



Amanda Cachia | What Can a Body Do?  
Inscribing and Adjusting Experiences  
of Disability in Contemporary Art

IN HIS STUDY *EXPRESSIONISM IN PHILOSOPHY: SPINOZA* (1990), French philosopher Gilles Deleuze famously grappled with the question “What Can a Body Do?”<sup>1</sup> This essay revisits Deleuze’s question in my own terms by asking “what can a *disabled* body do?” More to the point, what does it mean to inscribe a contemporary work of art with experiences of disability? What shapes or forms can that inscription take? How, precisely, can perceptions of the disabled body be liberated from binary classifications such as “normal” and “pathological”? What alternative frameworks can be employed by scholars, curators, and artists in order to determine a new fate for the often stigmatized disabled identity?

Dwarf contemporary artists Santiago Forero, Laura Swanson, and Corban Walker demonstrate some of the artistic possibilities.<sup>2</sup> These artists move away from terms such as the midget or freak as designations for little people.<sup>3</sup> This is because I believe that their work challenges the dominant culture’s perception of scale, size, and proportion, as well as the negative characteristics often attributed to little people, by expressing the counter perception that bodies may be different but equal.<sup>4</sup> By asserting this claim, Forero, Swanson, and Walker adjust and destabilize an often reductive representation of the disabled body to move toward more complex concepts of embodiment. Their works emphasize that the exploration of diverse

embodiments is crucial to the understanding of humanity and its variations, whether physical, social, or historical. The majority of this essay will focus on Swanson's and Walker's work. Namely, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "body without organs" will be applied to demonstrate Walker's re-conceptualization of the assumptions and practices of the visual representation of disability, in particular dwarfism. According to Deleuze and Guattari, bodies may contain numerous potential affects, movements, habits, and traits. This collection of potentials is what they call the body without organs, an entity they identify as a "body freed from its organic, productive functions."<sup>5</sup>

Significantly, the concept of the body without organs is based on the premise that our perception and experience of embodiment are always mediated and qualified by our engagement with other bodies. This mode of interconnection has resonance with the notion of complex embodiment developed by disability studies scholar Tobin Siebers in reaction to the limitations of the ideology of ability. Complex embodiment emphasizes the idea that the perception and experience of disability are complex, nuanced, and individual. This also gives Forero, Swanson, and Walker greater knowledge and power over their own bodies. Moreover, attention to the complexity of experience establishes layers of inquiry that prevent disability from being essentialized through constructs such as difference, identity, and disadvantage.<sup>6</sup> Complex embodiment proves that there is no single way to look at or think about experiences of disability.

In "What Can a Body Do?" Deleuze draws from several statements by seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza: "We do not even know what a body is capable of" and "We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power."<sup>7</sup> In other words, we haven't even scratched the surface of knowing our

bodies! Most of us know even less about the disabled body. It is important to think about what disability *does* rather than simply what it *is*. Such reframing breaks binary constructs as it is focused on a type of concretized being-in-the-world, on the truths of living *inside* a disabled body. As disability bioethicist Jackie Leach Scully argues, "understanding the experience of disability from this inside is essential to inform ethical judgments about impairment."<sup>8</sup> Asking what the disabled body can do helps us to understand what it means to think and be through the variant body. To use a term originally developed by Michel Foucault to describe knowledge and ways of knowing that are left out of normative narratives, the disabled experience has been a subjugated knowledge.<sup>9</sup> But what if disability could become an epistemic resource and an embodied cognition embedded with politicized consciousness?<sup>10</sup> Or, more simply, a way of knowing the world?

Imagine encountering a gamut of atypical physical experiences inscribed in a work of art. Examples might range from blindness and deafness to dwarfism's challenges with scale or the particular ways paraplegic bodies in wheelchairs or bodies with prostheses engage with the built environment. These atypical interactions will cultivate a heightened sense of sound, touch, smell, taste, hearing, or body language that will necessarily extend to the viewer's encounter with the work. As Tobin Siebers has argued, "the disabled body changes the process of representation itself. Blind hands envision the faces of old acquaintances. Deaf eyes listen to public television. . . . Mouths sign autographs. . . . Could [disability studies] change body theory [and contemporary art] as usual?"<sup>11</sup>

The work of Forero, Swanson, Walker, and many other artists with impairments bear this out by radically opening up our expectations for encounters with the physical world.<sup>12</sup> Through installations, social

Figure 1—Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Museo del Prado, Madrid

practice, and representational and non-representational imagery these artists explore the variety of bodily experiences. Their work demonstrates that various subject positions can be ruptured and replaced by a complex embodiment that includes impairment as a means for illumination. They might explore the phenomenological experiences of the disabled body, moving away from sometimes static and simple representations to explore questions such as how does it feel to move in a wheelchair? When one is deaf, what does it mean to see music in a visual form? How does the shape and movement of sound look on paper? When one is blind, what does it mean to hear, feel, and smell? When one is a dwarf, how does the pedestrian experience at four feet high define one's ability to survey of the world's terrain? Does one see differently than a person of "average" height? Engagement with such questions has the potential to transform us, forcing us not to simply look at bodies, but to contemplate what it is to *live* in our bodies. Ultimately, perception is not based in the information the body receives about the world, but in how the body inhabits it. These artists teach us that what a body has the ability to be and do is uncertain and open to question.

