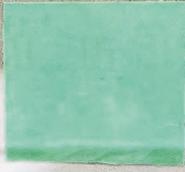


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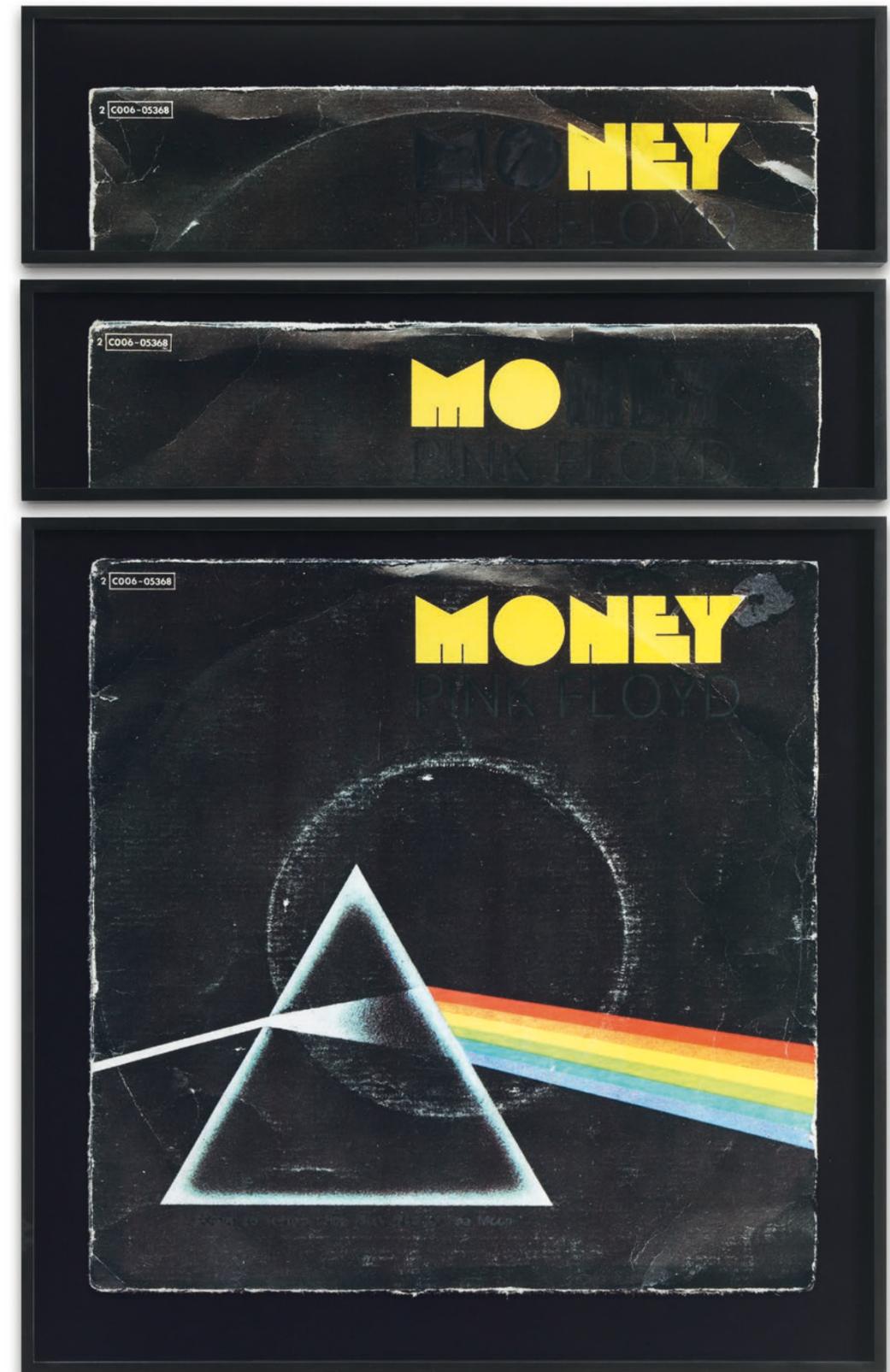
Beginning with her 2009 series *Today I Wrote Nothing*—comprising twenty-two photographs of poems composed from fragments of a brief 1937 journal entry by then-imprisoned Russian author Daniil Kharms—Natalie Czech has produced a distinct body of work that blurs the acts of writing and photographing, reading and seeing. Her deft use of text and photography of cultural artifacts builds on the legacies of pop, conceptual art, and appropriation art of the 1980s, yet her focus on the materiality of language also continues early-twentieth-century avant-garde practices in poetry, such as the calligram (in which the text forms an image related to the subject) and the cut-up (in which words from various sources are cut apart and pasted together).

