Under the Gun: Chris Burden’s *Shoot* (1971) and Hyper-Masculine Performance Art in the Vietnam War Era

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May 2, 2014
In his introduction for the exhibition catalogue for *Information*–a groundbreaking conceptual art show on view at the MoMA during the summer of 1970– curator Kynaston McShine writes “if you are an artist living in the United States you may fear you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina.”¹ McShine’s blunt statement indicates the fear and frustration that consumed the American public–artists included–during the early 1970s. Fed up with the Vietnam War and discouraged by the inefficacy of anti-war protest movements, American artists sought out new creative avenues to communicate their opposition to both foreign and domestic violence.² The rise of alternative artistic practices—including non-object based conceptual and performance art–presented new media with which artists could respond to the war.³

On November 19, 1971, artist Chris Burden had himself shot at F Space, a gallery in Santa Ana, California. A dozen or so spectators witnessed the performance. The artist’s description of the event is blunt and detached. “At 7:45 p.m. I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me.”⁴ The injury was so severe that Burden had to be hospitalized.

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Burden points to the violence of the Vietnam War as a primary motivating factor for Shoot. In a 2006 interview with Doug Aitken the artist stated:

> Vietnam had a lot to do with Shoot... There were guys my age getting shot up in Vietnam, you know?... So what does it mean not to avoid being shot, that is, by staying home or avoiding the war, but to face it head on? I was trying to question what it means to face that dragon.⁵

The original performance of Shoot, as well as the film, audiotape, and photographs that document it, have been mythologized and sensationalized for nearly 45 years (figs.1, 2, and 3). The social and political implications of the work have been extensively examined. Burden has been labeled a nihilistic waif⁶, the Evel Knievel of performance art⁷, a masochist⁸, and a populist hero⁹. However, recent scholarship has brought to light previously neglected elements of Burden’s oeuvre, particularly the remarkable maleness of the artist’s work. Robert Storr argues that the past critical silence regarding the overt masculinity of Burden’s performance works “has the quality of avoidance, as if it were easier not to notice how profound the maleness of his art is,” while Kristine Stiles characterizes the artist’s work as “wholly inculcated with the physiology of the muscular that is generally associated with the masculine.”¹⁰ Storr and Stiles, as well as Thomas Crow, Amelia Jones, and Donald Kuspit, discuss Burden’s work as violent, erotic, and powerful—descriptions traditionally associated in Western Culture with heterosexual

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masculinity.\(^\text{11}\) Given that Burden’s body was his primary medium during his performances, it seems appropriate—even necessary—to focus on the artist’s gender as a crucial aspect of these works. The maleness of Burden’s performances is also significant given the social and political context within which they were staged. The emergence of second-wave feminism in the late 1960s and 70s brought issues of gender to the forefront of American politics. While Burden opposed the Vietnam War, and identified with the American Left more generally, he has been quite frank regarding his disinterest in feminism. In a 2013 phone conversation with art historian Amelia Jones, Burden recalled having no interest in the Feminist Art Program, a prominent women’s organization that emerged at the California Institute for the Arts while Burden was completing his MFA at UC Irvine.\(^\text{12}\)

While Burden may have been indifferent regarding local feminist movements, certain environmental factors particular to Southern California during the 1960s and 70s did influence his violent, prototypically male performance works. Indeed, Burden was one of several male artists working in and around Pomona College during the early 1970s who created body-based performance works involving self inflicted physical distress. From 1970 to 1972, Hirokazu Kosaka, Jack Goldstein, and Bas Jan Ader all developed what I will characterize as intensely male artistic practices centered on physically stressing or harming their bodies.


\(^{12}\) Jones, “Chris Burden’s Bridges,” 115.
In this paper, I will consider these artists’ performance works as a response to the Vietnam War. Burden’s work will be my particular focus. I will discuss Shoot (1971) (figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4), Five Day Locker Piece (1971) (fig. 7), Through the Night Softly (1973) (fig.8), Transfixed (1974) (fig.9), and Deadman (1972) (fig.10) –as I believe these performances demonstrate (with particular lucidity and aggression) the violence and masculinity of Burden’s work. Additionally, I will discuss Kosaka’s untitled (1972) (fig.11), Goldstein’s Burial Piece (1972) (fig.12), and Ader’s Fall I Los Angeles (1970) (fig.13), and connect these artists’ works to a hyper-masculine, body-conscious sub-culture that was prevalent in Southern California during the 1960s and 70s. I will argue that this sub-culture provided an environment within which Burden and his contemporaries felt comfortable developing extreme— even masochistic— artistic practices.

