

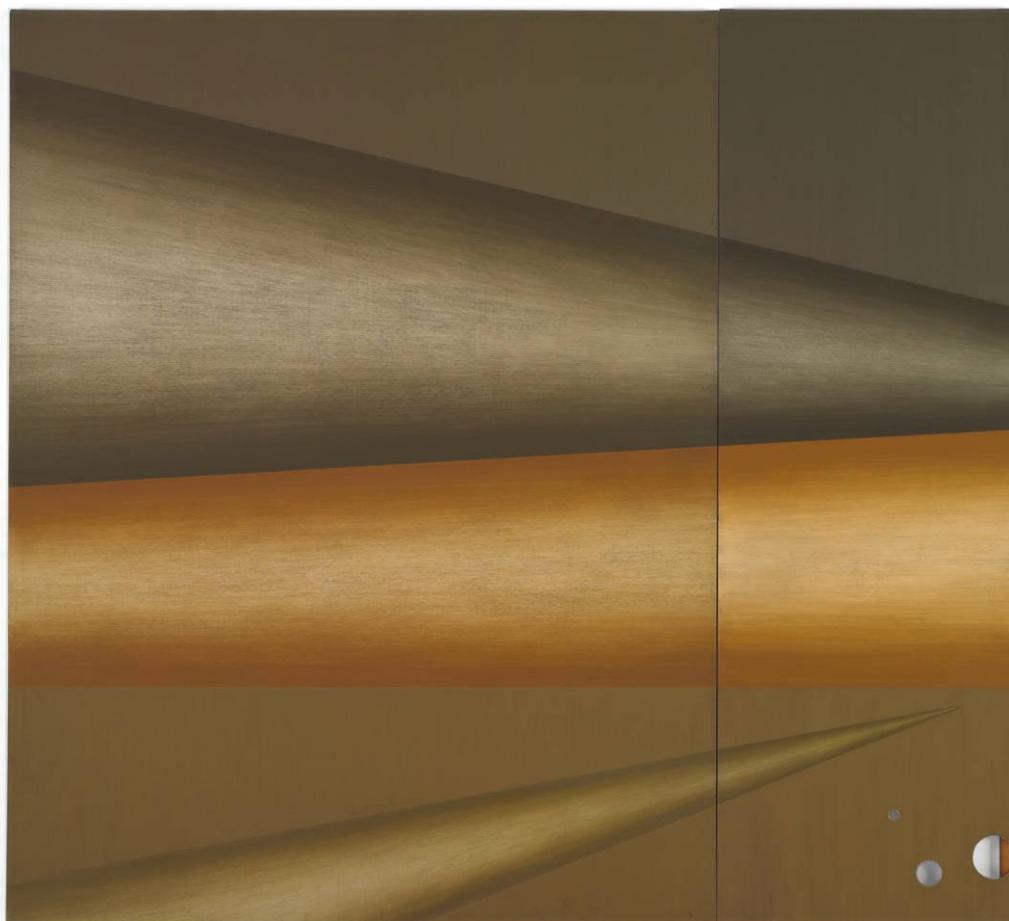
- 4 Miranda Stearn, "Art and Destruction: The Artist as Anti-Curator in the Museum," in *Art and Destruction*, ed. Jennifer Walden (Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 39.
- 5 World Monuments Watch, https://www.wmf.org/watch/watch_year/2016. On destruction through neglect, see Dario Gamboni, "Preservation and Destruction, Oblivion and Memory," in *Negating the Image: Case Studies in Iconoclasm*, ed. Anne McClanan and Jeff Johnson (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), 162–77.
- 6 J. M. Mancini and Keith Bresnahan, eds., *Architecture and Armed Conflict: The Politics of Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2015).
- 7 Jonathan Tubb, "Destruction in the Middle East," *Burlington Magazine* 157, no. 1352 (November 2015): 743.
- 8 David W. Dunlap, "Enduring 'Sphere' Sculpture to Return to World Trade Center Site," *New York Times*, July 22, 2016, A24.
- 9 James Simpson, *Under the Hammer: Iconoclasm in the Anglo-American Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 13.
- 10 Richard Serra to Donald Thalacker, January 1, 1985, in *The Destruction of "Tilted Arc": Documents*, ed. Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 38.
- 11 On this point, see Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (December 2002): 641–59; and Sarah Beetham, "From Spray Cans to Minivans: Contesting the Legacy of Confederate Soldier Monuments in the Era of 'Black Lives Matter,'" *Public Art Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (2016): 9–33.
- 12 For two examples, see Kenneth Rosen, "University of Texas at Austin Moves Confederate Statue," *New York Times*, August 30, 2015, A11; and Zoe Greenberg, "Yale Drops Case against Worker Who Smashed Window Depicting Slaves," *New York Times*, July 12, 2016, A20. See also Erika Doss, "Guest Editor's Statement: Thinking about Forever," *Public Art Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (2016): 1–5.
- 13 Ömür Harmanşah, "ISIS, Heritage, and the Spectacles of Destruction in the Global Media," in "The Cultural Heritage Crisis in the Middle East," special issue, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78, no. 3 (September 2015): 170–77.
- 14 Joseph Koerner, "The Icon as Iconoclasm," in Latour and Weibel, *Iconoclasm*, 164–213.
- 15 I explore this topic in a forthcoming book, *Performing Iconoclasm*.
- 16 Alfred Jones engraved *The Image Breaker* after Leutze's 1847 painting *The Image-Breaker (The Puritan and his Daughter)* (private collection); see Barbara S. Groseclose, *Emanuel Leutze, 1816–1868: Freedom is the Only King* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975), 77. Sally M. Promey connects another painting by Leutze—*The Iconoclasts* (1846, Victoria Mansion [Morse-Libby House], Portland, Me.)—and *Washington Crossing the Delaware* as part of a "loosely related cluster of paintings in which Leutze (1816–1868) explored the origins of American freedoms," in Promey, "The 'Return' of Religion in the Scholarship of American Art," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 3 (September 2003): 581, see 582 for a reproduction of *The Iconoclasts*.

