



Robert Morris at Hunter College

By Robert Shuster

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Films by Robert Morris

In his philosophic writings promoting minimalism, Robert Morris has often insisted on the de-personalization of the artist, but, luckily for us, he hasn't always adhered to his theories. His rarely screened films, given plenty of space in the maze of rooms here, offer up a surprisingly intimate conceptualism.

Several black-and-white works from 1969 are particularly endearing. In *Mirror*, the artist himself holds a large reflective surface and walks backward, facing the camera, through a snow-covered field. The surrounding trees and sky appear in the mirror as a frame within a frame, and, as Morris retreats, he seems to be stealing, magically, a piece of the landscape. For *Wisconsin*, Morris directed a large group of students to run, wander, collide, and form piles in certain patterns on another snowy field. Though their movements hint at mass hysteria, mass hypnosis, and, when they collapse in sequence, mass murder, the film ultimately celebrates the joy of participation. In line with his theories, Morris remained distant from *Slow Motion* (literally, by phoning in directions), but this film explores an odd and private sensuality, featuring, in grainy slo-mo, the naked torso of a beefcake guy pressing himself against a glass-panel door.

On the opposite extreme is the vaguely sinister *Gas Station* (1969), which presents (in color) two views of the same location, one in wide-angle, the other from a telephoto lens. The juxtaposition of the frames, slightly out of synch, suggests the French New Wave's fragmented narratives, but in the calm, close-up pans, you can't help but think of an assassin's surveillance, surely on everyone's mind that year. In his sculptures, Morris has never been exactly solicitous of the viewer's engagement, but as a filmmaker, he comes pretty close.

Hunter College Art Gallery, 450 W 41st St, 212-772-4991. Through November 21