It bears mentioning that this trend of self-destructive body art was not unique to Southern California, nor was it practiced exclusively by men. Many artists—Vito Acconci, Marina Abramović, and Gina Pane, among others— created masochistic performance art during the 1970s. However, the parameters of my discussion are geographically, politically, and socially specific. I will examine Burden, Kosaka, Goldstein, and Ader’s works in reference to the particular nature of masculinity in Southern California during the Vietnam War Era. Essentially, my goal is to present the male body as a focal point of conflict during this period. I will argue that the self-inflicted harm that characterized Burden and his contemporaries’ performance works capitalizes on this focus, thus utilizing the body as a uniquely expressive means by which to oppose the war. Before I proceed in my discussion, I will provide a brief synopsis of the

13 O’Dell, Contract, 1. O’Dell provides extensive discussion throughout her book regarding elements of masochism in Acconci, Pane, and Abramović’s performance works.
Vietnam War and artistic responses to the conflict, as a firm grounding in both topics will facilitate my investigation of Burden and hyper-masculine performance art.

The Vietnam War
58,193 US Soldiers and over 3 million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians lost their lives during the Vietnam War.\(^\text{14}\) From 1954 to 1973, the United States supported the South Vietnamese in their efforts to defeat Northern communist forces and reunify their country.\(^\text{15}\) The American public remains bitterly divided regarding the conflict. Events such as the failure of the 1968 Tet Offensive and the My Lai Massacre (the March 16, 1968 murder of 645 Vietnamese civilians by American soldiers) infuriated anti-war protesters and effectively shattered any illusion that the United States was winning the conflict.\(^\text{16}\) The apparent futility of the war, as well as the looming military draft and disturbing assassinations of John F. Kennedy (1963), Martin Luther King Jr. (1968), and Robert F. Kennedy (1968), contributed to a festering sense of societal malaise. Indeed, instances of gun violence in the United States increased by 90% from 1964 to 1970—a frightening indication of the Vietnam War Era’s distinctive turmoil.\(^\text{17}\) The chaos was, increasingly, impossible to avoid. Scenes of foreign and domestic conflict invaded American homes via the now ubiquitous television set, a revolutionary shift that led writer Michael Arlen to designate Vietnam as the first “living-room war.”\(^\text{18}\)


\(^{16}\) Ibid, 10; Tatum, “Memorials,” 645.

\(^{17}\) Gadd, “Performing”, 10.

means of communication and protest, art and artists assumed a crucial role in anti-war opposition movements.\footnote{Lucy Lippard, \textit{A Different War}, (Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1990), 10.}

In order to fully comprehend how Burden’s hyper-masculine performance works respond to the Vietnam War, it is useful to consider the historical trajectory of American artists’ responses to the conflict. This investigation will clarify major shifts in the nature of art and artistic practice in the early 1970s, specifically the emergence of conceptual, non-object based media. My particular aim in this exploration is to place Chris Burden’s performance works within broader art historical trends at play during the 1960s and 70s, thereby facilitating a discussion of their relation to the Vietnam War.

**The Artist as Protester: AWC and the Artists’ Protest Committee**

During the 1960s, American artists utilized a variety of methods and media to respond to Vietnam. The contemporaneous rise of social protest movements—including the Civil Rights movement and second-wave feminism—makes defining and categorizing anti-war art per se particularly challenging. Nevertheless, artists on both the East and West coasts formed coalition groups dedicated to enacting social change through art. In New York, the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) and its various splinter groups— including Art Strike, GAAG, and Women Artists in Revolution—protested both the Vietnam War, and social and gender inequality.\footnote{Bryan-Wilson, \textit{Art Workers}, 1-39.} These groups also critiqued art institutions because museums—the MoMA, the Guggenheim, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, et al—were seen as complicit actors in a conservative military-industrial complex.\footnote{Ibid, 10.}
In Los Angeles, artists similarly collaborated on anti-war protest efforts. *Peace Tower*, an immense outdoor sculpture created by the Artists’ Protest Committee in 1966, included over 400 artworks of various media, all in protest of the Vietnam War (figs. 5 and 6). The efforts of coalition groups like AWC and the Artists’ Protest Committee demonstrate how American artists working in the late 1960s increasingly practiced through methods of social protest. However, as anti-war efforts failed to halt American military involvement in Vietnam, many artists began to doubt the power of any art image or object to protest the war. In a 1967 interview with Jeanne Siegal *Peace Tower* contributor Ad Reinhardt asserted “there are no effective paintings or objects that one can make against the war. There’s been a complete exhaustion of images.” Reinhardt’s damning assessment evinces the rise of conceptual art during the Vietnam War era. In fact, many members of the AWC turned to non-object based artistic practices as a more radical means by which to oppose violence and social injustice both at home, and abroad.

