

**Exhibiting Cinema:
The Moving Image in Art After 1990**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction– The Othered Cinema	1
Chapter One– Architectures of Exhibition	36
Chapter Two– A Cinema in Ruins: Medium Specificity and the Rhetoric of Obsolescence	113
Chapter Three– The Remake: Old Movies, New Narratives	189
Chapter Four– The Fiction of Truth and the Truth of Fiction	275
Conclusion– “Cinema and...”	336
Appendix A– Timeline	359
Appendix B– Images	364
Works Cited	394

Introduction: The Othered Cinema

[T]he need is to propose new answers to the question that is now raised in all institutions dedicated to modern and contemporary art: How is film to be exhibited and how is film to attain the status of an artwork?

–Bruno Racine, president, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006¹

A German art magazine recently posed the contemporarily appropriate question: ‘What does art want from film?’ However, they could not provide an appropriate answer, because they were implicated in the system which they wanted to describe: the definition of art was presumed—and it excluded film.

–Lars Henrik Gass, director of International Oberhausen Short Film Festival, 2008²

To open, an *Overture*. In 1986, Stan Douglas produced a 16mm work that recycled some of cinema’s earliest images and one of its earliest genres, the phantom ride [FIGURE 1]. Douglas paired recycled footage from two Edison films shot in the Canadian Rockies, *Kicking Horse Canyon* (1899) and *White Pass, British Columbia* (1901), with a soundtrack of passages excerpted from Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. *Overture* consists of three image sections, each separated by black leader, and six passages of text. These passages are read by a male in voiceover through two repetitions of the image-track, resulting in the same image being accompanied by different text in the second iteration of the seven-minute loop. The phantom ride celebrates technologized perception, bringing together two of its most powerful incarnations: the speed of the locomotive and the mechanical eye of cinema. At a time when it was not possible to move the camera, the genre functioned as one way of enabling a mobile gaze. The iconography of the train, meanwhile, is inextricably linked to the birth of cinema through the inaugural rush of the Lumières’ *L’Arrivée d’un train à la Ciotat* (1895).³

¹ Bruno Racine, “Avant-propos,” *Le Mouvement des Images* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006), 9

² Lars Henrik Gass, “Afterword: After the Cinema,” *Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 158

³ Furthermore, as Lynne Kirby notes in her study, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema*, “As a machine of vision and an instrument for conquering space and time, the train is a mechanical double for the cinema and for the transport of the spectator into fiction, fantasy, and dream.” See: Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 2. For an account of the perceptual and temporal changes brought about by locomotive travel and its affinities to cinema, see:

In *Overture*, the train winds around the mountains, supplies views of the landscape, and travels through tunnels of darkness, offering the spectator a glimpse of how train travel would appear from the front window of the conductor's car. On the soundtrack, a monologue unfolds that is drawn from those fragile moments between sleeping and waking. Seemingly opposed to the fast-moving views of faraway lands seen on the image-track, the voiceover speaks of private, internal experience. And yet, as memories rush in and surround the narrator, he describes the experience in distinctly cinematic terms: "Everything revolved around me through the darkness: things, places, years." He then goes on to discuss the inability to separate one sensation from another with reference to the illusion of movement achieved by the proto-cinematic device of the bioscope. *Overture* thus brings together two conceptions of time that are central to late nineteenth-century modernity: the public, standardized time that is closely linked to the development of the railway and the subjective time of involuntary memory as elaborated by Proust.⁴ Somewhere between them—between regularity and contingency, public and private—lies the time of cinema.

Overture would not be out of place amongst the many works of the experimental film tradition that have drawn upon the pre-classical cinema, such as Ernie Gehr's *Eureka* (1974), which also uses footage of a phantom ride.⁵ However, *Overture* is not an experimental film, but a film installation. It belongs not to the movie theatre, but to the art gallery. It is an early example of the ways in which artists would claim the gallery as a space to investigate film history in the 1990s, prefiguring two strategies that would become central to this undertaking: the remake of an existing film and the investigation

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 33-44

⁴ The railroad companies were the first to institute standardized time in order to facilitate scheduling departure and arrival times, imposing a single time on 18 November 1883. For an overview of the function of standardized and subjective time in the late nineteenth century, see: Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Space and Time: 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 10-35

⁵ On the relationship between early cinema and the avant-garde, see: Bart Testa, *Back and Forth: Early Cinema and the Avant-Garde* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992)

of 16mm as a medium aligned with historicity. *Overture* is, then, something of an overture for the explosion of references to film history and uses of the moving image that would occur in artistic production from around 1990 onwards. From one *fin-de-siècle* to another, it is a return to the subjective transformations brought about by the invention of cinema at the end of the nineteenth century amidst those initiated by new electronic media at the end of the twentieth. As an indexical trace of pastness, the grainy footage of the Edison films contains within it the very force of time that Proust's narrator sought to recover, testifying to the way in which the past can be summoned in all its anachronism to challenge the present. As Douglas has remarked, "When they become obsolete, forms of communication become an index of an understanding of the world lost to us."⁶ In *Overture* the cinema emerges as such an obsolete form of communication, as a superannuated technology that might possess a redemptive power. Douglas' use of cinema conceives of it as an old medium, but does so on the horizon of staking out a new moving-image practice that might provide a reflection on the encounters between novelty and obsolescence, subjectivity and technology, that mark our contemporary moment.

In the almost quarter century that has passed since *Overture*, a whole host of artists have raised precisely these questions and have reinvented cinema within the spaces of art in the process. This dissertation will trace these developments and conceptualize the profound ramifications they have for art and for cinema alike. It will argue that the explosion of moving images in the spaces of art over the last two decades constitutes a primary site at which notions of cinema have been renegotiated and redefined. Cinema becomes a preoccupation of contemporary art precisely at a time when it is perceived to be crisis due to the increasingly consolidated hegemony of new

⁶ Stan Douglas, quoted in: "Diana Thater in Conversation with Stan Douglas," Scott Watson, *et al.*, *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 9

media—media that would be digitized and networked as the 1990s progressed. As a result, cinema enters the gallery as a reaction to convergence culture. It appears as something of an old medium, a notion very much at play in *Overture*'s embrace of 16mm as an outmoded device. However, though the cinema is older than new media, it is also newer than traditional media such as painting or sculpture. As such, it can be summoned to provide a dose of technological novelty and spectacle that, rather than standing against the motions of convergence, participates in them insofar as it compromises what were once relatively rigid borders between the image-regimes of cinema and art.

This dissertation will trace the ways in which this interplay of old and new media has unfolded across the multifaceted explosion of cinema in the gallery since 1990, taking care to contextualize these developments in relation to the contemporary fate of cinema and the spectacularization of the museum in an age of converging media and converging cultures, high and low. Moving across theoretical debates, curatorial decisions, and artistic practices, it will bring the tools of film theory to bear on what have traditionally been considered to be art historical objects, both to shed light on a new sector of moving-image practice and to conceptualize how this sector relates to both cinema and cinema studies. Following Giuliana Bruno's assertion of the necessity of an interdisciplinary study of film and art,⁷ it is the contention of this dissertation that cinema studies must reckon with the increasing presence of moving images into the gallery, for it represents the crucial site where one glimpses a sustained inquiry into the cultural meaning and history of the cinema over the past twenty years.

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin articulated the pressing question of how the advent of mechanical reproduction, most forcefully embodied in the cinema, might

⁷ Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 60

change our conception of art.⁸ Without abandoning this notion—for it is by no means settled—this dissertation will chiastically invert this query for the twenty-first century to ask: how does the progressive integration of film into the gallery and the museum, as it mutates and fractures, change our conception of cinema? And how might cinema in the gallery function as a microcosm in which to examine the transformations cinema is undergoing today? The questions cited as the epigraph to this introduction—“How is film to attain artwork status?” and “What does art want from film?”—are urgent indeed, but risk badly framing the dialogue, for both presuppose a stability and separability of these entities that are in fact undergoing a major renegotiation and hybridization. Instead, it is important to ask how the increasing integration of cinema into a gallery space changes *both* cinema *and* the gallery.

Certainly, uses of film and video have been central components of artistic practice since at least the 1960s or even reaching back to the cinematic experiments of the historical avant-garde. However, throughout most of the last century, there was a determined effort to disarticulate any relationship between artists’ employments of the moving image and the institution of cinema, as artists working with film and video refused illusionism and narrative and instead cultivated alliances with other media, such as sculpture and performance. Gallery-based uses of film virtually disappeared with the popularization of video, while video art developed a history of its own fundamentally apart from interactions with cinema. Since 1990, there has been a marked emergence of moving-image practices within the spaces of art very much under the sign of cinema. Film and video have achieved such ubiquity in galleries and museums during this period that Hal Foster has called them default media of contemporary art, while Mark Nash

⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version),” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 101-133

proclaims that the moving image has today become an “artistic *lingua franca*.”⁹ If, for decades, video art had aligned itself with other media such as sculpture, performance, or even the democratic impulse of television in an effort to disarticulate any relation to commercial cinema, since 1990 one witnesses a marked cultivation of cinematic tropes and conventions, such as *mise-en-scène*, montage, spectacle, narrative, and projection. Chrissie Iles has referred to this as the “new cinematic aesthetic in video,” writing that, “In form and content, video is now mimicking the qualities that had always pertained exclusively to film. The use of the word *video* as a defining term for a particular area of contemporary art no longer appears to be either necessary or relevant.”¹⁰

Some artists take up the history of cinema as fertile ground for artistic inquiry, while for others references to the specificity of film history are avoided in favour of an employment of tropes and strategies drawn from cinema. Filmmakers such as Chantal Akerman, Atom Egoyan, Jean-Luc Godard, Peter Greenaway, Abbas Kiarostami, and Chris Marker have made installation works, while recent editions of the Venice Biennale have been filled with moving images and the 2006 Whitney Biennial was cinematically titled *Day for Night*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, created a Department of Media to deal with its growing collection of film and video artworks in 2006, and even *Cahiers du cinéma* produced a special “Cinéma au musée” (“Cinema in the Museum”) dossier for issue 611 in April of that year. The products of the movie theatre are increasingly shown in gallery settings and group exhibitions thematically curated around the notion of cinema proliferate.¹¹ These exhibitions range from using cinema as a rubric

⁹ Hal Foster, “Roundtable: The Projected Image In Contemporary Art,” *October*, no. 104 (Spring 2003), 93; Mark Nash, “Between Cinema and a Hard Place: Dilemmas of the Moving Image as a Post-Medium,” *Art of Projection*, ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 141

¹⁰ Chrissie Iles, “Issues in the New Cinematic Aesthetic in Video,” *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (Glasgow and Manchester: Centre for Contemporary Arts and Manchester Metropolitan University, 2003), 140

¹¹ A substantial but not exhaustive chronological list of such exhibitions includes *Passages de l'image* (Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990), *Illusion–Emotion–Realität, 100 Jahre Kino: Die 7. Kunst auf der Suche nach den 6 Andern* (Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich, 1995), *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945*

to explore art across various media, to exploring the presence of cinema within new moving-image practices, to exhibiting works made for a movie theatre within a gallery, or even concentrating solely on the design of film credits.

The title of this study, *Exhibiting Cinema*, is meant in two senses. The importation of cinema into the space of the museum and gallery constitutes a new way of exhibiting or displaying cinema, certainly. But the title of this dissertation also draws on the etymological meaning of the verb “to exhibit” as stemming from the Latin *exhibere*, which, in its conjunction of *ex-* (out) and *habere* (to hold), invokes notions of presenting something for examination. These works “exhibit cinema” in the sense that they hold it out to view or subject it to scrutiny. This dissertation will argue that uses of cinema in the gallery since 1990 provide a site at which one may discern a sustained reflection on the kind of mutations and migrations the cinema is undergoing all across the cultural field at this time. In this sense, this dissertation may be understood as an intervention in the recent film theoretical debates that speculate on the present and future of the institution of cinema. If it is possible to identify a single set of questions that has preoccupied film theory in the past twenty years, it is without a doubt a return to the ontological inquiry, “What is cinema?,” now understood as an eminently historical formulation to which numerous answers might obtain. This dissertation will engage in these debates and contribute to them by interrogating a new space of cinema that has thus far been ignored

(Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1996), *Scream and Scream Again* (Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1996), *Spellbound* (Hayward Gallery, London, 1996), *Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art* (Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1999), *Cinéma Cinéma: Art and the Cinematic Experience* (Van Abbemuseum, Rotterdam, 1999), *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* (Tate Modern, London, 2000), *Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2001), *Image Stream* (Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, 2001), *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2001), *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2002), *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video* (Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, 2004), *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection* (Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2006), *Kino wie noch nie* (Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2006), *Le Mouvement des images* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2006), *Collateral: When Art Looks at Cinema* (Hangar Bicocca, Milan, 2007), *The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image* (Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C., 2008), and *Vorspannkino* (Kunst-Werke, Berlin, 2009).

in such discussions. In the gallery-based moving-image production of the last two decades, it will find a site at which interrogations into cinematic specificity that both encompass and extend beyond the materiality of the apparatus have taken place. As opposed to locating cinematic specificity in one or more material components of the apparatus, these works “exhibit” cinema as a social and historical institution and look to these extra-material attributes in their assertions of what the cinema was, what the cinema is, and what the cinema can do.

Second-Century Cinema

When one speaks about the transformations cinema is undergoing in the early years of its second century, it is most often in the context of a digital “threat,” a becoming-calculable of the film image that makes way for the CGI monsters of summer blockbusters and movies based on video games. Surely, this is one mutation the cinema is undergoing. But one might also look at the many other ways moving-image art is responding to the proliferation of digital media and the changes wrought to distribution and exhibition structures. Hollywood is not alone in its attempt to redefine the cinema. As noted above, contemporary art’s obsession with cinema has taken place over the course of two decades that have witnessed striking changes in the cinematic institution, very much participating in *and* responding to the movements of convergence.

On a very basic level, the keyword “convergence” designates the operation by which media lose their medium-specific qualities by being remediated or transcoded to data based in binary code.¹² It must be emphasized, though, that convergence is not

¹² “Remediation” is the term used by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, following Marshall McLuhan, to refer to the tendency of new media to incorporate characteristics of old media in order to better convey a sense of immediacy through a deployment of the familiar. While Bolter and Grusin assert that remediation is nothing new and may not be seen as a property exclusive to new media, they do emphasize that the contemporary moment raises the question of how old media are integrated into new media in a manner more urgent than ever before, since what may be said to be “new” about new media is bound up precisely with the relation they construct to older media: “What is new about new media comes

merely a matter of material substrate. Rather, as the products of cinema become available on an increasing number of viewing platforms, the heterogeneous practices that form a part of the cinematic institution also shift, giving rise to anxiety concerning its place—in both a literal and a figurative sense—in an increasingly digitized and mobile culture. While anxieties over the increasing obsolescence of celluloid film proliferate, the industrial products of cinema have attained a greater reach than ever before, with markets expanding worldwide through the Internet and mobile wireless technologies. It would risk historical blindness to speak of a new ontological instability of cinema,¹³ for it is clear that the cinema's ontology has always been diverse and variable, developing from a mute technological marvel through the epic spectacles of CinemaScope and the advent of the blockbuster, to the small screens of television broadcasting and VCR platforms. However, it is certain that since the 1990s, widespread digitization has sparked diverse anxieties concerning the fates of both the material of film and the cinematic institution.

If, for decades, the elements of the cinematic apparatus had been tightly sutured together to form a discernible entity, recent years have seen these elements dispersed across the field of culture, shattering the cinema into a multiplicity of attributes that separate, recombine, mutate, and enter into aggregate formations with other media. “Convergence” is perhaps an ironic title for this movement, which might just as easily be named “divergence” or “dissolution”—for when formerly discrete sectors of culture converge according to a shared technological substrate, the contours of formerly delimited zones dissolve. Elements of the cinematic apparatus break out of the

from the particular ways they refashion older media and the ways in which the older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.” “Transcoding” is taken from Lev Manovich, who calls it “most substantial consequence of the computerization of media.” See: David Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 15; Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 45

¹³ In his 2007 book, *The Virtual Life of Film*, D.N. Rodowick emphasizes that “the difficulty of placing film as an object grounding an area of study does not begin with the digital ‘virtualization’ of the image. Indeed one might say that the entire history of the medium, and of the critical thought that has accompanied it, has returned incessantly to film’s uncertain status.” See: David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 12

previously fixed network of relations of which they were once a part to now appear far from their usual configuration in new constellations that inhabit a murky interstitial space between cinema and its various others—television, the Internet, video games, mobile phones, and, of course, media art. For Henry Jenkins, convergence has less to do with technological change than it does with this kind of circulation of media content across various platforms, national boundaries, and economies. Jenkins writes that, “[C]onvergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content.”¹⁴ While one must understand convergence at the level of technology, for it is an important determination of this larger reconfiguration of media systems on a global level, Jenkins’ emphasis on convergence as a more general movement of contemporary culture has important implications for understanding the mutations of cinema in the gallery from the 1990s onward, as it speaks to the reconfiguration of institution on levels other than technology alone.

Rather than simply describing the contemporary moment as marked by the undifferentiation of convergence, it is more useful to consider it as characterized by the unleashing of multiple medium specificities that disperse the notion of cinema across varied conceptual and material spaces. Ideas of what the cinema might *be* are now articulated in numerous and incompatible forums, ranging from Hollywood’s increasing efforts to combat online bootlegging through campaigns that emphasize the gigantism of the multiplex screen to partnerships with mobile telephone companies (now rebranding themselves as providers of “multimedia devices”) to deliver content on tiny, handheld gadgets. Rather than buy into the notion that all media will converge into an undifferentiated digital field, it is necessary today to interrogate the ways in which the boundaries between media are both articulated and blurred, seeing the pair of

¹⁴ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3

convergence/specificity as existing in a tension with one another that allows for a new thinking of historicized ontologies rather than a dissolution, or even disappearance, of a given medium. By demonstrating the heterogeneity and variability of contemporary cinematic practices, this dissertation will avoid reifying cinema into a set of essential characteristics, thus dismantling predictions of apocalypse (for how can an apocalypse occur when variability and historical change is taken as the standard?) and avoiding mythologization (for the centrality of historicity impedes the freezing of contingency into the eternal nature of myth).

The Othered Cinema

Far from reducible to a single postulate, the presence of cinema in contemporary art is multifaceted, encompassing single-channel works alongside multi-screen projection, film as well as video, looped exhibition versus scheduled screening times, an interest in the virtuality of a represented world or in the phenomenology of spectatorship, an espousal or a rejection of narrative, and the differences between works made expressly for a gallery context and those made for traditional cinematic exhibition that now find themselves transported into the white cube. Jean-Christophe Royoux has termed these developments the *cinéma d'exposition* ("cinema of exhibition"), while Raymond Bellour has written of an "other cinema" that he describes as a "mimesis of cinema by other means."¹⁵

Responding to the large number of moving-image installations he encountered at the 2001 edition of the Venice Biennale, Bellour writes that,

These installations, and the forces that animate them, may seem to be the effect of the so-called "crisis" within cinema and to the difficulties of contemporary art,

¹⁵ Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Remaking Cinema," *Cinema, Cinema: Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1999), 21; Raymond Bellour, "Of An Other Cinema," *Black Box Illuminated*, ed. Sara Arrhenius, Magdalena Malm, and Cristina Ricupero, (Stockholm: Propexus, 2003), 39-62; Raymond Bellour, "'Le cinéma seul' / Multiples 'cinémas,'" *Le Septième art: Le Cinéma parmi les autres arts*, ed. Jacques Aumont (Paris: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2003), 262; translation mine.

of which installations are probably the most vivid manifestation. But if it is difficult to assimilate these works to the tradition of the plastic arts, the very framework of which they explode, it is no less difficult to take them as belonging to traditional cinema or as a supplement of cinema; it would rather be better to continue (to the extent that it will be possible) to recapture cinema in the historical and formal singularity of its own device. The strange force of these works is thus to open ever more clearly the indefinable expansion of *an other cinema*, according to which the conditions of an *aesthetics of confusion* are clarified and amplified. It is better to try to describe its nuances than to pretend to be able to escape them.¹⁶

This dissertation will take up the task of describing the nuances of what Bellour terms the “other cinema.” However, it will depart from Bellour’s preference that it would be better to “recapture cinema in the historical and formal singularity of its own device” and to maintain a rigid division between this cinema and the “other cinema.” For to do so would be to overlook the many which this “other cinema” recontextualizes the cinema and reflects on it as it has traditionally been conceived. Indeed, some components of the “other cinema,” such as Douglas’ *Overture* and the 16mm practices that will be discussed in chapter two, attempt to re-collect cinema—that is, to both remember it and piece together again. The “historical and formal singularity of cinema” is precisely that—historical. It is not something that can be taken for granted as having an existence independent of the many transitions cinema is undergoing. Accordingly, the pages that follow with attempt to establish a dialogue between the history, present, and future of cinema as it has traditionally been conceived and the gallery-based practices Bellour refers to as the “other cinema.” It will by no means attempt to collapse these works into an already existing tradition of cinema. As Adorno notes in his *Aesthetic Theory*, to understand the new only in terms of the old is to engage in a certain form of betrayal: “In the relation of modern artworks to older ones that are similar, it is their differences that should be elicited.”¹⁷ This dissertation will pay keen attention to these differences, but

¹⁶ Bellour, “Of An Other Cinema,” 41; emphasis in original

¹⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 19

also point out certain continuities, outright rejecting the term “post-cinema” in favour of interrogating the interactions between old and new incarnations of an ever-changing entity.

In a play on the terminology of Bellour’s notion of the other cinema, this dissertation will prefer to see in these developments an *othered cinema*. Rather than the strict alterity Bellour’s term maintains vis-à-vis cinema as traditionally conceived, understanding these gallery-based practices as an othered cinema is to suggest that they represent a site at which the cinema has become other to itself. They differ from it and yet share elements in common as well. The cinematic *dispositif* that had maintained hegemony for so long—what Bellour refers to as “the historical and formal singularity of cinema”—has shattered into its aggregate parts, which are now free to enter into new constellations with elements that may not be a part of the traditional *dispositif*. By using the term *dispositif*, often translated as “apparatus,” the intention is to emphasize the necessity of considering the specificity of cinema as residing not merely in its material substrate.¹⁸ Rather, the *dispositif*, as defined by Michel Foucault—rather than by Jean-Louis Baudry, whose use of the term is perhaps more familiar within film studies¹⁹—refers to a heterogeneous ensemble of material and discursive practices whose configuration is historically specific. Foucault has described the concept as

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.²⁰

¹⁸ This translation is unfortunate since it risks confusing the notion of the *dispositif* with that of the *appareil*, which designates solely technological components. The *dispositif* encompasses the *appareil* and much more, as per the definition provided by Foucault and cited above.

¹⁹ See: Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema,” trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand Augst, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299-318

²⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1971-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 194

In the case of cinema, the classical *dispositif* would thus include everything from the celluloid print to the projector, the theatre, ticketing policies, audience protocol, distribution practices, advertising methods, and more. This notion is central to conceiving of the relationship between cinema and the spaces of contemporary art for, in many cases, certain elements of the *dispositif* remain constant with cinema as traditionally conceived, while numerous others suggest a drastic mutation. This ensemble of parts irreducible to self-identity is precisely what the term the *othered cinema* hopes to invoke.

Old/New

Asserting the variable specificity of cinema necessitates grappling with its changing cultural status, as it both persists and even expands its reach as mass spectacle but simultaneously metamorphoses into an object worthy of the protection of the sanctified spaces of the museum and the gallery. Through this latter operation has been going on for some time now—beginning at least with the Museum of Modern Art’s decision to open a film library in 1935, contemporaneous with the formation of film archives worldwide—the contemporary moment is representative of a new phase in the claiming of cultural respectability and artistic value for the cinema. If Iris Barry, founder of the MoMA film archive, remarked that the relationship of the film library to the rest of the museum was “rather remote” and compared it to the “slightly ambiguous position of an adopted child who is never seen in the company of the family,” now, to continue the metaphor, film becomes the golden child of the museum, showered with attention and praise.²¹ One might argue that it is precisely the continued assertions that cinema is now an “old” or “dead” medium that make it fit for entrance into the museum—for, to follow

²¹ Iris Barry, quoted in: Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 121

Adorno, “museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art.”²²

The presence of film in the museum and the gallery prompts important questions about the contemporary status of cinema as a cultural institution and a mass medium. For Benjamin, cinema was a primary agent in the liquidation of cult value, something deemed essential to the authentic work of art.²³ Art’s basis in ritual gave way to exhibition value, characterized by an increased mobility and availability of the work of art by way of its reproduction, which induced a withering of aura. Certain elements of the contemporary integration of cinema into the museum are marked by a reversal of this process. Rarity and preciousness are cultivated as, in a digital age, cult value is retroactively attributed to the senescent cinema. Cinematic ruins and cinematic refuse appear within the museum and gallery as so many relics of another age, while mass circulation is reined in through the limited-edition model of distribution. This dissertation will demonstrate that this new cultic attachment to the cinema ranges from the employment of 16mm as a medium linked to a spectral historicity, to the selling of limited-edition 16mm prints for upwards of one hundred thousand dollars, and the nostalgic veneration of cinema as a lost object. These diverse developments are bound together by their shared status as reactions to widespread fears concerning the contemporary status of cinema.²⁴ This is by no means to partake in the melancholic refrain that proclaims the cinema to be dead, but rather to emphasize that such fears play an integral role in the tendency under discussion in this dissertation. Over the last two decades, the field of art has become a space in which these anxieties are exhibited and worked through.

²² Theodor Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 175

²³ Benjamin, 105

²⁴ For a general account of these fears, see: Wheeler Winston Dixon, “Twenty-five Reasons Why It’s All Over,” in *The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*, ed. Jon Lewis (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 356–66

However, to understand the integration of cinema into the museum as simply a matter of obsolescence is to ignore central aspects of how cinema has been mobilized in contemporary art. The activation of a cinematic cult value, visible in a work such as *Overture*, is matched by an unparalleled expansion of the value of exhibition within the museum itself. Museums resemble Adorno's mausoleum less and less as they integrate new technologies to provide interactive and visually stimulating experiences. Moreover, there are notable affinities between uses of the moving image in art over the past two decades and more generalized transitions in visual culture brought about by the motions of convergence. The rise of multi-screen projected-image installations, for example, may be linked to a change in what Anne Friedberg has called the "vernacular system of visibility" following digitization. Writing in 2006, she noted that "...aside from some notable historical anomalies, only in the last two decades—markedly with the advent of digital imaging technologies and new technologies of display—did the media 'window' begin to include multiple perspectives within a single frame."²⁵ Multi-screen installations go further to explode the single frame entirely and offer multiple perspectives within an experience of three-dimensional space.

Moreover, the mechanically reproducible, mass cultural medium of cinema contributes to an increasing technologization and spectacularization of art after modernism. One witnesses an increased contamination of what had formerly been designated "high" and "low" culture, as an MTV aesthetic permeates the museum walls in works by artists such as Doug Aitken and Pipilotti Rist, both of whom will be discussed in chapter one. In 1983, Hal Foster described an increasing spectacularization of contemporary art that abided by a Baudrillardian paradox: spectacle pervades artistic practice as an attempt to rescue the fading real, but by the same movement, it

²⁵ Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 3

exacerbates this loss.²⁶ A footnote to Foster's article reveals an alliance between this spectacularization and the cinema:

The work of [Robert] Longo and others also suggests a new "spectacular" model of the artist...Given the generic or serial form of so much contemporary art and the way it is "subcontracted," produced by specialists (the division of labour has penetrated even this last enclave), this cultural epitome might well be the artist not as producer (as Benjamin hoped) but as director, *Hollywood* director.²⁷

Foster's statement is prescient in more ways than one and has turned out to be more literal than he perhaps intended.²⁸ The artist is now a Hollywood director not simply in the production methods embraced, but also in the big-budget, spectacular moving-image work produced.²⁹

The division of labour Foster saw as mimicking that of Hollywood has been fully adopted by contemporary artists working with the moving image, to the point that it has already become the object of satirization, notably in works by Francesco Vezzoli such as *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's "Caligula"* (2005), *Marlene Redux: A True Hollywood Story!* (2006), and *Greed* (2007). In a sharp departure from the personal authorship of proper to the experimental film tradition, artists regularly employ professional editors, production designers, and cinematographers as collaborators. Some, such as Sam Taylor-Wood, integrate well-known celebrities into their work. Though exhibited on video, Sarah Morris' feature-length *Beijing* (2008) was shot on

²⁶ Hal Foster, "Contemporary Art and Spectacle," *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 79-96

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 220, n.22; emphasis in original.

²⁸ Longo, Salle, and Schnabel would all go on to direct mainstream feature films. Longo and Salle would make the one-offs *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) and *Search and Destroy* (1995), respectively; meanwhile, Schnabel would forge a successful career in filmmaking, with *Basquiat* (1996), *Before Night Falls* (2000), and *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (*Le Scaphandre et le papillon*, 2006).

²⁹ Additionally, in an echo of Longo, Salle, and Schnabel's move into the director's chair, some figures who have risen to prominence as makers of the moving image for a gallery context have recently ventured into feature filmmaking: Steve McQueen's *Hunger* (2008) won the Caméra d'or at the Cannes Film Festival, while Sam Taylor-Wood is following suit with *Nowhere Boy* (2010), which chronicles John Lennon's childhood. Shirin Neshat's *Women Without Men* (*Zanan-e bedun-e mardan*, 2009) premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2009 and won the Silver Lion for best director after the artist had completed two installations, *Munis* (2008) and *Fezeh* (2008), also based on Shahrnush Parsipur's novel. Similarly, also premiering at the Venice Film Festival in 2009 was Pipilotti Rist's *Pepperminta* (2009), a feature that shared footage with Rist's 2008 Museum of Modern Art installation, *Pour Your Body Out* (7354 Cubic Metres).

35mm and shows a division of labour typical of commercial cinema, with Morris listed as director. Matthew Barney's three-hour *Cremaster 3* (2002) possesses a list of credits as long as a mainstream feature, including visual effects supervisors, a large crew, and an entire sound team.³⁰ While this is perhaps an extreme example given the budget and magnitude of that artwork, it is by no means exceptional. As Jonathan Walley has noted, rather than the artisanal mode of production that characterizes avant-garde film, "a more proximate reference point for artists' films might be independent art cinema, as it is there that the division of labour in production is subsumed under the rubric of the *auteur*..."³¹ It is this division of labour that makes possible the production of technically complicated and polished artworks by individuals who, in most cases, have received little or no formal training in filmmaking. Such large-scale productions represent a pole of contemporary moving-image art that opposes the quiet interrogations of temporality and historicity found in *Overture*, one that—rather than suggesting any death of cinema—speaks loudly to cinema's status as a new medium within an art context.

Cinema might appear as an old medium in relation to digital media, but compared to truly old media such as painting and sculpture, it is a technological novelty with strong ties to entertainment and celebrity culture, able to infuse the space of the museum with spectacle. The othered cinema stands against the homogenizing movements of convergence by providing a site to reflect upon the history of film and to house certain kinds of filmmaking practices after these activities have lost viability within the sphere of a market-driven mass culture, such as 16mm. But the othered cinema is equally a part of convergence, as it constitutes an extension of cinema beyond itself, one that brings it into contact with new modes of spectatorship and new institutional determinations and that compromises previously upheld borders between

³⁰ The entire credit listing for each episode of *The Cremaster Cycle* may be found in *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2002), 504-509

³¹ Jonathan Walley, "Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde," *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 186

media art and media culture. This goes far beyond the adoption of the production methods of independent cinema, as even the modes of visibility proper to the museum and gallery increasingly mimic those of contemporary visual culture. For example, when the products of film history are exhibited within the gallery, as chapter one will explore, it is often a matter of excerpted clips shown at small scale. The spectator simply glances at them while passing by—precisely the same dilution and fragmentation of the cinematic experience that marks the throwaway images of culture at large.

In short, the integration of cinema into the spaces of art after 1990 must be seen as abiding by an interplay between old and new media, whereby cinema is both an old medium in which one might encounter the redemptive possibilities of the outmoded *and* an agent of accessibility, entertainment, and spectacle. The museum is a respite from the privatization of experience, providing a site at which to excavate cultural memory, contest a logic of technological progress, and imagine collectivity and publicity in an age of individualized consumption. However, it must be remembered that it is also an ideological apparatus facing distinct challenges to attract audiences and compete for tourist dollars at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Large-scale moving images are an integral part of what Rosalind Krauss has termed the “late capitalist museum,”³² offering the possibility of a fun, special-effects spectacle that still retains an element of highbrow cachet.

“New media” is commonly used as synonymous with digital media, but what is it that makes a medium—or an artwork—new? Adorno notes that the category of the new has been central to art since the rise of high capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century and is inextricably bound up in its commodity character.³³ This link between novelty and the commodity character of the work of art will become crucial throughout the pages that

³² See: Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October*, no. 54 (Fall 1990), 3-17

³³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 19 and 21

follow, as the novelty of large-scale projected images frequently evince distinct links to the reification of spectacle. However, Adorno also makes clear that the new is equally present in art's ability to dislodge established frameworks of understanding; it is a kind of "blind spot."³⁴ In this second formulation, the novelty of the new lies in its unfamiliarity and its trespassing of categorical boundaries, something encapsulated in Bellour's invocation of the term "aesthetics of confusion" to describe the workings of the "other cinema."

Uses of the moving image in contemporary art can participate in a technophilic spectacularization of the museum and gallery spaces, allowing for bigger, better, and more awe-inspiring fare that will satisfy museum visitors and, in turn, administrators. But certain uses of the moving image engage a notion of novelty-as-blind spot insofar as they embody this "aesthetics of confusion." Or, as Jacques Rancière has put it, these gallery-based moving-image practices indicate first and foremost "a redistribution in the system of correspondences of the arts" since "it is not strictly what one sees on its screens that marks their alterity" from the cinema proper.³⁵ In other words, the novelty of such practices is not simply the affinity with spectacle that they sometimes manifest, but rather a throwing into question what had once been a stable and easily definable relationship between art and cinema. Certain familiar attributes of cinema reappear in unfamiliar contexts, allowing for the creation of truly new narratives, temporalities, and images.

"We cannot not periodize."³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 20

³⁵ Jacques Rancière, "Le cinéma dans le 'fin' de l'art," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 552 (December 2000), 51; translation mine.

³⁶ Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 29

This study begins in 1990, though certainly the first stirrings of this tendency may be located earlier, as the opening example of Stan Douglas' *Overture* suggests. Any periodizing mechanism will necessarily be marked by a degree of arbitrariness, cutting off the flow of non-synchronous developments in order to impose the fiction of a clear historical break. And yet, in a work such as this, it is unavoidable. This study begins in 1990 for several reasons. 1990 marks the date of a watershed exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou entitled *Passages de l'image*, curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, and Christine van Assche. This exhibition, discussed at some length in chapter one, opens a problematic concerning the relation between cinema, the other arts, and the fate of the image after digitization that would become predominant in the years that followed. The location of *Passages* at the beginning of the 1990s initiates a decade that would be marked by an increasing spectacularization of the museum, new initiatives by major institutions to further integrate moving images into their collections and exhibitions,³⁷ as well as by many pronouncements concerning the endangered state of cinema surrounding its 1995 centennial—all factors that contribute to the tension between novelty and obsolescence that marks the integration of cinema into the museum at this time.

The choice of 1990 as a starting point is also supported by other authors who describe the same transitions under interrogation here. For example, Dominique Païni has written that 1990 signals the date after which “cinema becomes the heritage and cultural inheritance [*patrimoine*] of the century,”³⁸ a surplus cultural value that chapter one will argue is integral to the way in which cinema conceptualized within the spaces of art during the past two decades. When Bill Horrigan questions how, when, and why

³⁷ Exemplary of this tendency is the research project *Media Matters*, undertaken by the Tate Modern in 2003 in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the New Art Trust. The project is designed to provide guidelines for the preservation, loaning, and acquisition of time-based media. See: <www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/mediamatters>

³⁸ Dominique Païni, *Le Temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002), 26; translation mine.

“video art” gave way to “film and video in the gallery,” he notes that conferences held in 2000 on the history of video art at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago both pointed to 1990 as the end of a “golden age” of video art and the advent of a different paradigm of moving images within the gallery.³⁹ It is a year that also happens to also be when Projectavision, Inc., the first company devoted to producing data projectors—the technology that would displace the video monitor from the gallery in favour of the immateriality of cinematic projection—went public on Nasdaq.

As the decade progressed, data projectors with high image quality became less expensive and more portable, making them an increasingly attractive option for exhibiting video in the gallery space. Unlike the video monitor, anchored in the exhibition space by its clunky support, projection functions to endow the image with an absent presence that resides not on the screen and not in the projector, but somewhere in their cooperation and in the beam of light that connects them—a mode of presentation that is distinctly cinematic.⁴⁰ Significantly, Horrigan notes that the “increasing dormancy” of what had been known as “video art” is “closely tied to the triumph of projection over monitor-based presentation,” a development with the result that “‘film and video in the gallery’—what used to be called video art—is now being brought back into the fold of one of its presiding aesthetic progenitors, which is that of cinema.”⁴¹ One might say, while taking care to avoid a simple technological determinism, that a key component of the alliance with cinema cultivated in video installations over the past two decades is the deceptively simple fact of projection.

³⁹ Bill Horrigan, “Five Years Later,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing and Afterall Books, 2008), 293

⁴⁰ For more on the history and theory of the projected image, see: Mary Ann Doane, “The Location of the Image: Cinematic Projection and Scale in Modernity,” *The Art of Projection*, ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 151-166 and Dominique Païni, “Should We Put an End to Projection?” trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004), 23-50

⁴¹ Horrigan, 294-295

This displacement of the video monitor by the perceived immediacy and immateriality of projection has had significant implications. David Joselit has argued that, “The eclipse of closed circuit by projection thus performs an inversion whereby video is transformed from an apparatus *within a space* to a new electric skin that engulfs architectural elements.”⁴² For Joselit, this means that video abandons its most interesting and progressive attributes—an emphasis on interactivity that required the viewer to “complete the work”—in favour of what he perceives to be a more conventional mode of theatrical spectatorship. Or, as Chrissie Iles has put it, the projected image “[creates] a movie-sized image that relates not to the object but to the surrounding architectural space. This physical shift has, in turn, detached the video image from its associations with...television.”⁴³ If projection has weakened video’s link to television—an apparatus that is a piece of domestic furniture as much as an image support—it has done so while forging a link with cinema and its gigantism. The video monitor restricted the image’s scale and made it possessable and subordinated to its material support; by contrast, the projected image enjoys an immateriality and variable scale that may extend beyond the body’s ability to contain it or to apprehend it in a single glance. This shift in the triangulation of subject, screen, and surrounding architecture has had important ramifications for the kinds of artwork produced and the kinds of aesthetic experience made possible, both of which will be explored in the pages that follow.