Now I would like to provide some historical context. Although there is a long tradition of problematic representations of the disabled body in Western visual discourse, this discussion will be limited to



Figure 2—Santiago Forero, *Self-Portrait*, from *A Story about Gnomes*, 2009. Courtesy the artist



the depiction of dwarfs and, in some cases, very tall people, in order to illuminate Forero's, Swanson's, and Walker's creation of counter-perceptions to challenge conventional norms for scale, size, and proportion. As mentioned previously, over the centuries dwarfs have often been referred to as "midgets" or "freaks" and essentialized as asexual, childlike, unintelligent, and weak. In her historical overview of dwarfs in Western culture, psychologist Betty Adelson notes that "long before any writing appeared about [them], they could be found in artwork created in every culture and in every time period," from Egyptian stone carvings and sculptures to Greek vases and Indian stone reliefs.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, very few representations of dwarfs have been respectful. During the Renaissance, a visual convention developed in which dwarfs were inserted into paintings as exotic elements that "served as foils to set off the grandeur and magnificence of their benefactors." The novelty of these miniaturized adults incited the amazement of viewers.<sup>14</sup> Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656, fig. 1) is the best-known example of this phenomenon. Here, a dwarf woman is juxtaposed with average-size children and "animal pets who were their rivals"<sup>15</sup> for their master's attention and amusement. The reliance on representations of physical difference to create a sense of wonder and novelty persists in visual discourse today.

Due to its extraordinariness the body of the dwarf was considered by many cultures to possess mystical or magical qualities. Dwarfs have commonly been depicted as gnomes, a popular archetype that has been used ritualistically by people around the world as a source of luck and protection for their homes and gardens. The photographs in Santiago Forero's series *A Story About Gnomes* (2009) document a dwarf body's attempts to break out of the trappings of this objectifying form of representation. In this "self-portrait" image (fig. 2) Forero

Figure 3—The Walker/O’Neal silhouette for the exhibition *Size DOES Matter*. Courtesy The FLAG Art Foundation, New York, and Amy Mees, X-ing Design

lies with his back to the viewer, his four-foot frame positioned face-down in a bed of bright green leaves. By playing a fallen garden gnome, he points out the absurdity of placing gnomes—dwarfs—in gardens. This image also subverts traditional representations by constructing a potentially erotic reading of the connection between Forero and the earth below him. The suggestion that he may be fertilizing the garden disrupts the projection of asexuality on gnomes and the dwarf body.

In 2010, dwarf and tall person (derogatively dubbed “giant” in popular culture) combined in the back-to-back silhouettes of Corban Walker and Shaquille O’Neal, which became the graphic identity for the exhibition *Size DOES Matter* at the FLAG Art Foundation in New York (fig. 3). The logo was featured at the entrance to the exhibition, accompanied all wall texts, and was inserted in the catalogue.<sup>16</sup> The FLAG Art Foundation’s founder, collector Glenn Fuhrman, and the director of the foundation, Stephanie Roach, had invited famed basketball player Shaquille O’Neal to curate the show by selecting objects associated with the theme of size. Both Fuhrman and Roach recognized O’Neal’s power to draw in the general public and hoped that his participation would put their foundation in the spotlight. As they had predicted, the exhibition garnered much attention from the public and the press.



Figure 4—Laura Swanson, *Double Portrait*, 2007. IKEA Basisk desk and floor lamps. Red Ink Studios, San Francisco. Courtesy the artist



On its surface, the logo asserts that the tall person and the dwarf both matter in the same way, because the figures of O’Neal and Walker are offered as amicable equals. After all, what’s wrong with asking people to revere dwarfs and tall people the way they revere O’Neal for his celebrity status and pro sports ability? Scale carries status connotations that this show seems to have hoped to circumvent. But if we think about the title, it is a double entendre that not only has phallic, sexual, and racial implications but also raises sensitivities around the *power* of height in the world, particularly as an attribute of masculinity.<sup>17</sup> The logo also feeds existing negative social constructs around the characteristics associated with the “giant” or the dwarf. Typically, “giants” are “marvelous” creatures considered and superior in strength and ability because they are superior in height. Conversely, the “giant” can be associated with stupidity and violent tendencies. Dwarfs are to be pitied or feared by a non-dwarf dominant culture because they have not “grown up” into adults and, again, are asexual. They are considered abnormal and inferior in intellect and ability. And while many fairy tales attribute creative gifts to dwarfs, the logo is problematic in light of the traditionally negative connotations assigned to their size.

