“CHRIS BURDEN: EXTREME MEASURES”
NEW MUSEUM • October 2, 2013–January 12, 2014 • Curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Jenny Moore, and Lisa Phillips • Chris Burden’s breakthrough performance pieces, such as Swoot and Prelude to 220, or 110, both 1971, still unsettle our complacent acceptance of the status quo—a jolt that can make us overlook the delicate balance of elements at play in his work. The New Museum’s building-wide retrospective will offer a great opportunity to contemplate an impressive cross-section of this influential artist’s oeuvre. Burden turns a sharp visual eye on the broader social context of the artwork to simultaneously dissect and upend the figure-ground relationship that society idealizes even at the basic level of law and order, thereby bringing the backdrop of our conventions to the very fore. Looking at a great sculpture such as The Big Wheel, 1979, and nervously considering the physical implications of something going amiss, one realizes that what actually holds it all together is that Burden has shown us that something was already amiss in the bigger picture, in our aesthetics and unquestioned social structures.
—Charles Ray