Jo Applin

Cut Out, Drop Out

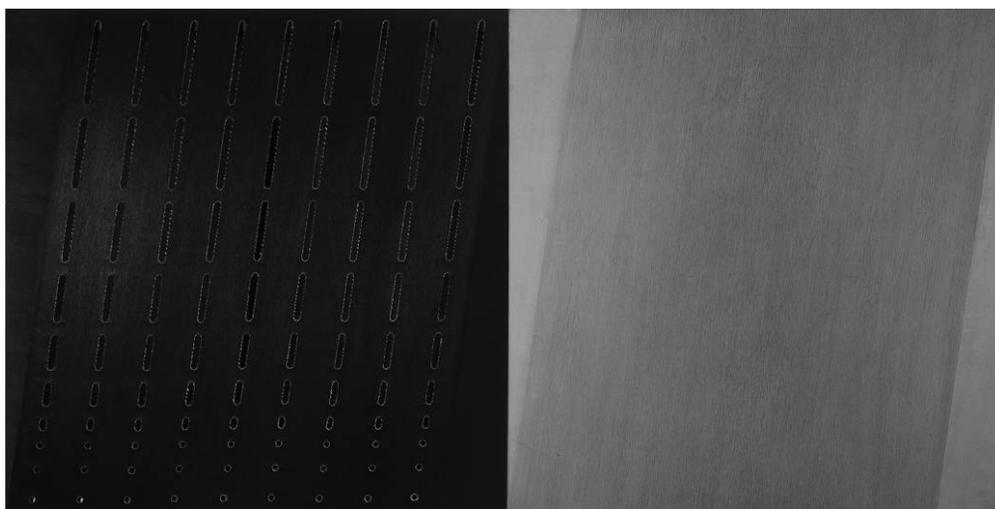
In the late 1960s Lee Lozano cut a series of holes from the surfaces of her recent abstract paintings. In some the holes were arranged in a neat grid, as an integral part of the whole. Inspection of others reveals that Lozano made the holes retrospectively, returning to earlier, finished pieces and cutting holes from their painted surfaces in a seemingly haphazard manner. In these works, the holes register less as a creative act than as a kind of destruction: it looks as though the canvas has been stabbed with a screwdriver or attacked by moths. Lozano made only a handful of cutout paintings, accompanied by a small group of preparatory sketches and templates that outline the specific measurements of the holes. The cutout canvases have elicited little critical attention from writers, who have tended to focus on Lozano's later conceptual art-life practices. In what follows I suggest the two projects share more than has to date been recognized.