Disciplining Artists’ Cinema

The relationship of the othered cinema to that realm traditionally called “avant-garde” or “experimental film” is a vexed one. In his account of artists’ film and avant-garde film as modes of production, Walley holds fast to sharp distinctions between the

⁴² David Joselit, “Inside the Light Cube: Pierre Huyghe’s *Streamside Day Follies* and the Rise of Video Projection,” *Artforum* (March 2004), 154; emphasis in original

⁴³ Iles, 131

two.⁴⁴ Avant-garde cinema is personal and artisanal, while artists' cinema is collaborative. The modes of distribution espoused by the two—a question that will be interrogated near the end of chapter two—are different, with the avant-garde preferring a rental-based model to the limited edition that dominates the art world.⁴⁵ Walley asserts that experimental filmmakers tend to only produce moving-image works, while artists often work in various media beyond film and video, something that largely holds true but which neglects the non-filmic artistic production of many experimental filmmakers, such as Bruce Conner and Michael Snow.

Walley's generalizations nonetheless serve an important heuristic value. They are lacking, however, in historical specificity. For example, Walley asserts that experimental filmmakers are devoted to the specificity of film whereas artists are not—a claim once might have been true but that is unfair in an age when many “experimental filmmakers” increasingly work on video and certain artists, such as those discussed in chapter two, are committed to interrogating the specificity of 16mm film. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the institutional boundaries between these two modes of production are in the process of breaking down as increasing numbers of experimental filmmakers move into the structures of distribution and exhibition proper to the gallery. United Kingdom-based filmmaker Ben Rivers continues to exhibit work at experimental film and video festivals such as Views from the Avant-Garde in New York City, but has also issued work on limited edition and installed it in a gallery setting, stating that it provides not only a more financially viable model of practice but also more control over how the work will be exhibited.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Walley, 182-199

⁴⁵ Though the limited edition is the primary model of distribution in the art world, important alternatives do exist, such as Electronic Arts Intermix in New York and Video Data Bank in Chicago, both of which rent video art much as Canyon Cinema and Film-Makers Co-operative do with film prints.

⁴⁶ Conversation with the author, 6 October 2009.

To explore one particular example, Matthias Müller had established an international reputation as an experimental filmmaker, distributing his work in the United States through San Francisco-based Canyon Cinema, before beginning to produce work for a gallery context. In collaboration with Christoph Girardet, Müller was commissioned to produce *The Phoenix Tapes* (1999), a forty-five-minute work in six chapters made up entirely of clips from some forty films by Alfred Hitchcock, for the 1999 exhibition *Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art* at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. Since this time, Müller has continued to exhibit work within a gallery setting, describing the choice in very pragmatic terms:

The art world's increased interest in the moving picture cannot be seen as merely a liberation from the cinema and its limited receptive conditions. Rather, each situation presents each work with specific challenges... When, through the laws of the art market, a moving picture is transformed into an object—a work of art issued in a limited edition—this transformation can seem an expression of bourgeois possessiveness, as Peter Weibel puts it. After twenty years of making “experimental films,” though, I know there will never be enough profit to secure my existence. Thus, there is no alternative *but* a gallery, which demands that works be sold as limited editions.⁴⁷

Experimental filmmakers such as Peggy Ahwesh, Martin Arnold, Jonas Mekas have all produced moving-image installations. This incorporation of experimental film into the space of the gallery affects not just the contemporary but the past as well: the historical products of experimental film increasingly appear in art exhibitions, whether monographic (*Kenneth Anger*, P.S.1, New York, 2009) or otherwise (*Le Mouvement des images*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2006). These examples are not meant to reduce the very real economic, institutional, and aesthetic distinctions that continue to reside between experimental film and video and the othered cinema, for these are spheres which do continue to remain different, if not entirely distinct, from one another. However, it is to suggest that over the past two decades the dividing line between

⁴⁷ Matthias Müller, quoted in: Scott MacDonald and Matthias Müller, “A Conversation,” *The Memo Book: The Films and Videos of Matthias Müller*, ed. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Berlin: Verlag Vorwerk 8, 2005), 255

experimental cinema and artists' cinema has become increasingly blurred, pointing to yet another way in which this period witnesses a profound reconfiguration between the spheres of art and cinema.

The move into the space of the gallery has been similarly pronounced in the domain of experimental documentary. Like Chantal Akerman and Chris Marker, two prominent filmmakers working in the documentary mode who have more recently turned to installation, artists such as Kutlug Ataman and Amar Kanwar—both of whom will be discussed in chapter four—made non-fiction films for exhibition in the movie theatre before moving into gallery-based multi-screen format. For example, Kanwar's *A Season Outside* (1998), *A Night of Prophecy* (2002), and *To Remember* (2003) are a trilogy of single-screen videos about post-independence India, completed before the artist's first foray into multi-screen work with *The Lightning Testimonies* (2007), an installation of eight projections that deals with violence against women on the subcontinent. The gallery provides an expanded field of formal possibilities for the documentary mode but can also serve as an incubator for practices that might be unviable outside of it in a cultural climate with decreasing support for vanguard non-fiction practice. As Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl have written, "Due to the increasing privatization of media and cuts in public funding, experimental documentary production has again been increasingly pushed into the art field. The art field has become a laboratory for the development of new documentary expressions."⁴⁸ Leaving behind the notion that documentary and art are opposed—the former category constituted by a closeness to the world while the latter is constituted by its departures from it—artists are now making use of the formal and financial possibilities of the gallery to pioneer new non-fiction genres, something that will be explored in this dissertation's final chapter.

⁴⁸ Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl, "Introduction: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art," *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1* (Berlin and Annandale-on-Hudson: Sternberg Press and Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2008), 14

The tendency under discussion in this dissertation speaks to an increasingly blurred line between experimental filmmaking and artists' cinema on the plane of practice, but so too does it point to a space of cross-disciplinary inquiry on the plane of critical and scholarly inquiry. In order to approach the problematic that has been outlined here, it is necessary to draw on two distinct disciplinary contexts—or, to put it somewhat differently, it is necessary to draw on two distinct disciplinary contexts that are becoming increasingly indistinct. As film studies metamorphoses into a more interdisciplinary undertaking that presents itself under monikers such as moving image studies, visual culture, or even modern culture and media, a certain fluidity is opened with regard to the object of study. Recent years have witnessed similar disciplinary negotiations within the field of art history, as it increasingly integrates material and visual culture into its stead. And yet, despite this increasing freedom, there remain very real disciplinary boundaries that govern the production and dissemination of knowledge.

The border between film studies and art history persists, as large bodies of moving-image practices are neglected by the former due to their apparent status as objects of the latter. How else might one explain the striking absence of interrogations into the othered cinema in film studies? In his primarily British *History of Experimental Film*, A.L. Rees asserts that experimental film derives “more directly from the context of modern and post-modern art than from the history of the cinema,” and names the gallery rather than the movie theatre as its primary site.⁴⁹ And yet, art history has minimized the role of the moving image while film studies has manifested a distinct

⁴⁹ This heritage is particularly interesting given the contemporary reintegration of cinema into a gallery context, allowing the relatively autonomous existence of experimental film from the 1950s to the 1970s to now seem like an entr'acte. It is not until post-World War Two that it became possible to speak of an experimental filmmaking community relatively separate from the world of gallery art, with the emergence of institutions such as Cinema 16 (founded by Amos and Marsha Vogel in 1947), the Film Artists' Society (founded by Maya Deren in 1953), the Filmmakers' Cooperative (founded by Jonas Mekas in 1962), the Filmmakers' Cinematheque (founded by Mekas in 1964), and perhaps most importantly, Anthology Film Archives (founded in 1970 by the collective of Mekas, James Broughton, Ken Kelman, Peter Kubelka, and P. Adams Sitney).

phobia towards films produced by individuals identified as “artists” rather than “filmmakers” (with Andy Warhol constituting a notable exception).⁵⁰ Tanya Leighton has speculated that, “To a great extent the problem...has been caused by the formalist, high modernist allegiances of much of the experimental film world,” but one must also note that it was the high modernist allegiances of the art world that led to the marginalization of film as an artistic medium in the first place.⁵¹ The reasons behind this divide are complex indeed, but it is certain that, as Andrew Uroskie has put it, a “critical blindness” surrounds these practices that reside in the interstitial space between the black box and the white cube.⁵² To return to the above epigraph from Bruno Racine, “all institutions dedicated to modern and contemporary *art*” are asking what do to with the entrance of film into the gallery, while Lars Henrik Gass cites the interrogation of a certain German *art* magazine into the phenomenon. From the side of film studies, the silence is

⁵⁰ On the side of art history, the marginalization of film is bound up in its links to mass culture and its basis in mechanical reproducibility. In film studies, many fruitful interactions between experimental film and the gallery in the United States have been closed off in part due to the hegemony of P. Adams Sitney’s approach in *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*, which neglects to take into account filmmaking by artists such as Bruce Nauman, Robert Whitman, or the Fluxus group and instead advocates for a category of “experimental filmmaker” to be recognized separately from that of “visual artist.” As an effort to legitimize experimental cinema as an independent entity, Sitney’s seminal text deliberately excludes much of the film work of those recognized primarily as gallery artists (though Warhol is a notable exception in this respect), while simultaneously minimizing contributions to gallery art by figures such as Michael Snow and Paul Sharits. Thankfully, recent years have seen a proliferation of publications and exhibitions dealing with the question of artists’ film in a way that moves distinctly outside the canons of both art history and experimental film to look at the use of film within the gallery beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the present. A notable contribution in this regard is Chrissie Iles’ 2006 Whitney Museum exhibition, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, which highlighted exchanges between the worlds of experimental cinema and gallery art and demonstrated the ways in which the two interpenetrated greatly. See: Chrissie Iles, ed., *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art Books, 2002); P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000, Third Edition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁵¹ Tanya Leighton, “Introduction,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 9

⁵² Andrew Uroskie, “Siting Cinema,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 397

remarkable; Chrissie Iles has memorably volunteered that “the relationship between art and film is a one-way love affair.”⁵³

One might argue that such practices remain fully within the domain of art history and are not in fact the concern of film studies, but this would be to not only perpetuate a disciplinary divide that has led to incomplete understandings of this field of cultural production but also to enforce a bias within film studies towards feature-length narrative filmmaking that has consistently resulted in the marginalization of vital experimental practices.⁵⁴ Though Vachel Lindsay’s 1915 *The Art of the Moving Picture*, the first book-length study of film published in the United States, saw film as deserving a place amidst the fine arts and as involved in a dialogue with sculpture, painting, and architecture, art and film have too often remained separated in the academy.⁵⁵ When art and cinema have come into contact in Anglo-American scholarship, cinema is most often seen as an incorporating medium that may display paintings within a film’s diegesis, while art is a vast storehouse of intertextual references.⁵⁶ French scholarship, by contrast, has proposed alternative ways of examining the relationship between cinema and painting

⁵³ Chrissie Iles, “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” *October*, vol. 104 (Spring, 2003), 74. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, to be found in the work of scholars such as Angela Dalle Vacche and Giuliana Bruno, but as a generalization, Iles’ statement holds.

⁵⁴ Philip Dodd has suggested that the division between film studies and art history is reinforced not only by disciplinary boundaries, but also by the emergence of film studies as a discipline as occurring primarily out of literature departments, something that might contribute to the emphasis on feature-length narrative. See: Philip Dodd, “Modern Stories,” *Spellbound: Art and Film*, ed. Ian Christie and Philip Dodd (London: Hayward Gallery and British Film Institute, 1996), 34

⁵⁵ Lindsay places his book in the context of the art institute and the museum, stating an interest in developing non-commercial film practices and believing that “motion picture art should be a great art, not a process of commercial manufacture.” He makes comparisons to other plastic arts and to music: the “action film” is sculpture-in-motion, the “intimate film” is painting-in-motion, and “splendour films” are architecture-in-motion. He looks back at various works of art in museums and sees them both as prefiguring element of cinema and as providing a place where filmmakers could go to learn. See: Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000).

⁵⁶ Angela Dalle Vacche’s *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film*, for example, excavates the relationship between Romantic landscape painting and F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), takes note of the reproductions that appear within *Pierrot le fou* (1965), and argues for that film’s stylistic indebtedness to Pop Art. See: Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), especially 107-134 and 161-196. Other examples include Susan Felleman, *Art in the Cinematic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) and Brigitte Peucker, *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

that move beyond citation and the presence of art within the diegesis of a given film to examine broader interactions between the two media. For Pascal Bonitzer, this means examining the role of the frame (and the related process of “deframing”), while for Jacques Aumont, it involves interrogating modes of visibility shared across media.⁵⁷ This dissertation owes much to this latter strain of inquiry, but distinguishes itself from both this French tendency and its English-language counterpart in that its primary task involves bringing film theoretical knowledge to bear on what have traditionally been considered to be art historical objects. It focuses not on “how art is used in film,” but on the comparably uncharted territory of “how film is used in and as art.”

In the existing scholarship, the works that will be discussed in this dissertation have been considered primarily from an art historical perspective, tracing influence and intervention quite exclusively within a history of gallery art. What is lacking in the current writing on such practices is an understanding of how these works engage with the vocabulary and history of cinema, as well as how they might be understood in the context of the history of film theory and its contemporary state.⁵⁸ As Liz Kotz remarks,

⁵⁷ The pre-eminence of line of inquiry throughout the 1980s is perhaps one reason that French criticism in the 1990s was more receptive to the emergence of gallery-based moving-image practices than its Anglo-American counterpart. See: Jacques Aumont, *L'Oeil interminable: cinéma et peinture* (Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1989); Pascal Bonitzer, *Décadrages: peinture et cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1985)

⁵⁸ This lack is felt in multiple strata of inquiry, whether it is in broad theoretical discussions of how gallery-based spectatorship differs from that of the movie theatre or in the misuse of filmic terms. The issue of spectatorship will be discussed at length in chapter one, so let two examples of the misuse of the term “jump cut” suffice here. Tom McDonough writes that the premise of Pierre Huyghe’s *L’Éclipse* (1998) is to “fill in a jump cut from a pre-existing film with a real-time depiction of the action separating the scenes that had remained unrepresented in the original.” Stefano Basilico makes the same error in his description of the work, going so far as to begin his description of the piece with an erroneous definition of the jump cut: “A *jump cut* is an abrupt transition that allows the editor to persuade the viewer to take a leap of faith and accept the flow of one event into the other without a visual lead.” The cut in question, from Wim Wenders’ *The American Friend* (*Der amerikanische Freund*, 1977), is by no means a jump cut, defined by Bordwell and Thompson as, “An elliptical cut that appears to be the interruption of a single shot,” central to early Méliès shorts and perhaps most famously exemplified by Godard’s *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1959). The cut in question is rather, as Huyghe’s title would suggest, a simple ellipsis. While such objections may seem to be petty, rigorous formal description is particularly necessary when the works in question are difficult to access, as these are. See: Stefano Basilico, “The Editor,” *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, ed. Stefano Basilico (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2005), 39; Tom McDonough, “Production/Projection: Notes on the Capitalist Fairy Tale,” *The Art and Projection*, ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 129

“...recent art-critical accounts employ emphatically reductive understandings of the filmic apparatus.”⁵⁹ Speaking of Matthew Barney, but voicing a concern that might extend to the entire tendency under investigation here, Iles has said, “There has not been a serious analysis of his films in cinematic terms, and most art world writers are not cognizant enough of film history or theory to attempt it.”⁶⁰ Meanwhile, most film scholars ignore Barney due to his membership in the realm of gallery art. And yet, these practices take up many of the questions that are most pressing in film studies today, such as the transitions from analogue to digital and large to small scale, the movie theatre as a horizon of public experience compared to the atomization of personal viewing stations, the site specificity of the projected image, cinephilia and spectatorial desire, and the relationship between convergence and specificity. They intervene in the history of installation and video art while also articulating much about the cinema and its place in mass culture that has been neglected in existing art historical scholarship.

Exhibiting Cinema will trace the contours of the othered cinema across four chapters, each beginning with a discussion of a single artwork as a way of opening a particular set of questions that will be explored through an analysis of a variety of media texts. These four chapters will trace how the interplay of old and new media, senescence and spectacle, plays out amongst the heterogeneous moving-image practices deployed in art since 1990. A brief note on the availability and selection of artworks for analysis is necessary: the limited-edition model of distribution espoused by nearly all of the artists under discussion in this dissertation (discussed at some length in chapter two) results in

⁵⁹ Liz Kotz, “Video Projection: The Space Between Screens,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 380

⁶⁰ Chrissie Iles, quoted in: “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” 75

significant difficulties for the scholar who wishes to have regular access to the work in the course of composing a manuscript. This dissertation would not have been possible without the cooperation of numerous individuals and commercial galleries in the New York City area and beyond. All attempts were made to gain access to what I perceive to be the most important works of the tendency under discussion, but in certain cases this proved impossible. As a result, the selection of artworks for analysis here was impacted at times by the sheer question of availability.

Chapter one, “Architectures of the Moving Image” examines how the tension between new and old media that marks the integration of cinema into the museum plays out in institutional and curatorial practices. It does so through a discussion of three related bodies of work: the increasingly common practice of exhibiting works produced for the movie theatre in the space of the museum; the proliferation of exhibitions since 1990 devoted to film history and/or thematically curated around the notion of cinema, and; artistic practices that examine the site specificity of the moving image, particularly those that take up the space of the movie theatre. It interrogates the changing characteristics of the institutional frame of the museum as it moves into the twenty-first century and questions how the migration of cinema into the gallery space has produced a new cinematic *dispositif*. Additionally, this chapter interrogates what model of spectatorship might best be able to grapple with the particularities of the moving-image installation.

Chapter two is entitled “A Cinema in Ruins: Medium Specificity and the Rhetoric of Obsolescence.” This chapter examines how artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, and Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij use 16mm film as an obsolescent medium linked to a spectral historicity, the pathos of the ruin, and the failed utopias of modernity. As noted above, the use of celluloid within the space of the gallery virtually disappears after the widespread availability of video. When celluloid returns as a

prominent feature of gallery-based moving-image practice in the 1990s, it is inextricably linked to the rhetoric of a “death of cinema” at the hands of a digital villain and, as such, engages in a rethinking of the medium specificity of film in relation to the calculation of the digital. This chapter questions what desires and fears are invested in the cathexis in celluloid that takes place concurrently with its increasing obsolescence. It examines how the superannuated machine of analogue film projection emerges as a site of opposition to high-tech novelty, but also engages in a becoming-auratic of the film print that refuses the reproducibility inherent to the medium in favour of the economy of purposeful scarcity embodied in the limited-edition model of distribution.

Chapter three turns to the obsession with remaking the products of film history that marks the artistic production of the 1990s and 2000s. “The Remake: Old Movies, New Narratives” discusses the work of artists such as Candice Breitz, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe to argue that they ambivalently engage the pleasures of cinema and its status as a cultural vernacular to reflect upon it as a site of collective memory an age of atomizing home-viewing technologies. A focus on cinema’s status as a public institution becomes paramount. I argue against the false freedoms of neoliberalism embraced in Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Postproduction* to instead advance ambivalence as an important mode of counterspectacle after the collapse of the complicity/critique divide. Rather than the refusal of popular cinema that marked the film installations of the 1960s and 1970s, or the relentless negativity of Situationist *détournement*, I argue that contemporary practices of remaking often make use of a nostalgia cinephilia that calls upon cinema as a memory of lost collectivity, but also retains an investment in a critique of the culture industry and of cinema as an apparatus of ideological interpellation.

“The Fiction of Truth and the Truth of Fiction” is the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation. This chapter leaves behind the investigations into cinema as an old medium that mark chapters two and three and instead examines how fiction and

documentary, modalities previously rejected in artists' employments of the moving image, have become central to artistic production since 1990. Radicalizing Jean-Luc Godard's claim that "all great fiction films tend towards documentary, just as all great documentaries tend towards fiction,"⁶¹ the works discussed in this chapter declare the inextricability of these modes by pioneering hybrid formations that interrogate them both. Through a discussion of works by Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Kutlug Ataman, Omer Fast, Amar Kanwar, and Steve McQueen, this chapter demonstrates that artists rehabilitate cinema's status as a technology of the virtual in order to interrogate subjective and historical experience. By employing textual strategies that trespass the boundaries between documentary and fiction, these artists reject the fiction of documentary truth and embrace the truth that can be generated from fiction.

In 1965, Jonas Mekas published an article in the *Village Voice* entitled "On New Directions, On Anti-Art, On the Old and the New in Art." In it, Mekas discussed the proliferation of experimental and expanded cinema practices that he saw around him. He wrote, "The medium of cinema is breaking out and taking over and is going blindly and by itself. Where to—nobody knows."⁶² While one might adjust Mekas' proclamation to assert that the cinema no longer goes forth by itself, but in aggregate formations with other media, it is a sentiment worth resuscitating today. Gallery-based practices that both inherit the legacy of and depart from those described by Mekas are engaging in important articulations of the histories and futures of the moving image. The chapters that follow seek to provide an account of these practices and some of the questions raised by them, all in an effort to attest to the status of the contemporary moment as one that is marked by—rather than any "death of cinema" to be mourned—a renewed vitality and

⁶¹ Jean-Luc Godard, "Africa Speaks of the End and the Means," *Godard on Godard*, ed. and trans. Tom Milne (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 132

⁶² Jonas Mekas, "On New Directions, On Anti-Art, On the Old and the New in Art," *The Village Voice* (11 November 1965), reprinted in Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of a New American Cinema, 1959-1971* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 208

reinvention of the cinema that has opened new paths and problematics that will continue to be explored in the years to come.

I. Architectures of Exhibition

Ephémère cinéma, avide d'éternité.
—Dominique Païni¹

...[I]n our world today, the cinema is everywhere, in the flick of a cigarette lighter, in the glow of a light bulb, in the punch of Lemmy Caution; it is in the way we perceive our world, in the way we speak, in the way we dream. We have no need of entering a movie theatre to experience cinema; life itself is just like a movie.
—Kerry Brougher²

Upon entering *Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales* (*Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences*), the museum visitor encountered twenty-one columns, each presenting a spotlit vitrine containing a single object resting on red satin. The exhibition, held in 2000-2001 and curated by Guy Cogeval and Dominique Païni for the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Musée des beaux arts, Montréal, showcased the Unica key from *Notorious* (1946), the bread knife from *Blackmail* (1929), the lighter from *Strangers on a Train* (1951), the yellow handbag from *Marnie* (1964), and other famous Hitchcockian objects. The objects were, as one critic would have it, “gathered together as if for an occult mass.”³ Bernard Hermann’s scores echoed throughout the room so as augment the air of eerie ethereality accorded to these now auratic objects, so many relics salvaged from the process of filmmaking. Exalted and fetishized, the objects were imported into the museum as cultural artefacts of an age past.

Paul Willemen has noted that there is an element of necrophilia present in cinephilia, relating as it does to a particular detail or moment (or, in this case, an object) from a film that is highly cathected and that lives on after the film’s viewing. It is, Willemen notes, “something that is dead, past, but alive in memory.”⁴ The twenty-one

¹ “Ephemeral cinema, eager for eternity.” Dominique Païni, *Le Temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002), 78; all translations from this text are my own.

² Kerry Brougher, “The Cinema Effect,” *The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image*, (London: D Giles Limited/Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Gardens, Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 20

³ David M. Lubin, “*Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales*,” *Artforum* (November 2001), 140

⁴ Of his terminological preference for “cinephiliac moment” over “cinephilic moment,” Willemen writes that it “is my preferred description because of its overtones of necrophilia, of relating to something that is dead, past, but alive in memory. So there is a kind of necrophilia involved, and I don’t mean that

columns of *Hitchcock et l'art* functioned as a spatial staging of this blending of desire and mortification, as the “occult mass” of objects in *Hitchcock et l'art* might just as easily be a funeral mass. The institutional frame of the museum conferred upon these objects the status of senescent artefacts that live on past the films from which they stem. While this cine-necrophilic strategy is represented most forcefully in the room of totem-objects, it was operative throughout the exhibition. Cogeval and Païni assembled some three hundred storyboards, props, posters and production stills, as well as forty clips from Hitchcock's films, all of which entered the museum as magical fragments, endowed with life and importance due to their status as relics of a Hitchcock production.

The catalogue of *Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales* specifies that the exhibition made use of three points of view to put forth its interpretation of the filmmaker. The first was documentary, explored through the display of costumes, props, storyboards, and other paraphernalia relating to the production of Hitchcock's films. The second “invited the visitor of the exhibition to physically relive the internal atmosphere of the films,”⁵ something accomplished by grouping the material into evocative thematic clusters such as “Desire and the Double,” “Women,” “Forms, Rhythms,” and “Terrors,” as well as playing soundtrack music from the films throughout the exhibition and reconstructing sets from *Psycho* (1960) (the shower) and *The Birds* (1963) (the jungle gym). And last of all, the exhibition ventured certain hypotheses concerning influence and aesthetic heritage, as it forged links between Hitchcock and the Pre-Raphaelites, Weimar Expressionism, Surrealism, and other artistic movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Following this point of view, one found correspondences drawn between a publicity still of Tippi Hedren for *The Birds* and Magritte's *Les eaux profondes*

negatively.” See: Paul Willemen, “Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered,” *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 227-235

⁵ Dominique Païni, “Rapprochements, constellations, resemblances, construction,” *Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales*, ed. Dominique Païni and Guy Cogeval (Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 2000), 18; all translations from this text are my own, emphasis in original.

(1941), or between Kim Novak in San Francisco Bay in *Vertigo* (1958) and both Willy Schlobach's *La morte* (1890) and John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (1850-1851).

In an introduction to the exhibition entitled "Connections, constellations, resemblances, construction," Païni outlines the goal of the undertaking: "This exhibition doesn't want to be a demonstration or a succession of comparative proofs... It wants to be a *reading*, an *interpretation*..."⁶ In short, what is at stake is less a definitive statement on the director than the self-conscious production of yet another Hitchcock,⁷ this one a "Hitchcock of art." For Païni in particular, who also organized a similar exhibition about Jean Cocteau (*Jean Cocteau: Sur le fils du siècle*, Centre Pompidou, 2003) and was involved with Jean-Luc Godard's *Voyage(s) en utopie* installation in 2006, *Hitchcock et l'art* is a central node within a larger undertaking that locates a contemporary cinephilia firmly within the museum walls, asserting that space as a site for the monumentalization of film history. At play is a work of valorisation that emerges as a present-day parallel to the efforts of the *Cahiers* group in the 1950s to take Hitchcock seriously: now that his status as auteur has been firmly canonized and this method of approaching films has become second nature in both the academy and popular culture, it is onto the work of

⁶ Ibid., 16

⁷ Thomas Elsaesser has provided an overview of the myriad faces of the director, so striking in its diversity that it is worth quoting at length: "To each his or her own: academics have praised Hitchcock for defending family values but also for sadistically intertwining love, lust and death. He has been compared to Shakespeare and Mozart, and 'outed' as an eternal Catholic racked with guilt. Writers have identified a misogynist Hitchcock and a feminist Hitchcock, an Oedipal Hitchcock, a homophobe Hitchcock and a 'queer' Hitchcock. There is the cold-war anti-communist Hitchcock of *Topaz* and *Torn Curtain*, and the hot-war anti-fascist not only of *Saboteur*, *Foreign Correspondent* and *Notorious*, but also present in *Shadow of a Doubt*. He has made fun of psychoanalysis in *Rear Window* and *Psycho*, but he is Jacques Lacan's best interpreter. There is a Gothic-Romantic, a Victorian, an Edwardian Hitchcock, with his imagination steeped in E.A. Poe and French decadence, and a Modernist Hitchcock, influenced in turn by Weimar Expressionism, French Surrealism and Russian montage constructivism. And of course, there is the postmodern Hitchcock, already deconstructing his own presuppositions in *Vertigo* or *Family Plot*. The 'British Hitchcock' has been given new cultural contours and local history roots, to balance the general preference for his American period. And in recent years, we have had Hitchcock the Philosopher: but which philosopher? There is a Schopenhauerian Hitchcock, a Heideggerian Hitchcock and a Derridean Hitchcock, several Deleuzian Hitchcocks, a stab at a Nietzschean Hitchcock (*Rope*, of course) and most recently, a Wittgensteinian Hitchcock." To this seemingly exhaustive list, it is necessary to add the "Hitchcock of contemporary art." See: Thomas Elsaesser, "Casting Around: Hitchcock's Absence," *Johan Grimonprez: Looking for Alfred*, ed. Steven Bode (Ostfildern and London: Hatje Cantz and Film and Video Umbrella, 2007), 140

establishing him as an artist on par with the best-known painters of the century. This emerges as an effort to counter the ways in which digitization has banalized cinema, broken it down into pieces and destroyed the rituals attached to its exhibition. Just as the insistence on authorship at *Cahiers* in the 1950s involved not only individual figures such as Hitchcock and Hawks, but also a larger argument about the cultural status of cinema, so too does *Hitchcock et l'art* make a claim for new conception of the institution through the conduit of Hitchcock.

The integration of Hitchcock into the museum is not confined to the memorabilia of *Hitchcock et l'art*. Hitchcock was by far the most represented filmmaker in Kerry Brougher's 1996 exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945*. This exhibition staked out three possible ways of integrating Hitchcock into the space of the museum, all of which would be elaborated upon by Brougher and others in the years that followed and which account for three primary ways cinema has appeared in the museum since 1990. There were props and artistic collaborations from Hitchcock's films, such as the painted muslin backdrop designed by Dalí for the *Spellbound* (1945) dream sequence; contemporary artists' remakes of or references to Hitchcock, such as Cindy Bernard's *Ask The Dusk: North by Northwest* (1959/1990) and *Ask the Dusk: Vertigo* (1958/1990), which reconstruct landscape shots from the titular films and photograph them in the same aspect ratio as the original; and excerpts of films such as *Psycho* and *Rear Window* (1956).

Though 1996's *Spellbound: Art and Film* at the Hayward Gallery in London took its title from Hitchcock's film and included Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), the next major instance of Hitchcock in the museum would come in 1999, when Brougher curated *Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art* for the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, with Michael Tarantino and Astrid Bowron. Commemorating the centennial of the director's birth, the exhibition restricted itself to contemporary artists

who make reference to the director, including works such as Victor Burgin's *The Bridge* (1984) and Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller's *The Phoenix Tapes* (1999).

Significantly, the primary source of funding for the exhibition was Universal Studios, the entity that produced Hitchcock's films from *The Birds* onwards and that now controls the rights these works and a handful of films the director made at other studios.

Universal's interest in publicizing Hitchcock's enduring influence on a new generation of artists must be seen as encouraging the production of this surplus cultural value that might now be attached to its back catalogue.

Describing the hall of objects in the *Hitchcock et l'art*, Laura Mulvey writes that, "The brilliance of the display was to create the ultimate tribute to, and exposure of, the fetishistic power of the cinema."⁸ And yet, with striking emotion for a theorist who once called for a destruction of cinema's visual pleasure, she adds, "[E]ven through tears, it was impossible not to remember that nothing looks better than when made from light and shade."⁹ Mulvey's description suggests that she was simultaneously moved and dissatisfied by the exhibition. This set of emotions highlights the ways in which the museum has become a space to memorialize cinema but does so at a certain remove from the films themselves, often parcelling them out into fragments or representing them via a series of metonymic substitutes. There are myriad tributes and excerpts, but generally speaking—exceptions will be encountered later in this chapter—the museum space is not the location of start-to-finish screenings and nor is it suited to be, with its visitors strolling through its halls at their own pace. The totems of *Hitchcock et l'art* can never fully stand in for the films from which they stem, but like true fetishes, compensate for an absence that they in fact reveal through their performance of presence.

⁸ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 Times a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 146

⁹ Ibid.

The exhibitions devoted to Hitchcock point to the intensity with which cinema has been integrated into the museum since 1990, the diversity of ways this process has occurred, and the issues it raises. Exhibitions of this variety come to prominence contemporaneously with the cinema's 1995 centennial and must be understood as both participating in and responding to a perceived crisis of the cinematic institution at this time. Passing over into the space of the museum, the cinema becomes an old medium fit for commemoration. And yet, as Mulvey's teary dissatisfaction suggests, how just is this commemoration when it takes place through fragmentation and displacement?

Hitchcock et l'art appears at first to have little in common with an exhibition like *Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art*, as it engages in imagining a museum of cinema rather than the cinema of the museum forged by artists such as Douglas Gordon and Stan Douglas. And yet, both share in the transportation of Hitchcock's films into a new institutional space, the art gallery, and both engage in strategies of fetishization and commemoration that take place through a dismantling of the plenitude of the original film. A pressing set of questions emerges from such a state of affairs: what is at stake in the contemporary integration of cinema into the museum and in claiming the museum as a space in which to interrogate and exhibit film history? If cinema enters the museum as a respite from the banalization and fragmentation it encounters in a digitizing mass culture, what is one to make of the fact that these are precisely the processes it sometimes encounters within the museum as well? How does this integration produce a new conception of cinema? And how do the specific characteristics of the gallery space change cinematic spectatorship and open a space for a new kind of moving-image practice?

Dial "M" for Museum

This chapter will take up these questions by examining the artistic and curatorial

strategies of exhibiting cinema within the spaces of art¹⁰ from 1990 onwards. As much as the cinema is made up of movies—that is, individual films—it is also informed by an architectural situation, the movie theatre. Or, at least, it once was. Today, as Francesco Casetti suggests, the question must be not only the Bazinian “What is cinema?” but also the radically anti-essentialist “*Where* is cinema?”¹¹ For the movie theatre is no longer the default site of cinematic spectatorship, far from it. Rather, the cinema has migrated to numerous new exhibition situations, changing these sites by its presence and being changed by them in turn. While discussions of the analogue/digital transition are certainly important in this moment of technological change, it is imperative to also take account of the increasingly numerous locations of cinema alongside the numerical basis of its new images. Even if the answer to the question “Where is cinema?” is a quick “Everywhere!” the inquiry cannot stop there. While one can speak of a generalization of cinema, its dispersal across various platforms, one must take care to interrogate the multiple specificities of this scattered cinema and question the ramifications of each component of it. Tom Gunning has written that there has been an unfortunate tendency to veer away from “any investigation into the diverse nature of media for fear of being accused of promoting an idealist project.”¹² The challenge, then, is to account for the aggregate nature of media while resisting the lure of idealism by always maintaining an attention to the historical and material specificities of the formations under discussion. Cinema may be everywhere, but everywhere it does not remain the same.

Along with televisions, laptops, mobile phones, and airplanes, the gallery and the

¹⁰ Certainly, there are important distinctions to be made between the commercial gallery, the international biennial, alternative/non-commercial spaces, and the museum. However, for the purposes of this chapter, the words such as “museum” and “gallery” will be used interchangeably, referring simply to the white cube of the art space. While in another context, this might be an egregious conflation, here, what is at stake is the presence of cinema within the spaces of art, not the particular differences between such spaces.

¹¹ Francesco Casetti, “The Filmic Experience: An Introduction,” 14; available online: <<http://www.francescocasetti.net/saggi/FilmicExperience.pdf>>

¹² Tom Gunning, “Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality,” *differences*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), 34-35

museum now constitute important spaces of cinema. In Ursula Frohne's words, "The museum itself is undergoing a metamorphosis, and is becoming a cinema in-process..."¹³ To recap some of the primary elements of this metamorphosis, outlined in the introduction, this othered cinema comprises group shows thematically curated around the notion of cinema, filmmakers who are now producing works for an installation context, exhibitions of the historical products of the movie theatre, and contemporary artists who work in film and video. As the diversity of these phenomena suggests, it is important to note that the presence of cinema within an art context cannot be reduced to a monolithic entity. Nevertheless, amidst such a variety of concerns, particular tendencies are discernible.

While the other chapters of this dissertation will deal with particular strains of practice that arise from this aggregate—such as the use of celluloid as aligned with a spectral historicity, the examination of cinema as a repository of shared narratives to be ambivalently negotiated through strategies of remaking, or the formation of documentary-fiction hybrids—this chapter will concentrate on the architectural and institutional relationships between cinema and art since 1990. It will trace the predominant ways in which this relationship has been conceptualized in curatorial and artistic practice. Three main bodies of work will be examined: the increasingly common practice of exhibiting work made for a movie theatre within a gallery/museum context; curatorial practices that stage a confrontation between art and cinema on the level of the institution, something embodied most in the exhibitions thematically curated around the notion of cinema; and artistic practices that take up the question of the sitedness of moving-image reception. While every artwork engages with its location, in certain cases, this concern with the architecture of exhibition comes to the fore to produce a reflection

¹³ Ursula Frohne, "Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installations," *The Moving Image and Art: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 357

on the “where” of the moving image.

This chapter will examine what is at stake in the cinematic migration from movie theatre to gallery, interrogating the issues that arise from the placement of the mass cultural medium of the cinema within a space defined by Brian O’Doherty as “expensive” and relying on an “eternity of display” that values timelessness.¹⁴ It will ask: how does the architectural specificity of this othered cinema endow it with qualities different from the cinema of the movie theatre or, for that matter, the cinema of the DVD or the BitTorrent file? And how does the location of cinema within the gallery produce a particular reading of the traditional architectural situation of cinema, or of the cinema *tout court*? When Chrissie Iles asserts, “There’s no such thing as the cinema versus the museum,”¹⁵ she is presumably referring to the great number of artistic practices that occupy truly interstitial positions between these institutions. However, there is no denying that these are historically distinct spaces with distinct determinations. Each possesses an architectural, cultural, and ideological specificity that now confronts and mingles with the other in the artistic practices under interrogation in this dissertation. By examining contemporary curatorial strategies of integrating cinema into an art context, this chapter will conceptualize what happens when the movies leave the movie theatre and enter the museum. It will grapple with the paradoxical position cinema takes up within contemporary art, as it is at once supposedly “rescued” from commercial exploitation by its entry into the gallery, but also infuses this space with attributes of spectacle.