In order to understand the ways the logo emphasizes the power of size difference, it is important to consider the evolution of the silhouette as a visual trope. A silhouette is the solid outline of a person or object. This art form was most popular in the mid-eighteenth century, but its practice continues today. Usually made in black, like the *Size DOES Matter* logo, silhouettes emphasize the outline of a person, but they also describe the sight or representation of a person that appears against a lighter background. This outline describes the shape of a person’s body in more pronounced terms. Indeed, the viewer sees only the outlines of O’Neal’s and Walker’s bodies, their arms folded

across their chests to emphasize through body language their pride in their forms. Silhouettes therefore suggest that the outlines of these bodies are the most important and defining features of these human beings. And with all of their other features—such as eye color and facial expressions—omitted, this is what must be focused on. But why must different bodies be reduced to their difference? The silhouette functions to define but also reduces its complex human subjects into very simple representations.

Now consider the installation *Double Portrait* (2007) by Laura Swanson: Two identical Ikea lamps stand on a low-lying white pedestal in the middle of an art gallery. It is difficult to resist reading the lamps anthropomorphically, as human figures (fig. 4). They have matching “bodies”: circular cream-and-brown bases, vertical steel tubes for necks, and white glass lamp shades. One resembles a floor lamp, the other a desk lamp; they are identical, differing only in height. One is short, the other tall.

As the title suggests, this work is a double portrait: the desk lamp stands in for the four-foot-tall Swanson, and the floor lamp represents her six-foot-tall partner, Greg. It is important to note that despite their difference in stature, the lamps are fundamentally the same. Their height makes each of them function more efficiently in a particular situation. Neither is really better than the other. One wouldn't judge the smaller lamp negatively or consider it defective. However, value-ridden binaries such as tall/short, good/bad, sexual/asexual, normal/pathological strongly inform our views of people with varying bodies, as we have seen in the O'Neal/Walker silhouette logo. Here, Swanson's doubling of the lamps defies the assignment of a so-called defective identity to one or the other because the lamps are immune from such designations. The measure of a lamp is not its height or size, but its brightness. Lamps are not subject to prejudicial

associations regarding size in the same way that the human body is. These lamps are non-threatening; visitors, drawn to their luminescent glow, gathered around the installation like a campfire. In contrast, when people have gathered to look at exotic or “other” bodies, particularly those of the “giant” or the dwarf, it has historically been within the context of a “freak show,” where they were displayed for entertainment purposes.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, while the bodies in Swanson's *Double Portrait* pairing recall the juxtaposition of O'Neal's and Walker's bodies in the silhouette, Swanson's representations of size difference possess a criticality that is lacking in the *Size DOES Matter* logo. For one thing, Swanson has replaced bodies with objects in order to remove *bodies* from the lens of objectification. Moreover, she has deconstructed reductive representations of the disabled body and insisted instead on different but equal, whereas the *Size DOES Matter* logo exploits the spectacle of size to garner attention. Given that “representation attaches meanings to bodies,”<sup>19</sup> as disability studies and gender studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has established, the pairing of large and small body forms can be deeply problematic; in the O'Neal/Walker logo it feeds existing negative social constructs, as I've previously described. In visual culture, very tall and dwarf bodies are generally either to be pitied, feared, or admired, so evoking them here as extremes had the potential to either attract the unwanted, threatening gaze of a mainstream public or encourage acts of unkindness, ranging from taunting and teasing to ignoring. The reality is that title *Size DOES Matter* was itself based on a familiar adage that suggests that one *size is* better than the other; they are not the same. For me, Swanson's creative installation moves beyond such reductive approaches to light the way for new critical explorations of scale.

Swanson has also created pairings using a variety of other objects, including ficus trees, lamp posts, and tool boxes. The ficus tree pairing from her *TOGETHER together* installation (2009, fig. 5) merits particular consideration. Swanson placed these unassuming trees on either side of a doorway. The tree on the left was four feet tall and the tree on the right was six feet tall. Passersby probably didn't even notice them, at least not at first glance.

A very different effect is achieved through the use of a doorway in the iconic performance piece *Imponderabilia* (1977, fig. 6) by Marina Abramović and Ulay. The artists stood naked, face to face and body to body, in a gallery doorway. The only way to enter the gallery was to pass between them. The artists were interested in observing visitors' uneasy reactions to this dynamic and in considering the decisions they made as they came uncomfortably close to the nude bodies of strangers.