- 1 Lee Lozano, *Untitled*, ca. 1965.
Oil on canvas with perforations,
two parts, 72 x 122½ x 1½ in.
Private collection © The Estate of
Lee Lozano. Courtesy of Hauser
& Wirth. Photo, Barбора Gerny



Lozano's cutout paintings belong to an earlier series of abstract-geometric works that she began in 1964 and continued to make, sporadically, until late 1970. These paintings, with their cool, suggestive, and often violence-tinged titles, such as *Ream*, *Clamp*, and *Jut*, contain angular shapes and forms painted in closely matched hues and metallic pastel shades. Before embarking on her abstract paintings, Lozano produced numerous drawings and paintings depicting giant claw-headed hammers and phallic, oversize screwdrivers commingled with naked body parts—and with each other—in violent-erotic couplings.¹ By 1969 Lozano had moved into conceptualism proper. She produced a series of art-life experiments that she wrote up in a series of texts documenting the various activities she had undertaken. Typically, Lozano's conceptual pieces were staged as intimate, social, moral, personal, and professional tests and investigations. She documented successes, but also those ventures she deemed to have somehow gone wrong, experiments that failed, and investigations that simply petered out and came to a stop. Examples include Lozano's yearlong tracking of her conversations with her peers, which formed the basis of *Dialogue Piece*, and *General Strike Piece* of 1969, during which she refused to participate in the art world for a six-month period. Other actions included Lozano's charting everything she ate and wore on a particular day, and documenting her production of a series of paintings while stoned, drunk, and sober.

Of course, artists have been destroying, altering, and otherwise messing around with their own work for as long as they have been producing it. More often than



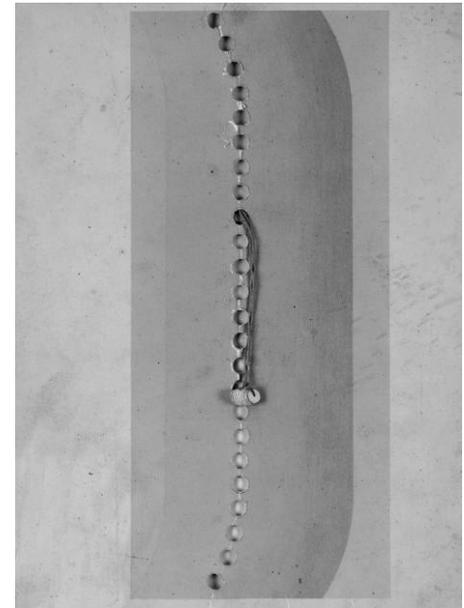
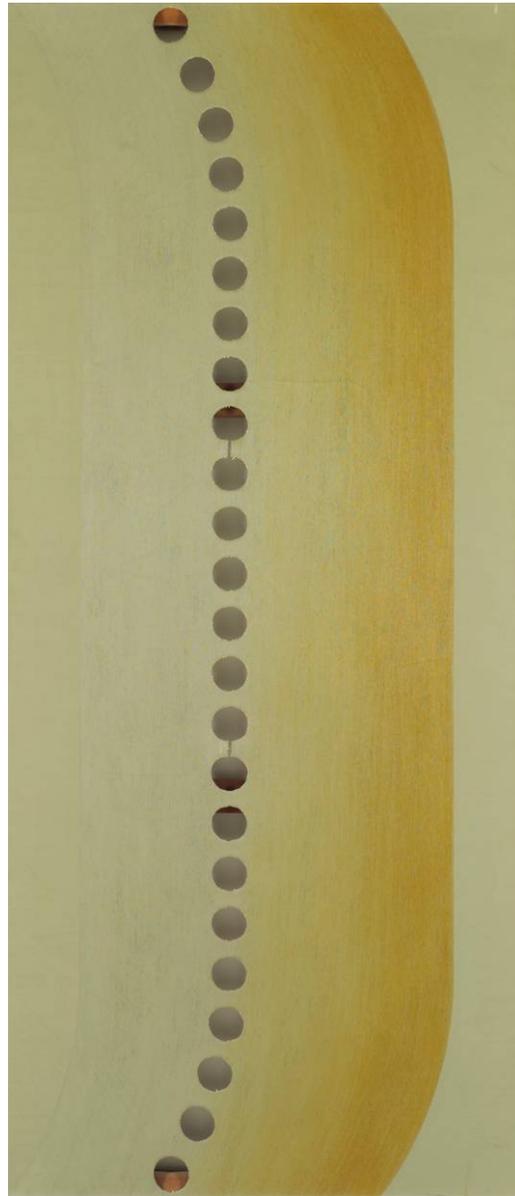
not, this is framed in the art-historical account according to a heroic sense of inner battle or personal struggle: think of Jackson Pollock gouging out portions of his painted canvases or Agnes Martin's decision to cut up her earlier paintings. Putting destruction to rather more productive ends, Lozano's contemporary Lee Bontecou made a series of large-scale metal and fabric wall reliefs studded with giant black holes—deep voids that rupture the surface and seem to press back into the wall behind.² Bontecou was in part challenging the status of painting and sculpture, interrogating how the codes of each medium should behave when hung on a wall.