This chapter will trace the veritable explosion of exhibitions devoted to the moving image throughout the 1990s and 2000s, laying out several key touchstones—

¹⁴ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 76 and 15

¹⁵ Chrissie Iles, “Does the Museum Fail?: Panel Discussion at the 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen,” *Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 128

such as the *Passages de l'image* exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1990—in the development of the tendency under investigation in this dissertation. Through a consideration of these exhibitions and a selection of artworks, this chapter will assess how the integration of cinema into a gallery context is marked by a bidirectional movement: seen as an old medium, cinema appears as in desperate need of the shelter provided by the gallery walls, but equally, the recent predilection for large-scale projected images is an important component of an increasing spectacularization of the museum space. To what extent can the gallery be said to “save” cinema, when the most frequent method of showing films made for the movie theatre within the gallery space is in the form of short excerpts installed before a viewer who strolls past? How can the white cube be a site of sanctuary from the determinations of the market when its supposed exclusion from such a realm is more mythic than actual?

In the first epigraph to this chapter, Dominique Païni suggests that ephemeral cinema is eager for the eternity that a residence within the space of museum might provide for it. But this is only half of the story. Reprising the question cited in the introduction to this dissertation—“What does art want from film?”¹⁶—this chapter will offer one possible answer, quite different than the notion that the gallery might provide a tomb for an embalmed cinema: it wants entertainment and mass accessibility. Within the rhetoric of the gallery “saving” cinema from obsolescence lays another set of concerns, concerns that are linked to the status of the institutions of art at the beginning of the twenty-first century as another branch of the culture industries. As such, it is necessary to interrogate how the ideology of the timeless white cube persists while also giving way to another conception of the museum as a technologized space of spectacle.

Spectacle, according to Guy Debord, designates the expansion of capitalist

¹⁶ Lars Henrik Gass, “Afterword: After the Cinema,” *Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 158

reification to all domains of life. As he describes it, “The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see—commodities are now *all* there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity.”¹⁷ In the post-industrial *société de consommation*, emphasis is no longer placed on processes of production, which invariably take place in an outsourced elsewhere. Instead, as Jean Baudrillard notes, use value and exchange value give way to a conception of sign exchange value, which now becomes crucial to any conception of political economy. The “sign object” is no longer a part of a transparent exchange between two parties; rather than gaining its meaning and value from such an exchange, it signifies only as a part of a differential system of signs.¹⁸ At play here is a principle of a generalized circulation of signs according to a code that sets up their consumption as a kind of labour that reproduces the system. In short, the image becomes a form of capital that is value-producing, namely, the image-commodity. In the second-order spectacle of contemporary visual culture, flashy images compensate for the occlusion of social relations by delivering a seductive intensity, but in fact work to exacerbate the loss of lived experience they seek to ameliorate by reproducing its very conditions.

The spaces of art are by no means excepted from this regime. Already in 1983, Hal Foster posed an important question: “Could it be that in our society of the spectacle art has begun to interiorize *its* logic, to be based not simply on exchange value, but on *sign* exchange value?”¹⁹ In the early 1980s, Foster tied this mutation to the prevalence of “structures of identification typical of spectacle—scopic, voyeuristic, patriarchal” that

¹⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 29

¹⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (New York: Telos Press, 1981), 65–66

¹⁹ Hal Foster, “Contemporary Art and Spectacle,” *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 92; emphasis in original.

informed the work of Robert Longo.²⁰ But these structures of identification typical of spectacle are precisely those said to be typical of cinema itself in the work of film theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz. If they were at play in the ambivalence of Longo's *Noweverybody (for R.W. Fassbinder)* (1982-83) [FIGURE 1], their presence has greatly intensified in the decades that have followed, as cinema and its structures of identification have inundated artistic production. Given these circumstances, a central objective of this chapter will be to ask: what is the relation between the increasing spectacularization of the museum and the new presence of cinema as a medium of contemporary art?

The relationship of cinema to the spectacularization of contemporary art must be considered alongside what kind of model of spectatorship is needed to grapple with gallery-based moving images. The immobility and imposed duration of the traditional architectural situation of cinema are drastically altered within a gallery setting, in which the spectator is free to wander at his or her own volition, a change that has enormous implications for aesthetic experience. The possibility of a mobile viewer allows for an exploration of slowness and duration to be conducted to a degree not possible in the cinema, and yet it can also lead to a distracted viewer who merely glances while passing by, taking in images like so many shop window commodities. Repeatedly, in art critical literature on the projected image, one finds an insistent valorisation of the physical mobility of the gallery spectator, conceived as a sort of resistant activity in opposition to the supposed passivity of the film spectator, thereby conflating physical mobility with active criticality.

This chapter will question what assumptions underlie such a model of spectatorship. It will interrogate what is at stake in reducing cinematic spectatorship to a proverbial straw man and suggest how one might better conceptualize the new

²⁰ Ibid.

“spectator-visitor” of the moving-image installations found within the spectacularized spaces of contemporary art.²¹ To do so, it will assert that the privileging of mobility and participation that marks discourses of the moving image in art is not a mark of freedom but in fact corresponds to a new diagram of power, the society of control. According to Gilles Deleuze’s formulation,²² we have moved from a centralized, disciplinary power to a highly flexible and fragmented form of power linked to data flows and an abolition of interior/exterior distinctions. Rather than relying on confinement, which had been the major technique of disciplinary power as elaborated by Michel Foucault,²³ the societies of control privilege circulation as the manner in which power is administered. Thus, far from guaranteeing an intellectual “activity,” mobility is in fact the primary injunction of contemporary organizations of power and must not be seen as possessing an inherently critical valence. Just as the immobile movie theatre spectator emblemized the society of discipline, so does the spectator-visitor of the moving-image installation emblemize the society of control. Understanding the period under discussion in this dissertation through this diagram of power will allow for a historically-located interrogation of the relationships between the individual artwork, the institution of the museum, and the viewing subject.

“Leaving the Movie Theatre”

In “Leaving the Movie Theatre,” Roland Barthes writes that, “Whenever I hear the word *cinema*, I can’t help thinking *hall*, rather than film.”²⁴ The architectural specificity of the movie theatre has long been an important component of the cinema,

²¹ The term “spectator-visitor” comes from Dominique Païni. See: Païni, *Le Temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 17

²² Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October*, no. 59 (Winter 1992), 3-7

²³ See: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988)

²⁴ Roland Barthes, “Leaving the Movie Theatre,” *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), 346

contributing to the particularity of the mode of spectatorship it elicits as much as do shot/reverse-shot structures or eye-line matches. Throughout film history, the movie theatre has been much more than a mere spatial container for the products of film industries worldwide. Rather, it is a highly cathected space with a ritualistic value that has led to its characterization as a kind of secular cathedral. In short, it has been an important element of the overall *dispositif* of cinema.

Today the movie theatre, which had so impacted the experience of cinema in its classical form, is one of numerous sites of moving-image consumption. Beginning with the spread of television in the 1950s, but drastically exacerbated by the popularization of home viewing technologies in the 1980s and the development of the Internet in the 1990s, seeing a film in a movie theatre has become the exception, not the rule. The photographs of Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Theatres* series (1978-present) have attained an iconic status in recent years, as the instantly recognizable long exposures of movie theatres function almost as melancholic love letters written to a lost experience [FIGURE 2]. Sugimoto's theatres are invariably devoid of people, vacated spaces displaced into a frozen timelessness so as to hypostatize their mortification. The long exposure, taken over the duration of the projection of a film, results in the screen appearing as a blinding white rectangle, as the seriality of the *défilement* turns into a superimposition that produces an image that is at once the totality of the projected film and its negation. The photographs show many different cinemas from all over the world, each with its own architectural characteristics. But all share two commonalities: they are empty and their films may no longer be seen. As the movie theatre is vacated, its architectural specificity and its function as an important site of public experience and sociality throughout the twentieth century are left behind.

While acts of mourning for this lost space are visible in contemporary feature films such as Lisandro Alonso's *Fantasma* (2006), Tsai Ming-Liang's *Goodbye, Dragon*

Inn (Bu San, 2003) and Brillante Mendoza's *Service* (Serbis, 2008), the interest in the movie theatre necessarily takes on an altered valence when it stems from the different institutional site of the art gallery. In Sugimoto's *Theatres* series, or in Zubin Pastakia's photographs of Mumbai cinema halls (2006-2008) [FIGURE 3], there is a sense of reflecting on cinema from a place once removed, as if art provided a locus from which to reflect on the history of cinema as a completed enterprise. This is particularly evident in Mark Lewis' *Cinema Museum* (2008), a thirty-six-minute video made for a gallery context that guides its viewer through the collections of film memorabilia, ephemera, and technology housed at the Cinema Museum in London [FIGURE 4]. As Lewis winds through the cluttered and deteriorating collections into the room that houses the museum's film canisters, the manager leading the walk-through makes a crucial slip of the tongue that betrays the investment of the whole enterprise: "Most of the film, professional film, is—*was* 35mm..." It is not, however, merely a matter of the fetishization of celluloid. More than an archive of film prints—a function principally fulfilled in London by the British Film Institute—this Cinema Museum is a collection of memorabilia, most of it linked to the movie theatre. Throughout the video, this woman makes reference to the "sensuousness" of the movie theatre experience, guiding Lewis through lobby cards, projectors, hand-painted signs advertising Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980), and even ushers' uniforms—all recalling a lost era now memorialized within the spaces of contemporary art.

Before the availability of home-viewing technologies, the allure of the movie theatre was such an integral part of film-going that studio head Marcus Loew had cause to remark, "We sell tickets to theatres, not movies."²⁵ The anonymous relationality activated by this space, the darkness, the gigantism of the screen, the imperceptible

²⁵ Marcus Loew, quoted in: John Margolies and Emily Gwathmey, *Ticket to Paradise: American Movie Theaters and How We Had Fun* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992), 14

rhythms of the flicker emanating from the projector—all these elements contribute to the particularity of the mode of spectatorship elicited by the traditional architectural situation of cinema. These attributes serve to buttress the powers of the film itself, consolidating the spectator's attentive fascination and engrossment. In the mainstream of 1970s film theory, such attributes were seen as resulting in the spectator's uncritical absorption in the fiction, thus contributing to an ideological mystification. Figures such as Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry link the darkness of the theatre, the immobility of the spectator, and the hypertrophy of vision at the expense of decreased motor capacity to a regressive state that enables identificatory processes and sets up a transcendental subjection position, shot through with idealism.²⁶ While surely these are invaluable contributions to an understanding of cinematic spectatorship, it is important to see them as located historically within the development of film theory and its interest in both psychoanalysis and ideology critique. Without discounting the relevance of such canonical accounts, it is important to acknowledge the great body of work that has taken place since the publication of these seminal texts,²⁷ as well as the immense changes that have occurred within the institution of cinema. As atomized viewing becomes the digital norm, for example, the public dimension of the movie theatre achieves a new importance.

²⁶ See: Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," trans. Alan Williams, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286-298; Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand Augst, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299-318; and Christian Metz, "Identification, Mirror," *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982), 42-57

²⁷ To encapsulate the bibliography of challenges to *Screen* theory's model of spectatorship could be the topic of an entire doctoral dissertation, as the diverse positions range from feminism, cognitivism, phenomenology, postcolonial theory, queer theory, cultural studies, and new historiography. However, for an overview of the impasses of psychoanalytic film theory's model of spectatorship and some responses to it, see: Linda Williams, "Introduction," *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 1-20

Already in 1975, Barthes' "Leaving the Movie Theatre" fastened on to the centrality of publicity to the cinema experience. He describes the experience of the movie theatre as inextricably bound to the eroticism of the big city, as a somehow intimate experience of public space that stands over and above the domestication of cinema to be found in small-scale television viewing:

In this darkness of the cinema (anonymous, populated, numerous—oh, the boredom, the frustration of so-called private showings!) lies the very fascination of the film (any film). Think of the contrary experience: on television, where films are also shown, no fascination; here darkness is erased, anonymity repressed; space is familiar, articulated (by furniture, known objects), tamed...the *eroticisation* of the place is foreclosed...²⁸

Along with the images the spectator sees on the screen, the experience of the dark room, where the immobile viewer is paradoxically alone in a crowd, contributes to the specificity of cinema spectatorship. Barthes writes of a "cinema situation" that is "pre-hypnotic" and would lead the spectator to "fetishize not the image, but precisely what exceeds it...the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of other bodies"²⁹— essentially all the components of theatrical exhibition. For Barthes, it is this "situation," rather than the film text itself, that accounts for the cinema's allure. The darkened theatre is a site of erotic possibility and clandestine encounter, whose pleasures redouble those culled from the entertainment onscreen.

Now, when images are increasingly consumed individually and/or in private settings, such a characteristic comes to greater importance when considering the specificity of the space of the movie theatre. Equally important within the frenetic montage aesthetics of contemporary media, with its regime of the glance replacing that of the gaze,³⁰ is the temporal relation enabled by the cinema hall. The immobile

²⁸ Barthes, 346

²⁹ Ibid., 345 and 349

³⁰ Timothy Corrigan has differentiated between "gaze aesthetics" and "glance aesthetics." Corrigan sees glance aesthetics as becoming increasingly predominant with the waning of classicism in the 1970s, leading to the contemporary condition that, "Whether they create spectacles of technology or are subject to the discriminating technology of home viewing, watching a movie today is 'distracted' in nearly every sense, a

spectator is party to an implicit contract to give him or herself over to the temporality of film, to confront whatever may come. Of course, one is always free to look away or to get up and leave; but the power of the movie theatre is precisely this ability to harness the spectator's attention through a relinquishing of the ability to change the channel, fast-forward, or pause. While in the 1970s, this was seen as a dangerous passivity, the act of looking long and hard can in fact be an important and politically invested gesture in today's visual culture.

In his curatorial statement for the film programme of Documenta 12 in 2007, Alexander Horwath wrote that all ninety-six films being exhibited would be shown in the movie theatre rather than in the gallery spaces—a rather unusual choice for a major international art exhibition. Of the movie theatre, Horwath wrote, “This format and space are based on the physical and technical characteristics of the medium. They allow film to be perceived on a specific level of intensity to which it owes its historical success.”³¹ As a part of this programme, Horwath premiered James Benning's *casting a glance* (2007), a film documenting Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970). Perhaps the epitome of the link Horwath forges between “intensity” and the particular spectatorial conditions of the movie theatre, Benning has long insisted that his duration-based works be shown in a cinema hall. He has refused both to exhibit them in a gallery context and to release them on DVD.

Scott MacDonald describes Benning's films as a kind of “visual and auditory retraining” that stands against our culture of distraction, a regime which, “seems predicated on the idea that a better life is essentially a deeper commitment to our material well-being, to an ever expanding level of consumption—of material possessions,

version of what Baudrillard called the ‘exhausted fascination’ of watching signs that have lost their authoritative meaning.” See: Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* (London: Routledge, 1991), 62

³¹ Alexander Horwath, “Second Lives—The Documenta 12 Film Programme”; available online: <<http://www.documenta12.de/787.html?&L=1>>. The entire list of films screened in this programme is available here.

of food, of shots per minute.”³² Here, discipline—“retraining”—is mobilized for its radical potential. Benning’s films depend so heavily on the architecture of the movie theatre that even displaying them at scheduled times in a black box with seats in a gallery space causes problems. When several of his films were exhibited at Dia:Beacon in New York State in 2008, the makeshift walls of the black box were not high enough to prevent the buzz and flicker of a Bruce Nauman neon piece from peaking over the divide to intrude on the serenity of *TEN SKIES* (2004), while gallery-goers came in and out at their leisure. Both Benning and Horwath—the head of the Austrian Film Museum, an organization that has eschewed the practice of exhibiting film memorabilia in favour of insisting that the duty of a film museum is to *show film*—are representatives of the position that installing works made for a movie theatre within a gallery space dilutes their potency. This position is not borne of reactionary nostalgia, but from an interest in what such an architecture of exhibition can provide. This stance, however, goes against the increasingly frequent practice of exhibiting work made for durational viewing in a gallery context, a tendency that will be discussed shortly.

The channelling of attention achieved by the movie theatre is far from the sole element of its architectural specificity. One must also take note of the particular regime of relationality that it activates. In *The Paradise Institute* (2001), produced for the Canadian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller fabricated a plywood replica of a cinema, measuring 168.3 cubic metres [FIGURES 5-6]. The viewer steps out of the white cube of the gallery and into another realm, up a few stairs and into a dimly lit interior, furnished with two rows of recognizable red velvet seats, sixteen in total. Taking a seat and donning the headphones provided, the viewer is transported into a classic movie palace. The perspectival model in front of the viewer

³² Scott MacDonald, “James Benning’s *13 LAKES* and *TEN SKIES*, and the Culture of Distraction,” *James Benning*, ed. Barbara Pichler and Claudia Slanar (Vienna: SYNEMA—Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2007), 224 and 230

makes it appear that he or she is seated in the movie theatre's mezzanine, overlooking snippets of a noir-horror playing to an empty house. As the "film" begins, the spectator-visitor is advised that s/he is expected to stay for the duration of the programme—thirteen minutes—thus aligning the spectatorial practice of *The Paradise Institute* more with cinema than with the gallery.

Just as the viewer settles in to watch the movie, a cell phone rings, someone coughs, a woman wonders aloud if she left on the stove when leaving the house. But where are these sounds coming from? The use of binaural audio contributes to a sense of surround sound that blurs distinctions between sound stemming from the headphones and sound stemming from one's own physical space. As such, the viewer's experience splinters into three: there is the diegetic world onscreen, the simulated surroundings of the movie theatre delivered via headphones, and of course, the space of the gallery itself. While, certainly, after the initial surprise, it becomes possible to disentangle the three regimes, the fiction-effect of *The Paradise Institute* is powerful. Throughout the piece, these conflicting spatial determinations confront one another, explicitly engineering a meeting between the protocols of movie theatre and the gallery. As Andrew Uroskie has written, "The word 'paradise' stems from the Ancient Persian for 'walled-off space,' and *The Paradise Institute* stages what is ultimately a crisis of boundaries... *The Paradise Institute*...in its very name conflates fantasy with containment, ancient myth with modern medicalization..."³³ The connotations of containment and scientific experimentation bear clear likenesses to the pristine white cube, while fantasy and the otherworldly are linked to the cinema's ability to transport its viewer into other spaces, other times. As such, Cardiff and Miller's installation is a kind of laboratory to dissect the affective economies of cinema-going.

³³ Andrew Uroskie, "Siting Cinema," *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 389

The movie theatre is a space of the narcissistic screen-mirror, surely, but not just. It equally offers a location where individual boundaries are compromised in a public experience of collectivity. It is this refracted notion of cinematic spectatorship to which the multiple levels of fiction and reality at work in *The Paradise Institute* point. Splintering into oneiric languor, intellectual engagement, phantasmatic mobility, and public intimacy, the multiple facets of the spectatorship elicited by the movie theatre are held up as conflicting but coexistent elements of a specific aesthetic experience that is at once personal and intersubjective. In short, the interest of *The Paradise Institute* lies in seeing the cinema situation as one that is inherently social and public, in some sense as the antithesis of Peter Kubelka's *Invisible Cinema* project, which operated at the Lafayette Street location of Anthology Film Archives between 1970 and 1974. For this project, Kubelka erected a barrier between each spectator so as to block peripheral vision and "make the screen [the viewer's] whole world, by eliminating all aural and visual impressions extraneous to film."³⁴ By contrast, in *The Paradise Institute*, one's experience is always divided between an interest in what takes place on screen and one's bodily location within the theatre as a part of the provisional collectivity of the audience.

This double consciousness is not merely a curious fascination with one's cinema-neighbour; it can also prompt a critical awareness of the conditions in which images are consumed. In "Leaving the Movie Theatre," Barthes writes,

But there is another way of going to the movies (besides being armed by the discourse of counter-ideology); by letting oneself be fascinated *twice over*, by the image and its surroundings—as if I had two bodies at the same time: a narcissistic body which gazes, lost, into the engulfing mirror, and a perverse body, ready to fetishize not the image but precisely what exceeds it: the texture of the sound, the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of other bodies... in short, in order to distance, in order to "take off,"³⁵ I complicate a "relation" by a "situation."³⁶

³⁴ Anthology Committee, "Anthology Film Archives," *Filmmakers Newsletter* (February 1972); quoted in: Sky Sitney, "The Search for the Invisible Cinema," *Grey Room*, no. 19 (Spring 2005), 103

³⁵ Here, though this is lost in the English translation, Barthes is playing on the multiple senses of the French *décoller*, which literally means "unstick" or "unglue" (in this case, from the screen-mirror), but can also mean to "take off," as in a plane, as well as to "get high," as in drug use. Breaking the mirror suggests a

Instead of calling for “the destruction of pleasure as a radical weapon,”³⁷ Barthes advocates a kind of double consciousness that investigates the fascination of the cinema by examining the larger institutional *dispositif* of which it is a part. The “perverse body,” literally, the body that faces the wrong way (from the Latin *perversus*), turns away from the screen to also fetishize a public ritual. Going against the orthodoxy of mid-1970s film theory, which tended to favour Brechtian strategies of distanciation effected through textual mechanisms, Barthes suggests another way of getting to the bottom of cinema’s fascination. Barthes makes use of a third term that would rupture the spectator-screen dyad by introducing an attention to that which exceeds the image.

It is this method of replacing a “relation” by a “situation” that is staged by *The Paradise Institute*. The film onscreen is in fragments at best: a nurse, a burning house, and a sleeping man appear but are never sutured into a legible narrative. Instead, the real interest here is in who may be sitting next to you. The work mobilizes a fictional cinema situation to stage a relationality normally missing from the spaces of art. Is art, then, the institute that studies cinema as a paradise lost? Perhaps. When compared to the atomization of individual viewing typical of moving-image consumption on the Internet or the visitor who wanders through the gallery space, *The Paradise Institute* asserts the movie theatre as a site where one is proximate with strangers throughout a given duration, thereby reflecting on an experience very other than that most often encountered in contemporary life, both within and without of the gallery.

This peculiar form of public intimacy is also present in Douglas Gordon’s film programming works. Gordon has, along with his many video installations made using

critical relation, but this last sense of *décoller* indicates the centrality of pleasure and intoxication. These seemingly contradictory meanings are key to Barthes’ text, but make translation difficult.

³⁶ Barthes, 349

³⁷ This, of course, was the rallying cry of Laura Mulvey’s watershed article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” published in the same year as “Leaving the Movie Theatre.” See: Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), 3-18

recycled footage from classical Hollywood, engaged in several projects in which the artist takes on the role of film programmer. In 1996, Gordon undertook a project entitled *Words and Pictures*, in which he programmed every film shown in his hometown of Glasgow between 20 December 1965 and 20 September 1966: the nine months of his conception, gestation, and birth.³⁸ In this project, the artist returns to origins that are not the private sphere of the family or the maternal womb, but a public, popular culture. In this way, Gordon displaces the autobiographical impulse from the realm of the individual and his purported uniqueness to a geographically and historically specific collective experience of movie-going.

But perhaps Gordon's most intriguing project as film programmer was made in collaboration with Rikrit Tiravanija. *Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge* [FIGURE 7-8], first made in 1995 for the FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier, consisted of two components: Gordon's *Cinéma Liberté*, a screening space, and Tiravanija's *Bar Lounge*, where visitors could enjoy coffee, wine, popcorn, and fruit. Gordon programmed a series of films for the project, which could be watched in whole or in part by spectator-visitors stopping by. Reconstructed in Rotterdam in 1996 for Manifesta 1 and in New York City in 2008 as a part of *theanyspacewhatever* exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, the films programmed for this project vary according to the location of installation, as they are chosen from a list of movies that had been banned or censored in the region.³⁹

³⁸ The list of films is too long to reproduce in its entirety here, but is available in: *Douglas Gordon: Kidnapping*, (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1998), 108-109

³⁹ The list of films shown as a part of Manifesta was unavailable, but in Montpellier, the first iteration of the project included: *To Be Twenty in the Aurès* (*Avoir vingt ans dans les Aurès*, René Vautier, 1972); *Hands off the Loot* (*Touchez pas au grisbi*, Jacques Becker, 1954); *The Green Mare* (*La Jument verte*, Claude Autant Lara, 1959); *The Game of Love* (*Le Blé en herbe*, Claude Autant Lara, 1953); *The Meeting on the Quai* (*Le Rendez-vous des quai*, Paul Carpita, 1955); *Bel ami* (Lois Daquin, 1954); *The Nun* (*La Religieuse*, Jacques Rivette, 1967); *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, Alain Resnais, 1959); *Stain on the Snow* (*La Neige était sale*, Luis Saslavski, 1953); ...*And God Created Woman* (*Et Dieu...créa la femme*, Roger Vadim, 1956). In New York, the project included: *The Red Kimona* (Walter Lang, 1925); *Freaks* (Tod Browning, 1932); *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945); *Pinky* (Elia Kazan, 1949); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan, 1951); *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert J. Biberman, 1954); *Victim* (Basil Dearden, 1961); *Titicut Follies* (Frederic Wiseman, 1967); *I am Curious (Yellow)* (*Jag är nyfiken—en film i gult*, Vilgot

Whereas *The Paradise Institute* makes use of fiction to interrogate the public experience of the movie theatre, *Cinéma Liberté*, linked to the tendency of what Nicolas Bourriaud named “relational aesthetics,” attempts to resurrect such conditions by staging them within the gallery space. Gordon and Tiravanija’s installations are less interested in asserting the gallery as a new site of film exhibition as they are in investigating how to make use of cinema’s status as a reservoir of public desires and anxieties to activate the gallery as a space in which these investments might be negotiated. By showing films that were once banned or censored, the installation leads its viewer to reflect on the historicity of social mores (for a film such as Fritz Lang’s *Scarlet Street* [1945] hardly seems controversial today), as well as the power structures that continue to legislate what gets seen and what doesn’t. The concept of relational aesthetics, which Bourriaud has explicitly described as arising in contrast to the image of sociality put forth by the Internet age,⁴⁰ posits the artwork as a “social interstice”; accordingly, a relational art would take “as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space.”⁴¹ This represents a use of the gallery space that moves away from the autonomous white cube of modernism, or at least attempts to in theory.⁴²

Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge calls upon cinema as a way of reviving a lost horizon of public experience wherein temporary and provisional collectivities might be formed

Sjöman, 1967); *The Last Picture Show* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1971); *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*, Volker Schlöndorff, 1979); *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Martin Scorsese, 1988).

⁴⁰ In *Postproduction*, Bourriaud writes, “*Relational Aesthetics*, of which this book is a continuation, described the collective sensibility within which new forms of art have been inscribed. Both take their point of departure in the changing mental space that has been opened for thought by the Internet, the central tool of the information age we have entered.” See: Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction, Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lucas and Sternberg, 2002), 13-14

⁴¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Paris: les presses du réel, 2002), 14; emphasis in original.

⁴² The concept of relational aesthetics and the extent to which works such as *Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge* actually make possible the relationships they purport to activate is a hotly debated issue. While it is not the mandate of this chapter to investigate the large body of arguments around this topic, chapter three, “The Remake: Old Movies, New Narratives,” will take up Bourriaud’s arguments in greater detail.

though the face-to-face encounter. While electronic media without doubt generate new public spheres, these differ drastically in character from that of the movie theatre before them, principally in that the formation of a networked commons depends on the physical separation of its participants. As Miriam Hansen has shown, in the early decades of the medium, the cinema functioned as an important public sphere, with its practices of collective reception allowing audiences to negotiate the desires and anxieties that stemmed from an experience of technologized modernity.⁴³ The shape of public culture has changed significantly since the early decades of the twentieth century. Today, references to the movie theatre invoke it as a form of publicity that stands against the practices of reception common to wireless and electronic media, media that are most often consumed individually rather than in groups. Hansen is clear about the role digital convergence plays in her emphasis on the cinema as public sphere: she writes that her work is “motivated by an awareness that the cinema, as a public institution, is vanishing fast, and with it the unfulfilled promises of film history.”⁴⁴ While it may be “vanishing fast” from most sectors of culture, the frequent references to it that appear in the spaces of contemporary art take up this task of forging a “politics of relationality [Zusammenhang].”⁴⁵ Chapter three will demonstrate that such a desire to resurrect a vanishing form of publicity is equally an important part of how and why artists have turned to remaking the products of film history.

However, it remains necessary to interrogate what happens to the experience of the movie theatre when cinema is transported into the white cube. *The Paradise Institute* successfully uses fiction to put forth the relationality of cinema as standing against that of the gallery, while *Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge* attempts to transport one

⁴³ See: Miriam Hansen, “Reinventing the Nickelodeon: Notes on Kluge and Early Cinema,” *October*, no. 46 (Autumn 1988), 178-198 and “Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere,” *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 134-152.

⁴⁴ Hansen, “Reinventing the Nickelodeon,” 184

⁴⁵ Hansen, “Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformation of the Public Sphere,” 143

into the other. However, most visitors to the latter installation simply walk by, glance at the film, and maybe drink a quick espresso (in the Guggenheim's *theanyspacewhatever* exhibition, the installation was sponsored by Illy). A sense of public debate or collective experience can never quite break through the austere protocols of the white cube, with the result that visitors wander past just long enough to "get it" as a conceptual gesture and then move on. Where is the relationality? Nothing "hangs together." As Sven Lütticken has put it, such works "seem to produce little more than PR for the art world itself, which is posited as a harmonious sociopolitical enclave set apart from the big bad world."⁴⁶ In this sense, *Cinéma Liberté*, far from contesting the autonomy of the white cube by insisting on the production of a social relation, as it purports to do, in fact reinforces the separateness of art and life.

Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge is exemplary of the problematic that emerges when the gallery becomes the site of a new, displaced cinema. Though it is an increasingly frequent exhibition site for the historical products of the movie theatre, as well as the location of important new moving-image practices, the gallery possesses its own rules of conduct and architectural determinations with which one must grapple. One must interrogate how the exhibition of cinema interacts with what the gallery both limits and affords. This prompts one to ask: what kinds of viewing positions are offered to the visitor of the moving-image installation? And how do they differ from that of the movie theatre? How can one conceptualize the relationship that emerges between the old cinema, which, "as a public institution is vanishing fast," the ascendance of digital media as the primary agents of this vanishing act, and the new spaces of contemporary art?

⁴⁶ Sven Lütticken, "Black Bloc, White Penguin: Reconsidering Representation Critique," *Artforum* (March 2007), 301

The *Passages* of Cinema

Today, the movies are, as it were, leaving the movie theatre. But instead of exiting into the brisk night air, still dreamy from a filmic haze as Barthes did in 1975, now they are scattering across the entire cultural field. The prevalence of discussions of convergence has led to a marked anxiety over the fate of cinema in such an environment, as well as interrogations into how art might best keep pace with the increasing mediatization of everyday life. This triangulation of art, cinema, and digital convergence was critically interrogated in the important 1990 exhibition, *Passages de l'image*. Curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, and Christine van Assche for the Centre Georges Pompidou, this exhibition announced a watershed in the display of moving images within the gallery. According to its organizers, the exhibition “respond[ed] to the desire to understand what started happening in and among images when it became clear that we could no longer simply speak of the cinema, photography, and painting, since we had reached a point of no return in a crisis of the image, when the very nature of images was brought into question.”⁴⁷ The exhibition undertook a rigorous inquiry into the fate of specific image-regimes at a moment marked by technological convergence and a renegotiation of the museum space after modernism. Closely linked to Bellour’s theoretical concept of the *entre-image* or “between-image,”⁴⁸ the exhibition interrogated

⁴⁷ Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, and Christine van Assche, “Introduction,” *Passages de l'image*, trans. James Eddy (Barcelona: Centre Cultural de la Fundacio Caixa de Pensions, 1990), 12

⁴⁸ While Bellour’s concept of the *entre-image*, which designates practices situated at the intersection of discrete media is immediately relevant to the *Passages de l'image* exhibition, in many ways the exhibition may be seen as encapsulating many of the most salient strands of French film theory throughout the 1980s, including the inquiry into the relationship between film and painting found in the work of Jacques Aumont and Pascal Bonitzer and the rigorous interrogation into the status of the filmic image in relation to fine art found in the films of Jean-Luc Godard throughout the 1980s. The extent of the theoretical import of this show is equally visible through an examination of its catalogue: as a serious body of scholarship rather than just a gallery-goer’s souvenir, it includes writing by Aumont, Alain Bergala, Bonitzer, Bellour, Thierry de Duve, Jacques Derrida, Louis Marin, Jean-Louis Schefer, and Paul Virilio. See: Jacques Aumont, *L’Œil Interminable* (Paris: La Différence, 1991); Raymond Bellour, *L’Entre-images: Photo, Cinéma, Vidéo* (Paris: La Différence, 2002); Pascal Bonitzer, *Décadrages: Peinture et cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1985).

the hybrid and intermedial forms arising from the “crisis of the image” brought about by the increased presence of video and digital images throughout the 1980s.

As Bellour has elaborated elsewhere,⁴⁹ *Passages de l'image* demonstrated that post-digitization contaminations of media do not vitiate medium specificity but rather suggest that “all old images should be interpreted anew on the basis of the enigma that these as yet doubtful images present to us.”⁵⁰ Though the organizers admit that these metamorphoses of the image have been well underway since the advent of photography, the exhibition crucially presents an overview of how these “passages” between discrete media have been interrogated in cinema throughout the twentieth century and how they have now become *de rigueur* in the work of artists such as Dan Graham, Gary Hill, Thierry Kuntzel, Chris Marker, Michael Snow, Bill Viola, and Jeff Wall. Dan Graham’s *Cinema* (1981) was the earliest artwork included in the exhibition, with the rest produced between 1987 and 1990. Meanwhile, an accompanying film programme included a diverse plethora of works stemming back to 1914.⁵¹ The thesis at work was that cinema—as a melting-pot of image, sound, and text—has long negotiated the intermedial tensions that face now contemporary art and that this very same cinema increasingly finds itself a part of them.

By pairing vanguard contemporary art with a wide-ranging selection of films, the exhibition insisted on the ability of the contemporary moment to open up a critical space in which to reconsider the images of the past in a new light, thus maintaining an investment in history while welcoming the moving image into the gallery. It saw a

⁴⁹ See: Raymond Bellour, “Battle of the Images,” *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, ed. Jeffery Shaw and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 56-59

⁵⁰ Bellour, David, and van Assche, 12

⁵¹ The entire list of the films and videos included in the exhibition is available in the catalogue, but a representative sampling includes: *The Crazy Ray* (*Paris qui dort*, René Clair, 1925); *Dog Star Man* (Stan Brakhage, 1962-1964); *News From Home* (Chantal Akerman, 1977); *Zelig* (Woody Allen, 1983); *Cézanne* (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1989), *The Thousand Eyes of Doctor Mabuse* (*Der Tausend Augen des Doktor Mabuse*, Fritz Lang, 1960); as well as videotapes from Vito Acconci, Nam June Paik, and Peter Campus.

popular film such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988) or the cheeky trickery of *F for Fake* (1974) as having as much to offer to an inquiry into the status of the image as the unshakable austerity of *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955). Though the artists included represent an earlier generation than is under consideration in this dissertation, what is necessary to note about *Passages de l'image* is the manner in which the exhibition staged a problematic concerning the tension between the notion of the discrete medium and the tendency of both digitization and the increasing technologization of art production to lead to a disintegration of a given medium's traditional boundaries, as well as a blurring of the line between high and low culture.

In this way, the exhibition acts as a condensation of the state of the problematic regarding cinema, technology, and the museum in 1990. The cinema finds itself planted firmly at the centre of such an inquiry: the so-called seventh art had, in its youth, been at the vanguard of the assault against the value of uniqueness central to the work of art, but now joins the ranks it once assailed as its conventional appearance is threatened by the new media—which includes video, deemed to be a fratricidal Cain to cinema's Abel by Godard in *Every Man For Himself* (*Sauve qui peut [La Vie]*, 1980), also included in the exhibition. In this sense, cinema stands poised between traditional artistic media and the informatic age of convergence with which *Passages* attempts to grapple. It is this unique position—newer than old media, but older than new media—that in many ways makes cinema the central focus of *Passages* and which might begin to account for the appeal it has had in art since 1990. It is a medium that has always espoused an aggregate condition that drew upon other media, high and low, thus providing a model for the new hybrid forms that result from the augmented influences from both mass culture and

technology within the realm of fine art practice⁵²—but it also appears as a loved entity in danger of disappearance.

In his review of the exhibition, Antoine de Baecque concludes by taking note of the manner in which *Passages de l'image* signalled a transformation of the entity known as cinema: “A mystery constructs itself before our eyes: the *gift of aura*, a way, perhaps, of thinking about the museification of cinema.”⁵³ Discussing contributions to the catalogue by Jacques Aumont and Pascal Bonitzer, de Baecque sees such authors as partaking of a personification of cinema as loved being (the “Personne-Cinéma”) that turns the exhibition into something of a ghost story. Haunting the film theorists, this “Personne-Cinéma” would spectrally return to utter, “*I am no longer there, but I remember and I remind you of the moment when you saw me for the first (the only) time.*”⁵⁴ The *Passages de l'image* exhibition stands as an early and cogent articulation of the bivalent forces that continue to govern the relationship between cinema and the gallery at the present moment. It critically interrogates a double movement: on the one hand, cinema’s integration into the white cube imparts a value of veneration to an endangered institution, commemorating this entity with a palpable nostalgia; but on the other hand, the cinema enters the gallery on the horizon of a centripetal motion of convergence that pulls technology and mass culture even further into the great *mélange* of contemporary art.