Like the human forms in *Imponderabilia*, the ficus trees represent an unusual physical and spatial relationship that illuminates fresh ways of looking at and thinking about physicality. Although the performance by Abramović and Ulay was about the conventions for looking (or not looking) at nudity, Swanson's work is about the conventions of looking at bodies that are different in height and size. Whereas people may behave in one way toward a nude female form and in another toward a nude male form, they likewise behave differently toward bodies that are "average-size" than they do toward dwarf bodies. This is because the average-height body is considered "ideal" and the dwarf body is considered "abnormal." People do not know where to look when confronted with an abnormal body—they avert their gaze, or simply stare.

In large part because the trees are not bodies, the work by Swanson functions differently than the Abramović and Ulay performance. Swanson's aim is to resist representation. Most people would barely

notice the trees—let alone the suggestive parallel with the pairing of "normal" and dwarf bodies—as they pass through the doorway. Moving between the trees as they pass from garden to museum is entirely unlike the jarring confrontation with Abramović's and Ulay's nude bodies in *Imponderabilia*. The trees do not announce themselves as artworks at first, but after reading the curatorial text that accompanies the installation, and looking at the trees again, this concept will emerge. So, upon second glance, one might assume that the smaller, four-foot tree is a younger, undeveloped version, a seedling, while the taller, six-foot tree is an adult. Visitors quickly learn, however, that these trees represent the bodies of two adults of different stature. Swanson has chosen to reveal our own biases to us slowly. People may ask questions about this installation, such as "Why would someone go out and buy two ficus trees of different sizes?" Even when it comes to objects, we are compelled to seek symmetry. But Swanson answers with another question: "Why can't we have asymmetrical trees or asymmetrical bodies?"

In *Imponderabilia*, we can observe that Abramović's and Ulay's faces are close to each other. They "naturally" line up and see "eye to eye." This is symmetry. Furthermore, while there is no question regarding the authenticity of the Abramović/Ulay romantic and sexual relationship, the asymmetry of the trees may cause a visitor to ask "Are they lovers, spouses, or parent and child?" The title of Swanson's piece, *TOGETHER together* is based on what people say when looking at Swanson and her partner walking down the street or when meeting them side by side for the first time: "Oh, are you two TOGETHER together?" (This is an embedded insult meaning "Oh, are you two in a *relationship*?") People are often surprised to find that two differently sized bodies are involved romantically. The capitalization of the first word in the title represents the emphasis

Figure 5—Laura Swanson, *Untitled*, from the series *TOGETHER Together*, 2009.  
Installation view at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Courtesy the artist

Figure 6 (opposite)—Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Imponderabilia*, 1977 (production  
photo). Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Bologna. © Marina Abramović Archives and  
Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