Bontecou and, as we shall see, Lozano both rejected the label “woman artist” and were at pains to resist feminism as an interpretative frame for their practices. Nevertheless, their work was variously taken up and championed by critics and artists who saw in Bontecou's sculpture in particular an abstract expression of selfhood based on her use of circles—an allegedly “feminine” form—and her craft-based practices such as patchworked fabric. Problematic as their rejection of the women's movement may have been, Bontecou and especially Lozano succeeded in proposing an engagement with destruction, violence, and cutting as conceptual motifs and critical formal operations. They resisted, by refusing, the too-easy conflation of personhood and art that would have interpreted their work as a personal expression of a self in disarray.

One of Lozano's first cutout paintings was an untitled diptych from about 1965 (fig. 1). The entire surface has been painted in amber-bronze hues of metallic paint. The two panels are unevenly sized: the one at the right is considerably smaller than the one on the left. A series of scattered holes has been cut from the lower right-hand corner, in neither a neat grid nor a precise pattern. They disrupt rather than add to the overall finished appearance of the work. The holes also reveal the wooden stretcher and the wall behind, reminding us, as did Bontecou through the act of destruction, of the work's status as an object in the world, not merely an abstract representation of it.

Stroke (1967–70) is another diptych with cutout holes, although in this piece the two panels are identical in size, if not appearance (fig. 2). One is painted a pale silver-gray; a wide, tubular form traverses its surface at an angle. The other panel is painted jet-black and contains a neat grid of oblong sliced-out holes that gradually decrease in size from top to bottom, casting a raking shadow on the wall behind (Lozano was inspired by the effect of sunlight filtered through a venetian blind).³ The invitation to touch or “stroke” is countered by the memory of how the gently frayed holes were made. The lingering

