar forms. They still serve as stigmas. As obvious as this may be, it is worth noting because it points to a crucial quality of Morris's art: its instability. Nothing here is just one thing. Everything—every form, every fragment of content, every image—is manifold: itself and so resourcefully other than itself that his works are whatever they become as we try to guide them to a state of completion.

The word "shroud" in the name of the linen casts suggests that we see them as ghosts bringing a reminder of death even to the smooth and affectless gray exteriors of Morris's minimalist objects, though we might imagine in the light—or the half-light—of the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* that those early cubes and slabs are not so much emotionally blank as apotropaic assertions of blankness: calm forms deployed against the threat of panic. Yet these forms are indeed blank, rigorously so, and we have no valid warrant for concluding that their calm is nothing but the mask of an inadmissible fear. To visit Morris's oeuvre in the company of his new works is to watch meanings flicker and shift as they draw us on, from one period to another.

Second Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Day), 1980
Steel, aluminum, mirror, human bones, silver leaf
120 x 384 x 192 inches



Arriving in the early 1980s, we find Morris already unfurling lengths of fabric, but not to drape them over manikins. The material, black felt now, is crumpled and woven into the immense metal framework of *First Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Night)*, 1980, to evoke the toxic clouds that would smother the earth in the aftermath of a nuclear disaster. Humanity persists in the form of a skeleton caught up in the twists and turns of this dense black material.[18] David Antin wrote of *First Study* that it is a "massively scaled and obviously emblematic meditation on death, the atomic bomb, and planetary extinction." *Second Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Day)*, also 1980, has an appalling glitter and a larger population of skeletons. Antin sees the same themes in this work and in *Jornada del Muerto*, from the following year. Named after test site in New Mexico, *Jornada* features helmeted skeletons riding nuclear missiles and, like the *Orion* installations, presents its "sci-fi disaster movie" subject in "comic-book imagery," according to Antin.[19] There's a touch of the comic-book to the *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*, as well.

It Was Always Like This, 2014-2015
Linen and resin
66 x 59 x 39 inches

Think of the horror comics of the 1950s, *Tales from the Crypt*, for example, with their shrouded skeletons, the moldering earth of the grave still clinging to them. It may have been odd to juxtapose "horror" and "comic" in the label of a pop-culture genre, yet Goya

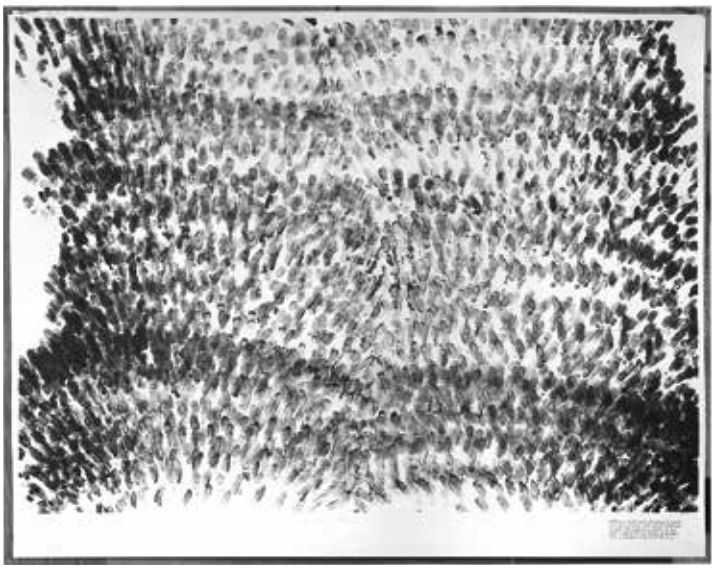
makes the same juxtaposition, and if we look from his time back to the Renaissance we discover woodcuts crowded with antic skeletons wrapped in swathes of fabric–an iconography invoked by *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS*.[20] For it is not beyond all conceiving that these casts once clothed the skeletons of *Jornada del Muerto* and the two versions of *Orion*. They may have been worn, before or after death, by the people whose bodily fragments appear in the *Firestorm* drawings of 1982. Time is reversible in Morris's oeuvre. Every work is proleptic, an intimation of something not yet realized, and a realization of some other prolepsis–or several of them.