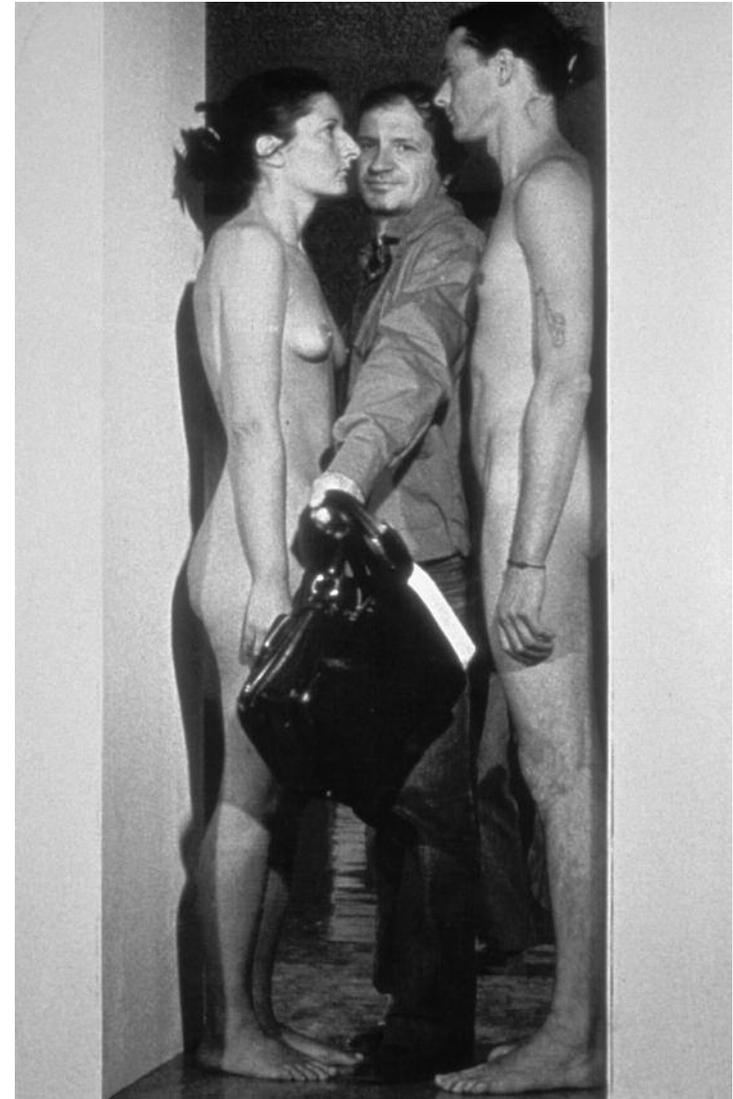


Figure 7—Corban Walker, *Please Adjust*, 2011. Ireland Pavilion, Istituto Santa Maria Della Pietà, 54th Venice International Art Biennale, Italy. © Corban Walker, courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York

it receives when spoken—it is generally vocalized more slowly or more loudly. But this could also suggest a scale relationship: big letters and small letters, side by side, like the ficus trees. In the face of assumptions about the ways two people should “match” when they’re a couple, Swanson transforms the insult. When partners are different heights, their eyes, body parts, and genitals may not meet squarely at the same point when they are standing, but this does not diminish their bond.

Corban Walker takes a different approach to destabilizing common notions of human scale. In *Please Adjust* (2011, fig. 7), a sculptural installation shown at the Ireland Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the simple, elegant repetition of stainless steel bars forms 176 interlocking cube structures that create a twelve-foot-high skeletal frame. *Please Adjust* is site-specific in its response to the materials, surfaces, and architecture of its environment. For example, the multiple square shapes of the sculpture seem to echo the pattern of the tiled surface of the space. The room stands empty apart from the work and a string of large twinkling lights suspended from the ceiling. But there is much movement. The sculpture is kinetic and theatrical; as light bounces off the steel, it illuminates some boxes while others remain in the shadows. This random on/off glow causes the square assemblage to pulsate with electric energy. The sculpture comes alive, the dizzying



and dynamic intersections of its steel form lost in a dynamic labyrinth of intermingling shapes. The elegance of the shapes is complex, as there is seemingly no rhyme or reason, nor pattern, to their arrangement. On its surface, the work may seem restrained or controlled, but upon closer inspection, there is a contradictory instability or even an element of chaos. Further, while the steel itself is strong, *Please Adjust's* construction method is precarious. This creates a sense of fragility that is enhanced by fact that the structure is temporary and changes shape and form every time it is installed in a new venue. This destabilized quality is significant, for it illustrates the conceptual destabilization of disability that is central to my argument.

The work's title is telling: *Please Adjust* reads as formal and polite, but it could just as easily end with an exclamation point. Declarative and intense, it may cry out for viewers to readjust their thinking about differently sized bodies. It is a title that, while seemingly restrained, is bursting with indignation below the surface. We might wonder how this indignation is possible. The work has no direct relationship with bodies or humans, as it is void of corporeal representation. A viewer learns upon reading the curatorial text accompanying the installation, however, that it was constructed according to a series of calculations based on four—the number of feet in Walker's own height. The work's components thus allude to Walker's embodiment, taking his measurement as the unit or standard. The stainless steel bars come in lengths of twelve or sixteen inches (both multiples of four), and the total number of cube forms, 176, is the sum of forty-four multiplied by four, the ultimate magnification of the "Corban Scale." Through such equations, Walker navigates a world that has been mapped out for the "non-disabled" person. The curator of the Irish Pavilion, Eamonn Maxwell, has explained that "given that the premise for architecture and the related

design is the six-foot man, Walker has to constantly adjust to fit into what is determined as normal. With this work, he is asking the viewer to *please adjust* to his viewpoint on the world."<sup>20</sup> But we must delve much more deeply into this work to understand its complexity and its power to shift our thinking in radical ways. This process is most clearly elaborated upon through imaginative deployment of the language of Deleuze and Guattari and their theory of the body without organs.