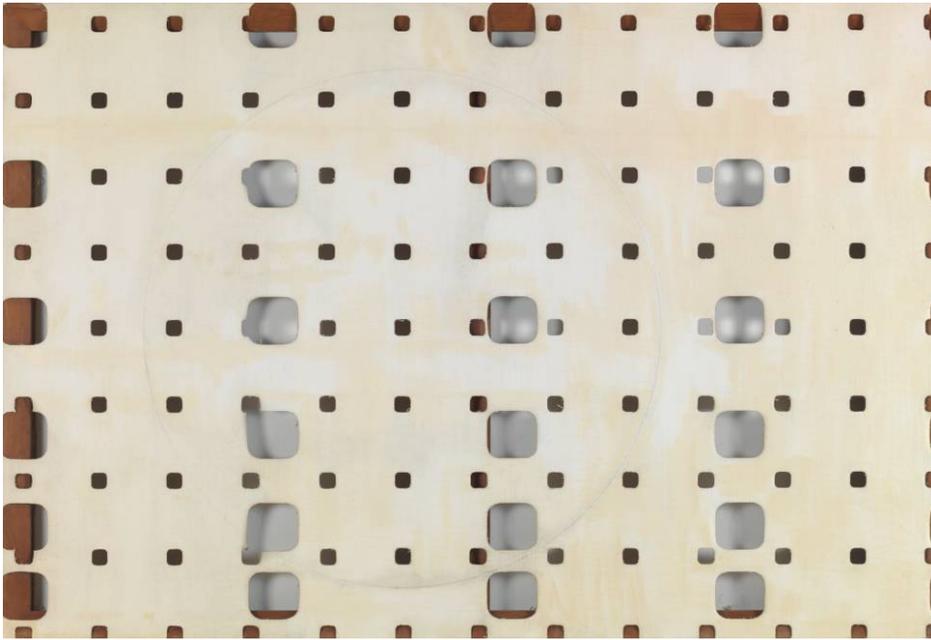
- 2 Lee Lozano, *Stroke*, 1967–70. Oil on canvas with perforations, two parts, 42 x 84 in. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Purchase through the generosity of The Judith Rothschild Foundation and the Michener Acquisitions Fund, 2001 © The Estate of Lee Lozano. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth
- 3 Lee Lozano, *Punch, Peek & Feel*, 1967–70. Oil on canvas with perforations, 95 5/8 x 42 1/8 x 1 5/8 in. Moderna Museet Stockholm © The Estate of Lee Lozano. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth. Photo, Stefan Altenburger Photography Zürich
- 4 Lee Lozano, *Untitled*, 1970. Silver print with string collage, 7 1/4 x 10 in. Collection of Susan Lorence © The Estate of Lee Lozano. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth



association of the sharp blade injects a spiky wariness into the act of viewing, warning of the damage that might in turn be inflicted on the viewer who chooses to touch, not merely look, and making clear the difference between the stroke of a brush and that of a knife.

In 1970 Lozano returned to another, earlier painting from 1967 and excised a strip of evenly spaced holes from its rectangular length (fig. 3). The holes run from top to bottom in a curving arc, tracing soft bands of color underneath. The time lag between painting and cutting is marked in Lozano's decision to

expand the date range of the work and her addition of a title—she subsequently named it *Punch, Peek & Feel*.⁴ As with *Stroke*, the new title served as both a literal description of Lozano's working process and an erotic, violent conflation of canvas, skin, and vision: the punching of holes into the painting that allow us to "peek." *Punch, Peek & Feel*, like *Stroke*, was initially supposed to lean against the wall, so as to incorporate light and shadow into the work, although in subsequent installations it has hung flush. In 1970 Lozano made a print after the earlier painting, again cutting holes from its length (fig. 4). In this instance, however, she attached the fragments to the front of the paper via a length of string woven through the holes so that they dangle from the middle, a strange, strung-up cluster of physical surplus, a physical instantiation of absence articulated by the bunch of "holes" suspended from the cutout surface. Lozano's retention of the fragments in 1970 was a one-off, suggesting she had not yet, quite, resolved what to do with the work, nor when to consider it finished. The



surplus holes refuse to let the act of cutting out slip from sight: Lozano instead shows us what she has done, making the destructive act of excision and withdrawal—of absence—an integral, material part of the whole.

One of Lozano's last paintings, in 1970, was an untitled monochrome (fig. 5). It was made while Lozano was in the middle of completing her final eleven-canvas Wave Series that went on show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in late 1970. Instead of an abstract "wave" of color running its length, the painting contained one hand-drawn circle that sits just off center, shaded in barely there graphite. The lopsided placement of the floating orb gives

5 Lee Lozano, *Untitled*, 1970. Gesso and graphite on canvas with perforations. 42 ¼ x 62 x 1 ½ in. Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © The Estate of Lee Lozano. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth. Photo, Barbora Gerny

the surface a somewhat jarring effect, which is reinforced by the grid of holes arranged in an evenly spaced pattern of smaller and larger round-edged squares.

