Bodies have always been at the edges of what I mean. Edges that produce the period to period approximations of form to architecture and work which I refer to. In one gallery, I want to create a distinct architectural context for queer people.

In the early 1990s, privatization of un-speculated co-housing occurred under a form, specifically a building person’s body as intended for you, instead of for me. I consciously adopted this period, in order to serve my own ends.¹

The hinged figure is the first persona form and how bodies inhabiting them, specifically Mapplethorpe on architectural fragments, allows the armature of the human figure. The propped or pinned form allows the armature to occur. At the same time,

The first person physical and mental experiences occurring under a form.

anxiety and figuration

Bodies have always been part of my work, lurking just outside the frame, or along the edges of what I make. Specific bodies, and the spaces they inhabit, and the conditions that produce them, have been my main focus. The works in this exhibition are mostly from the period 2005–2010, when I grappled directly with figuration, and with approximations of bodily form, form that was never autonomous, and always tethered to architecture and the work’s immediate context. They represent a larger body of work which I refer to as “hinged figures.” Instead of clustering the works together in one gallery, I wanted to disperse these hinged figures across multiple sites in the museum, where they would interconnect with the different artistic periods and distinct architectural environments.

In the early 1990s I created work that explored the erosion of public space as a context for queer individuals and groups. I was concerned with the sanitizing and privatization of urban sites, and the political motivations behind it. The neglected, un-speculated corners of cities that had served as safe, albeit precarious, spaces for queer people were being eradicated.

At the same time, I was considering what it meant for me to inhabit another artist’s form, specifically Minimalist form, as if it were my own, much like inhabiting another person’s body as a sort of camouflage, or drag. Or inhabiting a physical space not intended for you, squatting there while altering its identity and twisting its function. I consciously adopted and adapted the work of Tony Smith, for instance, during this period, in order to maneuver from within it, while transforming its meaning to my own ends.1

The hinged figures were a way for me to bring together my interests in Minimalist forms and how bodies, specifically queer bodies, shape and are shaped by the spaces that they inhabit. I grafted historical queer figures like Truman Capote and Robert Mapplethorpe onto these physical forms, which existed somewhere between an architectural fragment, a piece of furniture, and a crude approximation of a reclining human figure. The angled, hinged plywood structures are precarious, and need to be propped or pinned and secured in place. It’s this quality of potential collapse that allows the architecture and the fragile, uncertain personas, to mirror each other.

The first persona I used was Truman Capote.2 I was specifically interested in the physical and mental decline of Capote as witnessed on television talk shows in the 1970s, the unraveling of himself later in life, and the scene of that unraveling occurring under acute public scrutiny. Christmas Collapse, is the smallest of the
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ter.
hinged figures, and contains a copy of Capote’s 1956 short story *A Christmas Memory*, an evocation of loss and longing for an earlier, idyllic time in the life of the narrator. The work is located in the Wadsworth’s Wetmore Parlor, an eighteenth-century period room that evokes a similar sense of nostalgia and melancholy for past lives, both actual and imagined.

In 2008 I made the exhibition *Addict-Love* at Sculpture Center, in New York, centering on the idea of the twentieth-century New York avant-garde of the 1920s and ‘30s, and the 1950s and ‘60s, and considering these two historical moments as a script of gestures and movements. The title of the exhibition was taken from a Frank O’Hara poem, anchoring the 1950s period when the New York School reigned, co-mingling painterly practice with poetic written word, queer subcultural energies with the more dominant masculinist heroic performances of the Abstract Expressionists. *Propped perfume*—located in the Huntington Gallery with Tony Smith’s collection of Abstract Expressionist paintings—was meant to suggest some of the intensely social atmosphere that surrounds art movements. Along with its original companion pieces, *bent booze* and *hinged haze*, it considers the smells, tastes, and intoxications of these scenes being played out in a collective fashion. It pokes fun, in a sense, at twentieth-century rituals surrounding creative figures. I approached the Sculpture Center show as a choreography—as much about constriction and restraint as about freedom and part something was a key figure

Chick Austin became 26 and was the child. He embodied that desire, across the architectonics of structure, but also of strategies of stamina.