For her recent series, *Poems by Repetition* (2013–14), the German artist highlights or obscures quotidian prose on printed ephemera and consumer goods—from iPads and magazine articles to LP covers and overdrive pedals—to reveal the poems of well-known American authors. All the works in the series consist of two or more images that appear to be the same but are, in actuality, slightly different, mimicking photographic reproduction as well as techniques of poetic repetition. As a starting point for the series, Czech cites Gertrude Stein’s 1922 work “Saints and Singing,” which uses repetition as a structuring device. Aram Saroyan’s minimal poem “o r // o r” emerges from a grid of photographed ukuleles in *A Poem by Repetition by Aram Saroyan II* (2014), Hart Crane’s vice-versa questions appear on two Kindle screens (one black, the other white), and Allen Ginsberg’s ode to himself materializes across three photographs of the same magazine page containing images from artist Robert Longo’s 1979 *Men in the Cities* series.

As with poetry, sound is an essential component to the series, and Czech often uses objects related to pop music to create layered meanings. In *A Poem by Repetition by Aram Saroyan* (2013), for example, Czech alters and photographs the LP single of Pink Floyd’s “Money” (1973). The three photographs, repeating the album title, fashion the visual poem “ney/mo/money.” The images evoke the staccato lines of both the poem and song as well as the chimes of a cash register. While Czech uses album covers for several other works in the series, she conjures music in other ways too. *A Poem by Repetition by Emmett Williams II* (2013) is constructed from three photographs of an overdrive pedal known as “American Woman” (see page 8); the amplifier company Tech 21 developed it in 2003 to generate a distorted cascading effect like the one used in the guitar solo of its namesake song by The Guess Who. In Williams’s poem the sound seems to similarly distort from “a man // a woman // a men” while also referencing both the product and song. In each instance, Czech allows the histories and functions of the objects to resonate with the poems and surrounding contexts.

While most of the source materials for *Poems by Repetition* are relics of increasingly outmoded forms of print and popular culture (magazine pages and album covers, for example), the series manages to evoke the often fragmented and combinatory ways in which words, pictures, and even sounds, circulate today, i.e., via recycled links and posts on digital media platforms or multiple “windows” on a computer screen. In an age marked by commentary on the decline of reading and the acceleration of a vapid visual culture, Czech rewards those who take the time to read and look closely, again and again.