Performance art emerged as a particularly efficacious and potent method of remonstration. While past art historical movements—Dadaism, Surrealism, and Futurism among them—utilized performance, the practice emerged with renewed vigor in the 1960s and 70s. During these decades, many artists became intrigued with the creative potential of their own bodies. Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Willoughby Sharp, and Yoko Ono, among others, developed remarkable performance works during this period. Given the social unrest of the

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22 Lippard, *Different War*, 12.
24 Ibid, 8.
25 Ibid, 199. Bryan-Wilson dedicates a chapter of her text to AWC member Hans Haacke (pp.173-215) Haacke worked primarily in a conceptual mode. His work appeared in the 1970 *Information* show at the MoMA.
26 O’Dell, *Contract*, 1-10.
Vietnam War Era, it seems appropriate that many performance artists working during the 1960s and 70s utilized elements of physical risk and self-harm for creative effect. As asserted by Lea Vergine in her influential 1974 text *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*: “those who are in pain will tell you that they have the right to be taken seriously.” Vergine’s powerful statement supports a consideration of the artist’s body as a uniquely expressive means by which to confront and oppose the violence of the Vietnam War period. As such, it provides an appropriate transition into my discussion of Chris Burden’s performance works.

**Take It Like a Man: Chris Burden’s Hyper-Masculine Performance Works**
Chris Burden has been voluntarily shot (*Shoot*) and imprisoned (*Five Day Locker Piece*). He has crawled partially nude atop broken glass (*Through the Night Softly*), had himself crucified on a Volkswagen bug (*Transfixed*), and feigned mortal injury on the side of a busy highway (*Deadman*). Each of these works evidence a masochistic tendency toward self-testing. As such, they indicate the looming existential threat posed to American men by military service in Vietnam. Indeed, Burden crafted each performance to draw on fears at the forefront of the American psyche during the 1960s and 70s; gun violence (*Shoot*), imprisonment (*Five Day Locker Piece*), pain (*Through the Night Softly*), bodily sacrifice (*Transfixed*), and death (*Deadman*). As the ominous specter of compulsory combat loomed over Burden and his male peers, notions of masculinity became increasingly tied to military service. By facing, and ultimately overcoming, feats of intense physical distress, Burden successfully projects an image of masculine strength. *(On May 2^{nd} you edited this paragraph-is the edit better)*

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The artist’s devil-may-care persona is particularly evident in *Shoot* (November 19, 1971). As the shooter loads, raises, and aims his gun, Burden stands against the white wall of F Space, ostensibly calm and resolute (figs. 1, and 2). The photographs and film of the performance echo this aura of placid non-chalence. The images are stark, grainy, and minimalistic. Some are in focus and eerily balanced—the shooter’s raised rifle in figure 1 mirrors the form of Burden’s body. While others (fig.3) are blurry and disorienting, perhaps the result of the photographer’s nervous hands, aquiver with anticipation. In the film of *Shoot*, Burden’s physical reaction to his gunshot wound is minimal. He grabs his arm and calmly walks toward the shooter. To adopt a colloquial phrase, the artist takes the bullet like a man. A fourth photograph of Burden post-*Shoot* further evidences the artist’s grit (fig. 4). Seated and gazing directly at the camera, his bloodied arm freshly bandaged, Burden’s countenance smacks of tenacious machismo, a veritable screw you to both Uncle Sam and Richard Nixon courtesy of America’s resident rebel artist.