The body without organs is a non-hierarchical structure that allows for the passage and transfer of ideas or identities when organization breaks down. As a construct, it reveals the extent to which organizations and structures are culturally determined. The body without organs embraces multiplicity, as it can have many potential destinations that are simultaneously empty or full. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1997), Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on the body without organs is titled with the question "How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?" The chapter begins with an image of the "dogon egg and the distribution of intensities" (fig. 8). In Dogon mythology, the egg is a popular symbol for creation, as it holds unlimited potential and is the form from which life springs.<sup>21</sup> Illustrations showing how the body without organs might look and function depict round, circular, and oval shapes made up of broken lines. There are multiple shapes in this egg, representing ideas and thoughts moving in and out of contact with each other. This process is intense, non-linear, and erratic. Similarly, in the sculpture's multiple lines and crisscrossing, *Please Adjust* embodies qualities of these Dogon egg diagrams. The lines meet and veer off in new directions, only to meet again at another angle, then another and so on. If we understand that the body without organs is a reservoir of potential for new connections, traits, affects, and movements, *Please Adjust's* axes and intersecting steel bars can be seen as possessing similar traits.

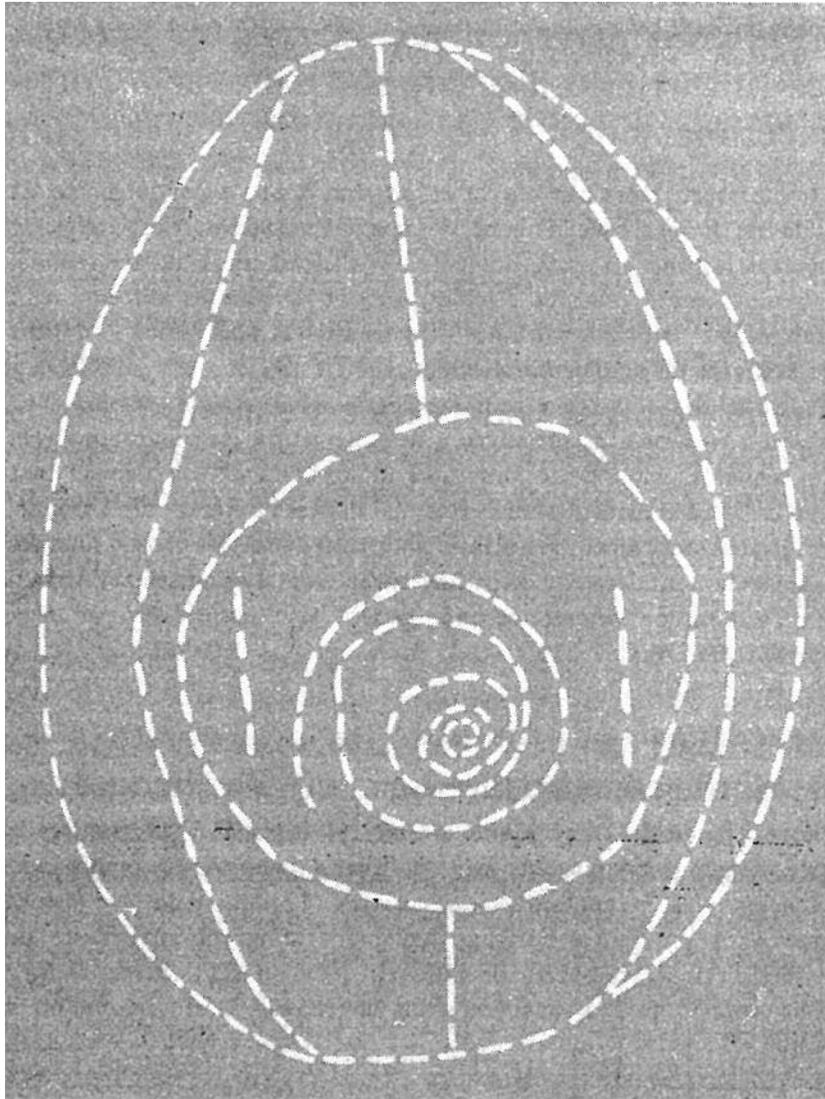


Figure 8—*The Dogon Egg and the Distribution of Intensities* from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1997). Courtesy University of Minnesota Press