A Poem by Repetition
by Aram Saroyan, 2013

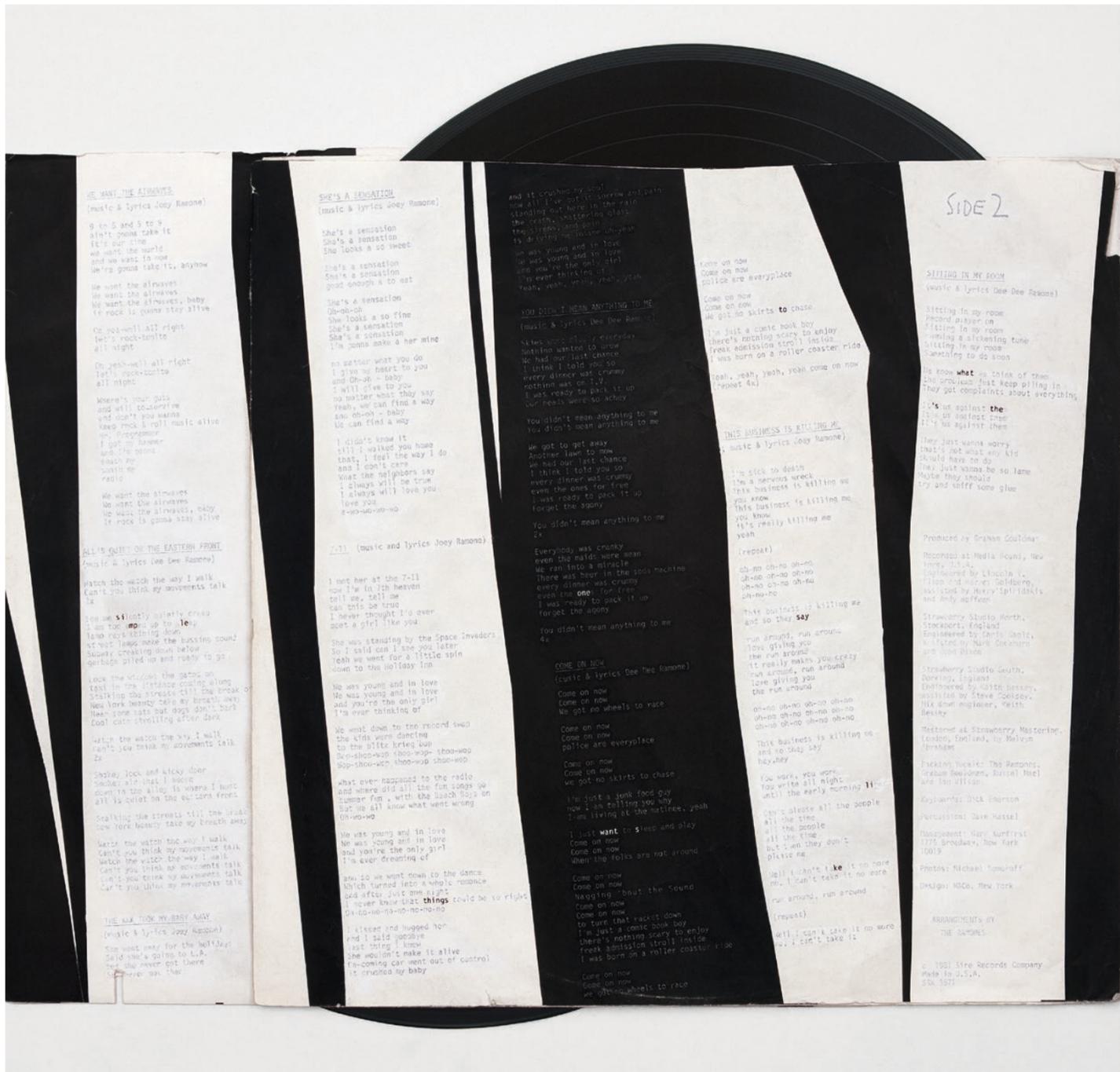


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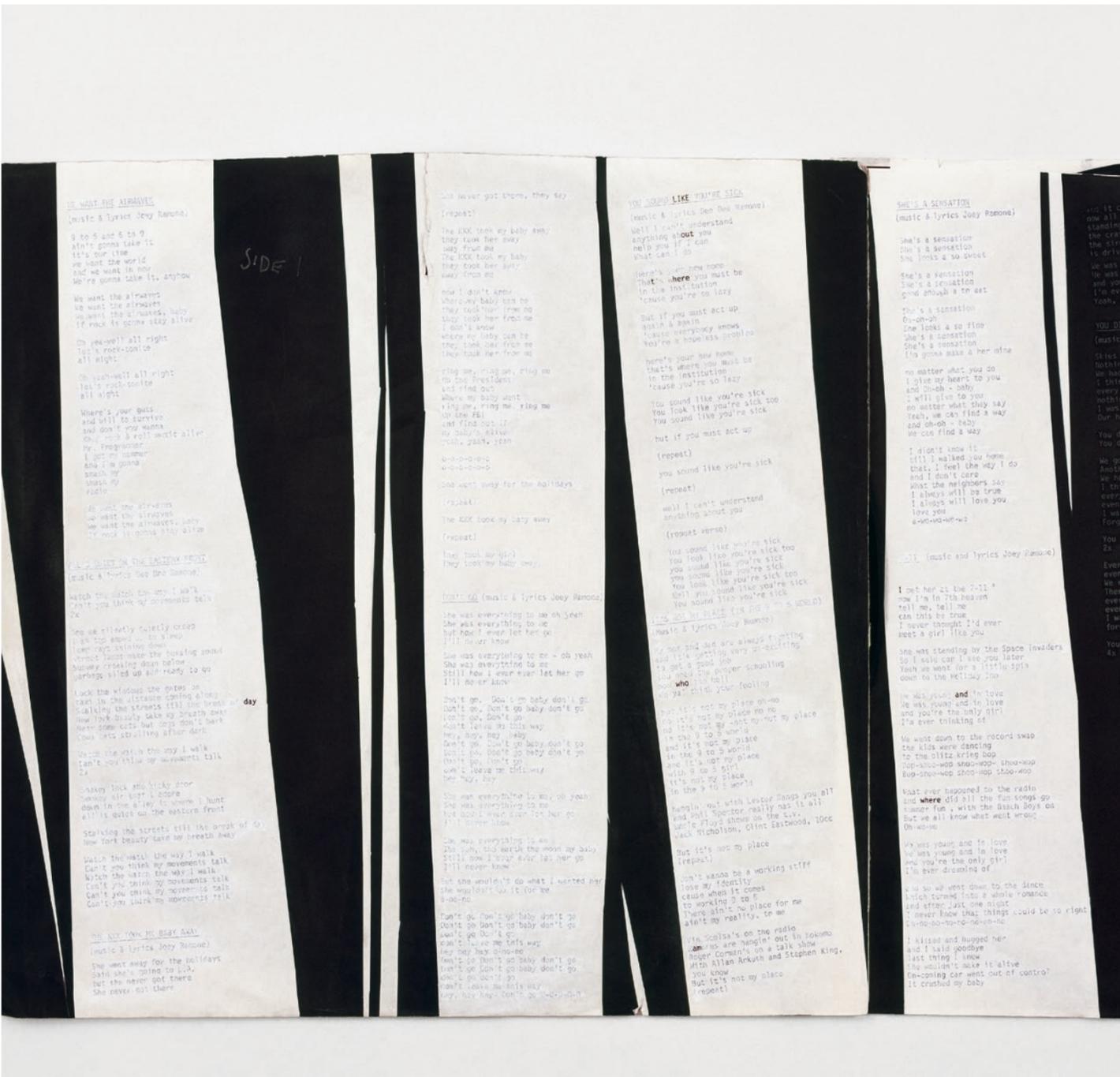
Natalie Czech Poems by Repetition

Drew Sawyer

Drew Sawyer, an art historian and curator, is currently Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Simple things
one wants to say
like, what's the day
like, out there—
who am I
and where.



A Poem by Repetition by
Robert Creeley #2, 2013

I fought

The Law

memorite tum etia ergat. Nos amice et nebevol, olestias accessum conscient to factor tum poen legum odioque civiuda. Et pecun modut est ~~neque nonor imper nec libiding gen epular~~ nulla praid om undant. Improb pary minuit, potius inflammat dodecendesse videantur. Inviat igitur vera ratio bene sanos ad i fidem. Neque hominy infant aut inuiste fact est cond qui neg conetud notiner si effecerit, et opes vel fortang vel ingon liberali but tuntung benevolent sib conciliant et, aptissim est ad quiet cum omning null sit caus peccand quaert en imigent cupidat a ne explemt sine julla inura autend inane sunt is parend non est nihil Concupis plusque in ipsinuria detriment est quam in his rebus who could keep your heart warmixer per se ipsad optabil, sed q they put him in a Dog Suiteund est propter and tutior vitam et I out on the Dustbowl or in the Roulette Mine prob fugiendad i the intake is on the uptake. Guac ad erat amicos pertinere ge I should be jumping shouting that I made it all the way ibusing yes its Number One the Radio said ut mihi detur expedium. It er the immigrants and remnants of all the glory years edere. Nam e that mobs don't march they run radiodispa monet amicitian con I would love to be the lucky onender luptam seiung non poest. they discovered one Black Saturday amicitiao non modo fautric are clustered round the bar again for another round of beers. ias now look what's happened to him e magna aliquam erat voluptat and so I know somewhere back an forth in time suserit laboris n out of the broken glass uis autem vel eum irure dolor in repreh I'm looking back for homecel illum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatu the High Street shops are boarded up esent luptatum delent aigt as they turn in for the night ditat non provident, simil tempor I can remember his first appearance et dolor fuga. Et harumd de but just like them we walk on and we can't escape our fate ongu as the lorries bring the Bacon insim omnis voluptas assumenda or in a ghetto cellar only yesterday. flice debet aut tum rerum nec or repudiand sint et molestia non recusand. Itaque earud rerum I delectus au aut profer endis dolorib asperiore repellat. Hanc e quid est our vercar no ad eam non possing aecommodare nost re