In an inversion of what was triggered them. The museum interior where Gertrude Stein lived in 1934. But this
as about freedom of movement—of known but incomplete steps, part historical canon and part something that eludes or exceeds that canon. A. Everett “Chick” Austin Jr. was a key figure in Addict-Love.

Chick Austin became the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1927 at the age of 26 and was the center of an artistic and literary social circle in Hartford and New York. He embodied the play between expression and constraint that I was interested in. I was anxious about the prospects of using Chick. My anxiety stemmed from the complexity of Chick’s sexuality, as a public as well as private dynamic, and the dispersal of his desire—his bisexuality if not homosexuality—and the constraints on that desire, across disparate rooms, social spheres, and geographic locations. The architectonics of the closet (relative to Chick) interested me, as both a repressive structure, but also as a generative one: generative of persona, of a character, and of strategies of survival and pleasure. 3

In an inversion of established site-specific logic, these works now return to be installed in rooms they were never in, but which resonate with the history that triggered them. The MATRIX Gallery and Avery Court—the first International Style museum interior in the United States—sits just above the original Avery Theater, where Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson’s opera Four Saints in Three Acts premiered in 1934. 4 But this exhibition is not a neat equation; I didn’t want to just reinstall these works in the MATRIX Gallery.

The site of the matrix figure series. Sam Wagstaff’s lives. LeWitt’s Incompleteness. 5 associations with associating with and intoxications with on fragmentation on signal the interconnectedness.

For the most part, the MATRIX figure series—though I
the historical canon of "Austen Jr."

I was interested in the contrast between the museum setting and New York. I realized that an important aspect of the work was to reinstall these works in their referenced setting and somehow resolve that intended gap, I wanted to include them as components of a larger body of work that has to do with figuration, space, and dispersion.

The site of the museum itself prompted more associations in relation to the hinged figure series. Sam Wagstaff, curator of painting and sculpture at the Wadsworth Atheneum from 1961–68, was an early supporter of Tony Smith and a generation of artists who would come to represent Minimalism. Wagstaff was also the lover and companion of Robert Mapplethorpe. In 2010 I made one foot in the grave, a natural plywood hinged figure that has a single Mapplethorpe flower postcard pinned to its upper panel and a small pile of earth covering a section of its lower extension. The work is a contemplation on illness and AIDS, which took both Mapplethorpe and Wagstaff's lives. Located on Colt Mezzanine, the sculpture is installed next to Sol LeWitt's Incomplete Open Cube 6/19 (1974). The pairing was a conscious one for the associations with Minimalism, but also for the poetic theme of incompleteness that resonates from one work to the other. LeWitt's project can be seen as a meditation on fragmentation and dispersion. But at the same time, in this setting, the sculptures signal the interrupted lives of Mapplethorpe, Wagstaff, and countless others.

For the most part, I've moved beyond this body of work—the hinged plywood figures—though I have periodic relapses. For the exhibition, I created two new works.
Sam-I-Am is located in the center of the Avery Court with Pietro Francavilla’s *Venus with Nymph and Satyr* (1600). The choice of location once again echoes Tony Smith. In 1966 he created the sculpture titled *Fixture*, a large, triangulated plywood mock-up, which enclosed the fountain and the *Venus* sculpture in its entirety. In my work, the hinged figure itself is supported by a thick, black plywood monolith spanning the width of the fountain, lifting the figure up in juxtaposition to the three entwined marble figures beside it.

*Inventory of Inherited Masculinities* is located in Chick Austin’s former home on nearby Scarborough Street in Hartford. Sited in the rouge-colored, Baroque-appointed living room, the work is placed in direct relation to the latent anthropomorphic conditions of domestic furniture. Both functioning as a monument to high camp and a normative family home, the house created shelter and protection, as well as fantasy, through its largely inward-looking orientation and theatrical embellishments.

These final two sites create a frame for the constellation of locations across the Museum’s galleries that make up the exhibition, linking together public and private spaces, and hinging together the individual hinged figures themselves.