I first saw this work in 2007, when it was shown in the major exhibition of art and feminism *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*.⁵ I was surprised to see Lozano included in the exhibition at all, given her unequivocal rejection of the women's movement (in 1968 Lozano declared, "I AM NOT A FEMINIST"⁶) and her dramatic "boycott of women,"⁷ after which she ceased all further contact with other women, and which ran from 1971 until her death in 1999. The boycott effectively marked the ending, too, of her participation in the art world, a process inaugurated in 1970, when Lozano embarked on her conceptual art-life action *Dropout Piece*.⁸ More surprising still, for me, was the inclusion of the white cutout painting (see fig. 5) as an accompaniment to the single-page write-ups for her *General Strike Piece* and the announcement of her boycott of women. What was it about this large, all-but-blank, monochrome painting with its grid of holes that assured for it a place in an exhibition dedicated to art and feminist revolution? Why not show instead Lozano's earlier, raucous, borderline pornographic drawings of body parts, tumbled together in a series of polymorphously perverse and violent couplings?

Yet Lozano's cutout paintings make a certain kind of sense alongside her conceptual withdrawals, as they were equally destructive gestures the artist wrought on established patterns of making and behaving. For by cutting herself out of the picture, Lozano effectively cut herself out of history—not until a retrospective in 2006 did her work begin to return to the limelight.⁹ Later, the critic and curator Lucy R. Lippard would describe Lozano as one of the key female figures of New York conceptual art, and, certainly, Lozano's commitment to issues of sexuality, the body, and to an eccentric documentation of her art-life practices (an early instance of making the personal political) was a necessary counter to much of the conceptual art and text-based work by her predominantly male peers.¹⁰ However, because Lozano dropped out of the art world in 1971 and refused to participate in the burgeoning women's movement, her work and the issues of gender and subjectivity with which her conceptual practice engaged were each, in effect, quarantined from the first wave of writing on conceptual art, which focused instead on an almost exclusively male lineup and

emphasized questions of language, logic, and so on (other female conceptual artists like Christine Kozlov received similarly short shrift in such accounts).

In 1968 Lozano stated, “A painting is a snapshot of an idea,” although it was an idea that, for a time at least, the artist considered full of holes.¹¹ The “abrupt terminations” that the critic Diane Waldman had earlier recognized as a distinctive feature of Lozano’s abstract paintings were made literal in a final act of material abstraction as the artist took a knife to their finished surfaces.¹² We might think of Lozano’s dropout as an act of aggression or anger, and her cutouts a coterminous undoing of her earlier work out of frustration at the fact her painting practice was petering to a close. For it is significant that Lozano stopped painting and started cutting up her paintings the same year she dropped out of the art world for good.¹³ Still, rather than considering Lozano’s painting and conceptual actions as polar opposites, it seems we must regard them, circa 1970, as instead intimately entwined. The cutout and dropout pieces each declare an end to a way of working, of living, that no longer holds true.

For the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, destructive gestures directed at the object are always, ultimately, productive for the subject. Writing in 1969, the same year Lozano was on the cusp of working this point out for herself, Winnicott wrote, “the object is always being destroyed.”¹⁴ Using, and abusing, the objects in our immediate orbit, whether physical or psychic, provides us the means by which we might work out our relationship to ourselves and other objects and subjects in the world, a crucial developmental stage first encountered during infancy but worked over time and again throughout one’s life. Those objects that ultimately survive destruction prove themselves most useful and, in the end, durable: such is the “positive value of destructiveness” for Winnicott.¹⁵ Lozano’s paintings survived the material acts of destruction enacted on their surfaces with the knife blade. They survive, too, as material evidence of Lozano’s attempts to destroy painting at a moment when she was on the brink of giving up on both painting and work entirely—twin acts of sabotage, or self-sabotage, even, we might say. Having already begun to move away from painting toward her later conceptual-oriented practice, that large, austere monochrome turned out, alongside her final painting in the Wave Series—another white monochrome that contains only two faintly drawn pencil lines—to be Lozano’s last-ditch attempt at making and remaking paintings at a moment when, as she said, she “didn’t, wouldn’t, couldn’t” paint anymore.¹⁶ The works survive, too, as snapshots—as documents—of a practice tried and tested, and of a decision (self-destructive, to be sure, but productive nonetheless) to stop, to act otherwise, to cut not just holes but oneself from the picture frame.