There is no end to tracing these patterns of prophesy and skewed fulfillment, nor any way to prevent considerations of chronology or stylistic shift from turning into inventories of form or commentaries on the themes that emerge from formal variation. To engage Morris's oeuvre is to enter a dark wood where the straight path has not been lost so much as absent from the outset. So we must invent a path as we go along, feeling ever more baffled as turnings proliferate. Even Morris's labyrinths, built to offer clear and stable ways in and out, lead us into ambiguity. For the point is not merely to negotiate these structures. That can be done by eye, while looking at a labyrinth from outside and above. The point, upon entry, is to make sense of a structure that provides, as the artist notes, "no clues to one's position as one traverses the passageways."[21] The clarity of a bird's eye view gives way to an immersion in uncertainty.

Untitled (Labyrinth), 1974
Plywood and Masonite, painted
96 x 360 inches diameter

Decades ago Thomas Nagel argued that if we could transcend all particular points of view we could form "a conception of the world which, as far as possible, is not the view from anywhere within it."[22] Unable to get outside of the physical world–the universe–we can never attain this degree of objectivity. If, however, we exchange absolute objectivity for the absolute subjectivity of the transcendent Self, certain possibilities open up. For, as artists, poets, and others have been insisting for centuries, a Self on this model lives beyond the reach of all contingencies and limitations. "Temperament" may impart a characteristic flavor to the work of an exalted subjectivity, but we are to appreciate this as the stamp of a personal guarantee on the transcendent and thus impersonal Truths the artist has revealed.[23]

As I've noted, this claim to transcendence persists even now, despite years of "critiques" aimed at the traditional metaphysics lurking in the art and aesthetics of the avant-garde and its aftermath. The "critiques" themselves often perpetuate the tradition–see the quasi-Hegelian notions of Historical Necessity that shape the judgments of "art theory" as it is practiced in the United States. Very few artists have extricated themselves from this legacy. Morris is one of them. Giving us no way to be right about what they are or mean, his *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* gather us into their play of allusion, implication, and memory, a shifting and imaginary labyrinth where the light is intermittent and we must feel our way from one tentative conclusion to the next.



Blind Time, 1973
Graphite on paper
35 x 46 inches

Our immersion in Morris's work is like his, though it can never be as complete. Or as courageous. The *Blind Time Drawings,* he has written, bring him to his "lowest levels. Groping and pathetic, absent the illusions of sight. Fragmented and spastic, absent the illusions of wholeness. Subhuman…And freed into a chthonic realm where it is easy to hold my breath. Freed to feel for my darker lump of being."[24] This inwardness does not isolate him. Each of the new linen-and-resin figures is submerged in a situation–possibly a crisis–that includes at least one other figure. Whatever it is, they are in it together. Likewise, Morris understands himself as an inhabitant of the space where everyone else lives. He acknowledges us, not as passive recipients of Truths delivered from on high but as actively speculative individuals able to feel in our own, contingent ways "the grind and creep of existence" that he feels as he works.[25]

Guiding us to ground-level, Morris prompts us to do with intensified awareness what we do more routinely in ordinary life: interpret the contingent flow of our experience. Arriving at no certainties, we carry on, finding occasionally that immersion in the vast field of his art gives us something valuable but difficult to name–a sense, say, of the texture of one's being, always lost, occasionally found, in a wilderness of images and words and their intertwined histories. In the company of *MOLTINGSEXOSKELETONSSHROUDS* one feels with particular force one's capacity for ghostliness and all the subtle, usually unnoticeable acts of comprehension that work against this insubstantiality to keep one present to others and even to oneself. •