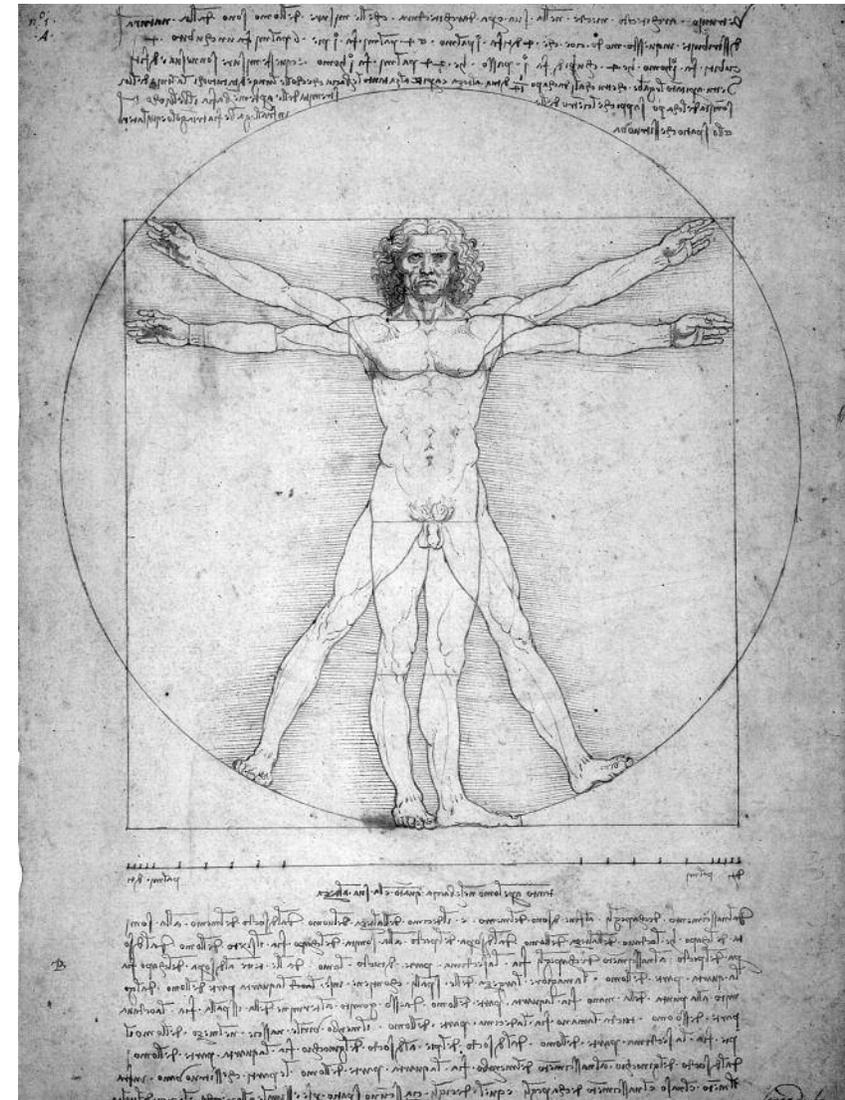
The relationship of this diagram to the body without organs lies in the fact that Walker has created a mechanism to set in motion a whole series of reactions, or “lines of flight,” for the viewer. In my mind, I construe Deleuze and Guattari’s term “lines of flight” as an expression of freedom in association with the body without organs. Lines of flight represent an uninhibited ability to think and to break out of organized structures and Western philosophical binaries. Through Walker’s stainless steel lines of flight, the viewer is able to think about scale, size, proportion, transparency, and light and to consider how a body moves through space in multiple forms and ways. Further, *Please Adjust* is a body without organs, for it suggests broader implications for the stratification of disability and atypical bodies within mainstream society and visual culture. The body without organs suggests the notion of disruption of the social order or strata in order to reveal what is underneath: a network of “desires, connections, and intensities.”<sup>22</sup> The body without organs desires to break down binaries such as man/woman, disabled/non-disabled, or black/white.

For example, consider Deleuze and Guattari’s egg and Walker’s structure as a replacements for “ideal” male and female bodies. Like me, one may be moved to imagine new shapes and forms for the corporeal frame. These “ideal” bodies have a lineage going back to Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* (1487, fig. 9). This drawing

Figure 9—Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, ca. 1487. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

mapped out notions of perfection, proportion, and beauty as defined in classical sculpture. The drawing was also based on Vitruvian architecture and ideal human proportions. Regretfully, the representation of a bodily ideal in *Vitruvian Man* is still seen as the ideal form today, contributing to ableist attitudes and discrimination against the disabled minority. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that bodies can be broken down and re-thought, and that there are no rules about what bodies should be or do. Walker imagines new frameworks for the body, within which being four-feet tall simply means perceiving the world at a different scale. The disabled body corporealized by Walker in *Please Adjust* offers an alternative ideal. Walker has created his own symbolic, as well as architectural and sculptural, *Vitruvian Man*, and by using the measurement of his own, less idealized height, he compels viewers to think about proportion, scale, and the built environment in different terms.

Walker's sculpture both displaces prevailing ideals and moves beyond them. Encounters with the work prompt a similar journey for viewers. One might wonder how, precisely, this is achieved, given that viewers are barred from entering the structure's space. But *Please Adjust* engulfs every shape and size of human being. At certain times of day, as viewers circumnavigate the work they will be able to see their own reflections in the surface of the steel as light streams into



the surrounding space through the glass windows on either side of the building. Only the viewer remains opaque. The work's transparent quality, together with its reflective quality and numerous possible vantage points, demonstrates that there is no single point of view or way to look at a body.