To quote Robert Horvitz, “the visceral intensity and bite” of *Shoot* stands in marked contrast to the passive endurance required by Burden’s earlier performance *Five Day Locker Piece* (April 26-30, 1971).\(^{29}\) A university locker is the only physical relic of the work, which was the artist’s MFA thesis at UC Irvine (fig.7). The premise of the performance was simple. As suggested by the title, Burden remained enclosed in a locker (without food or respite) for five days. The tremendous strength of will this feat required demonstrates Burden’s mental and physical tenacity. Furthermore, the artist’s voluntary confinement reflects an acute awareness of

\(^{29}\) Horvitz, “Chris Burden”, 34.
disturbing reports of the imprisonment of American POWs in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{30} The claustrophobia-inducing dimensions of the locker may be read as Burden’s own “cell” at a metaphorical Hanoi Hilton. The artist admits that the experience was both stifling and panic-inducing—“I started to get that weird feeling that a REAL crazy was going to come and do something to me…I knew my vulnerability might inspire someone to do something crazy.”\textsuperscript{31} That Burden would subject himself to such intense discomfort evidences the artist’s nascent reliance on masculine strength as a means of creative defiance.

A critical reader may recall my earlier utilization of the term \textit{hyper-masculine} and demand that I clarify its precise definition and proper application. Burden’s works are hyper-masculine in their dramatic emphasis on the male body as a focal point of violence. The artist’s willingness to subject himself to bodily harm and mental stress speaks to an engagement with notions of strength traditionally associated with heterosexual men. I maintain that a strain of hyper-masculinity in Burden’s performance works emerges in \textit{Five Day Locker Day Piece}, is perfected in \textit{Shoot}, reaches a fevered pitch with \textit{Through the Night Softly} and \textit{Transfixed}, and fully matures with \textit{Deadman}.

\textit{Through the Night Softly} (1973), and \textit{Transfixed} (1974) feature Burden in hyper-masculine overdrive. Splayed with his hands tied behind his back, Burden’s bulging eyes and grimaced expression in \textit{Through the Night Softly} indicate the artist’s suffering with near-visceral intensity.


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 29. Quote from a lecture at RISD November, 12 1974.
(fig. 8). The smoothness of his skin stands in dramatic textural contrast to the jagged pieces of glass, while his red underwear draws attention to fresh cuts on the artist’s chest and shoulders. The position of Burden’s body—hands bound, crawling face-down—recalls the posture of a soldier in combat. His tethered hands evoke the literal and symbolic binds of compulsory military service, while the act of crawling similarly correlates with the demoralizing duties of American G.I.s. Indeed, servicemen in Vietnam were frequently forced to traverse ditches and ride paddies face-down in order to avoid detection by oppositional forces.

While *Transfixed*’s connections to the Vietnam War are more oblique than those I have identified in *Five Day Locker Piece, Shoot*, and *Through the Night Softly*, the work’s evocation of crucifixion involves Burden’s most extreme projection of hyper-masculinity (fig. 9). In keeping with psychoanalyst Theodor Reik’s theory of Christian Masochism, *Transfixed*’s allusion to Christ assigns Burden what Amelia Jones characterizes as an “incomparable role of centrality and power in relation to those who view him.” The extravagance of Burden’s invocation of Christ is intensified by the self-inflicted nature of his wounds. While Christ lay at the mercy of those who condemned him, Burden’s sacrifice is wholly within his control. As such, he manages to out ‘man’ the savior of mankind. This dramatic invocation of power is explicitly oppositional. To imitate and mock the Son of God arguably constitutes the ultimate act of protest against Western patriarchal authority.

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33 Jones, Amelia, “Dis/playing,” 571.
34 Ibid.
While *Transfixed* references notions of hyper-masculinity tied to Christ’s immortality, *Deadman* draws explicitly on the fear of death. Photographs of the work are, absent context, perplexing (fig.10). The performance was staged on La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles. A tarp covers Burden’s prone body, resulting in an amorphous lump that rests precariously close to the tire of a parked car. The low-resolution black and white image is disorienting. The photographer’s shot is cropped and askew, cutting off any view of the surrounding street. Traffic flares surround Burden’s body. Two bright spots in the foreground of the image register the collision of camera flash and traffic flare glare, a union of blinding light reminiscent of a spectator’s curious double-take. Police, prompted by the phone call of a concerned bystander, were eventually called to the scene. Burden was arrested and charged for causing a false emergency.\(^{35}\)

In light of mounting casualty counts from Vietnam, *Deadman* literalizes fears of bodily demise prevalent among American men during the 1970s.\(^{36}\) By covering his body Burden metaphorically erases himself. His simulated death makes him a mere statistic. He is simply one more dead man. Additionally, the work’s invocation of a hit-and-run accident forces a reconsideration of civic and social responsibility.\(^{37}\) Thus, in an era where many Americans felt that the US government was “getting away with murder” in Vietnam, *Deadman* forces viewers to confront the potentially fatal consequences of passive compliance.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{35}\) Plagens, Peter, “He Got Shot—for His Art,” *New York Times*, 2 September 1973, D1, D3. The case against Burden was ultimately dismissed. A hung jury failed to convict the artist.