Tom Burr

Villa’s Venus by Tony Smith. Hollywood mock-up, my work, the pointed living conditions of a normative house, through its windowed marble.

Across the public and private.

SELECTED SOLO

2019  Tom Burr/MAX Wadsworth Art
Hartford, CT
Helio-Centric
2018  No Access, S
Savannah, GA
Sedimental,
Savannah, GA
2017  Surplus of My
Kunstverein,
2014  Tom Burr: Sc
Studies and
Bard College
Annandale-on- Hudson, NY
2013  Dressage, P
Switzerland
2012  Clouds in T
Umbria, Italy

SELECTED GROUP

2019  Queer Abstra,
Des Moines,
2018  The Condition
Gallerie K 014,
Düsseldorf, G
2017  Benz Bonin B
Skulptur Projekt
2016  Question the
Minneapolis, MN
2015  To expos
inform, to of
Stiftung Ludwig
Köln, Germany
2014  Take It or Lea
Ideology, Ham
2013  Outside the L
Museum, Hou

© Tony Smith.
TO M B U R R

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019  Tom Burr/MATRIX 182/Hinged Figures, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
2018  Hello-Centricities, Auroras, São Paulo, Brazil
2017  Surplus of Myself, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany
2014  Tom Burr. Screen, Center for Curatorial Studies and Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College (CCS Bard), Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
2013  Dressage, Parcours, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland
2012  Clouds in Trousers, Città della Pieve, Umbria, Italy

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019  Queer Abstraction, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA
2017  Benz Bonin Burr with Cosima von Bonin, Skulptur Projekt, Münster, Germany
2016  Question the Wall Itself, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
2015  To expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer, Museum Moderer Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria
2014  Outside the Lines, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX

2011  Gravity Moves Me, FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France
2009  Bonvicini/Burr, (with Monica Bonvicini), Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, Germany, travelling to Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland
2008  Addict-Love, SculptureCenter, New York, NY
2007  Moods; Secession, Vienna, Austria
2006  Extrospective, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne, Switzerland
2003  The Screens, Institute for Visual Culture, Cambridge, United Kingdom
2000  Low Slung, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig, Germany
1992  White Columns, New York, NY

WORKS IN THE ESTATE

1  Chick, 2008
   Plywood, paint, Straitjacket, white steel ashtray
   42 x 138 x 200 in
   Collection of Sheldon and Phyllis Arons

2  Chicks, 2008
   Plywood, wood box, vintage tunic, cover of Four Saints in Three Acts
   40 x 276 x 252 in
   Collection of Jill and Peter Sam-

3  Sam-I-Am, 2019
   Plywood, paint, stuffed photographs and steel push pins
   Dimensions variable
   Courtesy the artist

4  Bent, Bandaged, Bewildered, 1993
   Painted wood, brass
   64 3/5 x 59 x 23 in
   Courtesy the artist

See maps on following pages. Access to the Artist’s Studio. For more information, please contact the artist directly.
SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
Lenbachhaus Museum, Munich, Germany
Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany
MART Museum, Rovereto, Italy
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
New York Public Library, New York, NY
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

1. Chick, 2008
   Plywood, paint, steel hinges, canvas medical straitjacket, white rubber, steel drafting lamp, steel ashtray
   42 x 138 x 200 in.
   Collection of Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons

2. Chicks, 2008
   Plywood, wood balusters, vintage 1970s Chanel dress, vintage turntable, record and album cover of Four Saints in Three Acts by Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein
   40 x 276 x 252 in.
   Collection of Jill and Peter Kraus

3. Sam-I-Am, 2019
   Plywood, paint, steel hinges, mirror, photographs and printed material, steel push pins
   Dimensions variable
   Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, NY

4. Bent, Bandaged, Beat up, Beat up again, and Bewildered, (Heal Me), 2008
   Painted wood, bandage, metallic chain
   64 3/5 x 59 x 23 3/5 in.
   Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, NY