(Endnotes)

1. William Wordsworth, January 18, 1816, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. E. de Selincourt, Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 705.
2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817), ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols., Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983, vol. 1 p. 304.
3. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), trans. M.T.H. Sandler, New York: Dover Publications, 1977, p. 20.
4. Piet Mondrian, "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life" (1940), *The New Art–The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986, pp. 323, 224, 328.
5. Barnett Newman, Statement (1965), *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, p. 187.
6. Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes," *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 2, June 2007, pp. 351-55.
7. Robert Morris, email message to the author, February 9, 2015.
8. Morris, "Notes on *Less Than*" (2004), *Have I Reasons: Work and Writings, 1993-2007*, ed. with an introduction by Nena Tsouti-Schillinger, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008, p. 203.
9. Morris, "Cézanne's Mountains" (1998), *Have I Reasons*, p. 104; Morris, "A Few Thoughts on Bombs, Tennis, Free Will, Agency Reduction, The Museum, Dust Storms, and Labyrinths," *Red and Black Black and Red*, exhibition catalog, New York: Castelli Gallery, 2014, p. 10.
10. Morris, "A Few Thoughts on Bombs," *Red and Black Black and Red*, pp. 10, 12, 20. Morris discusses agency reduction in "Looking Back," an unpublished text from 2015.
11. Morris, "From a Chomskian Couch" (2003), *Have I Reasons*, p. 175. See also Morris, "Toward an Ophthalmology of the Aesthetic" (2004), *Have I Reasons*, p. 193. In this essay, Morris describes practitioners of agency reduction as "deflationary" artists comparable, perhaps, to analytic philosophers who offer deflationary theories of truth.
12. Morris, "Anti-Form" (1968), *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993, pp. 41-46. See also Morris, "Steam" (1995), *Have I Reasons*, pp. 61-62.
13. Morris, conversation with the author, January 21, 2015.
14. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 155.
15. Morris, "Toward an Ophthalmology of the Aesthetic and an Orthopedics of Seeing" (2004), *Have I Reasons*, p. 191.
16. *Robert Morris: Mirror Works 1961-78,* exhibition catalog, New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, 1979.
17. The other sculptors who contributed to *The Mourners of Dijon* are Hennequin de Prindale and Claus de Werve.
18. The skeleton entangled in the black felt of *First Study for a View from a Corner of Orion (Night)* alludes to the bronzed skeleton enveloped by a billowing cloud of stone in Gianlorenzo Bernini's *Tomb for Pope Alessandro VII*, 1671-78. Morris has said, "The Bernini tomb seemed extremely pessimistic and even anti-Christian with its skeleton image of death/time emerging (flying out) from beneath the heavy red marble drape. *Vanitas*, not resurrection seemed to be the message here." Interview with Catherine Grenier, *Robert Morris: Less Than*, Prato: Gli Ori, 2005, p. 127.
19. David Antin, "Have Mind, Will Travel," *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, exhibition catalog, New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994, pp. 42, 45-46.
20. Among the best-known prints of this kind are Han Holbein's *Totentanz*, proofed circa 1527 and first published in 1538.
21. Morris, "A Few Thoughts on Bombs," *Red and Black Black and Red*, p. 21.
22. Thomas Nagel, "Subjective and Objective," *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 200.
23. For the rhetoric of "temperament," which was launched by Emile Zola, see *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Henri Dorra, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 218, 222.
24. Morris, "Maybe the Angel in Dürer" (2003), *Have I Reasons*, p. 169.
25. Morris, email message to Barbara Rose, June 20, 2011, in Barbara Rose, "Robert Morris: Drawing As Thinking," *Robert Morris: el dibujo como pensmineto*, exhibition catalog, Valencia: Ivam Institut Valanenciá d'Art Modern, 2011, p. 314.

Design by HHA design

Printed in Canada

CASTELLI
18 East 77th Street New York NY 10075