\(^{38}\) Ibid.
Burden’s utilization of feigned death as a symbolic opposition to the violence of the Vietnam War Era finds similar realization in the work of Hirokazu Kosaka, Jack Goldstein, and Bas Jan Ader. All four artists practiced in Southern California during the 1970s and all four artists developed similarly hyper-masculine artistic practices.39

**Establishing a Trend of Hyper-Masculine Performance Art: Hirokazu Kosaka, Jack Goldstein, and Bas Jan Ader**

Like *Deadman* and *Five Day Locker Piece*, Hirokazu Kosaka’s performance *untitled*(1972) utilizes bodily erasure, physical discomfort, and overt allusions to death as a means of creative protest. Staged in the Pomona College Art Gallery, Kosaka lay on the ground, covered himself with a thermal blanket (set to high heat), and had a fellow student shovel dirt on top of him(fig.11).40 The artist endured the heat and weight for forty-minutes and then repeated the process across the gallery floor, leaving a trail of soil silhouettes–ghoulish reminders of the absence and presence of the artist’s suffering body.

Jack Goldstein’s *Burial Piece* (1972), the artist’s final work at CalArts, is remarkably similar to Kosaka’s *untitled* and Burden’s contemporaneous performance works (fig.12).41 Armed with only plastic breathing tubes, Goldstein buried himself underground. A stethoscope–placed near the burial site and rigged to correspond with a red light– was the sole visual evidence of the artist’s continued existence. Described by CalArts professor John Baldessari as “one of the most risky pieces I have ever seen,” the danger, self-erasure, and masochism involved in *Burial Piece* fits squarely within Kosaka and Burden’s hyper-masculine works. Of Goldstein’s purported

40 Ibid, 55.
41 Ibid. The connection between *untitled* and *Burial Piece* is particularly strong. Kosaka and Goldstein were studio-mates during the early 1970s.
motivation for the work Baldessari asserts, “Jack said that he was trying to give up something organic to make a symbolic statement.” That this “symbolic statement” necessarily includes an element of opposition to the violence of the Vietnam War seems valid. As asserted by Thomas Crow, “for a coterie of young men under threat of involuntary enlistment in a futile war that few if any of them endorsed, themes of the artist’s hidden, fugitive, or even entombed condition carried inescapable implications of genuine legal jeopardy and physical peril.”

Burden, Kosaka, and Goldstein’s shared pre-occupation with notions of self-harm manifest similarly in Bas Jan Ader’s film Fall I Los Angeles (fig. 13). In the performance Ader (who taught at Pomona College during the 1970s) launches himself off the roof of a suburban home. The film of Fall I is brief, a mere 24 seconds. A slow motion Ader tumbles down the front of the house. His arms flail. He loses a shoe. While the work employs an element of comedy absent in Burden, Kosaka, and Goldstein’s performances, Ader’s methods also employ masochistic tendencies as a response to the threat posed by the possibility of compulsory combat in Vietnam. The artist’s contentious relationship with American immigration authorities supports this interpretation. Ader (who was born in the Netherlands) was eager to avoid the draft, and thus refused to apply for United States Citizenship. As a Canadian citizen, Jack Goldstein encountered a comparable conundrum. Both Ader and Goldstein were needled by American authorities to choose either US citizenship (and possible military service), or deportation. By asserting an essential right to harm their own bodies both artists metaphorically wrested control of their fates from the prying hands of the American government. This defiance of authority,

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42 Ibid, 54.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid, 55.
coupled with each artist’s utilization of self-inflicted physical harm, links Goldstein and Ader’s performances with Burden and Kosaka’s contemporaneous works. This link effectively establishes a veritable trend of hyper-masculine performance art among artists working in Southern California during the 1970s.