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I fought

The Law

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A star is as far as the eye can see and as near as my eye is to me

A Poem by Repetition by Gregory Corso, 2013

continue to employ and delight in. Most importantly, I brought him back to pictures. A picture about a subject, and that's where he'd started—present in the **ma**—that is what drawing is. That credible medium that shows a **de** of its maker's hand and individual engagement. In our conversation with Robert **Lo** **ve** captured the ghost of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres who designated drawing the probity of art. With this Longo agreed.

"When I draw," he said, "I take it **to** me. I look at it, it goes into every part of **my** body, it comes out of me." The quiet, **fo** **sc** **w** **l** **f** "Magellan" was faced and bound, **li** **n** diurnal, by time and it insisted on **the** (his) giving over to what he identified

This interview took place in Robert Longo's studio in New York on June 10, 2010. We asked him—where did art begin for you?—and the conversation went on from there.

was 19 years old when I left to go to Europe. I didn't have the courage to say I wanted to be an artist. Instead I said I wanted to learn painting restoration and become an art historian, or something like that. But when I got to Florence I saw what the paint restorers were doing. It looked horrible. People in Giotto paintings looked like they had eaten lemons. History was being re-written, and I said, "This is not for me, not yet. I

as reverie. That's art asking a lot and giving back at least an equivalence.

As the interview concluded, Robert Longo talked about the drawings he was doing now, noting in what way the work was different from what he'd done earlier. "I want to give **more than** I did before. That's the biggest thing. The fact that you can actually take time and look at these **re** **cent** **wo** **r** **k** **s** and get lost in them is important." The time it takes for looking.

We spent close to four hours in conversation with Robert Longo, then wrote a quick note the following day thanking him for the pleasure of his company and his generous mind. He answered back with a note of his own, saying that perhaps all he should have said is that "maki **g** **a** **r** **t** **s** **s** imply an **ad** **ve** **r** **t** **i** **n** **g** for the act of believing." Hope and faith and a commitment to conscience.

want to learn some art history, not fuck it up." So I decided to travel around Europe and look at the best things. I had this book **my** **si** **st** **er** had given me about the history of art and I used it as a travel guide. I remember the wonderment of finding Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* and seeing Gericault's *The Raft of the Medusa*. I travelled around looking at art for six months. It was at the end of this trip that I had a cathartic moment. I went to visit my relatives in Sicily, and I was using my aunt's **ni** **ce** as a base. I remember going to Agrigento **ow** **ere** they have these **n** **re** **d** **i** **b** **l** **e** Greek temples made out of limestone. I was going to spend the night there, so I had brought a sleeping bag with me. This one temple sat on a little **li** **f** overlooking the Mediterranean, and at that moment I decided, "Fuck history, there's enough of it. I'm going to become an artist." It was an image of the **pe** **r** **m** **s** **ite**

1. *Untitled (2 Black Figures)*, 1981, charcoal, graphite and ink on paper, 96 x 60" each. Collection Emilio Mazzoli, Modena, Italy.

2. *Untitled (Clady)*, 1981, charcoal, graphite and ink on paper, 96 x 60". Private Collection.

3. *The American Soldier*, 1977, enamel on cast aluminum, 28 x 16 x 5". Collection Metro Pictures, New York, NY.

4. Source reference photo for "Men in the Cities" drawing, 1981.

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I made love to myself
in the mirror, kissing my own lips,
saying, "I love myself,
I love you more than anybody."