In 1990, *Passages* provided a critical exploration of this state of affairs through the inclusion of work that critically interrogated the condition resulting from technological and cultural change. A theoretical problematic was investigated. But

⁵² In her “*Voyage on the North Sea*”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Rosalind Krauss refers to the “filmic model” as a way to begin conceiving of the self-differing nature of all media. See: Rosalind Krauss, “*Voyage on the North Sea*”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 46

⁵³ Antoine de Baecque, “*Passages de l'image*: Iconoclastes, iconolâtres,” *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 435 (September 1990), 59; all translations from this text are my own. The implications of the becoming-auratic of the cinema will be taken up in chapter two.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

throughout the decade that would follow, cinema would be increasingly marshalled for its mass appeal, foregoing the investigation into the tension between convergence and specificity that *Passages* had undertaken. Increasingly, cinema would appear at once as a moribund relic of the last century and as an emblem of the values of spectacle, entertainment, and popular accessibility that art would increasingly cultivate as it entered the new millennium.

Safeguarding Patrimony

The dispersal of cinema has prompted a chorus of eschatologues to sing a requiem for the loved and lost “Personne Cinéma.” While such proclamations do risk romantic overvaluation, it remains important to interrogate the rhetoric surrounding the obsolescence of cinema and to examine precisely how such discourses do not merely speak of an object, but indeed produce it. All of the discussions of the “death of cinema” signal not so much its total disappearance as its passage into new discursive and institutional spaces. More than a death, it is a becoming; the contours of this new character must be traced. Following such an imperative, instead of issuing an obituary, Dominique Païni has historicized the various conceptions of cinema that have taken hold throughout its life. While this periodization is broad, it nonetheless has a certain usefulness. For Païni, between 1850 and 1908, cinema (including pre-cinema) exists as a curiosity, a notion embodied in Tom Gunning’s notion of the “cinema of attractions.”⁵⁵ From 1908 to 1950, the cinema is an institution of mass leisure, before reaching, from 1950 to 1968, a certain maturity as an art, presumably embodied in the European and American auteur cinemas. Between 1968 and 1990, cinema is integrated into the broader

⁵⁵ See: Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde,” *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 56-62

field of culture in general, a movement that carries with it certain fears of a cinema in peril. Its masterworks are first broadcast on television, then released on VHS, leading to a decline in box office receipts. This period sees the closure of many single-screen cinemas, but this endangerment of cinema means that “its value rises with its rarefaction, just like any primary resource.”⁵⁶ During this time, Païni sees a widening gap between cinema and art, as the cinema “becomes a kind of ideal model [*sur-moi*] for culture in general,” “eventually an argument of sales and of fashion” linked to celebrity and commercialism.⁵⁷

It is this conception of cinema that marks Susan Sontag’s bitterly threnodic article, “The Decay of Cinema.” Here, Sontag mourns the “vanished rituals—erotic, ruminative—of the darkened theatre,” and forges an explicit link between the dissemination of cinema over multiple spaces and its disintegration into “a disincarnated, lightweight cinema that doesn’t demand anyone’s full attention.”⁵⁸ The situation described in Sontag’s 1999 polemic has, if anything, only exacerbated in the decade that followed. However, given the periodization of this dissertation, it is significant that Païni marks 1990 as the date that marks the passage of cinema into a new realm, that of patrimony: “Since 1990, after having been the curiosity of the century, the leisure of the century, the art of the century, the culture of the century, cinema becomes the *patrimony* of the century. Each film is now *also* a document, testimony, trace, memory.”⁵⁹ Mainstream narrative cinema continues to partake of the same relationships to celebrity and mass culture that Païni described as dominating between 1968 and 1990. But in the meantime, another conception of cinema—perhaps more important to a conservator of film such as Païni—has arisen.

⁵⁶ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 26

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Susan Sontag, “The Decay of Cinema,” *New York Times* (25 February 1999), available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html>>

⁵⁹ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 26

The notion of cinema as *also* (that is, additionally and not solely) possessing patrimonial value invokes a relationship to protection and preservation that, while by no means new, has taken on a greater urgency in recent years.⁶⁰ After 1990, the dispersion of cinema throughout culture in general, which Païni sees as taking place from 1968 onwards, dialectically reverses to give way to the rarefaction of cinema that had always existed within it, leading to an interest in its history and its specificity. Spread too thin over the entire cultural field, the cinema appears in danger of disappearance, thus spawning rearguard efforts to both remember it and to reassemble it. Throughout the 1990s, no doubt spurred on by cinema's centennial and the invention of the DVD in 1995, this conception of cinema becomes increasingly prevalent. Païni summarizes its implications quite simply: "This last mutation is one from industry to art."⁶¹ In need of preservation, the sites of this patrimonial cinema become the museum and the cinémathèque more than the commercial movie theatre or even the home-viewing console. And once inside its walls, "the institution of the museum creates artistic value by imposing *the value of agedness* and *the value of exhibition*."⁶²

Païni sees "the call of the museum hall"⁶³ as the primary way in which cinema might be safeguarded as cultural patrimony, discussing the increasing prevalence of

⁶⁰ One might see both the turn to early cinema historiography and the interest in film as an indexical trace of pastness—perhaps the two most important trends in film theory in the last twenty years—as both responding to and creating this notion of cinema. The interest in early cinema—exemplified in the work of Noël Burch, Tom Gunning, and Miriam Hansen—investigates the history of the medium outside a narrative of teleological development that would inevitably lead to the hegemony of classical Hollywood, thus displaying an interesting in recovering alternate, unfulfilled futures the medium once had. This tendency fits with the notion of film possessing patrimonial value by insisting on the necessity of recovering forgotten or undervalued periods of film history that provide alternatives to what Burch terms the Institutional Mode of Representation. The interest in indexicality—exemplified by the work of Mary Ann Doane, Laura Mulvey, Philip Rosen, and the recent rehabilitation of Bazin and the Kracauer of *Theory of Film*—directly takes up the ability of the film image to function as document and the accompanying relationship to temporality, history, and affect that one finds therein. For the watershed edited volume on pre-classical cinema, notably published in 1990, see: Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990); the notion of indexicality will be a primary focus of the next chapter of this dissertation.

⁶¹ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 29

⁶² *Ibid.*; emphasis in original.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 45

exhibiting cinema throughout the 1990s as a form of “hanging cinema on the museum wall” [*accrocher du cinéma aux cimaises*], with all the changes in cultural status that would result from such a gesture.⁶⁴ Amidst such fears of disappearance, the increased presence of cinema within the gallery can be seen as an attempt to take sanctuary within the privileged and relatively autonomous zone of art. This architectural displacement allows for a kind of retrospective inquiry to emerge, whereby one constantly confronts the question, “What *was* cinema?” Disregarding the fact that cinema continues to be many things to many people—box office revenues in the United States exceeded \$10 billion in 2009⁶⁵—this strand of artistic and curatorial practice puts forth the space of the gallery as a tomb that would house and embalm a moribund cinema. This can take place in at least two primary ways: first, the gallery can serve as an exhibition venue for the historical products of the cinema, as exemplified in this chapter’s opening example of the *Hitchcock et l’art* exhibition; and second, it can provide a site for the exhibition of a new cinema that is “purged” or “cleansed” of its associations with the vulgarity of mass culture.

While the first manner is closely aligned with Païni’s notion of cinema attaining a patrimonial value, the second is linked to what Raymond Bellour has termed “saving the image.” Bellour uses this term to designate an operation that might most productively be thought as an attempt to redeem or rescue the image from the vulgarization and profanation it has undergone in the era of mass media proliferation through gallery-based production that would rehabilitate qualities of contemplation and substance. According to this premise, the gallery might become the site of a new kind of cinematic production that would carry on the cinema’s thwarted goals, conserving its mandate if not the specific products of its history. Of course, Bellour’s position rests on a very

⁶⁴ Ibid., 65

⁶⁵ Brooks Barnes, “Audiences Laughed to Forget Troubles,” *New York Times* (29 December 2009); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/30/movies/30yearend.html>>

particular understanding of cinema's mandate, one that writes out its relation to mass culture in favour of a purified, quasi-autonomous art form. Bellour describes the notion as "the fiction of a cinema saving itself as much as escaping itself, thanks to the metamorphoses to which it is submitted."⁶⁶ Cinema is able to pursue its goals only through a transubstantiation: through a kind of benediction, profane cinema may be made sacred by its entry into the museum and gallery. Bellour suggests that the domain of cinema proper is now beyond hope, lost forever to the vapid spectacle of Hollywood's media-industrial complex. In its place, the spaces of art will fulfil the lost vocation of the movie theatre.

In a similar vein, Thomas Elsaesser has suggested reversing André Bazin's suggestion that the cinema saved painting by liberating it from its obsession with producing likeness⁶⁷ to ask: "[I]s another art in the process of saving cinema?" Discussing Peter Greenaway's installation work, he writes that the artist is "purging cinema, by confronting it both with itself and its 'others,' recalling or insisting on a few conceptual features, in an attempt to rescue it from its self-oblivion by theatrically staging it across painting, sculpture, music, drama, and architecture."⁶⁸ By "purging cinema" of its undesirable attributes, no doubt allied to a vulgar commercialism, and marrying it with high-culture others in order to rescue it, Elsaesser's understanding of Greenaway recalls Bellour's notion of the *entre-image*, which produces a non-essentialist conception of medium specificity through an engagement with hybrid forms.

However, just as Païni emphasized the values of agedness and exhibition that are imparted to the cinema by its location within the museum, one must take care to

⁶⁶ Raymond Bellour, "Saving the Image," *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Buchler (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2003), 70

⁶⁷ In "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," Bazin writes that, painting was "redeemed from sin by Niépce and Lumière," this "sin" being an obsession with likeness. See: André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What is Cinema? Volume One*, trans. and ed. Hugh Grey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 12

⁶⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, "Peter Greenaway," *Spellbound*, ed. Ian Christie and Philip Dodd (London: Hayward Gallery, 1996), 77-78

interrogate the ideological determinations of the gallery space if one is to fully conceptualize what is at stake in this notion of “saving” cinema, whether by providing a new site of exhibition for old movies, or by sponsoring a new kind of moving-image practice. According to Bellour and Elsaesser, cinema is granted escape from the ideological determinations of mass culture, but there is no interrogation of those of the realm it is entering. While it is true that its location within the gallery is generative of new possibilities and new opportunities to explore the histories and the futures of cinema, some suspicion must be cast on the magnanimous gesture of “saving” cinema. The risk of positions such as Bellour’s and Elsaesser’s is that they fail to take into account the fact that the white cube is far from a neutral container that would protect the cinema out of an unquestioned benevolence. It possesses its own history, its own ideology, and its own contemporary predicament—all of which come to bear on why and how cinema has invaded contemporary art.

The White Cube, Cinema’s Tomb?

Tony Oursler’s *Movie Block (Sony)* (1994) performs the frictions that exist between the movie theatre and the art gallery as ideologically determined sites of image consumption. For this project, Oursler projected video footage of a Manhattan street corner onto two sides of a small white cube placed on the floor of the Metro Pictures gallery. Playing on the nomenclature of the gallery space as a “white cube” and the minimalist predilection for the cube as a reductive sculptural form, Oursler here uses video projection to dematerialize this modernist object into a bustling glimpse of street life in the East Village, injecting the sanctified space of the gallery with a glimpse of the outside world. Significantly, *Movie Block* shows not just any city intersection, but the location of a multiplex. The public culture of the movie theatre is in many ways at odds

with the ideology of the white cube—something Oursler points out by bringing the two into confrontation with one another.

The cinema situation, described above as linked to clandestine eroticism and public encounter, may be contrasted with the protocols of the white cube and the autonomy it seeks to bestow on the objects and spectators within it. The architectural form of the white cube, popularized in the 1920s, is inextricably tied to the ideology of modernism and the desire for an artistic autonomy free of the contaminating tentacles of a mass culture seen as governed primarily by market imperatives. Brian O'Doherty refers to this pristine space as a "survival compound,"⁶⁹ suggesting the strictly policed borders it enacts between its inside (the autonomous work of art) and what is outside (the world), while Douglas Crimp has written that, "...the modern epistemology of art is a function of art's seclusion in the museum, where art was made to appear autonomous, alienated, something apart, referring only to its own internal history and dynamics."⁷⁰

It is according to this conception of the gallery space that the humour of Oursler's *Movie Block* fully resonates. By severing the work of art from the world, the gallery enacts a decontextualization that allows it to enter a realm outside of time. Oursler, however, refuses this operation by insisting that the white cube—both as an emblem of the modern gallery and as a synecdoche for minimalist sculptural forms—inevitably points to the outside that it seeks to escape. And in the case of *Movie Block*, this "outside" happens to be concretely located at a multiplex just across town. Such a gesture prompts a consideration of the ways in which what Mary Ann Staniszewski has termed "the power of display" endows art objects with an autonomous presence that seems to emanate from within them but is in fact a matter of institutional framing.⁷¹ This erasure of historical contingency in favour of the appearance of essence and eternity has a name:

⁶⁹ O'Doherty, 80

⁷⁰ Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 13

⁷¹ See: Mary Ann Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998)

myth. Well-spaced and well-lit in an architecture where “[s]ome of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics,”⁷² the object found within the art gallery is framed by the space around it in such a manner as to radically change the meanings attached to it—a lesson that goes back to Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917). Accordingly, the exhibition space must not be seen as a mere container, but as a meta-medium to be investigated. It is the means by which art is made visible and knowable to those who consume it. It transmits individual works of art, but also much more: it activates relations between works, conveys institutional discourses, and produces a viewing subject.

While the specificity of this subject position will be taken up later in this chapter, what is important to note here is that the gallery does not merely *house* cinema after 1990, but effectively *produces* a new cinematic *dispositif* that coexists with a plurality of others, including traditional theatrical exhibition, video-on-demand, and more. Through the discursive and institutional practices of art, this new *dispositif* comes into visibility, taking on contours somewhat different than those it previously possessed. Subject to the ideological determinations of the gallery space, a notion of the history of cinema as possessing a surplus cultural value comes into visibility. De Baecque calls it “the gift of aura”; Païni names it patrimonial value. When the cinema risks being dissolved into the great data flows of the fibre-optic age, it enters the gallery and the museum—spaces in which mass cultural relevance is not merely unneeded, but in which mass cultural *irrelevance* has historically been cultivated. As such, one component of the new *dispositif* of cinema in the gallery is the value of agedness that lends the historical products of cinema a patina of precious rarity. The gallery thus occupies a paradoxical position: it is yet another site to which the shattered cinema has travelled, participating in the

⁷² O’Doherty, 14

dissolution of its specificity, and yet it is the “security compound” that might best preserve it intact. Unfortunately, however, much contemporary curatorial practice fails to interrogate the vicissitudes of cinema’s presence within such a so-called protective space. When works made for a movie theatre are exhibited within the gallery, for example, one witnesses a frequent neglect to consider both the ideological ramifications of such a migration, as well as what happens to the quality of the work when exhibited under such changed circumstances. For an institution apparently entrusted with a mandate to safeguard cinema, more often what one witnesses is a dilution based on principles of excerpction and spectatorial inattention that speak to concerns very other than providing shelter.

It should be noted Alexander Horwath’s vehement opposition to exhibiting works made for the movie theatre within the gallery is a minority position, at least within a contemporary art context. Far more common is the practice espoused by Kerry Brougher, who curated *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* in 1996. The exhibition included over two hundred works, spanning across media and including films by figures such as Luis Buñuel, Alfred Hitchcock, Peter Kubelka, Fritz Lang, Paul Sharits, and Orson Welles, shown on monitors primarily in the form of short excerpts. As Ludovic Cortade notes, there is a demonstrative and pedagogical function present in such a practice of excerpction, as if to say, “Look, this sequence nicely illustrates the directing idea of the exhibition.”⁷³ The practice of excerpction most often isolates a famous scene that, unlike the idiosyncratic privileged moment of the cinephile, is most often a showcase of virtuosity that stands in for the entire film. It is shown on loop on a small monitor. While curators pay extremely close attention to the exhibition specifications set out by artists, when it comes to displaying the products of film history, no such care is

⁷³ Ludovic Cortade, *Le Cinéma de l’immobilité* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008), 128; translation mine.

taken.

Concurrent with and following the major undertaking of *Hall of Mirrors*, the products of the movie theatre appear with increasingly frequency in the gallery. Chantal Akerman produced her first installation, a three-room a version of her 1993 feature, *D'Est*, in 1995 for the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and continued the pattern of producing installation versions of her feature films with *A Woman Sitting After Killing* (2001). The work was shown at the 2001 Venice Biennale, an event that also included installations by filmmakers Atom Egoyan (with Julião Sarmento), Abbas Kiarostami, and Angela Ricci Lucchi/Yervant Giankian, to say nothing of the numerous moving-image installations made by gallery artists.⁷⁴ This seven-monitor piece loops the last shot from Akerman's classic exercise in duration, *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai de Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). The viewer encounters seven iterations of a medium close-up of the title character (played by Delphine Seyrig) sitting at her kitchen table as night falls after murdering her afternoon john, though even this small morsel of information would remain undisclosed to the viewer unfamiliar with Akerman's earlier work. The explorations of hyper-description, quotidian routine, and long duration that make *Jeanne Dielman* a classic of oppositional cinema are gone; one is left only with a repeated final shot, devoid of context.

While Akerman represents an unusual case of a filmmaker re-making her own work for a gallery context, most often, the transportation of the products of the movie

⁷⁴ The Biennale's curator, Harald Szeemann, who had originally conceived his 1995 exhibition *Illusion—Emotion—Realität, 100 Jahre Kino: Die 7. Kunst auf der Suche nach den 6 Andern* for the Biennale but was prevented from showing it there due to unspecified "different reasons," lobbied for film to play a larger role in the 2001 edition. In addition to including many artists—such as Stan Douglas, Fiona Tan, and Bill Viola—who work with large scale projected images, Szeemann entered into a partnership with the Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica to invite filmmakers to install works in the art section of the Biennale, resulting in the contributions noted above. In the accompanying catalogue, Szeemann wrote that these installations were a chance to bring such filmmakers into contact with artists like Stan Douglas. See: *La Biennale di Venezia 49. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte: Platea dell'umanità • Plateau of Humankind • Plateau der Menschheit • Plateau de l'humanité* (Venice: Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 2001), xvii–xviii.

theatre into the gallery takes place at the behest of the curator. Sometimes one encounters monographic shows, such as *Derek Jarman: Brutal Beauty* at the Kunsthalle Wien in 2008, or *Kenneth Anger* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, in 2009. Other times, the products of the movie theatre are incorporated into larger exhibitions, as was the case when Bruce LaBruce and Jean Genet were included in the sex-themed room of P.S.1 and Kunst-Werke's exploration of the body of art, *Into Me/Out of Me* (2006), or when Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (2006) was exhibited at the 2008 Whitney Biennial. The results of such a practice are invariably mixed. At best, they expose works to new audiences and to new contexts of understanding. At worst, they make exhibition choices that present the works under unfavourable circumstances. Copies of inferior image quality may be shown and sustained viewing may be rendered impossible.

In 2003, the Museum of Modern Art exhibited digital copies of Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1964-1966) placed within frames, as if this feeble *rapprochement* with painting would lend some legitimacy to the presence of film within a fine art context. This installation completely neglected to consider that the nobility incurred through the analogy to painted portraiture was in fact precisely what Warhol agitated against in the *Screen Tests*' emphasis on seriality, accumulation, and the voiding of interiority—let alone the ramifications of exhibiting the 16mm films on video. A similarly questionable choice was made by Maya Stendhal Gallery, New York, when the DVD box set, *Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film, 1894-1941* was presented as an installation in 2008. The presentation consisted of merely looping each of the seven DVDs included in the set on its own LCD screen, adding nothing to the understanding of the work and greatly diminishing the impact it might have had in a traditional exhibition situation.

Perhaps the most monumental example the lack of concern for the integrity of the work found in recent curatorial strategies of exhibiting cinema in the gallery is the

Berlin Alexanderplatz (1980) installation curated by Klaus Biesenbach for Kunst-Werke and P.S.1 in 2007. Here, each episode of Fassbinder's fourteen-part miniseries was installed in its own small room, facing onto a central courtyard familiar from the domestic architecture of Berlin's Mitte neighbourhood, where the miniseries takes place [FIGURE 9]. As such, the visitor has a choice of strolling through this *hinterhof* to see all episodes projected at once, or to take a seat in one of the small rooms to watch an episode played on loop. While one admission to the exhibition was valid for as many return trips as the visitor pleased, the likelihood of viewing the entire 894 minutes of the series is highly unlikely, to say the least, while sound bleeding from other projections made concentrated viewing difficult.

Along with these episodes, the installation included an audio recording of Fassbinder speaking about the project, stills, preparatory sketches, excerpted scenes displayed on video monitors in another room, and, of course, a hefty catalogue of over 650 pages, composed in large part of stills. In an essay included in this tome, Biesenbach scarcely addresses the motivations or vicissitudes of making *Berlin Alexanderplatz* into an installation, though he does discuss Fassbinder's enduring influence on contemporary artists such as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, who exhibited a remake of the filmmaker's bedroom in the first Berlin Biennial in 1998 [FIGURE 10]. Biesenbach, temporarily ignoring the fact that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was a co-production of West German and Italian television, compares its length to Warhol's *Empire* (1963) and Matthew Barney's *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002), and does his curatorial best to cultivate art historical analogies that reach as far as Doug Aitken's *Cathouse* (1997), Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980), and Jeff Wall's *The Destroyed Room* (1978). Despite the reverential tenor of the exhibition, Biesenbach's installation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* does more to dilute Fassbinder's masterful epic narrative into a series of images to be consumed in a glance by a strolling gallery-goer than it does to contribute to a serious

understanding of the work. At the risk of oversimplification, one might venture that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* gains nothing from such an exhibition, while K-W and P.S.1 cash in on the legacy of Fassbinder and his much-acclaimed miniseries.

Les signes parmi nous, d'après JLG

As such examples make clear, exhibiting the products of the movie theatre within a gallery context is a tricky business, indeed. The very criticisms film purists level against the inferiority of the home-viewing experience often hold true for museum exhibition as well: there is a frequent lack of material specificity, a distortion of image scale, and unfavourable viewing conditions. However, unlike the home-viewing industry, which at some level acknowledges its secondary status vis-à-vis theatrical exhibition, the museum, with its high-culture status, parades as an elevation, or “saving,” of cinema. It is in a very different context that Serge Daney has spoken of a “Godardian pedagogy,”⁷⁵ but perhaps unsurprisingly, Jean-Luc Godard has something to teach on this front as well. No stranger to interrogating the relationship between cinema and art history, in his summer 2006 Pompidou exhibition, *Voyage(s) en utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (*Voyage(s) in Utopia, JLG, 1946-2006: In Search of a Lost Theorem*), Godard launched a provocatively cynical commentary on the contemporary status of cinema, both in and outside the gallery.

Though episodes of Godard's monumental *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1989-1998) had been installed at Documenta 10 (1997) and he had, with Anne-Marie Miéville, been commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art to produce a documentary about that institution entitled *The Old Place* (1998), this project marked the first time that the filmmaker produced a work expressly for an installation context. Godard had long

⁷⁵ See: Serge Daney, “Le terrorisé (*Pédagogie godardienne*),” *La Rampe: Cahier critique, 1970-1982* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1996), 85-94

interrogated the role of the museum, so it came as little surprise that the exhibition took up the vicissitudes of film's integration into such a space, thus standing as a foil to the many easy yet problematic transplantations of recent years. The exhibition stemmed from a project abandoned in February 2006, *Collage(s) de France, archéologie du cinéma d'après JLG*,⁷⁶ which had itself been borne of the Collège de France's rejection of Godard's proposal to teach a seminar there according to the methodology of *Histoire(s)*.⁷⁷ A sign greeting the visitor at the entryway to the exhibition made this clear [FIGURE 11]:

The Centre Pompidou has decided not to realise the exhibition project *Collage(s) de France, archéologie du cinéma d'après JLG* because of the artistic, ~~technical,~~ ~~and financial~~ difficulties it presented—and to replace it by another programme entitled *Voyage(s) en utopie, à la recherche d'un théorème perdu, JLG, 1946-2006*.

Rumour had it that Godard took to the sign with a permanent marker the day of the opening to put “technical and financial” *sous rature*. The numerous maquettes encountered alerted the viewer to the original objectives of Godard's “utopian travels,” giving a dollhouse hint of what the nine rooms of his exhibited archaeology of cinema might have looked like [FIGURE 12].⁷⁸

In place of this aborted exhibition, Godard made three rooms—titled “Today,” “Yesterday,” and “The Day Before Yesterday”—into something of a garbage dump of

⁷⁶ For a description of the original project, see: Dominique Païni, “According to JLG...” trans. Michael Witt, *Rouge*, no. 9 (2006), available online: <www.rouge.com.au/9/according_jlg.html>

⁷⁷ Godard undertook such a seminar in Montréal in 1978. He outlined the goal of the lectures at the Conservatoire d'Art Cinématographique as such: “Instead of giving courses like it is done today in all the universities of the world, I proposed to Losique [the director of the institution] to consider the business [*l'affaire*]... as an affair... a sort of co-production that would become the scenario for an eventual series of films entitled, “Introduction to a True History of Cinema.” [...] On each trip, I brought a bit of my history and jumped into it, at the rate of two of my films per month. But I often saw something other than my memory had recalled, and it came from what we projected in the morning of the films from the history of cinema that at the time had a relationship with what I was doing. And I commented on it all immediately before three or four Canadians who were as lost as me in this story [*histoire*]. Then it all ended...” These lectures were published in 1980 and are in many ways the beginnings of the project that would become *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. See: Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma, Tome I* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1980), 15; translation mine.

⁷⁸ The titles of these rooms were to be: Myth (Allegory), Humanity (The Image), The Camera (Metaphor), The Film(s) (Duty(s)), Alliance (The Unconscious, Totem, Taboo), The Bastards (Parable), The Real (Daydream), Murder (Sesame, Theorem, Montage), and The Tomb (Fable).

culture. The space looked as if it were still in the process of installation. Unused video monitors lay stacked in a corner, while elsewhere wires hung exposed and a clip of a “No Trespassing” sign from *Citizen Kane* (1941) impeded the viewer from obtaining a clear view of a video screening behind a metal fence. The rooms were transformed into a sort of necropolis of cinema, with a proliferation of small, LCD screens showing Bresson, Ray, and Rossellini like so many gravestones. Stripped of its monumentality and place in the public sphere, the big screen appeared small scale, in an “exploded apartment”⁷⁹ complete with an unmade bed [FIGURE 13]. A small train shuttled between two spaces, making its way through a hole that seemed to have been haphazardly punched through the gallery wall [FIGURE 14]. Was it a return to the playfulness of childhood, to the innocence of lost origins, to the 1895 screening of the Lumières? Did it look back at a mechanical age from the maelstrom of the electronic or reference the deportations and mass death of the last century?

Scale was a governing problem of the entire exhibition, recurring in the miniature maquettes, the tiny LCD screens, and the toy train. As an aberration of normal scale, the miniature is aligned with the interior, the possessable, and with a negation of the flux of time. As Susan Stewart has written, the miniature is “a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination.”⁸⁰ While there is sense that the gigantic never fails to escape one’s grasp, thus linking it to the sublimity of expanses only partially apprehendable, the miniature reduces the normal scale of an object to something precious, knowable, and tamed. Throughout the exhibition, the multiple instances of miniaturization signalled the destruction of public culture in the name of private property and acquirable goods. The presence of the tiny screens of private digital image consumption reflected specifically on

⁷⁹ Bamchade Pourvali, *Voyage(s) en utopie, Jean-Luc Godard, 1946-2006: à la recherche d’un théorème perdu* exhibition pamphlet (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006)

⁸⁰ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 69

the current state of the cinema, but also served as a node within a larger set of concerns about the fate of the public sphere.

Perhaps what was most telling in this respect was the room entitled “Today”, into which the toy locomotive tellingly did not travel. The only room to contain no films by Godard, it was a space that entertained Ridley Scott’s *Black Hawk Down* (2001) as a metonymic stand-in for the obscenity of Hollywood alongside pornography, simulcast television (ESPN and TF1), and clippings from interior design magazines in a makeshift kitchen. Described by James Quandt as a “domestic hell,”⁸¹ it was this space that most fiercely indicted the contemporary intersection of consumerism, the media, and the neoliberal privatization. Here, the glittering surface of the commodity emitted a blinding glare that transformed one’s perception of all objects it encountered. This, of course, included the histories of art and cinema, both of which were banished to the anterior rooms of “Yesterday” and “The Day Before Yesterday.” For Godard, the collective history that lies buried within them becomes impossible in “Today”’s spaces of war, porn, and merchandise.

Thus, the entirety of *Voyage(s) en utopie* was marked by the definitional tragedy of utopia: it can be no place, it is doomed to fail. However, the infamous difficulties involved in mounting the exhibition—including Godard’s reported refusal to speak to Païni, the exhibition’s commissioner—were not the only locus of failure in *Voyage(s) en utopie*. Antoine de Baecque made this clear in his review of the exhibition for *Libération*: “Godard is a catastrophe and he is proud of it.”⁸² A podium discussion regarding the relationship between cinema and the museum at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 2007

⁸¹ James Quandt, “Double Exposure,” *Artforum* (September 2006), 78

⁸² Antoine de Baecque, quoted in: André Habib, “Invitation au Voyage: *Voyage(s) en utopie*, JLG, Pompidou,” *Hors-champ* (27 July 2006), available online: <http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/spip.php?article224&var_recherche=voyage%20godard>; translation mine.

took as its title the question, “Does the Museum Fail?”⁸³ Here, Godard provided a firm answer: yes, it does. And how. For *Voyage(s)* was not a failed exhibition, but an exhibition *about* failure—about the failure of Godard’s *Collage(s) de France* concept, but also about the failure of the fine arts to adequately grapple with the cinema and all of its implications, and the failure of both of these entities in contemporary culture. The relationship figured here between cinema, mass culture, and the museum by no means fits with the notion that the gallery might shelter or “save” cinema. Rather, cinema *and* art appear as so much detritus of a fallen regime.

Godard firmly asserted the place of cinema amongst the fine arts—something the filmmaker has been intent on exploring through his entire career, from the presence of Élie Faure in the bathtub of *Pierrot le fou* (1965) through the tableaux of *Passion* (1982) and beyond—not by advocating for its integration into the museum, but rather by situating both on the same debased plane. He patently denied the white cube’s mythic timelessness, abiding instead by a statement made in *The Old Place*: “Art is not sheltered from time, it is the place where time resides.”⁸⁴ This is to refuse the spurious eternity conferred upon art by its institutional frame and instead to see it as constantly in dialogue with the contingencies of culture at large and as a privileged site where the movements of history become visible. It is this understanding of the relationship between art, cinema, the museum, and history that *Voyage(s) en utopie* took as its central concern.

Unlike the *Berlin Alexanderplatz* installation, which attempted to present itself as a space adequate to the viewing of the film, one that would both commemorate it as a masterpiece and infuse it with new life suited to the contemporary media environment, Godard exploited the gallery’s very inability to safeguard cinema. All the rhetoric of art’s

⁸³ See: “Does the Museum Fail?: Podium Discussion at the 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen,” 115-155

⁸⁴ “L’art n’était pas à l’abri du temps, il était l’abri du temps”; translation mine.

ability to shelter cinema deflates here, as Godard emphasized that the crisis of the black box is equally the crisis of the white cube—for both institutions are implicated in the predicament of what happens to the public culture of the twentieth century within the digital mobility of the twenty-first. Rejecting the notion of an “expensive” space of precious objects, Godard turned the halls of the Pompidou into a massive rubbish pile, with cinema and painting both consigned to the heap. This suggests not only a profound cynicism concerning the contemporary status of the museum, but also a very different relationship between art and the moving image, one that proposes that the notion of the gallery as “saving” cinema is just another mystification of the echo chamber of the white cube—an institution which itself is in desperate need of help.

The “Cinematic” as Cipher

While certainly, the spaces of art continue to cultivate the modernist values of autonomy, expense, and preciousness described by O’Doherty in *Inside the White Cube*, over the last two decades, the walls of the museum have been forced to become more permeable to grapple with the accelerated mobility of images and with the changing status of the institution in culture at large. Godard’s *Voyage(s) en utopie* exhibition is both representative of this trend—that a major museum would invite a filmmaker to produce such an exhibition in the 1970s is virtually unthinkable—and also responds to some of the problems it poses. Godard’s transformation of the museum space into a theatre of mass spectacle and consumption enacted on a hyperbolic level that institution’s contemporary crisis. The status of the museum as yet another sector of the culture industry has become increasingly visible in recent decades, rendering visible the mythic status of the white cube’s supposed autonomy.

Beginning in the 1970s, one sees the emergence of what has become known—borrowing from the language of cinema—as the “blockbuster exhibition.”⁸⁵ The *Treasures of Tutankhamen* exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976 is frequently cited as the beginning of a trend in museum exhibition to favour the guaranteed box office revenues provided by accessible material and a well-stocked gift shop. In 1998’s *Beyond the Brillo Box*, Arthur Danto remarked upon the evolution of a new kind of museum that associates the consumption of art with that of food or the purchasing of souvenirs,⁸⁶ while already in 1990, Rosalind Krauss took note of a then-recent article that asserted that a museum’s collection can now be referred to as “assets” by its director and trustees as signalling a shift in the historical function of the museum from safeguarding cultural patrimony “to one of eyeing the collection’s contents as so much capital—as stocks or assets whose value is one of pure exchange and thus only truly realized when they are put into circulation.”⁸⁷

These notions of mobility and circulation are key attributes of the society of control as described by Gilles Deleuze. This diagram of power is marked by a generalized crisis in the enclosures that marked disciplinary power, and the museum is no exception: in recent decades the institution has become increasingly permeable and malleable in an effort to maintain relevance. Something of a museum industry emerges, with a huge number of openings and expansions. Half of the 1240 art museums in the United States were less than a quarter-century old in 1999, with many of them devoted purely to modern and contemporary art.⁸⁸ Spectacular architectural commissions such as Frank

⁸⁵ On this phenomenon, see: Tom Csaszar, “The Spectacular, Record-Breaking, Sold-Out, Smash-Hit Blockbuster Supershow!: A Phenomenon of Museum Culture,” *New Art Examiner*, no. 24 (December-January 1996-1997), 22-27; “Special Section: Museum Blockbuster,” *Art in America*, no. 74 (June 1986), 19-23; “Art History and the ‘Blockbuster’ Exhibition,” *Art Bulletin*, no. 68 (September 1986), 358-359.

⁸⁶ Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 4

⁸⁷ Philip Weiss, “Selling the Collection,” *Art in America*, vol. 78 (July 1990), 124-131, quoted in: Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October*, no. 54 (Autumn 1990), 4-5

⁸⁸ James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 28

Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim (a part of a veritable museum franchise) and the American Association of Museums' think-tank initiative, the Centre for the Future of Museums, both testify in very different ways to the museum's desire to (post)modernize and embrace the dynamism of the digital age.

In such a climate, competition is fierce and institutions are under pressure to curate exhibitions that will please a large audience. Krauss predicts that this "late capitalist museum" will begin to have more in common with Disneyland than with its previous incarnation:

Thus it will be dealing with mass markets, rather than art markets, and with simulacral experience rather than aesthetic immediacy....The industrialized museum has a need for the technologized subject, the subject in search not of affect but intensities, the subject who experiences its fragmentation as euphoria, the subject whose field of experience is no longer history, but space itself...⁸⁹

The spectacularly immersive experience of large-scale moving-image installations such as Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* or the broad appeal of exhibitions such as the Museum of Modern Art's *Tim Burton* (2009) cannot be far behind. Cinema, once perceived as a disorganizing threat, can now be summoned to maintain relevance and accessibility, as its presence fulfils the new museum's need for entertainment and exhilaration. In other words, the very possibility of cinema's acceptance within this rarefied milieu depends on the very motions of cultural and technological convergence it resists when it purports to save cinema: namely, an increasing infiltration of art by mass culture, technology, and spectacle.

Thus, a relationship emerges: from the side of cinema, art proffers eternity but most often delivers fragmentation; from the side of art, cinema offers upbeat contemporaneity that appeals to all. Either way, one cannot avoid a confrontation with the ways in which a service-based capitalism has brought profound changes to the historical institution of the museum. The mobilization of cinema as an instrument of

⁸⁹ Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," 17

mass appeal is especially evident in two recent thematically curated mega-exhibitions: *Le Mouvement des images* at the Pompidou in 2006 and *The Cinema Effect* at the Hirshhorn Museum in 2008. While *Le Mouvement des images* consisted of a creative rehang of the permanent collections of the Musée nationale d'art moderne, *The Cinema Effect* brought together contemporary moving-image practices under two broad headings, the old Lumière/Méliès binary of “reality” and “dreams.” Despite such different parameters, the exhibitions converge in one important respect: they both make use of a generalized principle of the “cinematic” free from historical determination to curate large-scale exhibitions with a broad allure.

Entering the central corridor of *Le Mouvement des images* was a dazzling and disorienting experience, as thirteen digital projections of works by Marcel Broodthaers, Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Bruce Nauman, and others confronted the viewer in rapid succession. Philippe-Alain Michaud, the exhibition's curator, justified the potentially distracted viewing the installation might elicit by invoking a resurrection of the *flâneur* that he saw as disappearing with “the theatricalization of cinema”: “It suffices to pass in front of [these films] for a few moments...What we see in this biased way, in a manner very unconscious and fugitive, is different but not less interesting.”⁹⁰ While some of these works were indeed videos made to be shown on loop in a gallery setting, many of them were made on celluloid for start-to-finish viewing. No attention is given to the change of format and/or exhibition situation, let alone the fact that the work was installed in a crowded manner in a transitory space.

Called “an ambitious, cast of thousands extravaganza,”⁹¹ by one reviewer, *Le Mouvement des images* marshals cinema as a thematic framework to govern a

⁹⁰ Philippe-Alain Michaud, quoted in: Emmanuelle Lequeux, “La Vie rêvée des images,” *Beaux Arts Magazine*, no. 263 (May 2006), 111; translation mine.