**What a Bunch of Studs: Hyper-Masculinity in Southern California during the Vietnam War Era**

Thus far my discussion of Burden and his contemporaries’ performance art has focused on the violence of the Vietnam War Era as a primary motivating factor. However, given that these artists were all working in and around Los Angeles and interacting with a closely connected group of local artists, it seems appropriate to question whether the particular environment of Southern California contributed to the hyper-masculinity of these artists’ works.

In Los Angeles sculpted bronze bodies abound. An abiding pre-occupation with the physical permeates the local population—comely Hollywood stars mingle with beach-going muscle men and surfers. Indeed, as asserted by Tom Marioni, “California is a body culture.”45 Beginning in the 1950s, perhaps due to the influence of local veterans of the Korean and Second World Wars, men in Southern California increasingly embraced physically extreme pastimes. Hell’s Angels motorcyclists relished the opportunity to race along Los Angeles’ extensive highway system, while die-hard surfers savored the adrenaline rush of conquering the Pacific’s epic swells.46 During this period masculinity in Southern California became strongly linked to risk-taking, bodily strength, and sexual virility— all crucial aspects of Burden, Kosaka, Goldstein, and Ader’s performance works.

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46 Ibid.
Additionally, the hyper-masculinity of Burden and his contemporaries’ work finds local precedence with *The Studs*—a group of artists that exhibited at the Ferus Gallery during the 1960s. All of these “studs” were heterosexually identified men and all developed artistic personas in keeping with Los Angeles’ body-conscious, hyper-masculine culture. *The Studs* included Billy Al Bengston, Allen Lynch, Robert Irwin (who later taught in the MFA program at UC Irvine), Craig Kaufman, John Altoon, Ed Kienholz, and Ed Moses (fig. 14). Ed Ruscha is also frequently associated with the group. An advertisement from the 1967 issue of *Artforum* featuring the artist in bed with two young women displays Ruscha’s sexual prowess and stud status (fig.15). Captioned “Ed Ruscha Says Goodbye to College Joys”, this advertisement supports Amelia Jones’ astute observation that the 1960s “represented the last heyday of an unapologetically male-dominated art world.” The image of traditional masculinity portrayed by *The Studs* presents the body of the American male artist as a source of power and authority.

While Burden and his contemporaries’ performances certainly draw from this local precedent of masculine strength, the self-inflicted violence involved in their hyper-masculine work indicates broader fears related to bodily harm and emasculation. These fears—ostensibly absent in *The Studs*’ carefully composed image of California cool—evidence a progression in gender-related anxieties from the early 1960s to the 1970s. Put simply, the world was a scarier place for Burden, Kosaka, Goldstein, and Ader than it was for *The Studs*. The *Extreme Measures*—to borrow the

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid. Jones’ essay “Dis/playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform their Masculinities” *Art History* 17 No. 4, 1994: pp. 546-584 also includes considerable discussion of the literal and symbolic power of the body of the American male artist.
title of Burden’s 2013 retrospective at the New Museum—of their hyper-masculine performance works attest to this shift.

Conclusion

Given the violence and radicality of Burden and his contemporaries’ performance works, it is unsurprising that these men were each unable to maintain their hyper-masculine artistic practices. As a prominent member of The Pictures Generation, Jack Goldstein’s work was crucial in the development of Post-Modernism. Tragically, the artist committed suicide in 2003.\textsuperscript{50} Bas Jan Ader met a similarly distressing fate. In an event eerily foreshadowed by the artist’s fixations with death and bodily harm, Ader died in a shipwreck while sailing from Massachusetts to England. His body was never found.\textsuperscript{51} Hirokazu Kosaka is an ordained Buddhist priest and Zen scholar.\textsuperscript{52} Chris Burden—disturbed by the oft-distorting press coverage of his performance works—re-embraced an object-based artistic practice in the mid-1980s.\textsuperscript{53} However, the artist’s \textit{Other Vietnam War Memorial} (1991), a massive bronze sculpture memorializing the 3 million Vietnamese who lost their lives during Vietnam War, evidences the artist’s persistent preoccupation with the conflict.\textsuperscript{54} Of the work Burden states, “I don’t think you can look at this list…and not think, ‘Jesus Christ, what did we do in Vietnam?’”\textsuperscript{55}

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\textsuperscript{53} Stiles, “Burden of Light,” 23.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
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The brief duration of Burden, Kosaka, Goldstein, and Ader’s flirtations with hyper-masculine performance art attests to the contextual specificity of these works. A sign of the times, their violence and radicality speaks volumes regarding the social unrest of the Vietnam War era.