5. propped perfume, 2008
   Plywood, paint, steel hinges, steel thumbtacks, vintage magazine ads, feather boa, steel cable
   73 x 24 x 100 in.
   Collection of Barbara and Howard Morse

6. Christmas Collapse, 2005
   Wood, latex, paint, metal, hardware, glass, paper
   Dimensions variable
   Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
   Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez, 2016.186-a-d

7. one foot in the grave (reclining), 2010
   Natural wood, hinges, postcard, soil
   31 1/2 x 18 x 96 1/2 in.
   Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, NY

8. Inventory of Inherited Masculinities, 2019
   Plywood, paint, steel hinges, Philip Johnson’s jacket, books, pamphlets
   Dimensions variable
   Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, NY
   Provenance of Jacket:
   Philip Johnson
   Fran Lebowitz
   Ricardo Kugelmass
   Tom Burr

See maps on following panel for location of works throughout the Museum and Austin House.
Access to the Austin House is limited; for reservations, call 860-838-4046. Please see website for more information: www.thewadsworth.org and search: Austin House.
I explored eroding public space and engaging with conceptions of way into thinking about sub-cultural respite and sub-cultural rejuvenating, it was my hope, transforming it into my own color, as well as shifting the

The Complete Stories of T拥挤

While the idea of the closet, is often grounded in very specific in relation to the pressure of cultural identities, Philip Johnson’s

In 1930, Chick Austin and his Palladian villa they had been decorated with Italian Baroque, became the social theater

ARTIST TALK
TOM BURR
Thursday, June 6, 6:30pm
Free with museum admission

CURATOR TALK
PATRICIA HICKSON
Emily Hall Tremaine Court
Thursday, August 29, 6:30pm
Free with museum admission

LOCATION OF WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Austin House

see website
I explored eroding public space through the lens of Robert Smithson, building out and away from his conception of the earthwork towards a form to engage with conceptions of naturalness, neutrality, and difference; I adopted Tony Smith’s approach to physicality and his black chromatic density as a way into thinking about sculpture in relation to its other: actual lived spaces. Bars, dark rooms, theaters, and hybrids of these typologies emerged through this work, always straddling the line between sculptural status and a space or place of interiority. Queer architectural types, spaces of sub-cultural respite and assignation, were layered over and through the logic of Minimalist form, attempting to produce a sort of fantasy of form, unleashing, it was my hope, both closely felt pleasure and a gap of critical distance. And in 2000 I borrowed Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc (1981) and transformed it into my own Deep Purple pulling Serra into the work as a figure, up and against my own presence. Through altered scale, material, and color, as well as shifting the conditions of site-specific practice, Deep Purple performs an act of mimicry and impersonation.


While the idea of the closet, and of being “closeted” is an oppressive and dangerous space to exist within, it also produces affects and conditions, and it is often grounded in very specific architectural locations where someone can be “out” or not. Modes of behavior, or dress, and of survival, are developed in relation to the pressure of the closet and the dual existence it creates.

Four Saints in Three Acts is a modernist opera written by Gertrude Stein with music by Virgil Thomson. The opera, featuring an all-black cast, premiered at the Avery Memorial Theater on February 7, 1934, to a sold-out audience. Chick Austin had planned the production to coincide with the opening of the first comprehensive Picasso exhibition to be mounted in the United States.

Sam Wagstaff curated the seminal exhibition Black, White and Grey at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1964. While expansive and varied in its inclusions, the exhibition came to be known, along with Hynesorton McShine’s 1966 Primary Structures exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York, as the first institutional presentations of Minimal Art. Wagstaff also worked extensively with Tony Smith during this period, presenting Smith’s first large-scale sculpture show at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1966.

In 1930, Chick Austin and his wife Helen Goodwin Austin built their wooden house on Scarborough Street in Hartford. Modeled after a sixteenth-century Palladian villa they had seen in Italy, the house stands in stark contrast to the neighboring homes. Often noted for its stage-like quality, elaborately decorated with Italian Baroque furnishings on the first floor in contrast with the Modern Bauhaus-style bathrooms on the second floor, the house became the social theater space for Chick Austin and his circle of friends.