⁹¹ Shelley Rice, “Three Shows on Time and Movement,” *Aperture*, no. 186 (Spring 2007), 10

retrospective look at twentieth-century art, gathered around four sections: unwinding,⁹² projection, narrative, and montage. The works found within any one of these sections consist of a hodgepodge of styles, media, and periods; for example, the montage section of the exhibition featured Georges Braques' *Le Guéridon* (1911), Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (You Substantiate Our Horror)* (1983), Steve McQueen's *Deadpan* (1997), Robert Rauschenberg's *Oracle* (1962-1965), and Jeff Wall's *Picture for Women* (1979), among other works. As Bruno Racine, president of the Pompidou from 2002-2007, writes in the "Avant-propos," the exhibition "offers a re-reading of both twentieth century art and the art of today from the viewpoint of film; its self-appointed aim is to show how the 'seventh art' now irreversibly conditions our experience of both artworks and images."⁹³ Rather than being conceived as an historically specific set of institutions and practices to be investigated, here the cinema becomes a heuristic used to look at a century of art, reduced to several transhistorical principles also found in other media.

The exhibition ran from 5 April 2006 to 29 January 2007, ironically—or perhaps fittingly—sharing space at the Pompidou with Godard's *Voyage(s) en utopie*, which was installed from 11 May to 14 August. Whereas Godard's installation proposed a sharp diagnosis of the contemporary state of cinema and/in the museum formulated with equal parts melancholy, humour, and sangfroid, *Le Mouvement des images* enacted a different relationship between art, cinema, and the commodity form. Racine wrote that, "[T]he need is to propose new answers to the question that is now raised in all institutions dedicated to modern and contemporary art: How is film to be exhibited and

⁹² This is the catalogue's rather unfortunate translation of the French *défilement*, which refers to the successive passage of film frames through the projector. "Unwinding" fails to capture the centrality of seriality to this section of the exhibition, which featured works such as Donald Judd's *Stack* (1972), selections from On Kawara's *Today* series (1966), Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1960, albeit as mounted on the wall rather than as a projection), Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1968, the section's only moving-image work), and Andy Warhol's *Ten Lizes* (1963).

⁹³ Bruno Racine, "Avant-propos," *Le Mouvement des images* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 9

how is film to attain the status of an artwork?”⁹⁴ The first part of this question is incredibly pressing, but it is clear from the avenue of digital projections that the organizers of the exhibition were not terribly invested in truly thinking through the vicissitudes of exhibiting film in a gallery space. The second part of the question, meanwhile, attests to the extent to which the objective of such an exhibition is to recuperate cinema into the economy of the fine arts, to assimilate it to the status of a traditional artwork rather than interrogate how it challenges such a paradigm through its character as a mechanically reproducible, mass cultural medium.

As Alexander Horwath, who described the catalogue’s rhetoric as “send[ing] shivers down [his] spine,” puts it, in *Le Mouvement des images*,

this critical idea of exploding cinema or expanding cinema in the 1960s and 1970s has now turned into another connotation of the word “expansion.” Now it’s about expanding with cinema. By that, I mean museums and the museum structure using moving imagery as a part of their shopping mall.⁹⁵

No longer does one confront the singular image of the title of *Passages de l’image*, which maintained a concern for the specificity of a particular image-regime in tension with the homogenizing thrusts of convergence, but rather one confronts the plurality of images in movement. While such thematic curation can sometimes facilitate drawing interesting connections between dissimilar artworks, in *Le Mouvement des images*, the governing principle—patently suggested by the title—is one of non-specific circulation, in which images travel with an ecstatic mobility that escapes any sense of historical determination. Michaud has said that, “Today, the cinematic exceeds the *dispositif* of exhibiting images in projection rooms, which is a part of a theatrical heritage: it appears from now on as a manner of conceiving of and exhibiting images.”⁹⁶ The sense of the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Alexander Horwath, “Does the Museum Fail? Podium Discussion at the 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen,” 145 and 153

⁹⁶ Philippe-Alain Michaud, “Philippe-Alain Michaud, conservateur au Musée nationale d’art moderne,” *Le Journal des Arts*, no. 235 (14 April 2006), available online: < http://www.artclair.com/jda/archives/e-docs/00/00/58/0E/document_entretien.php>; translation mine.

“cinematic” put forth by this exhibition is something of a spectacular catchall, meant to infuse the halls of the Pompidou with the excitement of a shopping arcade, or, in the words of Jean Baudrillard, a supermarket. When the Pompidou was opened in 1982, he named the transformation of public culture he was witnessing the “Beaubourg effect”: functioning according to a model of “cultural fission and political deterrence,” Baudrillard saw there “a supermarketing of culture which operates at the same level as the supermarketing of merchandise.”⁹⁷ What began in the 1980s has now reached a fever pitch, with the “cinematic” at its nucleus.

And so one moves from “the Beaubourg effect” to *The Cinema Effect*, although the principle remains much the same. In many ways, *The Cinema Effect* traces the growth of progeny borne of the precursors explored in *Hall of Mirrors*, also curated by Brougher. With the exceptions of work by both Andy Warhol and Bruce Conner, who function as the reluctant grandparents of *The Cinema Effect*, all other pieces included in the exhibition were made between 1986 and 2006, with a remarkable twenty-seven out of forty included artworks produced after 2000. Brougher’s conclusion to his 1996 “Hall of Mirrors” essay makes clear the extent to which this earlier exhibition prepared ground for *The Cinema Effect*: “While the cinema as a pure art form may be disappearing, the cinematic is alive and well within the various modes of presentation in this vast but homogeneous network of images and sounds.”⁹⁸ Insofar as it was an historical examination of the relationship between film and art, *Hall of Mirrors* maintained attention to the specificity of the practices it interrogated, despite its aesthetic of excessive excerption. However, it did so with the proclamation that the era when such a thing was possible has ended, and that we are now entering an age when contours dissolve and proverbial lines in the sand may no longer be drawn. It is the obituary of the

⁹⁷ Jean Baudrillard, “The Beaubourg-Effect: Implosion and Deterrence,” trans. Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, *October*, no. 20 (Spring 1982), 3 and 9

⁹⁸ Kerry Brougher, “Hall of Mirrors,” *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film After 1945* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 137

cinema placed next to the birth announcement of the “cinematic.” The purported homogeneity of this “network of images and sounds” may only be claimed by ignoring the specificity of the new *dispositifs* of aggregate media that most require attention today. Even if the designation of homogeneity holds true at the level of binary code, it is far from tenable at the level of the interface. What one encounters here is a problematic generalization of the “cinema”—a term that encompasses the institutional structures of film production and the fruits of its labours—into the spurious term of the “cinematic,” which lacks the specificity that would endow it with meaning. While “what is cinema?” can never (and should never) resolve itself once and for all, historically specific answers have been and continue to be provided. However, how might one broach the question of what constitutes the cinematic? The very employment of the adjective-turned-noun of the cinematic suggests a retreat from any notion of specificity into the easy mutability of vague sense that appears wherever one looks for it.

As noted above, Tom Gunning has noted that understanding the diverse characteristics of media has often been avoided for fear of supporting an idealist project, leading instead to attempts to shore up the medium’s boundaries through discussions of specificity. And while an investigation into the aggregate nature of media is imperative—indeed, it is the very wager of this dissertation—the lure of idealism is startlingly real and present in conceptualizations of the cinema in contemporary art. This haunts not only Biesenbach’s appraisal of the multifarious reference points of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* but also the curatorial strategies of mega-exhibitions such as *Le Mouvement des images* and *The Cinema Effect*. In 1990, *Passages de l’image* took seriously the variable specificities produced by intermedial forms. However, in 2006, the “cinematic” emerges as something diffusely pervasive, everywhere and nowhere. Everything is analogous to everything else, with a consideration of the historical conditions of possibility for a given aesthetic formation nowhere to be found. The nominal use of “the cinematic” ascribes a

purity to the entity “cinema” that the latter never possessed, declares it finished, and replaces it with a vague signifier emptied of any historical determination.

In “The Cinema Effect,” Brougher culls an epigraph from Jean-Louis Baudry’s essay, “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema”: “It can be assumed that it is this wish which prepares the long history of cinema: the wish to construct a simulation machine capable of offering the subject perceptions which are really representations mistaken for perceptions.”⁹⁹ Here, Brougher invokes a questionable film theoretical precedent that, similar to André Bazin’s “Myth of Total Cinema,” sees cinema as a historically specific form of a transhistorical desire for the impression of reality.¹⁰⁰ As the cinema fractures into nothing but an “effect,” “the cinematic” is the name given to the troublingly idealist transhistorical desire that persists. The regressive and fascinating apparatus that simulates a dream state is, with a quick sleight of hand, divested of its specific conditions of possibility to become an essential and mythic desire. For Brougher, cinema “is in the way we perceive our world, in the way we speak, in the way we dream. We have no need of entering a movie theatre to experience cinema; life itself is just like a movie.”¹⁰¹ If cinema has become so indistinguishable from quotidian life in the early twenty-first century, then why all of the talk about it? Why not simply speak about contemporary life instead? What *are* we speaking about when we speak about cinema? What kind of cipher has it become and what kind of elision is taking place?

Brougher writes, “Indeed, over the last decade, we have witnessed an exponentially

⁹⁹ Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema,” trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand Augst, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 315; quoted in: Brougher, “The Cinema Effect,” 13

¹⁰⁰ See: André Bazin, “The Myth of Total Cinema,” *What is Cinema? Volume One*, trans. Hugh Grey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 17-22

¹⁰¹ Brougher, “The Cinema Effect,” 20

increasing presence of the cinematic in society.”¹⁰² To anyone who has paid attention to the lamentations concerning the death of cinema throughout the decade Brougher is describing—1998 to 2008—the statement sounds patently absurd. This is the era of a declining cinema and a rising Internet, of fibre-optic networks and simultaneous wireless communication, of text messaging and instant downloads. The statement, however, begins to make sense with a quick of game of substitution: remove “cinematic,” insert “image-commodity,” and the game is won. For it becomes clear when examining exhibitions such as *Le Mouvement des images* and *The Cinema Effect* that the term “cinematic” has become critical shorthand for an image-based culture founded in a principle of spectacle that engages in a forgetting of the specificities of film history. The curatorial frameworks of these exhibitions troublingly embrace this generalization of the “cinematic,” tying it to an ecstatic experience of the intensities of contemporary life that is in fact nothing other than an embrace of the hallucinatory excesses of advanced capital.

This is particularly egregious since the work included in such exhibitions often does not conform to the ideological position of the curators’ writings.¹⁰³ However, the all-important curatorial heuristic within which such work is placed—which may be read symptomatically to reveal institutional objectives and desires—conceive of the cinema much as Jonathan Beller does in his book, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*:

Under the rubric of the cinematic mode of production, “cinema” refers not only to what one sees on the screen or even to the institutions and apparatuses that generate film but to that totality of relations that generates the myriad appearance of the work on the six billion screens of “consciousness.” ...“Cinema” is a material

¹⁰² Ibid., 8

¹⁰³ Quite the opposite, in fact. Included in *The Cinema Effect* are artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Pierre Huyghe, and others, who actively interrogate the relationship between art, the moving image, and the commodity form in interesting ways that will be discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. What is under interrogation here is the curatorial framework within which these works are situated; it is a matter of institutional practices rather than the textual strategies of a given artwork. Contemporary artists who embrace cinema as a way to dismantle spectacle from within will be the primary focus of chapter three.

practice of global scope, the movement of capital in, through, and as image. “Cinema” marks the changeover to a mode of production in which images, working in concert, form the organizational principles for the production of reality.¹⁰⁴

However, where Beller is clear about the ways in which he is abstracting the concept of “cinema” to critically comment on the increased becoming-image of the commodity in advanced capitalism, the curatorial texts of *Le Mouvement des images* and *The Cinema Effect* celebrate the development as heralding a new age of mobility and freedom. Gone are the shackles of the old cinema, with its rigid definitions and hypostatized specificities; the cinematic has arrived, with its much-lauded values of circulation and seduction.

The Spectator-Visitor

...the moving image expands to fill space and time, inviting responses from its spectators that are very far from the passive, distanced stance of the auditorium.¹⁰⁵

One might say that this freeing of film from its flat, fixed-screen perspective, from its *disciplined* conditions of narrative and representational plenitude, is analogous to the notion of the “death of the author” and the empowerment of the viewer.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to the hypnosis induced by the pitch-blackness of the cinema, within which the single bright screen seizes our minds in its distracting grip, the dimly lit gallery engages the viewer in a wakeful state of perception.¹⁰⁷

Given the pervasive spectacularization of the spaces of contemporary art, how is it possible to posit a strict determinism between the physical mobility of the spectator-visitor of the moving-image installation and a critical or “active” form of spectatorship, as these authors do? Throughout the art critical literature about the subject position created by moving-image installations, one frequently finds a comparison between the

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth University Press, 2006), 14

¹⁰⁵ Catherine Fowler, “Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija-Liisa Ahtila,” *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 343

¹⁰⁶ Tanya Leighton, “Introduction,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 29; emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁷ Chrissie Iles, “Between Still and Moving Image,” *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001), 34-35

“passive” spectator of the movie theatre and the “active” spectator of the gallery. Very often, cinematic spectatorship functions as a kind of straw man against which the inherent critical value of gallery spectatorship is asserted. Film spectatorship is seen as nothing but a duped infantilization compared to the demystification supposedly inherent to the gallery space. True, it is a fact that the film spectator sits immobile in the red velvet seat, whereas the gallery spectator wanders through space. However, such comparisons between the cinema and the gallery rest on a spurious mapping of passive/active binaries onto this architectural difference, as if to conflate physical stasis with regressive mystification and physical ambulation with clear-sighted criticality—a claim that holds true on neither end.

The oversimplified model of gallery spectatorship mythifies both cinematic spectatorship and the exercise of power into ahistorical constants, ignoring their status as historical contingencies that change over time. As Gilles Deleuze has shown, a system of control based in principles of mobility and circulation has superseded discipline and its reliance on confinement as the contemporary diagram of power. This modification in the administration of power calls for a re-evaluation of the submission to power as associated with stasis and resistance to it as associated with movement. Moreover, when one compares the difference in the modes of spectatorship elicited by a classical Hollywood film such as *Gilda* (1946) and an installation like Nam Jun Paik’s *Zen For Film* (1962-1964), one is comparing much more than the difference between a seated and a mobile spectator. The conflation of physical mobility with intellectual activity disallows any consideration of the manner in which textual strategies work to position the viewer. Païni importantly notes that the temporality of gallery spectatorship is double: there is a “collision” that occurs between the temporality of the spectator-visitor’s perambulation

and the deployment of temporality internal to the work.¹⁰⁸ The simplistic accounts of gallery spectatorship cited above only take account of the first temporality, ignoring the second. A successful diagnosis of the place of the spectator-visitor in the moving-image installation needs to take into account this double temporality, investigating both how textual mechanisms position him or her, as well as what results from his or her passage through space. As Mark Nash cautions, “there can be no necessary connection between a particular formal approach to the conditions in which a work is experienced (e.g., in creating a mobile spectator) and a presumed radicality.”¹⁰⁹

How might one diagnose this obsessive return to the denigration of the movie theatre? Might there be a symptomatic repression at play here? Crucially, the positing of a strict determinism between the architecture of exhibition and a critical spectator disallows any questioning into the ideological determinations of the gallery space since the gallery is *de jure* a space of demystification. However, when one examines the presence of the moving image in contemporary art and the status of the museum today, there emerges an unmistakable relationship to spectacle that the focus on the inherent critical activity of the gallery spectator might seek to mask. By seeing the architecture of the gallery as guaranteeing criticality, a diversion takes place by which particular questions regarding the relationship between the explosion of the moving image in art after 1990 and the increasing spectacularization of the museum cannot be asked.

How, then, might one conceive of this spectator-visitor, if not in opposition to the supposed passivity of the movie theatre spectator? Giuliana Bruno has likened, rather than contrasted, the cinema and gallery spectators, suggesting that there is a “reversible process” at work between the two.¹¹⁰ She writes,

She who wanders through an art installation acts precisely like a film spectator

¹⁰⁸ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 17

¹⁰⁹ Mark Nash, “Art and Cinema: Some Critical Reflections,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 447

¹¹⁰ Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 3

absorbing and connecting visual spaces. The installation makes manifest the imaginative paths comprising the language of filmic montage and the course of the spectatorial journey. If, in the movie theatre, the filmic-architectural promenade is a kinaesthetic process, in the art gallery, one literally walks into the space of the art of memory and into its architecturally produced narrative...Ultimately then, the form of the art installation reproduces the haptic path that makes up the very museographic genealogy of cinema.¹¹¹

Bruno is right to emphasize that there is a mobility, however figurative, associated with the film spectatorship, despite the physical stasis of its spectator. However, collapsing the “haptic path” of the film spectator with the literal perambulation of the gallery-goer fails to diagnose the fact that these modes of spectatorship produce markedly different experiences of spatiality, temporality, and the work of art itself. In *Le temps exposé*, Païni associates the roaming gallery viewer with the Baudelairean *flâneur* due to his or her desultory movement through space. Michaud also embraces this archetype, as discussed above, as does Cortade in his *Le Cinéma de l'immobilité*.¹¹² In a footnote, Païni defines the verb *flâner* as: “walking without goal, by chance; using one’s time without profit according to le Littré. Le Robert evokes abandonment to the sensation of the moment,”¹¹³ something that Païni notes is crucial to the experience of contemporary moving-image installations.

Certainly, this is the principle at play amidst the forty screens of Kutlug Ataman’s *Küba* (2004) [FIGURE 15], an installation that relies on the mobility of its viewer to weave together a complex fabric out of the many voices of residents of an area of southern Istanbul that serves as a refuge for a diverse group of people united only by their need and/or desire to live outside of state control to the greatest degree possible. The viewer’s movement throughout space stages an activity of mapping that finds its analogue in the work’s desire to chart a geography that the artist has described as less of

¹¹¹ Ibid., 28

¹¹² Cortade, 127-130

¹¹³ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 139

an actual area and more a “state of mind—rebellious, lawless, cohesive.”¹¹⁴ Individual narratives are pieced together into a variable portrait that maintains a tension between the component parts that come together in the formation of collectivity. The work allows each spectator to construct his or her own trajectory at his or her own pace. The mobility of the spectator-visitor of the moving-image installation here allows for new temporalities and new forms of narrative that simply would not be possible within the traditional space of cinema.

This mobility, however, should by no means be conceived of as necessarily oppositional or as a mark of the spectator’s autonomy from structures of power. Contrary to the productive wanderings of the spectator of *Küba*, the movement of the gallery viewer can take him or her from one work to another to another to another in an endless parade of objects to be consumed. Particularly when images confront one another in a crowded array, such as in the central avenue of projections in *Le Mouvement des images*, they lose their status as distinct artworks and instead become ambient décor. The most that one can ask is to be allowed the time and space to engage in a sustained consideration of a work if one wishes, something that is not always possible when both artworks and people compete for space within the museum. The difference from the spectator of the movie theatre is, then, far greater than a simple question of mobility versus stasis; in fact, what is at stake is the spectator’s relationship to time and attention. Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij try to combat this problem by assigning scheduled screening times for the viewing of their films, as did Steve McQueen in his 2009 Venice Biennale installation at the British Pavilion, *Giardini* (2009), but such a practice is rare.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Adrian Searle, “Talking Heads: *Küba* by Kutlug Ataman, Sorting Office, New Oxford Street, London,” *The Guardian* (29 March 2005); available online: < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2005/mar/29/1> >

¹¹⁵ In the case of de Rijke and de Rooij, these scheduled screening times result in intervals during which no film is projected, resulting in an empty white room that questions the perpetual availability of images both within the gallery and in culture at large. As Pamela M. Lee has written, “The ‘capacity for a film to be

While Bellour agrees that subject position imagined by the moving-image installation is very different than that of the classical cinema, he points out that Païni's likening of the spectator-visitor to a *flâneur* is a weak comparison since "there would need to be a real crowd for that, and the street is not the Salon." Bellour goes on to acknowledge the difficulty of conceptualizing this gallery-based spectator, stating, "As random and often uncertain as it is, in the situation of a semi-spectacle inferred by the museum, the work fixates that which one could call its visitor—but there is no right word with which to grasp this dissolved, fragmented, shaken, intermittent spectator."¹¹⁶ Certainly, the spaces of contemporary art are far from the jostling crown of a modernizing metropolis. Nonetheless, Païni's conception of the *flâneur* does hit on an essential aspect of the experience of viewing moving images in a gallery: a likeness to window-shopping. In the work of Baudelaire and Benjamin after him, the *flâneur* is aligned with strolling through the Paris arcades and experiencing the phantasmagoria of the modernizing city in an intoxicated haze. In the spaces of contemporary art, images are offered up for passing consumption in a manner that mimics strolling through the arcades and gazing at merchandise.

Philippe-Alain Michaud valorised the experience of the *flâneur* in his discussion of the mode of spectatorship elicited by the central avenue of projections in *Le Mouvement des images*, when in fact this distracted viewing at times merely mimics the perceptual regime of mass culture. Like so many of Benjamin's archetypes, *flâneurie* is marked by a profound ambivalence: on the one hand, "The idleness of the *flâneur* is a demonstration against the division of labour," but as Anne Friedberg has suggested, "The

absent,' as de Rooij has said, is indivisible from our expectations of the image and from the particular sway cinematic conditions maintain over our everyday habits of perception." See: Pamela M. Lee, "Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij: A Portfolio," *Artforum* (March 2008), 318

¹¹⁶ Raymond Bellour, "Of An Other Cinema," *Black Box Illuminated*, ed. Sara Arrhenius, Magdalena Malm, and Cristina Ricupero (Stockholm: Propexus, 2003), 42

flâneur becomes an easy prototype for the consumer.”¹¹⁷ If one is to employ the archetype of the *flâneur* to understand the spectatorship of moving images in the gallery, it is necessary to keep in play the Janus face of the concept. It invokes both associations of spectatorial mobility and of the consumption of goods. This is not lost on Païni, who writes that, “*Flâneurie* arises from this sort of deception in regard to images that simultaneously offer themselves up spectacularly while receding semantically, according to the model of objects of consumption in shop windows that attract aesthetically but economically remain unavailable.”¹¹⁸ Bellour’s “intermittent spectator” flickers in and out of attention to these seductive images. At times, this distracted, mobile apprehension of images might allow the viewer to forge interesting connections, but at others it offers an experience of simple accumulation wherein eminently disposable moving images provide a kind of video wallpaper for a stroll through a technological wonderland. While the concept of the *flâneur* has been invoked so frequently and loosely within the discipline of film studies so as to render it little more than a petrified cliché, its affinities with commodification, spectacle, and the inattentive mobile consumption of images render it perhaps more apposite to the spectator-visitor of the gallery than it ever was to the immobile cinema spectator. But if it is to retain any heuristic value at all, it is imperative to keep in mind the fundamental ambivalence of the figure of the *flâneur* and to resist a simple equation of mobility with either criticality or freedom.

While important accounts of film spectatorship—such as Baudry’s—were deployed primarily at the level of the apparatus, it has historically been important to also interrogate how the formal construction of a work functions to secure a certain spectatorial position. In accounts that privilege the space of the gallery as necessarily guaranteeing a form of critical spectatorship, this creation of a spectatorial subject

¹¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 427; Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 34

¹¹⁸ Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, 71

position through textual mechanisms is entirely neglected. Accounts of the place of the spectator in classical Hollywood cinema, for example, have emphasized how devices such as the shot/reverse-shot or the eye-line match work to foster identification and create a stable and safe position for the spectator to occupy.¹¹⁹ While such structures occasionally find their way into moving-image installations, it is clear that no such coherent formal system exists therein to be theorized after the manner of 1970s film theorists such as Mulvey or Stephen Heath, a fact that surely contributes to Bellour's characterization of this spectator as "disolved, fragmented, shaken, intermittent."

Nonetheless, one might suggest that instead of the techniques of suture found in classical Hollywood, certain moving-image installations favour immersive spectacle, overwhelming the viewer through large-scale projections of a high sensory intensity—an argument that could also be made of the contemporary post-classical blockbuster. Artists such as Matthew Barney, Pipilotti Rist, and Bill Viola make use of extravagant visuals, high production values, and a maximalist aesthetic of visual hypersaturation and bombast that unsettlingly mirrors the spurious production of affect and sensation by the image-commodities of advanced capitalism. To conclude, it is necessary here to signal the important relationships between such works and a museum structure that is ever searching for exhibitions that will possess a wide appeal.

The New Blockbusters

Though the Museum of Modern Art espouses notably conservative curatorial policies with regard to the display of moving images in its permanent collection exhibitions, since its foundation in 2006 under the curatorship of Klaus Biesenbach,¹²⁰ the Department of Media has delivered large-scale spectacular commissions by Doug

¹¹⁹ See, for example: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," or Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space" and "On Suture," *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 19-112

¹²⁰ Biesenbach resigned as head of the department in fall 2009 to become head curator at MoMA's contemporary art projects space, P.S.1. He retains the title of "chief curator at large" at the Modern.

Aitken (*Sleepwalkers*, 2007) and Pipilotti Rist (*Pour Your Body Out [7352 Cubic Meters]*, 2008) that meld MTV aesthetics with sensory intensity and broad appeal. Such prominent installations testify to the extent to which the moving image has been recruited as part of the ongoing becoming-entertainment of art that conceives of the museum-going experience as exhilarating, fun, and devoid of antagonism. Hal Foster has noted that the admirable “attempts to open up cultural history through old media”—something that will be explored extensively in the next chapter—have been “overwhelmed by the institutional attention given to ‘new media,’” in particular the “technophilic extravaganzas” of recent video installation.¹²¹ Foster is critical of the institutional endorsement of works such as these for their accessibility, entertainment value, sensory rush, and ability to fill the large cavernous spaces of many newly opened or renovated museums. He decries the false immediacy achieved by this variety of practice because it “aestheticizes, or ‘artifies,’ an already familiar experience—the mind-blowing intensities produced by media culture at large”; it engages in a kind of “cultic reenchantment” that mythologizes technology as spiritual experience.¹²² Despite their differences, *Sleepwalkers* and *Pour Your Body Out* engage in a kind of euphoria of surfaces that Siegfried Kracauer saw as characterizing the Berlin picture palaces of the 1920s: “[t]hey raise distraction to the level of culture,” offering a panacea for lack that is “articulated only in terms of the same surface sphere that imposed the lack in the first place.”¹²³ One of the primary mass cultural—and eminently ideological—functions of cinema here finds itself displaced and rearticulated in the twenty-first century museum with a startling lack of criticality.

¹²¹ Hal Foster, “Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art,” *Art Since 1900: Modernism Antimodernism Postmodernism, Volume 2: 1945 to the Present* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 676

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Siegfried Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction: On Berlin’s Picture Palaces,” *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Writings*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 324-325

Sleepwalkers literalizes the conception of spectator-visitor of the moving-image installation as *flâneur* by placing him or her outside on West 53rd Street in New York City. Aitken, who began his career by directing music videos for the Barenaked Ladies, Fatboy Slim, Iggy Pop, Interpol, and others, consolidated his international reputation when he was awarded the International Prize at the 1999 Venice Biennale for his eight-projection installation *Electric Earth* (1999). When commissioned by the MoMA and Creative Time to undertake a major public art project, Aitken made use of lush cinematography and celebrities (such as Donald Sutherland, Tilda Swinton, and musician Cat Power) to produce a spectacle of overwhelming proportions. The exhibition employed seven enormous projections on the facades of the MoMA at night from 16 January to 12 February 2007, dissolving the architecture of the museum into a dazzling sea of colour to render its spectacularization quite literal [FIGURES 16-17].

Tracing the nocturnal journeys of five New Yorkers, the skeletal narrative weaves together their waking life and dream experiences in a somnambulistic haze. Occasionally, the image will dissolve into large pixels or envelop the installation's characters in a spinning luminosity, ending finally by overtaking the representational function of the image with bands of colour that curiously resemble a barcode—the image as merchandise to be scanned. No character ever occupies the same screen as another; rather, their individual trajectories combine and diverge through montage strategies and rhyming activities, such as turning off a light or drinking a beverage. They begin their day as the sun goes down, with each leaving a private space to venture out into the five boroughs on a thirteen-minute journey. After the end of one cycle, all narratives end simultaneously, characters switch screens, and the work begins again in a new combination.

Much has been made of Aitken's interest in fragmented, non-linear narrative: the artist has published a book of interviews entitled *Broken Screen: 26 Conversations with*

Doug Aitken Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative, in which he discusses his conviction that nonlinearity and fragmentation are “truer to reality,” closer to the “hurricane of modern life.”¹²⁴ Meanwhile, curator Peter Eleey asserts that “the multipart configuration...of *Sleepwalkers* blows apart the one-point perspective automatically set up by the camera, along with its correlative relationship between vision and power, buttressing its democratic spirit.”¹²⁵ However, as important recent scholarship has shown, the demolition of centralized power does not necessarily lead to democratization, for power continues to exist after decentralization, just in different configurations.¹²⁶ Within the society of control, decentralization is the norm and the imperative is to be mobile, thus tempering any assertion that the perambulation of the gallery spectator through multi-screen environments might constitute a democratic freedom. With regard to the subject position created by such a regime, Deleuze writes, “...the man of control is undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network.”¹²⁷ How else to describe Aitken’s *Sleepwalkers*? For Deleuze, this is how power now operates, necessitating attempts to exploit the network’s weak nodes and agitate from within it. But when it comes to *Sleepwalkers*, one finds nothing of the sort; instead, the installation brings the viewer a jubilant celebration of the false freedoms of neo-liberalism, thereby putting forth a spurious affirmation of the state of life under capitalism.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Doug Aitken, *Broken Screen: 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative*, ed. Noel Daniel (New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, Inc., 2006), 8-9

¹²⁵ Peter Eleey, “The Expoded Drive-in,” *Doug Aitken: Sleepwalkers*, ed. Emily Hall (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Creative Time, 2007), 115

¹²⁶ See, for example, Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004) and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006)

¹²⁷ Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 6

¹²⁸ This is not, however, to assert that the use of strategies of fragmentation and non-linearity are inherently aligned with an affirmative stance towards late capitalism. To provide just two counterexamples: Eija-Liisa Ahtila’s *If 6 was 9* (1995) is a three-screen installation that complexly interrogates feminine subjectivity and sexuality; Isaac Julien’s *Baltimore* (2003) also employs three screens, this time examining the relationship between official culture, popular culture (here exemplified by the genre of blaxploitation), African-American experience, and the museum. Unlike Aitken’s *Sleepwalkers*, both of these works—which will be discussed in chapter three—make use of the multi-screen format to stage productive frictions and likenesses within domains that have historically been denied access to the “I” of the Cartesian subject.

Sleepwalkers was the first major project of the MoMA's Department of Media. The exhibition's press release made clear the extent to which increased accessibility was a major goal: "A project like this creates a very different dialogue with the public, who we hope will be inspired to think about art in relation to the city itself, and to the larger urban experience...*Sleepwalkers* will be easily accessible to a broad and diverse audience of New Yorkers and visitors to the city, who can engage directly with an artwork in a vital and unexpected context."¹²⁹ Viewing *Sleepwalkers* did not require museum admission, but it essentially functioned as a video billboard advertisement for the MoMA, perhaps luring people who would not normally visit the museum back with the promise of more seductive images of the *Sleepwalkers* variety to be found on the inside, accessible for the twenty-dollar admission. With the phantasmagoria of Times Square less than ten blocks away, it is almost as if the MoMA decided to voluntarily participate in the city ordinance governing the zone immediately to its southwest: buildings must display illuminated commercial advertising.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, in the same press release, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg explicitly linked the installation to an expected increase in tourism revenue.¹³¹ With high production values and a large crew, such work lends to the museum space a much-desired injection of hip entertainment, of seductive, glittering image-commodities for consumption. The work devastatingly fulfils Guy Debord's

It might be said that these artists take up a poststructuralist interest in fragmentation, in comparison with Aitken's vacuous and unthought embrace of surface.

¹²⁹ MoMA director Glenn Lowry, quoted in: Museum of Modern Art and Creative Time press release, "MoMA and Creative Time Present *Doug Aitken: Sleepwalkers*. Large-Scale Cinematic Installation to Be Projected onto the Facades of The Museum of Modern Art, Rhythms and Energies of New York and Its Inhabitants Inspire Major Public Artwork," (16 January 2007), 2; available online: <http://moma.org/about_moma/press/2007/Aitken_Release_MainSite.pdf>

¹³⁰ See: Alan S. Oser, "Perspectives: Great White Way; Planning for a Brighter Times Square," *New York Times* (14 December 1986); available online: <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0DE0D7133BF937A25751C1A960948260&sec=&spn=&pagewanted=all>>

¹³¹ Mayor Bloomberg: "Last year, a record 44 million tourists visited New York City, with nearly 50% of them visiting our cultural offerings, and through the help of exceptional art events such as *Sleepwalkers*, we expect to surpass that total this year." Quoted in: Museum of Modern Art and Creative Time press release, "MoMA and Creative Time Present *Doug Aitken: Sleepwalkers*. Large-Scale Cinematic Installation to Be Projected onto the Facades of The Museum of Modern Art, Rhythms and Energies of New York and Its Inhabitants Inspire Major Public Artwork," 1

definition of spectacle: “capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”¹³²

In 2008, the Department of Media commissioned Pipilotti Rist’s *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Metres)* [FIGURE 18]. When the MoMA reopened in 2004 following a two-and-a-half year, \$425-million renovation conducted by architect Yoshio Taniguchi, it was endowed with a capacity that doubled its previous square footage. An integral part of this expansion was the addition of a 110-foot tall atrium on the second floor, an enormous open space just outside the contemporary galleries that called for nothing but monumentality and grandeur. Rist turned the vast, white emptiness of this atrium into a throbbing sea of colour. *Pour Your Body Out* enveloped the entire space, as the volumetric measurement of its subtitle suggests. Three projections twenty-five feet high and a total of two hundred feet long transformed the room into a womb-like enclosure of deeply saturated fuchsia and cyan. In its centre, a large circular sofa in pale blue velvet provided a space for visitors to rest and take in the spectacle. Inside this iris lay a black pupil, thus forming an eye thoroughly corporealized by its placement within the womb of projections.

The sixteen-minute video loop engages cycles of fertility and decay through formal strategies of extreme magnification, colourization, and slow motion. The lava-lamp aesthetics of oozing hues are achieved by digitally-enhanced colour that endows the images with visual qualities of painting or animation; hardly out of place, for example, is a green strawberry with blue seeds floating in pink water. There are extreme close-ups on female body parts, fields of tulips, and flower petals stuffed up a woman’s nose; then earthworms, rotting fruit, bare feet in close-up walking across dark, moist soil. A woman traipses across a field and bathes in a lake, sometimes exchanging positions with a warthog that follows the same path. The three projections can display three distinct images, sometimes two of them will mirror each other along a corner axis, and other

¹³² Debord, 24

times the three projections merge into one. They flow into one another and across the walls with a fluid continuity. Anders Guggisberg's ambient indie rock soundtrack echoes through the space and bleeds into the surrounding galleries, with the *ritornello* of a hummed melody burrowing into one's brain even after leaving the atrium.

There is a trance-like intensity to the installation that aims to achieve a sensory flood of warmth and liquidity. *Pour Your Body Out* strikingly recalls the "cosmic consciousness" of Gene Youngblood's McLuhanite *Expanded Cinema*, published in 1970. As Youngblood would have it, "We are tragically in need of a new vision. We shall be released. We will bring down the wall. We'll be reunited with our reflection."¹³³ For Youngblood, pioneering moving-image environments outside of the movie theatre was one way this altered consciousness might take shape. In a similar vein, the wall text outside *Pour Your Body Out* informed viewers that Rist hoped they would receive "spiritual vitamins" by experiencing the installation. They were told, "Please feel as liberated as possible and move as freely as you can or want to! Watch the videos and listen to the sound in any position or movement. Practice stretching: pour your body out of your hips or watch through your legs. Rolling around and singing is also allowed!" A sign requesting the removal of shoes added, "Please make new friends at the museum" and on 1 February 2009, the installation was used as the site of a yoga lesson [FIGURE 19].

Pour Your Body Out clearly points to the contemporary transformations of the museum, as the institution mutates from a graveyard repository of stodgy relics to a pulsing site of visceral intensity competing for tourist dollars. Rist, like Aitken, works on the very architecture of the museum space, dissolving its masses in an immersive experience that tenderly envelops the viewer. Jerry Saltz's enthusiastic review of the installation linked this transformation of the museum to gender; his article was entitled

¹³³ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1970), 49

“MoMA’s Sex Change.” He writes, “The atrium of this bastion of masculinity becomes a womb, and the museum itself a woman. In an abstract way, Rist makes the institution ovulate... This is museum as hallucination, opium den, Lotus Land, cubbyhole, and pleasure dome. Call it Trance Central station.”¹³⁴ Similarly, the *New York Times* noted that *Pour Your Body Out* was “arguably the first project to humanize—and feminize—the atrium.”¹³⁵ These accounts attach a politics of gender to Rist’s intervention into the museum space and signal its departure from a conception of contemporary art as inaccessible to or aggressive towards the public and instead align it with a nurturing and caretaking femininity. Femininity is indeed a recurring concern throughout the artist’s work,¹³⁶ but this so-called feminization of the museum in no way intervenes into the institution’s collections or its politics, it in no way confronts the gendering of art and/or the museum, nor does it understand sex and gender as discursive terrains inscribed with power relations.