The works of Santiago Forero, Laura Swanson, and Corban Walker destabilize reductive representations of the dwarf body. They create new thinking about size, scale, and proportion and disrupt negative associations of dwarfism, encouraging a shift in the perception of the disabled body. Their works move away from binaries to become complex embodiments. Disability studies scholar Carrie Sandahl has asserted that "disabilities are states of being that are in themselves *generative*, and, once de-stigmatized, allow us to envision an enormous range of human variety—in terms of bodily, spatial, and social configurations."<sup>23</sup> As we begin to expand our understanding of what constitutes a representable body, we also expand our thinking about disability itself. Within contemporary art and beyond, we must aspire to adjust and inscribe disability as an essential aspect of human diversity rather than a pathological aberration.

## Notes

- 1 "What Can A Body Do?" was also the title to one of the chapters in Deleuze's study.
- 2 Although this is a much contested terrain, I, like the medical field, assume in this essay that dwarfism is a disability because it is visible, affects social relations, and can have physical and health implications. The great debate surrounding dwarves' adoption of the term "disability" in relation to themselves gives this classification an added layer of complexity.
- 3 Little People of America (LPA), a nonprofit organization founded in 1957, defines dwarfism as a medical or genetic condition that usually results in an adult height of 4'10" or shorter, among both men and women, although in some cases a person with a dwarfing condition may be slightly taller than that. The average height of an adult with dwarfism is 4'0", but typical heights range from 2'8" to 4'8." "Frequently Asked Questions," Little People of America, accessed March 4, 2012, <http://www.lpaonline.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=84634&orgId=lpa>. LPA endorses the use of "little person," "dwarf," or "short statured" in reference to members of this community.
- 4 According to Michael Tavel Clarke, mid-twentieth-century Americans considered smallness a sign of inferiority, lack of intelligence, and degeneration, while bigness represented progress, grandeur, and superiority. This arguably remains true today. See *These Days of Large Things: The Culture of Size in America, 1865-1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
- 5 Michael Davidson, "Organs without Bodies" in *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 202.
- 6 By this I mean reduced to an essential, highly simplified, form. Often, this has negative connotations. For example, essentializing a dwarf body as lacking in intelligence due to its lack of height.
- 7 Gilles Deleuze, "What Can A Body Do?," in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 226.
- 8 Jackie Leach Scully, "Thinking Through the Variant Body," in *Disability Bioethics: Moral bodies, Moral difference* (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 84.
- 9 For Foucault's discussion of subjugated knowledges, see *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994).
- 10 Jackie Leach Scully argues that embodied cognition bases complex mental processes on the physical interactions that people have with their environment; this is contrasted with the classic or first generation view of cognition as essentially

- computational or rule-based. See “Thinking Through the Variant Body” in *Disability Bioethics: Moral Bodies, Moral Difference*, (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 84.
- 11 Tobin Siebers, “Body Theory,” in *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2008), 54.
  - 12 For more information on work by other impaired artists, please refer to the practices of Joseph Grigely, Park McArthur, Carmen Papalia, Christine Sun Kim, and Alison O’Daniel.
  - 13 Betty Adelson, “Art,” in *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity towards Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 139.
  - 14 Leslie Fiedler “Dwarfs: Changing the Image,” in *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 70.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 69.
  - 16 The image was based on a real-life photo of the pair, who happily agreed to take this picture when they were hanging out and clowning around in Cleveland. Walker had gone on a trip to watch O’Neal play a basketball game, alongside staff from the foundation and several other artists who were making new works for the exhibition that featured O’Neal in one form or another.
  - 17 There is a stereotype that black men have larger penises, and that penis size does matter when it comes to vaginal intercourse. There is also a stereotype that the smaller the man (and the whiter), the smaller the penis, so this image (and corresponding exhibition title) also suggests that O’Neal, who is African American, has a larger penis than Walker, who is white.
  - 18 Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s performance “The Couple in the Cage” (1993) is another example of a contemporary work that addresses such issues.
  - 19 Rosemarie Garland Thomson, “Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction,” in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5.
  - 20 Eamonn Maxwell, “The Line Begins To Blur,” in *Corban Walker: Ireland at Venice 2011* (Ireland: Culture Ireland, 2011), 19.
  - 21 The Dogon egg comes from the Dogon people, who are a tribe from Mali, Africa.
  - 22 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari “How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 161.
  - 23 Carrie Sandahl, “Considering Disability: Disability Phenomenology’s Role in Revolutionizing Theatrical Space,” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (Spring 2002): 19.