Notes

- 1 For comprehensive overviews of Lozano’s career, see, in particular, Adam Szymczyk, ed., *Lee Lozano: Win First Don’t Last Win Last Don’t Care* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 2006); and Iris Müller-Westermann, ed., *Lee Lozano* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 2010).
- 2 Jo Applin, “Threatening, and Possibly Functioning Objects: Lee Bontecou,” in *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012), 13–41.
- 3 Lozano told this to Jaap van Liere, Lozano’s former dealer, in a phone conversation. Email message from van Liere to author, June 2, 2016.
- 4 For an excellent account of abstract painting in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Katy Siegel, ed., *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting, 1967–1975* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2006).
- 5 *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 2007 and traveled to MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, in 2008. It included work by 120 international artists and artist groups and was curated by Connie Butler.
- 6 Lee Lozano, Private Notebook 1, April 1968, The Estate of Lee Lozano, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.

- 7 Lee Lozano, unpublished “boycott of women,” first week of August 1971, The Estate of Lee Lozano, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.
- 8 Lee Lozano, Private Notebook 8, April 5, 1970, 114, The Estate of Lee Lozano, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.
- 9 Szymczyk, *Lee Lozano*.
- 10 Lucy R. Lippard, “Escape Attempts” (1995), in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972: A Cross-Reference Book of Information on Some Esthetic Boundaries: Consisting of a Bibliography into Which Are Inserted a Fragmented Text, Art Worlds, Documents, Interviews, and Symposia, Arranged Chronologically and Focused on So-called Conceptual or Information or Idea Art with Mentions of Such Vaguely Designated Areas as Minimal, Anti-form, Systems, Earth, or Process Art, Occurring Now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with Occasional Political Overtones)*, ed. Lippard (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), vii–xxii, xii.
- 11 Lee Lozano, Private Notebook 1, ca. March 1969, The Estate of Lee Lozano, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.
- 12 Diane Waldman, “Reviews and Previews, Lee Lozano,” *Art News* 65, no. 8 (December 1966): 13.
- 13 On Lozano’s dropouts, see Jo Applin “Hard Work: Lee Lozano’s Dropouts,” *October* 156 (Spring 2016): 75–99; and Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece* (London: Afterall, 2015).
- 14 Donald W. Winnicott, “The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications” (1969), in *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge Classics, 2005), 126–27.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 126.
- 16 Lee Lozano, statement, “The ’60s in Abstract: 13 Statements and an Essay,” ed. Maurice Poirier and Jane Neol, *Art in America* 71, no. 9 (October 1983): 135.

Valerie Hegarty

Alternative Histories

Three Activations in the Brooklyn Museum’s Early American Period Rooms

I am often asked about the tropes of decay and destruction in my work. Is it a fetishization of ruins? A nihilistic worldview? A disrespect for the masters of art history? A diss to our founding father? A subversion? A provocation?

I frequently cite Thomas Cole’s *The Course of Empire* series as a reference.¹ Painted in 1833–36, the grouping of five paintings appears as a moral tale or warning and depicts a landscape going through a process of discovery by man and the resultant growth of civilization, followed by corruption, destruction, and decay. The final painting in the series is where I find a touchstone for my work. *Desolation* depicts the aftermath of the fall of the empire. The moon is rising and the city is in ruins. Nature has reclaimed its place in, over, and around the broken architecture. There is no sign of life, except for a few birds nesting in the remains of a column. In this scene I see a space of self-destruction and a possible fertile ground for rebirth if we heed the lessons of the past. Today Cole’s series becomes more potent as man’s destruction extends from civilizations to the natural world itself.

My paintings, sculpture, and installations appear as if a destructive event or the slow process of natural erosion has occurred within the gallery, or within an artwork itself.² My early installation work involved a process I called *reverse archaeology*, in which I glued layers of painted paper to the gallery walls and floor only to scrape them back to create a material memory of the room (fig. 1). Viewers walking into the white cube gallery or museum would do a double-take when they caught a glimpse of what appeared