Instead, this techno-pastoral brings femininity back to a mute nature in a joyous exaltation of technologized perception that avoids any possibility of antagonism. Conflicts between subject, nature, and technology are sublated in a myth of togetherness and mutual enrichment. She is one with the changing of the seasons, the recurring cycles of renewal and rot. If *Pour Your Body Out* is to be conceived as a feminist intervention at all, it is a feminism already defeated by its disturbing anchorage in an extra-discursive conception of the body that equates woman with nature. As the cushy colours and squishy, magnified breasts come together to coat the white cube in washes of pink, one has to question if *Pour Your Body Out* is doing anything more than reinforcing the very

¹³⁴ Jerry Saltz, “MoMA’s Sex Change,” *New York Magazine* (28 December 2008); available online: <<http://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/53144/>>

¹³⁵ Karen Rosenberg, “Tiptoe by the Tulips (or Stretch by the Apples),” *New York Times* (20 November 2008); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/21/arts/design/21rist.html>>

¹³⁶ For a reading of Rist’s earlier work as feminist, see: Elizabeth Mangini, “Pipilotti’s Pickle: Making Meaning from the Feminine Position,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance Art*, vol. 23, no. 2 (May 2001), 1-9. Mangini looks to tropes of doubling and feminine imagery such as flowers and fluidity as evidence of the feminist import of Rist’s 1997 double projection *Ever is Over All*.

binaries that have served to largely exclude women artists from institutions such as the MoMA in the first place, while simultaneously neutralizing any ability that space might have to offer an alternative to the image-saturation of mass culture by simply rendering it gigantic and by hyberbolizing it—and delighting in that hyperbole.

Dorothy Spears offers a position on the installation significantly different from that of Saltz:

The video-and-sound environments of Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist are easy on the eyes and ears—making them an excellent balm for today’s world-weary culture travelers. And if the same can be said for the lobby of a W Hotel or a Bliss spa, this is certainly no coincidence... Rist's tantalizing installations speak the universal language of pleasure to an audience weaned on Ambien, electronic billboards and echoing, whitewashed spaces.¹³⁷

What Saltz saw as a provocative¹³⁸ feminization of the museum is here viewed as a transformation of that space into a mirror of luxury consumer zones of pampering and care—a realm that, one should add, is also closely aligned with a mythologized femininity. Spears sees *Pour Your Body Out* as the commodity form decked out as a rejuvenation of spiritual wellbeing, a postmodern sublime offering reified images in the guise of “spiritual vitamins” and reproducing the services for sale in the experience economy. The emphasis on femininity in the installation reinforces its status as a caretaking, comforting, and compliant enclosure. It erases a history of what some might find less pleasant feminist interventions in favour of a fuzzy wholeness concocted from a blending a romp in the grass with beyond-Technicolor effects. There is no debating the sensory power of Rist’s installation; even Spears allows that it “speak[s] the universal language of pleasure.” While pleasure is by no means a problem, one must interrogate the bases on which the pleasures of *Pour Your Body Out* rest: a neutralization of the politics of gender in favour of a timeless, essentialist femininity and a special effects

¹³⁷ Dorothy Spears, “Pipilotti Rist: MOMA,” *Art in America* (January 2009), 105

¹³⁸ He in fact calls it “one of the most seductively rebellious artistic gestures” since Lynda Benglis’ 1974 *Artforum* advertisement, in which she appears naked and holding a dildo. See: Saltz, *op. cit.*

sublime that pacifies and, as Kracauer would have it, compensates for a lack by the very same means the lack was induced.

Sleepwalkers and *Pour Your Body Out* indicate the extent to which the contemporary integration of cinema into the museum must be seen not only as a matter of protecting or commemorating an endangered institution, but also of mobilizing its accessibility and entertainment values in order to attract audiences. Given such a state of affairs, it is important that one maintains a healthy scepticism about what Volker Pantenburg has called “emancipation theories” of the spectatorial position put forth by new moving-image installations.¹³⁹ Such theories see components such as a mobile spectator and a multiplicity of viewpoints as inherently democratic, thus failing to recognize the redistribution of power in a contemporary society in which centralized disciplinary power is no longer the dominant diagram. They also overlook the ways in which the moving image has functioned as a central component of an increasing spectacularization of the museum space that brings it into a closer proximity to mass culture than ever before. Curator Roger Buergel has likened the administration of power in the gallery space to a Foucaultian concept of governmentality, wherein the apparent permissiveness of neo-liberalism masks power structures that are now internalized rather than forcibly administered through enclosure and segmentation, as they were within the regime of disciplinary power. Pantenburg quotes Buergel: “The ethical concept of redefining individual behaviour follows the ethics of neoliberal politics: individual choice, autonomous acting, governance of your own fate, self-initiative and self-determined living. The museum seems to be designed to provide this framework.”¹⁴⁰ Buergel emphasizes that though the spectator may be “liberated” from the physical

¹³⁹ Volker Pantenburg, “‘Post-Cinema?’ Movies, Museums, Mutations,” *SITE Magazine*, no. 24 (2008), 5

¹⁴⁰ Roger M. Buergel, “Arbeit an den Grenzen des Realen,” *Texte zur Kunst*, 11. Jahrgang, Heft 43 (September 2001), 68; quoted and translated in: Pantenburg, 5

enclosure—such as that experienced in the movie theatre—this is not an escape from power.

Coexisting with the ostensible autonomy of the gallery visitor are a whole host of invisible constraints that govern one's conduct and inform one's way of seeing. The freedom of moving through space is precisely the way power functions today; it is far from something to champion unproblematically as guaranteeing a critical perspective. If the movie theatre was a site of disciplinary power, holding the spectator immobile, the art gallery invokes the art of governmentality and control to manage its crowds. This however, is by no means a totalizing determination. Rather, as Deleuze puts it, "There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons."¹⁴¹ Every exercise of power offers a possibility of resistance; the need today is to abandon the notion of the art gallery as a space of autonomy and clear-sighted criticality, to confront the ways the institution functions as a technology of power and a part of spectacular culture, and to formulate responses to it.

These actions are already underway. One can, for example, identify moving-image work that embraces the anti-spectacular, cultivating an interest in the obsolete and discarded forms that constitute the dialectical other of capitalism's focus on the incessant production of novelty. Artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, and Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij—all of whom will be discussed in the next chapter—fall under such a heading. Though they might seem to be diametrically opposed to spectacular culture, they in fact agitate from within it by mining its detritus. It is also possible to find instances where artists embrace spectacle so as to turn against it, or at least ambivalently hold it up for view. Remaking old movies into new narratives in order to question the relationships between subjectivity and spectacular culture will be the focus of chapter three. While it is sure that there can be no outside, the need persists to

¹⁴¹ Deleuze, 4

find weak links in the network, or as Bernadette Corporation puts it in their video *Be Corpse* (2006), to look for “new energy coming from dead things.” This complicates an understanding of the deployment of the spectacular in art from an inherently negative force to a terrain to be negotiated from within. Though strikingly different, both of these tendencies are exemplary of how cinema’s status as an old medium may be used to intervene in the problematic of spectacle and contemporary aesthetics. Chapter four will turn from old to new, countering the novelty of the commodity form that marks installations like *Sleepwalkers* with the novelty of the blind spot by examining the emergence of fiction/documentary hybrids in recent art practice.

But to conclude this examination of the “where” of cinema in contemporary art, what is perhaps most important to emphasize is that the dispersion of cinema across the entire cultural field happens in an uneven and disjunctive manner, leading to the coexistence of incompatible postulates and unlikely bedfellows. It is this erratic flow that allows for the cinema to appear at once as an old medium in need of safekeeping *and* as a harbinger of spectacular culture within the museum. In order to provide a *compte rendu* of the current situation, an attention to the specificity of such formations is of paramount importance. Rather than indulging in the generalization of the “cinematic” as a kind of umbrella heading that would refer to an undifferentiated image-saturated culture, one must cultivate an attention to the specific historical incarnations of the cinema, seeing the contemporary moment not as the death of cinema and the birth of the cinematic, but rather as a new phase of medium specificities that have always been variable and impure.

The notion of the aggregate *dispositif* provides a way of probing the implications of the new assemblages of media that proliferate at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Cinema in the gallery must be understood as a new *dispositif* of cinema, one that is related to that of theatrical exhibition, but also possessing ideological, institutional, and architectural determinations that differ from it. This chapter has

attempted to map key nodes in the network of relations between the spaces of cinema and/in art after 1990 in an effort to provide an overview of the institutional and curatorial strategies that have emerged during this time and that have given way to the formation of this new *dispositif*. With this framework in place, the rest of this dissertation will move to the level of individual artworks and aesthetic practices, examining how particular examples function within the institutional determinations outlined here—in some cases corroborating them, in others contesting them fiercely.

II. A Cinema in Ruins: Medium Specificity and the Rhetoric of Obsolescence

Perhaps if the future existed, concretely and individually, as something that could be discerned by a better brain, the past would not be so seductive: its demands would be balanced by those of the future. Persons might then straddle the middle stretch of the seesaw when considering this or that object. It might be fun.

—Vladimir Nabokov¹

So obsolescence is about time in the way film is about time: historical time, allegorical time, analog time. I cannot be seduced by the seamlessness of digital time; like digital silence, it has a deadness.

—Tacita Dean²

In 2001, Tacita Dean travelled to the west coast of Madagascar to film the total eclipse of the sun, a project that would later become *Diamond Ring* (2002). By chance, while she was there, she heard of a phenomenon called the “green ray”: often glimpsed at sea, the brief flare of green light that shoots up as the last bit of sun dips below the horizon had long been a symbol of good fortune for sailors. Morombe, Madagascar was an ideal place to sight the elusive ray, which takes place under conditions of low moisture and clear air. Also by chance, Dean had also learned the evening before that Éric Rohmer had faked the effect in his *Summer* (*Le Rayon vert*, 1986), his cinematographer having waited some two months in the Canary Islands for every sunset before giving up and going home to the magic of post-production, thereby making Dean’s determination to capture the ray all the greater. Coincidence to coincidence, chance to chance, *The Green Ray* (2001) came into being [FIGURE 1]. Dean describes the process of shooting as such:

The point about my film of *The Green Ray* is that it did so nearly elude me, too. As I took vigil, evening after evening, on that Morombe beach looking out across the Mozambique Channel and timing the total disappearance of the sun in a single roll of film, I believed, but was never sure, I saw it.³

¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things* (New York: McGraw-Hill International, Inc, 1972), 1

² Tacita Dean, “Artist Questionnaire: 21 Responses,” *October*, no. 100 (Spring 2002), 26

³ Tacita Dean, “The Green Ray,” *Tacita Dean: Film Works*, ed. Rina Caravajal (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2007), 88

And indeed, the spectator is never sure, either. The film is not displayed on loop, like many of Dean's other works, but instead the 16mm projector is outfitted with a pushbutton that will begin the film at the viewer's volition. Over the course of two-and-a-half minutes, the spectator sees the golden sun sink below the horizon and waits for the fatal instant. But before one knows it, the sun is gone, the sky is dark, the film has ended. *Did I glimpse the green ray?* Time to push the button again.

The sun and the sea are recurring figures in Dean's films: *Banewl* (1999), *Totality* (2000), and *Diamond Ring* feature solar eclipses; *Fernsehturm* (2001) and *Palast* (2004) capture a literal sun setting metaphorically over the monuments of the former German Democratic Republic; *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), *Disappearance at Sea II* (1997), *Bubble House* (1999), and *Teignmouth Electron* (2000) are films generated from Dean's exploration of the story of Donald Crowhurst, a British amateur sailor who jumped overboard after abandoning a race around the world in a trimaran, taking his chronometer with him in a gesture that cannot help but be read as carrying symbolic weight. The sun and the sea function here as thematic and imagistic concerns, certainly, but they also suggest a certain relation to time. In *The Green Ray*, the cyclical recurrence of the sun's diurnal movements is interrupted—perhaps—by a brief flash of contingency. This chance occurrence takes place at the meeting of sun and sea and thus fittingly suggests a temporal relation closer to that of the flux of the ocean than the regularity of the sun. Though it too is governed by tidal fluctuations influenced by the moon and the sun, in its filmic representations, the ocean is figured as a site of unpredictability and chance, of a disruption of linear time in favour of the contingent or the unknown that can act as an allegory of cinema itself. One might think here of the uncertainty of the closing freeze-frame of François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (*Les 400 coups*, 1959), of the denial of human finitude achieved by the ocean-as-thinking-substance of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (*Solyaris*, 1972), or even of the photograph of the ocean that finally brings the

inexorable zoom of Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) to a rest, only to open onto another visual field.

At the meeting of sun and sea, *The Green Ray* attempts to capture a rare optical phenomenon that might act as an allegory of film, that medium with a privileged access to the archivization of the chance occurrence and the ephemeral. Dean herself makes this link between the material base of *The Green Ray* and its subject. She was not alone during the filming, but was accompanied by two others who captured the event on video. Instantly replaying the footage, they insisted that their video proved that there had been no green flash and that they had witnessed, in fact, just another Mozambique sunset.

Dean writes:

But when my film fragment was later processed in England, there, unmistakably, defying solid representation on a single frame of celluloid, but existent in the fleeting movement of film frames, was the green ray, having proved itself too elusive for the pixellation of the digital world.⁴

Video versus film, digital versus analogue, regularity versus contingency: *The Green Ray* mobilizes a larger problematic concerning the contemporary digitization of culture and what happens to analogue film in its wake, explicitly raising the question of medium specificity in the face of convergence. The film demands an investment in the revelatory capacities of celluloid, its powers of transcription, taking as its subject, Dean says, the possibility of "faith and belief in what you see."⁵ She continues, "This film is a document; it has become about the very fabric, material, and manufacture of film itself."⁶ Whether or not the green ray can be glimpsed in this film comes down to a leap of faith and a belief in the material of film as having a privileged access to the real.

"This film is a document," but a document of what? Perhaps of a fleeting optical phenomenon, but certainly of a particular moment in the history of film and the desires

⁴ Ibid., 89

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

its makers and spectators invest in it. For this “faith and belief in what you see” is, to be sure, a fantasmatic projection: the spectator fastens on to the ability of celluloid to render legible contingency precisely in the wake of the digital’s regularity of ones and zeroes. The investment in the revelatory capacities of celluloid and a faith in its indexical guarantee must be read as a symptomatic response to anxieties surrounding often hyperbolic claims of the ungroundedness and inherent manipulability of the digital. By virtue of approaching obsolescence, film’s ability to capture ephemeral moments in the process of disappearance has been highlighted as a quality central to its specificity as a medium. Though the digital is also capable of such an operation, what is at stake in the privileging of analogue film’s relationship to contingency is an investment in the medium as linked to historicity and spectrality. These chance moments are not made present for the spectator, but persist as remnants of a lost time, much in the same way that the very apparatus of film currently finds itself as a relic of a now collapsed regime of image registration and apprehension.

It is as much of this moment in the history of cinema that *The Green Ray* stands as document as it is of the sunset on that Madagascar evening. Though discussions of film’s medium specificity as linked to the registration of contingency go back as far as the exclamations of early spectators that what fascinated most in Louis Lumière’s *Feeding the Baby* (*Repas de bébé*, 1895) was less the title action and more the wind in the trees in the background,⁷ the frequency with which this ability has been held up in recent theory

⁷ In Christian Keathley’s revealingly titled *Cinephilia and History: or The Wind in the Trees*, the author begins with the following quote from D.W. Griffith: “What’s missing from the movies nowadays is the beauty of the moving wind in the trees.” In the introduction, he writes that, “This fetishization of marginal, otherwise ordinary details in the motion picture image is as old as the cinema itself,” before proceeding to invoke the legendary fascination early spectators had with the wind in the trees. This apocrypha perhaps finds its source in Georges Sadoul’s *Histoire générale du cinéma*, in a chapter on Lumière titled “La Nature même prise sur le fait, ou les raisons du succès de *L’Arroseur arrosé*”: “In the background, in the garden, the leaves quivered in the sun, a detail that a spectator of today would have to make an effort to distinguish, but that filled the crowds of 1896 with enthusiasm.” Sadoul’s remark that such a detail surely would not be remarked upon today is revealing in the present context, for “today” in Sadoul’s text refers to an historical moment (1946) considerably different from our own, when indeed people are once again remarking on the

and practice as central to an ontology of the analogue moving image demands historicization and contextualization if it is to be adequately understood.

For *The Green Ray* is not alone in such concerns. Rather, the contemporary insistence on using 16mm film in the gallery in tandem with explorations of the contingent, the ephemeral, or the disappearing is striking. Roughly concurrent with cinema's 1995 centennial, the use of celluloid returns as a major feature of moving-image art for the first time since the advent of video displaced the film installations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The re-entry of 16mm into the gallery in the 1990s brings a host of concerns very different from those at stake in this earlier moment. The 1960s-1970s' baring of the apparatus in conjunction with a phenomenology of spectatorship has shifted to an exploration of history and the obsolescent, marking a profound reconfiguration of the medium's specificity. This can be witnessed not only in Tacita Dean's work, but is also central to artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij, Stan Douglas, and Sharon Lockhart. This employment of 16mm may be seen as part of a larger problematic of obsolescence in contemporary art that could include work as diverse as Jane and Louise Wilson's video installations of disused sites of bureaucratic power (*Stasi City*, 1997), James Coleman's use of the slide projector (*INITIALS*, 1993-94), or William Kentridge's explorations into early cinema through the vehicle of hand-drawn animation (*Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès*, 2003).⁸ As George Baker has remarked, "The obsolescent, the 'outmoded,' the nonsynchronous,

"wind in the trees" of the film image. See: Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, Or the Wind in the Trees* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), ii and 8; Georges Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinéma: Tome 1, L'Invention du cinéma, 1832-1897* (Paris: Denoël, 1946), 247; translation mine

⁸ Though Kentridge's practice does include the use of both 16mm and 35mm film, I have excluded it from my consideration here of 16mm gallery practices due to the artist's heavy reliance on video and, crucially, the choice to transfer the pieces to video for projection within the exhibition space. My choice to focus on artists such as Dean and Buckingham in contrast to Coleman and Kentridge will also become important later in this chapter with regard to Rosalind Krauss' call to "reinvent the medium," for these latter two artists are precisely those named in the closing lines of her book, *A Voyage on the North Sea*. See: Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 56

discarded forms, marginal mediums: all of these seem to be resources of special interest to many of the most interesting artistic projects today.”⁹

This chapter will focus specifically on work made and exhibited in 16mm, for it is here questions of celluloid’s obsolescence are explicitly addressed. This chapter will build a theoretical framework in which to consider how best to locate such contemporary practices and their insistence on both the institution of cinema and the material of film as superannuated. Hal Foster has remarked, “There are usually two dynamics at these new technological moments. There are artists who want to push the futuristic freedoms of new media and others who want to look at what this apparent leap forward opens up in the past, the obsolete.”¹⁰ This chapter will deal with artists who fit into this second category, who engage through practice the opportunity Thomas Elsaesser sees the digital as having provided for film theorists, namely its function as “a zero-degree that allows one to reflect upon one’s understanding of both film history and cinema theory.”¹¹

The Green Ray explicitly invokes discourses of medium specificity, but as is demonstrated by the relationship between the film’s muteness and the rhetoric of analogue exceptionality that pervades Dean’s writings about it, this configuration of film’s medium specificity has as much to do with the discourses surrounding the medium and its historical emplacement as it does with the inherent qualities of its physical support. In *The Green Ray*, as is the case for practically all of Dean’s films, the artist’s writings—which she describes as “asides”—function as an important textual supplements to the film. The film text itself might eschew narrative, but through this supplementary dimension, the films enter into a series of interlocking stories and journeys that run throughout the artist’s practice. But one must also consider the ways in which other

⁹ George Baker, “Artist Questionnaire: 21 Responses,” 6

¹⁰ Hal Foster, “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” *October*, no. 104 (Spring 2006), 73

¹¹ Thomas Elsaesser, “Early Film History and Multi-Media: An Archaeology of Possible Futures?” *Old Media, New Media: A History and Theory Reader*, ed. Wendy Chun and Thomas Keenan (London: Routledge, 2006), 16

kinds of discourses constitute a contemporary understanding of the medium specificity of film. Particularly, for purposes of this dissertation, the institutional and economic discourses of the gallery and the museum must be taken into account.

The presence of 16mm film in a gallery context might at first appear as a generalization of “cinema,” as a dispersal to sites and contexts that would compromise its specificity, or even as a use of film that doesn’t belong to the cinema (in its marked silence concerning these practices, the discipline of film studies has tacitly adopted this latter position). In November 2008, the *New York Times Magazine* changed its annual Oscar-season Hollywood issue to a “Screens” issue that took up questions of digital image consumption and the fate of cinema within such a climate. In his contribution, “The Screening of America,” critic A.O. Scott asked, “What will happen, in the age of iPod, DVR, VOD, YouTube and BitTorrent, to the experience of moviegoing, to say nothing of the art of cinema?”¹² This inquiry compounds two questions—that of traditional cinematic exhibition and that of the “art of cinema”—to which very different answers might be offered. For it is the contention of this chapter that the migration of 16mm filmmaking into a gallery context has allowed for an important articulation of the specificity of the medium at this historical juncture, despite its status as simultaneously partaking of an extension of cinema beyond itself. The “art of cinema” is alive and well, one might say, within the gallery walls. This migration does not take place, however, without an accompanying re-conceptualization of the medium. Here, film is figured as an old medium, a remnant of a cinema in ruins that has a privileged link to ephemerality and historicity, sharing these concerns with important discussions of medium specificity in recent film theory.

¹² A.O. Scott, “The Screening of America,” *New York Times Magazine* (21 November 2008); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/magazine/23wwln-lede-t.html?ref=magazine>>

To call something an “old medium” is to assert that this medium has a history; that is, it is to assert that the very concept of what might count as a medium is a profoundly historical category. These works assert the historical variability of film’s specificity, but go further than this to posit film’s specificity as inextricable from its relationship to the past. While the films under consideration here do not make specific reference to the history of cinema, as visible in the work of Douglas Gordon or others who will be discussed in the next chapter, there is a discernible interest in interrogating the relationship of the medium to the archivization of the past and of reaching a stage in its own history where it might be considered as antiquated. This happens not only by virtue of form-content relationships wherein celluloid is used to deal with aged or disappearing subjects,¹³ but also due to the institutional determinations of placing film inside the gallery as an object of aesthetic contemplation. By attaching importance to the film print itself as an *objet d’art*, film leaves the realm of mass cultural circulation to enter a different economy of consumption, perhaps most epitomized by the popularity of the limited-edition model of distribution. As such, to adequately characterize the role of the medium in the employment of 16mm in the gallery requires a rethinking of the category of medium specificity and the status of film as object. The specificity of a medium must take into account the material qualities of its physical support, but must also be historicized to take into account the various social, institutional, and economic factors that exert an influence on how one conceives of that support at any given juncture.

This reconfiguration of medium specificity places 16mm gallery practice squarely amidst two related but separate contemporary discourses that take up the notion of a crisis in the idea of the medium: from media studies, convergence, and from art history,

¹³ This strategy has even pervaded mainstream American feature filmmaking, with varying success. David Fincher’s fantasy of reversible time, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), simulates aged film stock to convey a sense of historicity within a film that otherwise presents a *Forrest Gump*-esque cartoonish and digitally-enhanced past. Darren Aronofsky’s *The Wrestler* (2008) is markedly more effective as a meditation on the melancholy of time’s passing, using 16mm blown up to 35mm to produce an aesthetic of grainy senescence that matches the film’s portrait of an aging professional wrestler.

Rosalind Krauss' formulation of a "post-medium condition." This chapter will understand the relationship between convergence and specificity as one of dialectical movement, demonstrating how it is precisely in tandem with an anxiety over the limits of a medium that one finds articulations of its specificity. Further, it is the contention of this chapter that contemporary 16mm gallery practices cannot be adequately understood without recourse to discourses of the medium stemming from *both* film studies and art history. This marks a major methodological divergence from much art historical writing that considers the film production of these artists outside of an understanding of how the specificity of film has been elaborated within film studies and how it might be reconfigured in the contemporary moment by its increasing integration into the gallery.

To speak of medium specificity in this context is not to partake in a disciplinary orthodoxy that tries to demarcate a territory of the uncontaminated object of "cinema," but rather to open film studies to the changing contours of its object, foregoing a purity of cinema for the possibilities that may be generated out of its continuing metamorphosis. If one takes seriously Hollis Frampton's claim that "...no activity can become an art until its proper epoch has ended and it has dwindled, as an aid of survival, into total obsolescence,"¹⁴ there is an intimate connection between the increasing obsolescence of celluloid and its current configuration within the gallery space that suggests a productive becoming of the medium much more than its end.

Post-medium Post-mortem

Any contemporary formulation of medium specificity must situate the concept alongside the increasing digitization of culture, a condition that sees the notion of the discrete medium challenged by the centripetal motions of convergence. On a very basic

¹⁴ Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, and Video Texts, 1968-1980* (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983), 112

level, a prime meaning of the keyword “convergence” is ability of new media to translate “old” media from one format to another, to “transcode” all media to a numerical representation of ones and zeros that make media programmable.¹⁵ Friedrich Kittler states this quite succinctly:

The general digitization of channels and information erases the differences among individual media...Inside the computers themselves everything becomes a number: quantity without image, sound, or voice. And once optical fibre networks turn formerly distinct data flows into series of digitized numbers, any medium can be translated into any other. With numbers, everything goes. Modulation, transformation, synchronization; delay, storage, transposition; scrambling, scanning, mapping—a total media link on a digital base will erase the very concept of medium.¹⁶

However, the movement of convergence may not be confined to the level of technology alone. Rather, one must recall Henry Jenkins’ conviction that convergence designates a broader “cultural shift” that involves a larger reconfiguration of media systems on a global level, encompassing the ways in which content now achieves possibilities of circulation heretofore unknown.¹⁷ As demonstrated in chapter one, the presence of film within the gallery walls cannot be understood outside of this reorganization spanning across all sectors of culture.

If, for media studies, anxieties over the formerly clear boundaries of media take the form of questions of convergence, in art history, the dialogue is framed in a slightly different, but certainly related, manner. In her lecture-turned-book, *“A Voyage on the North Sea”: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Rosalind Krauss outlines the state of the medium in contemporary art practice, tracing the fallout of the exhaustion of the modernist paradigm of medium specificity. If digital convergence is one reason

¹⁵ The term “transcoding” comes from Lev Manovich, who specifies it to be one of the five principles of new media in his book, *The Language of New Media*. For Manovich, “to ‘transcode’ something is to translate it into another format.” This ability is, for Manovich, “the most substantial consequence of the computerization of media.” See: Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 45 and 47

¹⁶ Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1-2

¹⁷ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3

discussions of medium specificity have receded, perhaps another is the term's inevitable invocation of the spectres of modernism, formalism, essentialism, and of Clement Greenberg—perhaps the most influential theorist of medium specificity of the twentieth century. Very much in line with the *locus classicus* of medium specificity arguments, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1774 *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*,¹⁸ Greenberg (in)famously argued that with modern art, each medium should engage in a process of distillation and self-criticism, to undergo a radical reduction so as to reach the medium's essential qualities. In short, this trajectory involved the pursuit of excellence through limitation.

As he put it, "The essence of Modernism lies...in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence."¹⁹ The notion of more firmly entrenching a medium in its area of competence demonstrates Greenberg's commitment to a centred, autonomous work that would form a monad capable of resisting ever-insidious mass culture. This programmatic prescription of autotelic pruning led to an emptying of the medium of anything extraneous to its essence, a movement that would find its apogee and breaking point in minimalism.²⁰ By the mid-1960s, modernist unity

¹⁸ Here, Lessing emphasizes the physical structure of a medium, putting forth that the proper subject matter for a given medium can be extrapolated from its form. See: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Ellen Frothingham (New York: Noonday Press, 1969)

¹⁹ According to Greenberg, with modern art, "It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique in the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thus would each art be rendered 'pure,' and in its 'purity' find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence." See: Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume Four, Modernism with a Vengeance, 1959-1967*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 86

²⁰ While Donald Judd's "specific objects" might appear to fulfil the modernist enterprise in their reductive forms, they also contradict the injunctions to the discreteness of media, to opticality, and to apprehension in a single instant by temporalizing perception and insisting on the thickness of bodily, phenomenological experience. For a close examination of minimalism as both the apogee and breaking point of modernism, see: Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 35-69; on the overcoming of the traditional boundaries of the medium see: Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 181-89); and for the canonical indictment of the temporalization of perception induced by

begins to fracture, leading to a dispersed notion of “art in general” and an increasing interest in inter- and multi-media rather than work that belonged to a discrete domain such as painting or sculpture.

Krauss’ elaboration of the “post-medium condition”—a term that with a revealing parapraxis might quickly flip to “postmodern condition”—details what happened next. This notion begins as a critique of the essentialist unity of the modernist medium in the name of fragmentation, self-difference, and an undoing of the autonomy of the work of art. Film is central here, since it provides a model of a medium with an aggregate nature, finding its conceptualization in the amalgamation of parts that make up the term “apparatus.”²¹ Following the developments of poststructuralism, video art, and the renewed interest in Marcel Duchamp found in 1960s Conceptualism,²² the essential unity of the modernist medium became untenable and led instead to a conception of the medium “as differential, self-differing, and thus as a layering of conventions never simply collapsed into the physicality of their support.”²³

minimalism and its “theatricality,” see: Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood [1967],” *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172.

²¹ Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*,” 24-25

²² Krauss has stated, “So poststructuralism, Conceptual art, Duchamp reception [*sic*], video art: together they effectively dismembered the concept of the medium.” See: Rosalind Krauss, “Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art,” Yve-Alain Bois, *et al.*, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism, Volume 2, 1945 to the present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 674. Krauss expands greatly on the role of video in this process in “*Voyage on the North Sea*.” She pinpoints the invention of the Portapak, introduced in 1967, as the initiation of a kind of “discursive chaos” around the idea of the medium, sealing its fate and “shatter[ing] the modernist dream.” The rise of video art, for Krauss, “routed” the unity structural film had produced from an aggregate apparatus through “a heterogeneity of activity that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core,” thereby sounding a death knell for theories of medium specificity. See: Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*,” 30-31

²³ Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*,” 53. The emphasis on the generative restriction of historically-determined conventions forges a link between Krauss’ formulation and Stanley Cavell’s notion of “automatisms”—recently resurrected in film studies by D.N. Rodowick in his discussion of “variable specificity”—which similarly looks to a set of conventions to provide enabling limitations for the creation of new work. Cavell prefers the word automatism to medium, stating that “the use of the word seems to me right for both the broad genres or forms in which an art organizes itself...and those local events or *topoi* around which a genre precipitates itself...[I]n mastering a tradition one masters a range of automatisms upon which the tradition maintains itself, and in deploying them, one’s work is assured of a place in that tradition.” Key to the notion and perhaps central to Cavell’s choice to leave behind the term “medium” is that it extends beyond the physical support of the work. See: Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*:

Krauss' seminal 1978 essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," sharply captures this moment. Here, Krauss uses a Greimasian semiotic square to explore the postminimalist art of figures such as Richard Serra and Robert Smithson in an attempt to grapple with a time when "rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture: narrow corridors with TV monitors at the ends; large photographs documenting country hikes; mirrors placed at strange angles in ordinary rooms; temporary lines cut into the floor of the desert."²⁴ Krauss' main task in this essay is to problematize the unity of the modernist category of "sculpture," to link art theory to a broader poststructuralist critique of essence and identity in order to break away from a conception of the medium as rigidly and ahistorically defined. Describing this new space of sculpture, Krauss writes,

Thus the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organization of the work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium. From the structure laid about above, it is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the ground of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material.²⁵

And this, certainly, was received as a welcome change. Though not named here as such, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" provides an early formulation of what would later become known as the "post-medium condition." But crucially, what began as a progressive critique of modernist essentialism would become, in Krauss' view, a default position that consolidated the generalization of the aesthetic and permeation of art by kitsch that are the hallmarks of advanced capitalism. If in "Sculpture in the Expanded

Reflections on the Ontology of Film (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 104; For Rodowick's discussion of "variable specificity," which has much in common with Krauss' "differential specificity," see: D.N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 23

²⁴ Here one assumes Krauss is referring to the work Bruce Nauman, Richard Long, and Robert Morris, and Walter de Maria, respectively. See: Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 277

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 288-289

Field,” the breaking apart of unity was accorded an important political and conceptual task, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the situation would change drastically.

Nearing the end of “*Voyage on the North Sea*,” and in the articles on “reinventing the medium” that follow,²⁶ the changed status of fragmentation in Krauss’ thought becomes clear. In “Reinventing the Medium: Introduction to *Photograph*,” a 1999 essay on James Coleman, she writes:

It is at this historical juncture that the taboo against specificity comes to seem less and less radical and a desire to rethink the idea of the medium as a form of resistance to late capitalism’s utter generalization of the aesthetic—so that anything from shopping to watching wars on television takes on an aestheticized glow—seems less and less impossible.²⁷

This desire to recuperate the unity of a medium and the possibilities for self-reflexivity lying therein must be read against the pervasiveness of installation art in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the increasing spectacularization of contemporary art and the museum space discussed in the previous chapter. At stake here is an attempt to revive a critical practice thought to be neutralized by the once-productive contaminations of high and low, inside and outside.

If, in the 1960s, Allan Kaprow could triumphantly proclaim that, “Young artists of today no longer say, ‘I am a painter,’ or ‘a poet’ or ‘a dancer.’ They are simply ‘artists.’ All of life will be open to them,”²⁸ by the 1990s, this attempt to re-inject art into everyday life had shifted to the postmodern complicity of art, capital, and mass culture. The “postmodernism of resistance”²⁹ has been co-opted by a movement of capital that

²⁶ See: Rosalind Krauss, “...And Then Turn Away? An Essay on James Coleman,” *James Coleman*, ed. George Baker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 157-183; Rosalind Krauss, “Reinventing the Medium,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Winter 1999), 289-305; Rosalind Krauss, “‘The Rock’: William Kentridge’s Drawings for Projection,” *October*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), 3-35; and Rosalind Krauss, “Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition,” *October*, no. 116 (Spring 2006), 55-62. A slightly different version of the second essay listed here is available as “Reinventing the Medium: Introduction to *Photograph*,” *James Coleman*, ed. George Baker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 185-210

²⁷ Krauss, “Reinventing the Medium: Introduction to *Photograph*,” 199

²⁸ Alan Kaprow, quoted in: Bois, *et al.*, 450

²⁹ In his 1984 essay, “(Post)Modern Polemics,” Hal Foster differentiates between a neoconservative postmodernism and a poststructuralist postmodernism. The former, affiliated with the work of artists such

functions not according to principles of unity and identity, but instead according to fragmentation and difference—those very keywords once championed by poststructuralism as providing a philosophical corrective to the centuries-old hegemony of binary, rationalist thought. In 1966, Godard dedicated his *Masculine Feminine* (*Masculin féminin: 15 faits précis*) to “the children of Marx and Coca-Cola,” but now one might say that today’s children are borne of Deleuze and Starbucks—alive amidst paradoxical flows of deterritorialization, personalization, and niche marketing. Krauss’ repugnance at such a configuration is palpable, to the point that she has spoken of not being able to maintain her earlier methodological commitment to poststructuralism³⁰ and has made blanket statements as problematic as calling “the international fashion of installation and intermedia work” a situation in which “art *essentially* finds itself complicit with a globalization of the image in the service of capital.”³¹ Krauss’ response to such a situation is a call to “reinvent” the medium, a notion that will be taken up later in this chapter.

as Sandro Chia and Julian Schnabel, is marked by an “eclectic historicism” and a return of the humanist tradition and the artist as genius, while the later, associated with figures such as Cindy Sherman and Louise Lawler, engages in a critique of origins and assumes “‘the death of man’ not only as original creator of unique artefacts but also as the centered subject of representation and history” (121). While Foster acknowledges that both postmodernisms are symptomatic of the same moment of late capitalism and its processes of reification and fragmentation (132), he closes his essay by emphasizing that for poststructuralist postmodernism—elsewhere called a postmodernism of resistance—there may be something very real to be gained through this emphasis on fragmentation and textuality *despite* its relationship to capital: “For what is this subject that, threatened by loss, is so bemoaned? Bourgeois perhaps, but patriarchal and phallogocentric certainly. For some, for many, this may indeed be a great loss, a loss which leads to narcissistic laments and hysterical disavowals of the end of art, of culture, of the west. But for others, precisely for Others, it may be no great loss at all” (136). See: Hal Foster, “(Post)Modern Polemics,” *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Culture Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 121-136. Foster names this a “postmodernism of resistance,” in his introduction to *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, (New York: The New Press, 1998), xii-xiii

³⁰ Krauss has stated, “And if I as a critic have any responsibility now, it is to dissociate myself from this attack on the medium, and to speak for its importance, which is to say for the continuance of modernism. I don’t know if poststructuralism will help me to do this, and thus I don’t know if I can maintain my earlier commitment to this methodological option.” See: Krauss, “Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art,” 674

³¹ This statement disturbingly posits that the work’s ideological position is strictly determined according to its relation to the medium in a manner strikingly reminiscent of Greenberg. The stakes of Krauss’ recent return to the unity and autonomy of the work of art will be explored further as this chapter progresses. See: Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*,” 56; emphasis mine.

How might one situate the relationship between 16mm gallery practice, medium specificity, and obsolescence in relation to the twin debates of convergence and the post-medium condition, which both speak of specificity's undoing in favour of homogenization and contamination? Conditions such as these have led to the relative denigration of the term "medium specificity," relegating it to nothing more than a spectre of modernism that has little relevance for the contemporary moment. Writing on Tacita Dean in an essay whose title misleadingly suggests a particular concern with the medium, Michael Newman proposes that,

The issue is no longer how to distinguish mediums from each other or different uses of a medium within a given state of technological development (as in the relation between cinema and artists' films in the 1960s), but rather of *whether a medium as such is even possible* in the context of the technological transformation—specifically the digitalisation of media as a whole.³²

Paul Arthur, speaking as a part of a round table on obsolescence and American avant-garde film, voices a similar position:

When you have first-generation film purists like Ken Jacobs, Michael Snow, Jonas Mekas, Ernie Gehr, Bruce Baillie, Andrew Noren, Peter Hutton, and Gunvor Nelson all working in video; and you have younger-generation filmmakers like Peggy Ahwesh and Scott Stark who move back and forth between digital and film; and you've got Stan Brakhage willing to commit his precious hand-painted films to VHS for distribution, it seems to me that the notion of medium specificity is somewhat vitiated.³³

Both of these proclamations miss how the twin phenomena of the post-medium condition and convergence might lead not to the obliteration of specificity but rather back to a re-thinking of the concept that would free it of its modernist shackles and render it relevant to the contemporary moment.

In the contemporary moment, it is precisely these admixtures of film and video, these dispersals of cinema beyond what is considered to be its "normal" bounds, that necessitate re-thinking how medium specificity might operate. Instead of shoring itself

³² Michael Newman, "Medium and Event in the Work of Tacita Dean," *Tacita Dean: Recent Films and Other Works* (London: Tate, 2001), 24

³³ Paul Arthur, "Round Table: Obsolescence and American Avant-Garde Film," *October*, no. 100 (Spring 2002), 123

up from contamination in an essential purity, it is now possible to see the medium as delimiting itself precisely in relation to the aggregate mixtures it enters into with other media. This phenomenon is not new: as Tom Gunning describes it, “[C]inema has always (and not only at its origin) taken place within a competitive media environment, in which the survival of the fittest was in contention and the outcome not always clear.”³⁴ But certainly, the contemporary moment brings this “battle of the images,” to use Raymond Bellour’s term,³⁵ to a rather exacerbated degree unknown during the decades when the constitutive heterogeneity of the cinematic apparatus was relatively reigned in by the hegemony of the co-operating systems of representation and exhibition that find their canonical formulation in Jean-Louis Baudry’s “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus.”³⁶ The entrenchment of this situation in 1970, when Baudry published the essay, was so firm as to appear as mythologized nature. As such, the political imperative of the time was to dismantle such unity, to make evident the work of the apparatus and thereby provoke an Althusserian “knowledge effect.”³⁷

With the erosion of this hegemony within the institution, the situation has changed. Now, in a horizontally-integrated industry, one once again confronts the aggregate character of the cinema, which reaches as far as the marketing of fast-food tie-ins or the downloading of companion short films online.³⁸ The objective now becomes less a destruction of unity—for fragmentation is presumed to be the point of departure—

³⁴ Tom Gunning, “Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality,” *differences: a journal of feminist and cultural studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), 35

³⁵ Raymond Bellour, “Battle of the Images,” *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, ed. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 56-59

³⁶ Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286-298

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 287

³⁸ This refers to Wes Anderson’s *Hotel Chevalier* (2007), a thirteen-minute film serving as a prologue to his feature *The Darjeeling Express* (2007). The short was screened in some theatres before the feature, but many viewers saw it as a free download from the Apple iTunes store, where it was made available one month before the film’s wide (800 screen) release, racking up some 500,000 downloads. See: Lia Miller, “‘Darjeeling’ to be Paired With a Short,” *New York Times* (22 October 2007); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/22/business/media/22darjeeling.html>>

and more a salvaging of the remnants of an object become precious, re-collecting (assembling again and remembering) the cinema through an interrogation of its elements.³⁹ This is to insist first on the historical variability of film's medium specificity rather than on an enduring essence, and second on the gallery as a space where an interrogation into the cinema's component parts and conventions might occur. If an artist chooses to move back and forth between film and video, this should not be taken as a mark of indifference to the medium, but rather as an effort to engage the medium most suited for the work, thereby necessarily engaging its specific qualities. It is common for artists who use 16mm in the gallery to engage in a certain medium promiscuity: to pick only two representative examples, Tacita Dean works in drawing, photography, books, found objects, sound, film, and video; Matthew Buckingham works in film, video, photography, slide projection, sculpture, installation. Far from vitiating the notion of medium specificity, such cross-medium practices provide a new way of thinking medium specificity, one that sees it as in a constant interaction with the flows of convergence.

This dialectic of convergence and specificity calls for, following Bellour, the necessity of "grasping all the arts as part of one single ensemble and analyzing each work in terms of its mix of different art forms, particularly in terms of media, or the artist's choice of confining oneself to one mechanism alone."⁴⁰ The contemporary climate of convergence makes possible a thinking of medium specificity that does not rely on the old fiction of the purity of media, but instead begins from the premise of interpenetration and contamination, taking off from the fact that, as André Bazin—so often invoked as an ontologist of cinema—acknowledged over fifty years ago, film is and

³⁹ This is a notion glimpsed even in Jean-Christophe Royoux's assertion that the cinema of exhibition aims to "produce a kind of intensity by separating, say, the elements that usually constitute a film by insisting on only one of them." Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Cinema as Exhibition, Duration as Space," trans. C. Penwarden, *Art Press*, no. 262 (November 2000), 26

⁴⁰ Bellour, "Battle of the Images," 58

always has been an “impure art.”⁴¹ As Bellour writes, “The most twentieth-century form of art, [the cinema] is at once more crowded-in now than ever and more alone in its splendour.”⁴²

More crowded-in and yet more alone than ever—Bellour’s formulation points to the tendency to see articulations of medium specificity appear precisely during those moments when limits or boundaries are being compromised and/or drawn, suggesting that any notion of film’s specificity is produced out of an historical situation of heterogeneity and conflict. Even Bazin, so often mistakenly held up as an example of the presumed essentialism of classical film theory, emphasized that, “...we must say of the cinema that its existence precedes its essence; even in his most adventurous extrapolations, it is this existence from which the critic must take his point of departure.”⁴³ As the cinema’s existence changes, so will conceptions of what is specific to it. Once again, it is best to follow Bazin’s advice: “So let us stop appealing to precedents from the origin of cinema and *let us take up again the problem as it seems to confront us today*.”⁴⁴

Indexing the Past, Slowly

Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij’s *Untitled* (2001) is a 35mm film consisting of a single ten-minute long take of the Karet Bivak Cemetery in central Jakarta [FIGURE 2]. The static frame captures no more movement than the continual rustling of the trees and a tiny lone figure wandering through the middle ground about halfway through. The stillness of the cemetery is overlooked by the high-rise buildings in the background, evidence of the rapid development affecting the twenty-three million inhabitants of

⁴¹ See André Bazin, “Pour un cinéma impur,” somewhat unfortunately translated as “In Defence of Mixed Cinema,” *What Is Cinema? Volume One*, trans. and ed. Hugh Grey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 53-75

⁴² Bellour, “Battle of the Images,” 59

⁴³ Bazin, “In Defence of Mixed Cinema,” 71

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 61; emphasis mine.

Indonesia's capital city. The unbroken continuity of the long take is riven by a temporal discontinuity within the image, as tradition and modernity meet from background to foreground. Indeed, the cemetery would have been demolished to make way for new construction long ago, but owes its continued existence to housing the grave of Ibu Fatmawati Sokarno, who was both the wife of Sokarno, the first president of Indonesia, and the mother of Megawati Sukarnoputri, who served as the first female president of the country from 2001-2004. Sokarno lobbied for independence from Holland and presided over the country during the first turbulent years of national sovereignty, with his wife reportedly sewing the first Indonesian flag. As the image of the gravesite of this first first lady, *Untitled* invokes not only the contemporary geopolitical resonances of globalization but the history of colonialism as well—all within a meditation on finitude. This is a concern the film shares with de Rijke and de Rooij's *Bantar Gebang* (2000), another single ten-minute take, this time of a slum near a garbage dump on the outskirts of Jakarta.

The genre of the travel view was one of the most popular of the pre-classical cinema, arising concurrently with the rise of tourism as a leisure activity and forever intertwining the cinema's history with that of colonialism and the commodification of travel. Tourism and cinema emerged as twinned ways of "purchasing" or taking possession through the authority of the gaze, of attempting to render the Other knowable through the capture of an image. *Untitled* re-stages this drama of vision and knowledge as it relates to the travel genre of early cinema. However, instead of supplying its viewer with any sense of possession or understanding, it withholds information or "facts" in favour of a brute encounter with time. Recalling the experiments in filmic duration undertaken by Andy Warhol between 1963 and 1965, throughout the ten minutes of *Untitled*, details proliferate, yielding more and more visual data that never resolve into a stable meaning. Rather than using the extension of time to provide the viewer with an

increased understanding of the subject, as *Untitled* progresses, the possibility of true knowledge is increasingly undermined. As curator Jessica Morgan has written, “Knowing that the artists are Dutch, we assume a post-colonial interest on their behalf. The impenetrable flatness of the image, however, suggests that this observational investigation of a former colony remains a halted quest for understanding.”⁴⁵

Key here is an investment in the powers of registration possessed by the film image. De Rijke and de Rooij insist on the employment of celluloid, a choice one must take seriously and pursue to its fullest implications.⁴⁶ The artists refuse to overwrite the time of the apparatus (the spooling of film through the projector) and the time of reception (the experience of the spectator) with the time of narrative, a strategy that Peter Gidal sees as central to Warhol’s *Blow Job* (1963). For Gidal, narrative—however fragmentary it might be—obliterates time: “the real substance of what’s being shown on film is overtaken by what it ‘stands for’ or ‘represents.’”⁴⁷ For Gidal, this means that radical filmmaking must trouble film’s representational capacity by insisting on the materiality of the image; it should *document nothing*. De Rijke and de Rooij’s intervention is to follow Gidal’s call to insist on the time of reception but to still maintain an investment in the referentiality of the image, something structural film’s investigations into medium specificity occluded in its emphasis on film as material.⁴⁸ For

⁴⁵ Jessica Morgan, “Time After Time,” *Time Zones: Recent Film and Video* (Tate: London, 2004), 25

⁴⁶ Indeed, de Rijke and de Rooij were the only artists to show work on film in 2004’s *Time Zones*, the Tate Modern’s first major exhibition devoted to the moving image. Other participating artists included Francis Alys, Fikret Atay, Yael Bartana, Yang Fudong, Anri Sala, Bojan Sarcevic, Wolfgang Staehle, and Fiona Tan. The exhibition took place from 6 October 2004 – 2 January 2005.

⁴⁷ Peter Gidal, *Blow Job* (London: Afterall Books, 2008), 10

⁴⁸ In 1969, P. Adams Sitney proclaimed, “Suddenly, a cinema of structure has emerged” (326). Describing a body of films by individuals such as Tony Conrad, Hollis Frampton, Ernie Gehr, Paul Sharits, and Michael Snow, Sitney defined the structural film as “insist[ing] on its shape, and what content it has is minimal and subsidiary to the outline” (327)—thereby positing a self-reflexive cinema that could be seen as the filmic analogue of Greenbergian modernism. According to Sitney, through its severely reductionist forms, structural film interrogated the medium specificity of film in a modernist manner, engaging in an ontological inquiry into film *as film*, as material. Though the historiography of structural film is undergoing significant contemporary revision, the still-prevailing consensus around this work uses the discourse of medium specificity as way of writing out other concerns (political, social) so as to focus on the construction

Ina Blom, de Rijke and de Rooij's "self-effacing structures serve to deflect attention from the work and onto the context or conditions of viewing itself," putting the filmmakers very firmly within lineage of structural film.⁴⁹ However, as much as de Rijke and de Rooij engage this legacy, they also break apart from it by insisting on the historicity of the film image. *Untitled* puts forth a notion of cinema as an archive of chance, registering mute contingencies, pointing to a referent that it can never quite summon to presence. One can see this pointing to the profilmic real, but the film's blockage, its "halted quest for understanding," also points to the unrepresentable forces of global capital, extending from colonial domination to today's transnational flows of labour, information, and power. The Real is summoned by the image but cannot be spoken by it.

This notion of the medium as linked to both contingency and historicity invokes the concept of indexicality, a category that has come to achieve crucial importance in recent film theoretical discussions of the analogue-digital transition. Against the much-feared capacity for manipulation that resides in the binary basis of digital media, the idea of analogue film as an indexical sign invokes a testimonial power and a sense of historicity that are seen to be weakened—if not obliterated entirely—by new media. As Mary Ann Doane has ventured, "One might go so far as to claim that indexicality has become today the primary indicator of cinematic specificity."⁵⁰ This is to suggest a very different relationship to the category of medium specificity, which has traditionally been

of "pure film," an autonomous object bound up in desires for the legitimation of experimental film as a discrete cultural domain. See: David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 237-279; P. Adams Sitney, "Structural Film," *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 326-348; P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000, Third Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 347-370. For important recent revisions of this historical moment, see: Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art Books, 2002) and Tess Takahashi, "'Promiscuous Mixture': Structural Film and Video Art in the 1960s and 1970s," *Impure Film: Medium Specificity and the American Avant-Garde, 1965-2005*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University (2007), 9-50.

⁴⁹ Ina Blom, "Director's Cut (Beauty Operations)," *De Rijke/De Rooij: Director's Cut*, ed. Ina Blom (Oslo: The National Museum of Contemporary Art/Museet for Samtidskunst, 2001), 8

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *differences: a journal of feminist and cultural studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), 129

paired with an emphasis on the autonomy of the work of art. Greenberg's suggestion that the medium engage in self-criticism so as to further entrench itself in its area of competence is a turning away from the outside world towards self-referentiality, a move that is witnessed by structural film's tendency to problematize the referential capacity of cinema when not doing away with it entirely.

By drawing attention to the material attributes of cinema—the surface of the filmstrip, the single-frame articulation, sprocket holes, zoom, pan—structural film located film's specificity in the materiality of the apparatus turning in on itself, not in its ability to register a trace of pastness. With structural film, medium specificity is grounded in film's ability to become about itself, achieving autonomy from that which would contaminate it. Now, on the contrary, film's medium specificity lies in its ability to point beyond itself, in the assertion of its radical *lack* of autonomy by indexing the past. Recent theory and practice have shifted to see this inscription of time as central to an historicized ontology of the cinema. Just as Tacita Dean asserted that the material of celluloid had a privileged relation to capturing chance occurrence in *The Green Ray*, *Untitled* mobilizes a conception of filmic specificity that has to do with a registration of duration that will allow for the materialization of contingency.

First introduced into film studies in Peter Wollen's 1969 *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, the concept of the index is drawn from the work of C.S. Peirce to designate a sign that evinces an existential connection to its referent. The index is part of a tripartite division of signs, completed by the icon, which evinces a relation of likeness to its referent, and the symbol, which possesses a relationship of convention. As a trace of the real, the index can take many forms: linguistic deixis, weathervanes, footprints, and most importantly here, the photograph. Photosensitive celluloid captures a lasting trace of a fleeting moment of light that will always point back to that initial moment of registration. In this way, the filmic index condenses a particular constellation of the

transitory, the contingent, and the passing of time. Wollen mobilizes the concept as a part of a reading of Bazin that insists that his notion of cinematic realism must be disentangled from verisimilitude, stating that Bazinian realism “had little to do with mimesis...it was the existential bond...which counted for most in Bazin’s aesthetic, rather than any quality of similitude or resemblance.”⁵¹ Bazin himself makes this clear in his comparison of painting and photography in “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”: he insists that the crucial distinction lies not in “the perfecting of a physical process,” but in “a psychological fact...The solution is not to be found in the result achieved but in the way of achieving it.”⁵²

Indexicality, then, is not a matter of duplicating the visible world, but of a certain relation to the spectator borne from his or her knowledge of the image’s method of production. As such, while all photographic cinema is the result of such a method, certain films can be seen to exploit the spectator’s knowledge of this process more than others. Accordingly, Wollen sees the cinematic image as a mixture of index, icon, and symbol, with these three aspects occurring in varying balances across different film styles. If Roberto Rossellini’s *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945) is a film that exploits the indexicality of the photographic image, Josef von Sternberg’s *The Devil is a Woman* (1935) emphasizes iconicity, while Eisenstein’s *October* (*Oktyabr*, 1928) focuses on its symbolic value. Consonant with Bazin, Wollen acknowledges that film’s indexical base is always present, but may be called upon by particular film styles as more or less essential. If post-war cinema mobilized indexicality as central to the discourse of revelation surrounding Italian neorealism that sought spiritual reawakening after the horror and destruction of World War Two, contemporary gallery film calls on it to mark out the preciousness of analogue film, its privilege over and above the “seamlessness”

⁵¹ Peter Wollen, “The Semiology of the Cinema,” *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 133-134

⁵² Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” 12

and “deadness” of digital time.⁵³ These films appeal to the semiotic status of celluloid base as a part of constructing an affective relationship to the spectator grounded in the melancholy of lost time and an awareness of finitude.

Recently, the concept of the index has been taken up, often yoked to Barthes’ discussion of the *punctum* in *Camera Lucida*, as a site of intense cathexis and cinephilia. This can be seen as the development of a theory of spectatorship out of what Bazin called the “psychological fact” of the viewer’s knowledge of how the image was produced and what affective investments result from it. In the first part of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes names the contingent detail that “pricks” the viewer the *punctum*. Opposed to the *studium*, which encompasses all the readable elements of the image, the *punctum* is seen to be a wound that disturbs the surface of the image, possessing a power of expansion. “It is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pieces me.”⁵⁴ The *punctum* is intimately linked to chance—it is described by Barthes as “a cast of the dice”—and is entirely subjective.

When Barthes reaches the end of the first part of *Camera Lucida*, he realizes that he has not gone far enough. It is by delving further into himself, further into his own affective life, that in the second part of his meditation he advances a second kind of *punctum*. It is more fundamental than the first, which it encompasses: it is Time itself. This *punctum* involves the catastrophic recognition of death, a reckoning with finitude that is present in every photograph.⁵⁵ Like Bazin, Barthes emphasizes that the testimony of the photograph “bears not on the object but on time. From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation.”⁵⁶ Once again, it is a matter of the affect resulting from the temporal

⁵³ Dean, “Artist Questionnaire: 21 Responses,” 26

⁵⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 96

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89

specificity of image production rather than any mimetic value (in Barthes' words, "authentication" rather than "representation"). It is an empty pointing that at once gestures back to the moment of inscription, but also forward to impending death, thereby situating the present moment as transitory, as ephemeral.

Miriam Hansen's re-evaluation of Kracauer's American writings in her introduction to *Theory of Film*, Paul Willemsen's "Through a Glass Darkly," Laura Mulvey's *Death 24 Times a Second*, and Christian Keathley's *Cinephilia, or the Wind in the Trees* all participate in the contemporary interest in the index as linked to medium specificity, spectatorial desire, and death in a manner that might be read as drawing on both Bazin and Barthes and as symptomatic of a certain anxiety surrounding the increasing dominance of the digital.⁵⁷ Described by Thomas Elsaesser as a "semiotic conundrum,"⁵⁸ the concept of indexicality is marked by disagreement and misunderstanding. A constant danger is the confusion of indexicality and iconicity: it is important, as Doane advises in "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," and as is present in Barthes, Bazin, and Wollen, to disentangle the two and to recognize that the indexical sign is a pointing to the real rather than any guarantee of verisimilitude.⁵⁹ This pointing can be seen as a kind of trace of the real, its spectral haunting. Thus, far from providing a theoretical buttress for a belief in the unmediated presence of the image, the notion of indexicality possesses a profound relation to absence and loss, qualities that mark the palpable melancholy of Barthes' *Camera Lucida*—perhaps the greatest formulation of the pathos of indexicality—but also films such as *The*

⁵⁷ See: Miriam Hansen, "Introduction" in Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), vii-lvi; Keathley, *op. cit.*; Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006); Paul Willemsen, "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered," *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 223-257

⁵⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, "Digital Cinema: Delivery, Event, Time," *Cain, Abel, or Cable? The Screen Arts in the Digital Age*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Kay Hoffmann (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 203

⁵⁹ Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," 133

Green Ray and *Untitled*. Here, the index defeats the dream of presence by pointing to something that was but is no longer, persisting only as a remnant, a trace.

Tom Gunning has vociferously questioned the usefulness of this category given that digital media can also be seen to have a connection to their referent, however mediated.⁶⁰ Gunning uses historical inquiry to question the truth value that has been retroactively assigned to photography relative to the ungroundedness of the digital, arguing not only that photographs have never been trustworthy, but also that the ontology of photography is to be found as much in its magical and uncanny attributes as it is in its existential bond to its referent.⁶¹ However, arguing for the presence of magic in photographic ontology does not diminish its ability to simultaneously function as a heavily cathected technology that would render time back unto the subject, just as Jonathan Crary's location of photographic specificity in the capacity for reproduction and circulation does not disable an understanding of photography's indexicality as bringing attributes of uniqueness and singularity.⁶² In fact, the magical and uncanny attributes of photography are by no means opposed to indexicality, which itself has resonances with ghostliness and the uncanny.

Moreover, even if, historically speaking, photography's truth claims have always been questionable, the contemporary desires invested in the revelatory capacities of the medium must be taken seriously as symptomatic of the current state of technological change and interrogated in order to yield insight into the implications they have for understanding contemporary employments of celluloid in the gallery. Dismissing them as factually erroneous does not reduce their affective resonance, as they participate in a fetishistic regime of belief rather than knowledge. The concept of disavowal has a long

⁶⁰ Gunning, "Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality," 29-30

⁶¹ Tom Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theatre, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny," *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, ed. Patrice Petro (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 42-71

⁶² Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 13

history in film theory, invoked in the 1970s as a way of conceptualizing the spectator's willingness to suspend disbelief and invest in the illusion of reality.⁶³ Now, however, the complex machinations of disavowal structure a quasi-mystical investment in the powers of the photographic image: "I know very well (that photographs have always been doctored and the digital can also tell the truth), but all the same (I am drawn to photographs, for the force of time present within them, I can't explain it, it just *feels different*)..." A knowledge of how the image is produced forms the ground of a complex structure of disavowal and belief that must be taken seriously and understood historically.

For Doane, indexicality is a profoundly historical category that designates "the promise of the rematerialization of time"—an intense desire provoked in part by the abstraction of the subject's relation to time following the standardizing processes of industrial modernity.⁶⁴ If the late nineteenth century witnessed a profound reconfiguration of the subject's relationship to time, the emergence of networked electronic communications in the 1990s and 2000s may be seen as another such shift. Paul Virilio hyperbolically speaks of the "globalization of time, more precisely, the advent of universal, REAL TIME that has recently abolished the primacy of local time," while Geert Lovink quotes Jean Baudrillard as proclaiming that "Time itself, lived time, no longer has time to take place," and continues to explain that, "In this pathology of postmodernity, the Internet is no doubt the epiphany of the real-time power."⁶⁵

⁶³ For the canonical formulation of this operation, see: Christian Metz, "Disavowal, Fetishism," *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1977), 69-78

⁶⁴ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 10

⁶⁵ Lovink does, however, temper such rhetoric by emphasizing that one must not forget the "networking" of networking and replace the lived experience of digital media with "disgust for the perfect simulacrum." See: Jean Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Berg, 2005), 30; Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 127-128; Paul Virilio, "The Visual Crash," trans. Bernard G. Prusak, *CTRL [space]: Rhetorics of*

Electronic media allow for an asymptotic approach to the simultaneous, linking disparate spaces across global networks in the perpetual present of online communication. Data is encoded in a regularized series of ones and zeros very different from the photograph's enigmatic status as a "message without a code."⁶⁶ In relation to such present-tense mapping, it is understandable that the cinema's alignment with the archivization of traces of pastness and of chance events will be seized upon as central to its medium specificity, for it offers a temporal regime and a system of signification at once older and different.

Though the ubiquity of new media dreams of being everywhere at once, all of the time (a desire driving the narrative of contemporary techno-thrillers such as *The Bourne Ultimatum* [2007]), and might be able to capture amateur footage of an event even before the arrival of news crews, the promise of cinema is a promise of historicity. It is a pact to bear witness to the haunting of the present by the past. As Philip Rosen has written, "The indexical trace is a matter of pastness. This already makes it appear that the image is in some way 'historical.'"⁶⁷ Similarly, in *The Virtual Life of Film*, D.N. Rodowick describes his book as circling around a question asked by Babette Mangolte not unlike the sentiment voiced by Tacita Dean in the epigraph to this chapter: "Why is it so difficult for a digital image to communicate duration?"⁶⁸ Rodowick fastens onto the idea of "automatic analogical causation" to emphasize that the transcriptive function of photography trumps any ability it might have to produce a spatial likeness—that is, index trumps icon—and sees film's photographic base as creating a record of duration in a manner that cannot be duplicated by the digital.

Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother, ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Wiebel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 108

⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 19

⁶⁷ Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 20

⁶⁸ Rodowick, 53

As such, discourses that attempt to minimize the analogue-digital difference through a rhetoric of perceptual realism are misguided since they wrongly assume that the most important power of photography is that of spatial semblance.⁶⁹ Rodowick admits that digital images do maintain a certain testimonial (read, indexical) value, but emphasizes that the operations of calculation and programmability impart a different tense to the image, powerfully impacting the spectator's affective relation to it. The photographic image is present to the viewer all at once, presenting a continuous slice of duration,⁷⁰ while the digital image is self-differing, "being constantly reconstituted, scanned, or refreshed."⁷¹ It is not just the power of the index, but the power of the index coupled with a relation to the past that accounts for the specificity of the film image. For Doane, this is a matter of distinguishing between two orders of the index: the trace and deixis.⁷² If analogue film provides an indexical trace, imbued with historicity, one might say that the indexical power of digital media is linked to the present tense pointing of "here!" and "now!" Both point to their respective referents, but the temporal and affective implications are radically different.

The question of spectatorial affect is central here. Just as Tacita Dean saw *The Green Ray* as being about faith and belief in what one sees, it must be underlined that though the category of indexicality is used to designate a particular regime of the sign linked to the materiality of celluloid, its mobilization cannot be confined to this material

⁶⁹ One representative of this tendency is Stephen Prince, who, in his "True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images and Film Theory," argues that realism should be considered a matter of perception rather than reference and explicitly ties the idea of realism as concerned with reference as linked to indexicality, thus partaking of the tendency to conflate the iconic with the indexical. Rodowick's argument has nothing to do with realism, but with referentiality and the temporality of the image, thus aligning it with an understanding of indexicality closer to Peirce. See: Stephen Prince, "True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images and Film Theory," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Spring 1996), 27-37; Rodowick, 103

⁷⁰ Rodowick, like Deleuze, makes the crucial caveat here that he is speaking specifically about the filmophanic: drawn from Etienne Souriau, this term designates the film as seen by the spectator rather than referring to its existence on the filmstrip, which obviously is marked by the discontinuity of individual photograms. See: Rodowick, 17

⁷¹ Ibid., 137

⁷² Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 219

level alone. For, following Bazin and Barthes, the index must be emphasized as linked to the automatic registration of the photographic image, certainly, but it must also be understood as a certain relation to the spectator bound up in time, desire, and finitude. As Heidegger suggested, “The essence of technology is nothing technological,” meaning that technologies cannot be understood in terms of their functionality but must instead be understood in terms of their culturally produced meanings and usages.⁷³ In sum, the index is a matter of discourse as much as of the mute registration of the real. It is the *pathos* of the index, the affect of the trace that is now summoned by the film image. Cinema’s specificity once lay in the illusory presence of the objects onscreen, perhaps most embodied in the apocryphal story of credulous early spectators recoiling at the oncoming train.⁷⁴ Now, however, one witnesses a shift—from presence to absence, from life to death. Tombstones populate the visual field of *Untitled*, but the film’s eerie stillness equally lends the work a sense of mortification. The film’s taciturnity directs attention back onto the conditions of viewing, inducing a reflection on mortality. Not just the temporality of the image, but the apparatus itself contributes here to the sense of the stubborn resistances of the past, the persistent fascination of the ruin. Becoming quiet, becoming venerated, 35mm film is employed here as a reminder of novelty grown old and evinces the sadness of acknowledging that all that once was modern will tempered by time’s senescence.

In the 16mm film *For Bas Oudt* (*Voor Bas Oudt*, 1996), de Rijke and de Rooij train their camera on the quivering wings of a butterfly in a Dutch zoo for ninety seconds before ending abruptly, dedicating the result to Bas Oudt, their former teacher at the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam. Shot with a boroscope, a lens possessing powers of

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 4

⁷⁴ For an investigation into the mythology of this founding moment, see: Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator,” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, Fifth Edition*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 818-832

extreme magnification usually used for scientific purposes, the film captures a fleeting moment that Vanessa Joan Müller has linked to *vanitas*, a genre of Northern European still-life painting with a strong relation to death. Latin for “nothingness,” *vanitas* is related to the transitory and the lack of meaning in earthly life. Traditionally, a *vanitas* painting would depict objects such as rotting fruit, drooping flower petals, skulls, or watches—all of which testify to the impermanence of things. Müller writes, “The butterfly is reminiscent of the impossibility of eternity and of eternal entropy. It celebrates the transitory moment and also reflects in this transitoriness the passing time documented by the shortness of the film.”⁷⁵ Thus, the film both archives the passing moment and insists that it has been lost forever, now available only as a flickering spectre. The filmic image takes over from the *vanitas* genre as the *memento mori* of modernity. The thematics of ephemerality and loss are here mobilized at the level of form and content, making the deceptively modest *Voor Bas Oudt* into a powerful meditation on both the materiality of film and the passing of time.

In the films of de Rijke and de Rooij, one finds a relation to temporality and to history that stands against a notion of easy image consumption and the delivery of information able to be apprehended in an instant. Any security of interpretation is undone. The butterfly of *For Bas Oudt* passes by too quickly, while the graveyard image of *Untitled* lasts and last but never yields to the viewer’s gaze. De Rijke and de Rooij have described the contemporary situation of image consumption and easily given meanings with vitriol: “Images are being used as garbage. People don’t even look at them... It is also our task to protect the images we make from over-exposure, and our public from their self-imposed visual bulimia.”⁷⁶ While one might question the self-imposition of this

⁷⁵ Vanessa Joan Müller, “Forever and a Day,” *Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij: After the Hunt*, ed. Veit Loers, Nicolaus Schafhausen, and Caroline Schneider (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2000), 50

⁷⁶ Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij, quoted in: Nicolaus Schafhausen, “Interview with de Rijke/de Rooij: If Only All Rooms Would So Clearly Fulfil Their Purpose,” *Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij: After*

bulimia, the point is well taken. Once the province of shock and distraction, once aligned with the speed of the modern city, here cinema is mobilized as a site of aesthetic contemplation. If Barthes saw cinema as rushing by too fast, as lacking the “engorgement” of time one finds in photography, one must see the slowness of a film like *Untitled* as rendering unto cinema something of the contemplative temporality of stillness Barthes prizes so much in photography,⁷⁷ a strategy that is compounded by the strict regulations de Rijke and de Rooij impose for the screening of their films.

Unlike most moving-image gallery work, the duo insists that their films be exhibited in custom-designed spaces at particular screening times. The projector is enclosed in a soundproof booth and any potential distraction is minimized. Describing these rooms as “minimal sculptures,”⁷⁸ de Rijke and de Rooij are interested in the vacancy resulting from the span of time between projections, when the room will be white and empty. In a visual culture—both inside the gallery and out—that is predicated on the perpetual availability of images, this withholding is crucial. With screening times posted outside of the room, the viewer is expected to sit, wait for the film to start, and stay until its end. T.J. Clark has put forth that “one kind of corrective to dogma is looking itself, pursued long enough.”⁷⁹ To propose such a relationship between the duration of perception and a politics of the image is to reconfigure the maligned name of

the Hunt, ed. Veit Loers, Nicolaus Schafhausen, and Caroline Schneider (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2000), 18

⁷⁷ In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes repeatedly returns to the speed of the cinema and the sense that one may never grasp hold of its images. While this partially has to do with the fact that one may hold onto a photograph (something not possible in the cinema), it also is a matter of the frozen temporality of the photograph compared to the impression of life generated by movement in the cinema. He writes, “...in the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic referent, but this referent shifts, it does not make a claim in favour of its reality, it does not protest its former existence; it does not cling to me: it is not a *spectre*. Like the real world, the filmic world is sustained by the presumption that, as Husserl says, ‘the experience will constantly continue to flow by in the same constitutive style’; but the Photograph breaks the ‘constitutive style’ (this is its astonishment); it is *without future* (this is its pathos, its melancholy); in it, no protensity, whereas the cinema is protensive, hence in no way melancholic (what is it, then? –It is, then, simply ‘normal,’ like life).” See: Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 89-90

⁷⁸ Schafhausen, 20

⁷⁹ T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12

contemplation. If absorption was once a quality of bourgeois aesthetics to be overthrown in the name of distancing, in the contemporary media environment, its valence has changed. Through his sustained examination of Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (c.1648, National Gallery, London) and *Landscape with a Calm* (1650-51, Getty Museum, Los Angeles)—in which, interestingly enough, he also fastens onto the figure of a snake as a *memento mori*—Clark forges a chronopolitics of image consumption for the digital age, specifically around the refusal of easily apprehended meaning:

...our present means of image-production strike me as...an instrumentation of a certain kind of language use: their notions of image clarity, image flow, image depth, and image density are all determined by the parallel (unimpeded) movement of the logo, the brand name, the product slogan, the compressed pseudo-narrative of the TV commercial, the sound bite, the T-shirt confession, the chat show q. & a. Billboards, web pages, and video games are just projections—perfections, perfected banalizations—of this half-verbal exchange. They are truly (as their intellectual groupies go on claiming) a 'discourse'—read a sealed echo-chamber of lies.⁸⁰

If *Screen* theory insisted on viewing cinema as a language, the more recent turn to Peircian semiotics in theories of indexicality show what might be gained by expanding our apprehension of the cinematic image beyond a linguistic framework: a conception of the image as never exhausted by linguistic meaning and at times resistant to it.

In *Untitled*, de Rijke and de Rooij combine two temporal strategies: the exploitation of film's indexicality and an insistence on long duration. Using these two elements together, the artists engage in *kenosis*—an emptying of meaning—that questions the violence that underlies the assumption of easy understanding. By positing the possibility of unknowing through an insistence on the mute facticity of the filmic image, de Rijke and de Rooij revive a Warholian interest in obstinate stupidity within an inquiry on the vicissitudes of cross-cultural understanding and global image circulation. In his text on the neutral, Barthes has written, "[A]s we know, Nietzsche linked meaning

⁸⁰ Ibid., 176

and power: meaning (fruit of, called by interpretation) always a blow of force. → In radical terms: no solution to arrogance other than the suspension of interpretation, of meaning.”⁸¹ De Rijke and de Rooij reject the easy availability of the billboard, the commercial, and the logo in favour of a different relationship to pastness, historicity, speed, and attention. This is, however, a new place for cinema: it is a position suffused with slowness, sadness, and death. It emerges as a contestation of the frenetic montage aesthetics of contemporary mass media, using the controlled environment of the gallery against mainstream commercial filmmaking. But one might also view such usage as a quiet outcry against the politics of image consumption *within* the gallery walls, using film against the flashy overload of installation-entertainment. The artists stake out a small place for a different kind of filmmaking between the spectacular poles of mall multiplex and blockbuster exhibition.

A Little History of 16mm

“Every move a picture, every man his own movie director, every lawn a movie studio, and every home a movie theatre.” So begins the first mention of 16mm film in the *New York Times*, on 9 January 1923.⁸² Kodak introduced the gauge that year in an attempt to bolster amateur filmmaking, expanding markets from commercial exhibition to enthusiasts who would require cameras, film stock, and projectors to support their new hobby. For indeed, as Haidee Wasson remarks, though the name of 16mm may refer to the measurement of the filmstrip, “it was more accurately an expansive network of ideas and practices.”⁸³ The ideas and practices formed around this cheaper, more accessible alternative to the industry standard of 35mm stock have, throughout various

⁸¹ Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 155

⁸² “Movie Kodak Made for Individual Users,” *New York Times*, January 9 (1923), 10

⁸³ Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 46

points in its history, included not only amateur filmmaking, but also other venues of non-theatrical exhibition, such as classrooms and film societies.⁸⁴ But perhaps above all, 16mm has been the favoured gauge of experimental cinema. The smaller gauge and ease of operating the camera facilitates the sense of a personal cinema of single authorship, held against the great orchestrations of Hollywood production methods. Moreover, 16mm provided the avant-garde with an economic choice. Though by no means cheap, the format provided a viable choice for filmmakers and exhibitors working under strained financial circumstances while retaining an excellent image quality. With some exceptional employments of 8mm and 35mm,⁸⁵ despite a relative freedom from the economic considerations so central to experimental film as a mode of production, 16mm has become standard gauge for gallery filmmaking—precisely at a time when widespread fears circulate concerning its obsolescence. Given the relative freedom from financial constraints that would make 35mm production and exhibition possible, it is not impossible that 16mm is employed precisely because of its relation to obsolescence. 35mm is not in the same danger as the smaller gauge given its presence in feature-film archives and its continued hold on theatrical exhibition (though this is changing as digital projection becomes increasingly common).

In 2006, *Cinema Journal*, the publication of the Society for Film and Media Studies, published a dossier as a part of its regular “In Focus” section entitled, “The Death of 16mm?”⁸⁶ The title of these documents joins in recurring refrains concerning

⁸⁴ Wasson outlines how 16mm exhibition was crucial to the growth of film societies across the United States in the first half of the twentieth century in her chapter, “Mannered Cinema/Mobile Theatres: Film Exhibition, 16mm, and the New Audience Ideal.” See: Wasson, 32-67. It should also be emphasized that the availability of reduction prints in 16mm were crucial to the development of film studies as a discipline, as it would have been prohibitively expensive for university departments to rent and project 35mm.

⁸⁵ Foremost among such exceptions would be de Rijke and de Rooij’s employment of 35mm, as discussed above. Only three of their films have been made in 35mm—*Of Three Men* (1998), *Bantar Gebang* (2000), and *Untitled* (2001)—all of which are single ten-minute takes. The rest of their moving-image work has been completed on 16mm film.

⁸⁶ Heather Hendershot, ed. “In Focus: The Death of 16mm?” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 109-140

the death of cinema *tout court*, in the face of which it is always important to emphasize that the cinema has died many deaths in its relatively short history. The coming of sound, of colour, the advent of television, of home video, even Godard's famous declaration in *Week-end* (1967), "Fin d'histoire, fin du cinéma": all of these have heralded cinema's demise before the present crisis. Nevertheless, the contemporary situation is unprecedented, as both theatrical exhibition and the medium's material base are in jeopardy. Within experimental filmmaking and educational exhibition, once the strongholds of 16mm, the crisis is palpable.⁸⁷ At the 2008 edition of Views from the Avant-Garde, the main annual showcase for new experimental filmmaking in the United States, seventeen of the thirty-two works included in the three programmes of mixed shorts were on video.⁸⁸ Even James Benning, often deemed a purist for his refusal to show in a gallery context or issue his intensely duration-based 16mm works on DVD has suggested that his 2007 film, *R.R.*, will be the last he makes on 16mm.⁸⁹ After a roughly

⁸⁷ As Heather Hendershot describes the situation, "University and college administrators are less and less willing to fund film rentals, and on many campuses the offices in charge of providing technical support to faculty have unceremoniously tossed their 16mm projectors into dumpsters" (109). Meanwhile, the distributors that formerly supplied 16mm film rentals to such institutions, such as Kino International, have in recent years sold off much of their inventory, sometimes for only the cost of shipping or as little as \$200 per feature, according to Brown University film archivist Richard Manning. Though television shows such as *The O.C.* (2003-2007) and *Law and Order* (1990-present) are shot on Super 16mm and transferred to a digital format during postproduction, thereby keeping the number of feet processed annually from withering entirely, Dominic Angerame of Canyon Cinema, one of two primary experimental film distributors in the United States (the other being the Film-Makers Co-operative in New York City) has noted a decline in rentals over the past two years, attributing it to increasing DVD availability of canonical experimental work. Certainly, the availability of a DVD such as *By Brakhage*, a compilation of Stan Brakhage films released by the Criterion Collection in 2003 will cause a decline in rentals, but so will the choice of many contemporary experimental filmmakers to work in video. See: Heather Hendershot, "Introduction: 'Here it is! Look at it! Do you see what I see?'; In Focus: The Death of 16mm?" 109-112; Jan-Christopher Horak, "Archiving, Preserving, Screening 16mm; In Focus: The Death of 16mm," 112-118

⁸⁸ The number of seventeen works on video includes two films (Ben Rivers' *Ah Liberty!* and Fern Silva's *After Marks*, both 2008) shot on 16mm and transferred to a digital format for exhibition. Out of the remaining films, all were 16mm save for two (Pat O'Neill's *Horizontal Boundaries* and Tomonari Nishikawa's *16-18-4*, both 2008), which were in 35mm. For the entire list of programmes, curated by Mark McElhatten and Gavin Smith, see: <<http://www.filmlinc.com/nyff/program/avantgarde/avantgarde.html>>

⁸⁹ In an interview in *Cinema Scope*, Benning directly links his choice to cease work in 16mm to the obsolescence of the medium, stating, "I'm disturbed that I'm being forced out of my craft by new technologies that are developing that are getting more attention, that means there's less attention on what I've been working in. And nobody's aspiring to be a good 16mm projectionist except James Bond in Chicago, there's nobody else who even can fix them. And the labs, they make believe they still do good

twenty-five-year absence within a gallery context, artists' revival of 16mm production could simply be seen as a continuance of choices made by earlier generations of artists and experimental filmmakers. But more importantly, it must be seen anew in the light of obsolescence. If the use of 35mm as a standard gauge depends on industry policy and the needs of commercial filmmaking, 16mm involves other forces, other institutions. As it has historically been affiliated with marginal cinemas, it is no surprise that now, as celluloid-based filmmaking becomes increasingly rare, 16mm will be summoned in the effort to construct an othered cinema, small and aged.

Serge Daney has eloquently stated that, "Defunct as an industry, cinema will once more become an artisanal art, poor or affluent, and will talk of everything that remains in frame once the compressing rollers of mediated communication have gone by."⁹⁰ Daney posits a timeline of filmmaking that links together the birth of cinema with the present moment of its decline, leaving the years of its hegemony to stand in the middle as a "great divide."⁹¹ While, as stated above, 16mm was not invented until 1923—well into the industrialization of cinema—its affiliation with an artisanal mode of production makes it a favoured material support for this return to the modest origins of the medium. This is exemplified by the 16mm work of Matthew Buckingham, who uses the medium to

work but they don't pay attention to it at all." James Benning, quoted in: Mark Peranson, "Trainspotting with James Benning," *Cinema Scope*, issue 34 (Spring 2008); available online: <http://www.cinema-scope.com/cs34/int_peranson_benning.html>. Benning had previously threatened to cease work in 16mm: "When I finish *casting a glance* [made one year before *R.R.*]...I plan to buy a DVD camera and start a new career. No more 16mm filmmaking: the lab work is too stressful, and projection is getting worse than terrible. I'm going to make small DVD works and only show them to friends."). Though Benning continued to work on 16mm after *casting a glance*, the release of 2009's *Ruhr* on HD video suggests that *R.R.* might indeed be a turning point. James Benning, quoted in: Scott MacDonald, "James Benning's *13 LAKES* and *TEN SKIES*, and the Culture of Distraction," *James Benning*, ed. Barbara Pichler and Claudia Slanar (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum and SYNEMA—Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2007), 218

⁹⁰ Serge Daney, *Le Salaire du zappeur* (Paris, Editions Ramsay, 1988), 251; translation mine.

⁹¹ The reference here is to Andreas Huyssen, who posits modernism as a "great divide" between the avant-garde and postmodernism, which both (unlike modernism) take up the relationship between art and mass culture. The term also refers to Huyssen's notion that the postmodern is an overcoming of the "great divide" of high and low art, resurrecting the possibility of combining the avant-garde and mass culture in a manner that would not neutralize the former, but would rather reignite hopes that a new relation between the aesthetic and everyday life might be possible. See: Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

interrogate micro-histories of modernity, including that of the cinema. Beginning with *Amos Fortune Road* (1996), in which Buckingham moves between the present of a young woman's summer in New Hampshire and the enduring past of slavery, the artist marks out an interest that unifies his broad body of work: he encounters traces left by the past and narrativizes them according to the exigencies of the present. Installations such as *Subcutaneous* (2001) and *Muhheakantuck: Everything Has a Name* (2003) use film in conjunction with an interest in the "little history": the micro-narratives that get left out of the official story, the fragmentary slices of the past that persist into the present in the form of heavily cathected traces.

The notion of the "little history" is equally a reference to Walter Benjamin's 1931 text, "Little History of Photography."⁹² Here, Benjamin returns to the beginnings of photography, looking at long-exposure portraiture to attempt to understand the fascination of the medium prior to its large-scale industrialization. It is here that Benjamin brings together a certain notion of historiography with the proposition of the "optical unconscious," a term used to designate the new realms of visibility opened by the camera. The historiographic impulse of the "Little History" is to return to a moment in the past in an effort to recover the utopian potential that was held therein but dissipated by the passage of time. This unsettles any notion of historical necessity, reintroducing the centrality of contingency and posing the possibility of alternate, unfulfilled futures—but it also imparts a sense of finitude and the horror of time's impassive march. This constellation of hope and death, history and subjectivity—glimpsed everywhere throughout the writer's oeuvre—accounts for the importance of photography.

⁹² Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. *Selected Writings, Volume Two, Part Two: 1931-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 507-530

Benjamin posits a homology between what he views as the historiographical imperative and the medium-specific characteristics of photography, with contingency emerging as a category vital to both. The advent of technological media, while compromising tradition and taking part in the dissolution of *Erfahrung*, or long experience, also provided a new opportunity to interrogate the past and negotiate the relationship between subjectivity and modernity. Discussing a photo taken by Karl Dauthendey of himself and his fiancée, Benjamin remarks that in old photographs,

the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.⁹³

This tiny spark of contingency—conceptualized in the preceding section according to the notion of the indexical trace—is here linked to a new way of understanding history. To rediscover in the image the forgotten future so that what is found there might be put in the service of the present: this emerges as a paramount concern in two Buckingham film installations that deal explicitly with narratives of film history and with film as a medium intimately bound to historicity, *Situation Leading to a Story* (1999) and *False Future* (2007).

In *Situation Leading to a Story*, Buckingham returns to the culture of amateur filmmaking initiated by the advent of 16mm. As the viewer enters the gallery, no image is visible—a 16mm projector occupies the room and a male narrator can be heard through speakers [FIGURE 3-5]. Not the image, but its machinery: in this, the first work for which the artist specified installation instructions, the projector appears as sculptural object before the viewer is introduced to the image. While it is not divested of its utility, still functioning to emit an image, this becoming-sculpture of the projector puts forth the technology as an object of aesthetic contemplation, much like Simon Starling's *Wilhelm*

⁹³ Ibid., 510

Noack oHG (2006) and Rodney Graham's *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8* (2003) [FIGURE 6].

While Starling references the thwarted utopia where modernism and industry might meet through a Moholy-Nagy-inspired projector, Graham has described his installation as "Two obsolete technologies facing off," the projector and the typewriter.⁹⁴ In all three works, the projector remains in use but acts as more than just the material support for an artist's film. Framed by the gallery walls, it emerges from its normally hidden position in a soundproof booth to command the viewer's attention as a sculptural form in its own right, distinctly aligned with the outmoded.

In Buckingham's installation, one must leave the room and re-enter around the corner in order to gain access to the image, suggesting a process of work to find the image, a labour of access. Over jerky, hand-held black-and-white footage of a garden party from decades ago, a voice-over tells a story of finding four rolls of 16mm on the street in Manhattan. Each roll was labelled with a single word: "garden," "Peru," "garage," and "Guadalajara." The image-track of *Situation* consists of this 16mm footage, reprinted, as Buckingham's voice-over explains, so as to be able to be projected at sound speed without making the motion look jerky. Buckingham's final comment on this printing process, "Later I wondered if I'd slowed it down too much," might merely be indicative of a perfectionist's dissatisfaction, but it also invokes the eerie slowness of found-footage films like Angela Ricci Lucchi and Yervant Giankian's *From the Pole to the Equator* (*Dal polo all'equatore*, 1987) and Bill Morrison's *Decasia* (2002), which exploit optical printing as a way of instilling an increased fascination with the aged celluloid image.

Despite this commonality, *Situation Leading to a Story* must be distinguished from such works, for it not only makes use of found footage, but also directly interrogates

⁹⁴ Rodney Graham, quoted in: gallery label text, *Multiplex: Directions in Art, 1970 to Now* (21 November 2007–28 July 2008), Museum of Modern Art, New York; available online: <http://moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A25983&page_number=1&template_id=1&sort_order=1>

the processes of finding and making sense of such images of the past. As Mark Godfrey suggests in an article on Buckingham entitled “The Artist as Historian,” “It could be said that Buckingham provides a metacritique of the indulgent use of found imagery in recent art practice in *Situation*, and by taking found film as a site, relinquishes a formalist investigation for an institutional one.”⁹⁵ Whereas *Decasia* presents a kind of fantasia of the archive, with footage drawn from organizations all over the world according to formal interest, it is not just the fetishized material of celluloid that figures in *Situation* (although this is very much at play). Rather, one witnesses an investigation into the different uses and functions of 16mm film throughout its history and the particular challenges that this body of images poses today. The artist plays archivist-detective with this footage: he dates it according to the codes found along the edges of the filmstrip (a practice Kodak instated in 1916), grapples with the onset of vinegar syndrome, and attempts to find its owner based on the name and address on the box that contained the reels.

The particular “situation” of an artist finding discarded film leads to a “story,” or to be more precise, to many stories. For throughout the twenty minutes of the film, Buckingham weaves a polyphony of voices and temporalities that crisscross modalities of discourse from histories of exploitation, to film preservation, the detective story, and the poetic meditation—none of which engage what has emerged as the “official” history of cinema. No studios, no stars, no auteurs. The film labelled “Peru” documents the construction of a tramway in the Andes Mountains. This leads Buckingham to relate the story of how the Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation (CPC), owned by a group of New York industrialists, polluted and devalued the land in its 1912 consolidation of a monopoly over mining in Peru. In the years that followed, the CPC entered into a series of clashes with revolutionary governments, striking workers, and American anti-trust

⁹⁵ Mark Godfrey, “The Artist as Historian,” *October*, no. 120 (Spring 2007), 161

laws that led to the eventual nationalization of the corporation in 1972, when it was purchased from its American owners at a price overvalued for mines that had nearly been sucked dry. This story stands next to information about the introduction of the 16mm camera, which we learn was first available only as a package including tripod, screen, splicer, and projector, appearing only five years before Ford's Model T car and costing only seventy dollars less. As the voice-over states,

Despite the relatively high price, there were 500,000 home-movie makers in the United States six years after the camera was introduced. As a guide and inspiration to these new hobbyists Kodak published a book titled *How to Make Good Movies*...The book also advises the reader to "make your movie camera the family historian," and later makes this enigmatic warning to filmmakers: "your movie camera exists to preserve life, not to destroy it."

"To preserve life, not to destroy it." While the second clause of this sentence is rather enigmatic, indeed, film's mandate to preservation emerges as central to *Situation Leading to a Story*, spanning across public and private domains so as to archive instances of colonial exploitation alongside the leisure time of the bourgeoisie. The preservation of life—not the creation of fictional spectacle—is here put forth as the forgotten vocation of film, echoing Jean-Luc Godard's contention in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1989-1998) that the cinema betrayed itself by turning away from its ability to document the world and towards stories of a girl and a gun.

In *Situation Leading to a Story*, the voice-over posits that this mandate is explicitly in conflict with narrative:

Narrative is a chain of events in cause and effect relationship occurring in time and space. The plot of a narrative is selected from the events of a story, which, in turn, have been selected from experience, ordering time and erasing contingency. But in home movies a minute is really a minute, there is no condensation or ordering of time, no selection of plot from story, just a few hyper-quotidian moments, banal activities performed only because there is a camera there recording them.

Buckingham seconds Doane's assertion that while the early cinema allowed for "the ceaseless production of meaning *out of* contingency," with the development of narrative,

cinematic time is “troped,” made plastic by the development of editing, and subverted to the needs of the storytelling.⁹⁶ Amateur filmmaking provides, for Buckingham, a place to excavate the persistence of an earlier temporal economy that had not yet abolished the time of the apparatus with that of the diegesis.

Situation Leading to a Story excavates how this archive of past contingencies enters into relations with the present moment. The voice-over mediates the viewer’s experience of these images in the light of the present condition of 16mm film and the historical distance of the moment of recording. There is an interrogation of the impossible desire to recover the moment of inscription, when trace and referent would be united in an experience of presence. This recalls archivist Paolo Cherchi Usai’s notion of the “Model Image,” a theoretical fiction that posits the image at the moment of creation.⁹⁷ Usai’s description of the task of film history with regard to this Model Image might very well be that of *Situation Leading to a Story*:

The ultimate goal of film history is an account of its own disappearance or its transformation into another entity. In such a case, a narrating presence has the prerogative of resorting to the imagination to describe the phases leading from the hypothetical Model Image to the complete oblivion of what the moving image once represented.⁹⁸

Stumbling on this footage on a street corner, Buckingham must reconstitute its history through narrativization and imagination, so as to telescope “then” and “now” to produce an alternative film history. Buckingham playfully uses the French *maintenant* to describe the fantasy of recovering the moment of inscription, for it links the category of the “now” to the hand of the camera operator. As the voice-over states, *maintenant* is

⁹⁶ Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 181-189. True to this formulation but with a very different agenda and approach, David Bordwell writes that, “Time in the classical film is a vehicle for causality, not a process to be investigated on its own,” and like Doane, designates the device of crosscutting as central to this temporal economy. See: David Bordwell, “Time in the Classical Film,” David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 47

⁹⁷ Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 67

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89

“derived from the Latin *manutenere*, to support or sustain, which in turn comes from *manus*, or hand, and *tenere*, to hold. *Maintenant*: to hold in the hand, hand-held.” The hand holding the camera becomes a metonymy for the body present before the event. The desire for presence but the simultaneous acknowledgement its achievement would require reversing the passage of time—an impossibility—is what suffuses the film image with its particular commingling of desire and melancholy. When not transported into the otherworldly fantasies of narrative film, the viewer remains caught between this desire for the rematerialization of the past and his or her firm emplacement in the present, ever fleeing into the future, farther and farther away from the distant event captured on film. There is no illusion of presence, but merely a lingering trace.

As if to compensate for not being able to recover the moment of registration, Buckingham instead seeks to find the man whose name was written on the box of film. Since he cannot unearth the filming body, the *main/tenant*, the hand that held in the now, perhaps he can at least recover the *main jettant*, the hand that threw the film away, and somehow take account of the time of the film’s oblivion. After finally tracking down one Mr. Harrison Dennis through a quest spanning from New York City to Ossining, the narrator calls the man on the telephone only to find that Mr. Dennis doesn’t remember throwing away any reels of film. The narrator wishes to describe the films to him, to tell the story of where he found them and how he tracked down their possible owner—in short, to describe the situation that led to this story by communing over the collective memory found in these reels, the stories dormant in the moss of time that has grown over these images. But Mr. Dennis has no interest and is eager to get off of the phone, bringing the detective story of ownership that runs throughout *Situation Leading to a Story* to a conclusion.

It is, however, a conclusion that lacks fulfilment. Tacita Dean has written in a Bazinian manner that *Situation Leading to a Story* “is about revelation: revealing the

intimacies of the anonymous other.”⁹⁹ However, one must note that, just as with de Rijke and de Rooij’s *Untitled*, there is an acknowledgment that this revelation both will and will not take place. Yes, film will grant access to the past, reveal the visible; but it will never fully render it present, always imbuing it with a certain spectrality, tempering the pleasure of resurrection with the ache of loss. In this context, another remark of Dean’s is perhaps more apposite than the one she addresses specifically to *Situation*:

“Obsolescence has an aura: the aura of redundancy and failure.”¹⁰⁰ While the notion of aura will be reprised in the following pages, one must see Buckingham’s exploration of the history of 16mm as an attempt to engage such failed futures so as to ignite new hope while simultaneously giving rein to the sadness of disappearance. Redundancy and failure are here not cast away, but cultivated and mined for their generative potential.

In this way, Buckingham recalls Walter Benjamin’s ambivalence around the Dauthendey portrait as well as his assertion that the pathos of his *Arcades Project* is that “there are no periods of decline.”¹⁰¹ To reject the notion of decline is to refuse a teleological conception of history as a narrative of progress, to dislodge the sense that the present that exists is the only one that could be, and therefore to reintroduce the centrality of historical contingency. For, if Guy Debord wrote that, “It is a particular society, not a particular technology that has made cinema what it is. Cinema could have been historical analyses, theories, essays, memories,”¹⁰² Buckingham responds that yes—cinema could have been all of these things. But in the margins, it might have been so all along. And with some effort, perhaps it still might be.

Buckingham has publicly discussed his interest in Benjamin:

⁹⁹ Tacita Dean, “Historical Fiction,” *Artforum* (March 2004), 150

¹⁰⁰ Dean, “Artist Questionnaire: 21 Responses,” 26

¹⁰¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 458

¹⁰² Guy Debord, “In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni (1978),” *Guy Debord, Complete Cinematic Works: Scripts, Stills, Documents*, trans. and ed. Ken Knabb (Oakland: AK Press, 2003), 145-146; translation modified

There's a notion that can be found in Walter Benjamin's writing that is central to what I try to work with. Benjamin describes the vanishing point of history as always being the present moment. This formulation of history—thinking about the present moment as the point where history vanishes—is a way of reversing the received notion of history as vanishing somewhere behind us, vanishing into a nonexistent time, a time that no longer exists...We are restaging those events here and now in order to think about what's happening here and now, to think about the present.¹⁰³

This impulse is particularly evident in Buckingham's 2007 installation, *False Future*.

Here, the artist explores the story of a man named Louis who invented cinema. But no, not *that* Louis, brother of Auguste, but instead a little-known pioneer named Louis Le Prince who managed a panorama company before trying his hand at the creation of moving images some five years before the Lumières. He produced at least three films, each eight seconds long, before mysteriously disappearing on a train leaving Dijon bound for Paris in 1890. Some suspected Edison. As Tom Gunning has said of this film, "Thus, the history of cinema opens with a magic trick (or a mystery story) that it would replay for decades, from Méliès to Hitchcock to Antonioni: sudden disappearance."¹⁰⁴ But, like the disappearances of *Amos Fortune Road* and *Situation Leading to a Story*, here once again Buckingham insists on the story of a person disappearing *with* a trace. For even if Le Prince was never found, he left behind his films, one of which is remade by Buckingham to form the image-track of *False Future* [FIGURES 7-8]. As the subtitled French voice-over relates, out of the 129 frames that originally comprised Le Prince's view of the Leeds Bridge in Leeds, England, only twenty survive—roughly one second of projected film. Since the position Le Prince occupied for the shooting of this film has since been turned into luxury condominiums, Buckingham shot his film from one floor

¹⁰³ Matthew Buckingham, quoted in: Godfrey, 147

¹⁰⁴ Tom Gunning, "Le Prince/Buckingham: Vanishing Act and Eternal Return, or Hide and Seek?" *Matthew Buckingham: Play the Story, Volume 3: False Future* (London: Camden Arts Centre, 2007), 27

below, stating, “I didn’t want to recreate the *Le Prince* film, but instead set up a situation where I would be recording contingencies in the way that he did.”¹⁰⁵

Instead of the great showing at the Salon Indien by the Lumières in 1895, here we learn of a false start of cinema, a beginning that wasn’t. The title comes from the French verb tense the “faux futur,” used in historical narration to anticipate the events of the past as if they were yet to occur.¹⁰⁶ This is a false future for it returns the listener to a present of the past to look forward to a future that has in fact already been played out and is hence no longer a true future. Much like the desire in *Situation* to return to the present of inscription, here too Buckingham investigates the affects of historicity. Buckingham returns to the birth of cinema not as an easy return to origins but as an attempt to show the difficulty of easily determining such origins and to consider the ways in which the history of cinema might have gone differently, to remember something of the great potential the medium held at its beginnings. What would have been? What might have been if the history of cinema had begun differently? Begun earlier?

The voice-over questions,

If *Le Prince* had survived, filmmaking might have begun five years before it did. In those five years what moving images might have been made? Which ones would have been preserved? Would we now be able to see motion pictures of the court-martial of Captain Dreyfus, or of the U.S. overthrow of indigenous rule in Hawaii? The Elephant Man’s funeral? The massacre of the Lakota at Wounded Knee? Or nine inches of snow falling on the city of New Orleans in February 1895? But perhaps there are other ways to think of what might have been.

False Future is this other way. Buckingham suggests that it is not so much the capturing

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Buckingham, quoted in: “A Conversation between Matthew Buckingham and Mark Godfrey, New York City and London, February 2007,” *Matthew Buckingham: Play the Story, Volume 1: Play the Story* (London: Camden Arts Centre, 2007), 13

¹⁰⁶ This tense is also called the *futur antérieur de rétrospection/de bilan*, or the future anterior of retrospection or assessment, since it involves passing judgment on an event in the present of the past with knowledge of future developments. An example of this tense would be “C’était un homme qui n’aura jamais été puni pour ses crimes,” roughly translatable as “This was a man who was never to be punished for his crimes.” The relationship here to that which “will have been” has striking parallels to Barthes’ discussion of photography in *Camera Lucida*, where he aligns the tense of the photograph with the future anterior. He writes that in the photograph, “I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future.” See: Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96

of landmark historical events that is important, but rather the registration of the banal, the quotidian. After opening the possibility of thinking about the historical function of moving images differently, the voice-over describes in detail the extant fragment of Le Prince's film of the Leeds Bridge. We receive a kind of inventory of occurrences: "These twenty frames show six horse-drawn vehicles travelling in opposite directions. One wagon is loaded with enormous bundles. Others carry passengers. On the far side of the street fifteen people pass each other on the sidewalk. One disappears around a corner. Two men cross the middle of the street diagonally," and so on, and so on. One can count and one can list, but this ekphrasis will never exhaust the image, nor will it ever approximate its fascination, for it lacks its power of deathly resurrection. The excessiveness of description here is an inscription of failure. But just like the failure glimpsed at the end of *Situation Leading to a Story*, this failure is paradoxically generative: it testifies to the specificity of cinema. It is what cannot be spoken by such description, by the *studium*, that accounts for the desires and anxieties invested in the film image.

False Future is a re-opening of possibilities that had been closed down, a re-activation of a mode of filmmaking dependent on the registration of contingency over time. Even the installation specifications of the piece speak to Buckingham's desire to return to this other origin in the hope of setting in motion another future. The film is projected onto a large white sheet, which the voice-over tells us was the memory Le Prince's daughter had of briefly glimpsing his working quarters before being ushered out. The gallery is turned into a space of experimentation and labour from the late nineteenth century, setting up a laboratory of image-making that bypasses the stability of the movie theatre, most often thought of as the site of cinema. *False Future* is a resurrection of hope and possibility at a time of tremendous anxiety over what will happen to the medium in the years to come, releasing a utopian hope for celluloid film as it faces

obsolescence.

Ruinophilia

Linking together a discussion of medium specificity with obsolescence and the work of Walter Benjamin inevitably invokes Rosalind Krauss' triangulation of such topoi near the end of "*A Voyage on the North Sea*." As Krauss puts it,

That the cynical element gains the upper hand over the course of time goes without saying. But Benjamin believes that at the birth of a given social form or technological process the utopian dimension was present and, furthermore, that it is precisely at the moment of obsolescence of that technology that it once more releases this dimension, like the last gleam of a dying star. For obsolescence, the very law of commodity production, both frees the outmoded object from the grip of utility and reveals the hollow promise of that law.¹⁰⁷

The entirety of Benjamin's *Arcades Project* involves an investigation of the material culture of nineteenth-century Paris, an era vanishing by the time Benjamin began writing. It is through an examination of the detritus of capitalism that Benjamin would probe the debris of history and bring it into contact with the present, where it could attain legibility in the now-time [*Jetztzeit*] of recognizability. In this sense, Benjamin's historiography manifests a great likeness to Baudelaire's description of the ragpicker, cited in the former's essay, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire":

Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously; he collects, like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaw of the goddess of Industry.¹⁰⁸

But rather than making the found objects useful once again within the context of Industry, the ragpicker-historian embraces obsolescence as the dialectical other of

¹⁰⁷ Krauss, "*A Voyage on the North Sea*," 41

¹⁰⁸ Charles Baudelaire, quoted in: Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," trans. Harry Zohn, *Selected Writings, Volume Four: 1938-1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 48

capitalism's imperative to novelty, finding within this other side of the proverbial coin the possibility that new relationships might be illuminated and the profane redeemed.

This understanding of obsolescence is in many ways the primary theoretical grounding of Krauss' call to "re-invent the medium," perhaps the dominant way of considering medium specificity in contemporary art theory. This return to medium specificity emerges against the backdrop of the rise of installation art throughout the 1980s and 1990s, which, as noted above, Krauss sees as a disturbing transformation of the post-medium condition. The critique of the medium moves from an indictment of modernist essentialism to an uncritical indulgence in late capitalist fragmentation. What is most at stake for Krauss in this return to the medium is the generation of recursive structures, wherein certain elements of the work engender rules that will govern the structure of that work. By "recursive," Krauss refers to a circular structure, whereby the work refers back to itself in a reflexive manner, and then makes use particular conventions and limitations of the medium to generate parameters that will dictate the form of the work.

Following Theodor Adorno much more than his dear friend Benjamin, this notion aims at a re-invention (rather than a destruction) of autonomy as the pathway towards imagining a new and different conception of collectivity.¹⁰⁹ Here, the work is sealed off into a spiral of self-interrogation that shores it up against the onslaught of kitsch—perhaps an outdated term,¹¹⁰ but one that Krauss takes from Greenberg: "Kitsch is vicarious experience and fake sensations. Kitsch changes according to style but always remains the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Adorno's position is developed throughout his body of work, but finds especial emphasis throughout his *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

¹¹⁰ Responding to Krauss' use of the term, Yve-Alain Bois has stated, "As a concept kitsch seems very dated—it has been replaced by spectacle." See: Yve-Alain Bois, "Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art," 674

¹¹¹ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 10; quoted in: Rosalind Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," 58

As Krauss explains, “In order to sustain artistic practice, a medium must be a supporting structure, generative of a set of conventions, some of which, in assuming the medium itself as their subject, will be wholly ‘specific’ to it, thus producing an experience of their own necessity.”¹¹² This experience of necessity will not only provide a standard by which to judge the work’s excellence, but will also ensure that it forms a monad capable of resisting contamination. It is acknowledged that this unity can only be partial, or at best provisional, for the medium as it is now conceived refuses the transparent self-identity once accorded to modernist media. It cannot fully double back in a perfect self-enclosure, for it is made up of aggregate parts and is acknowledged to be self-differing. Nevertheless, it is the task of the artist to produce the greatest possible recursivity, to aim at autonomy even if it cannot fully be achieved.

The notion of reinventing the medium is explicitly linked to technological obsolescence, as it involves staking a claim on disused commodities as ground for producing a renewed autonomy of art precisely through that which once compromised it—as Krauss notes, photography was, after all, the serpent that entered the Eden of artistic autonomy.¹¹³ Now, over and above—or *because of*—a support’s anchorage in mass culture and its ties to circulation, the successfully reinvented medium withdraws a particular technology from mass culture and forges for it an aesthetic system, sublating difference and shoring itself off from the world through self-interrogation in order to fulfil what Krauss sees as the desired function—namely, a commitment to an enduring modernism.

James Coleman is the exemplary artist here, as he makes use of a slide projector and audio voice-over to produce narratives after the manner of the photo-novel. For Krauss, it is key that both the slide projector and the photo-novel “point directly to an

¹¹² Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*,” 26

¹¹³ Krauss, “Reinventing the Medium: Introduction to *Photograph*,” 186

internationalist commercialization of culture in advertising on the one hand and a degraded form of literacy on the other.”¹¹⁴ By forging self-reflexive systems out of such outmoded mass cultural forms, Coleman glimpses the utopian energy that may be released at the moment of technological obsolescence, following Benjamin’s claim regarding the redemptive powers of the disused commodity. However, Coleman’s ability to invent a medium also depends on the fact that the use of slides has “no aesthetic lineage and...is so singular as a support that to adopt it as a medium is immediately to put a kind of patent on it.”¹¹⁵ Here, one witnesses an *ex nihilo* invention of a medium, as the artist appropriates a mass cultural technology fallen into disuse to generate recursive structures and “patent” the medium outside of any historical understanding of its conventions.¹¹⁶ This seals it off not only through self-interrogation,

¹¹⁴ Krauss, “...And Then Turn Away? An Essay on James Coleman,” 162. Though, it must also be noted that the slide projector did fulfil an important function much closer to gallery than to the “internationalist commercialization of culture”—it was the main method of image dissemination in the art history classroom until the popular availability of data projectors.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 160-161

¹¹⁶ In this respect, Krauss’ reading of Coleman is very different than Raymond Bellour’s. In his article, “The Living Dead (*Living and Presumed Dead*),” Bellour sees the artist as exemplary of his concept of the *entre-image* or between-image. In a footnote to “...And Then Turn Away?” Krauss relates her view of Coleman to that of Bellour: “Stressing the liminal nature of Coleman’s medium in a manner that follows the theoretical tenor of his *L’Entre-images*—which would imply a mixed medium or possible a ‘postmedium’ view of the matter—Bellour nonetheless opens his text on *Living and Presumed Dead* with a comment highly suggestive of the direction toward which the present essay is leading, namely the ‘invention’ of a new medium” (182). While Bellour might gesture in such a direction, his concept of *entre-images* depends on fragmentation, intermediality, and the suspension of heterogeneous elements in a way that deviates significantly from Krauss’ notion of reinventing the medium. The *entre-image* designates work at the intersection of discrete media, and is, for Bellour, a question of “morality and energy”: intermediality is not just the homogenization of convergence, but also a site of possibility generated by hybridization, confrontation, and metamorphosis (9). Though he does refer to Coleman’s use of the slide projection with voice-over as his “great reinvention,” perhaps implicitly gesturing towards Krauss’ reading of the artist, Bellour insists on the unresolved “love of the heterogeneous” found in Coleman’s work and sees it as dealing with the very impossibility of closure (59 and 62). The notion of *entre-images* is mobilized here to deal with the way multiple and conflicting medium specificities function in this “interspace of the still-image projection,” never resolving itself into a unity (64). Here we have a significant divergence from Krauss’ reading of Coleman. As cited above, Krauss deems “the international fashion of installation and intermedia work” a phenomenon “in which art *essentially* finds itself complicit with a globalization of the image in the service of capital” (56, emphasis mine). How to escape such an essence? Reinvent the medium and return to modernism. For Bellour, intermedia is not inherently complicit with capital. Instead, he chooses to evaluate the strategies of individual works to see how fragmentation and reflexivity operate therein and, crucially, how they engage in re-reading the histories of the media with which they engage. What one finds here is not a return to modernist autonomy, but rather following Leo Steinberg’s suggestion in “Other Criteria,” a thinking about the medium by breaching its limits, by opening

but also through a certain ownership, as an invented medium may only be practiced by one.

Here one finds a major difference between artists investigating the specificity of film as an old medium and Krauss' notion of reinvention. Crucially, *film has an aesthetic history*, and a rich and varied one at that. Moreover, the interrogations into medium specificity one finds in gallery film concertedly take up this history. Works like *Situation Leading to a Story* and *False Future* interrogate alternative film histories. *The Green Ray* and *Untitled* may avoid overt reference to film history, but they do take care to locate themselves within an historical tradition of reflections on the medium and its changing contours over time, whether it be in Dean's interrogation of the analogue-digital transition, or de Rijke and de Rooij's desire to situate their work amidst traditions of duration-based experimental filmmaking. Recursivity is not what is at stake in this conception of medium specificity, even if the illuminated oblong windows of Tacita Dean's *Bubble House* mimics the film's frame or the lighthouse of *Disappearance at Sea* references the mechanism of projection [FIGURE 9].¹¹⁷

Rather, the conception of medium specificity put forth in these works is radically anti-autonomous, interrogating the history of the medium and its historicity, its function as archive and social technology. For Jacques Rancière, essentialist conceptions of medium specificity such as Greenberg's erase the relation between images, the social, and the history of criticism. A medium is thus not a "proper" means or material (i.e.,

on to an outside. It is *from within* this climate of fragmentation and heterogeneity that one must act, rather than nostalgically attempt to recoup wholeness. See: Raymond Bellour, *L'Entre-images: Photo, Cinéma, Vidéo* (Paris: La Différence, 2002); Raymond Bellour, "The Living Dead (*Living and Presumed Dead*)," trans. George Baker, *James Coleman*, ed. George Baker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 57-72; Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 55-92

¹¹⁷ In her article, "Lack of Fit: Tacita Dean, Modernism, and the Sculptural Film," Tamara Trodd notes the tendency of critics to remark upon this: "Several critics have pointed out that this film explores a structure of medium specificity: using the lighthouse as a light-projecting device, its rotation, and the cast shadow and flicker it produces, to re-perform the filmic apparatus." See: Tamara Trodd, "Lack of Fit: Tacita Dean, Modernism, and the Sculptural Film," *Art History*, vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2008), 370

flatness for painting) but instead a space of conversion that articulates relations between visibility and intelligibility, seeing and saying.¹¹⁸ While Krauss rejects both the unity of the support and its status as the sole determining instance of the medium's essence, she remains prey to Rancière's quite valid criticism. For there is little place for the social and for the history of criticism here; instead, the invention of the medium rests on the production of a formalist unity that presents itself as an artistic novelty without history that is not unlike the commodity form itself—new, desired, and subject to ownership.

Krauss' call to reinvent the medium follows the Benjaminian type of the collector, he who orchestrates "the liberation things from the drudgery of being useful."¹¹⁹ Though aligned with the possibility of redeeming these fallen objects, what must be emphasized is that, like so many of the figures that populate Benjamin's writing, the collector is a character marked by a profound ambivalence. The collector detaches the object from its utility, but in doing so removes it from history. Torn from context, the collected object enters a spatial organization frozen in time. Calling the collection a "paradise of consumption," Susan Stewart describes it as "replac[ing] history with *classification*, with an order beyond temporality."¹²⁰ In insisting that the medium is reinvented *ex nihilo* without aesthetic lineage, Krauss puts artists such as Coleman and Kentridge in such a position, seeing them as redeeming superannuated technology through their care, attention, and artistic insight, but disallowing any consideration of the ways in which they engage the respective histories of the various media they invoke. Benjamin describes the "most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects" as "the struggle against dispersion," a notion mirrored in the emphasis Krauss places on the formation of a recuperative unity. From the scattered remnants of the world, the collector forges a coherent system and imposes it onto the heterogeneity of objects so as to forge a new,

¹¹⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 75

¹¹⁹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 209

¹²⁰ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 151

totalizable system.

In opposition to the collector, Benjamin places the allegorist. While acknowledging that, true to the antinomic patterns of his thought, “more important than all the differences that may exist between them—in every collector hides an allegorist, and in every allegorist a collector,” the allegorist is the “polar opposite” of the collector, retaining the historical specificity of the detritus he or she encounters but wrenching it from the continuum so as to make it enter relationships—in the manner of cinematic montage—with other elements.¹²¹ Michael Newman has emphasized the centrality of the figure of the collector to Tacita Dean’s work, making use of Benjamin’s theory of collecting to do so.¹²² While one cannot deny the collector’s impulse that underlies works such as *Four, Five, Six, and Seven Leaf Clover Collection* (1972-present) and *Die Regimentstochter* (2005), allegory rather than collection emerges as a more apposite figure to describe the majority of artist’s work, for it resists the freezing of historical contingency into the synchronic time of the collector’s structure. Rather, allegory allows for an understanding of the passage of objects through time, as well as the historical and affective resonances that this entails.

The ruin is a central trope throughout Dean’s work, but figures especially strongly in *Bubble House*, *Fernsehturm*, *Kodak* (2006), *Palast*, *Section Cinéma* (2002), and *Teignmouth Electron*, all of which document physical ruins of varying sorts through the ruined medium of film. Less than the “rescue” of which Newman speaks, something that might be conceptualized as the collector’s struggle against the dispersals of time, these films engage the pathos of the ruin and the inevitability of entropic passage into relic, tracing the contours of the dispersal rather than arresting it. The irreversible motion of time cannot be stopped, and Dean does not attempt to do so. Rather, these ruins are

¹²¹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 211

¹²² Michael Newman, “Sauvetage,” *Tacita Dean: Seven Books—Essays* (Paris: Éditions des Musées de la Ville de Paris and Steidl Publishers, 2003), np

examined not in an attempt to halt decay but to interrogate how the disjunctive temporalities that reside therein might produce a different understanding of the present.

The allegorist is the reader of ruins, the excavator of the remnants of the past in the light of the present. Unlike the collector, the allegorist does not attempt to defeat time but instead interrogates nonsynchronous temporalities, confronting head on the admixture of hope and dread that Benjamin read in the Dauthendey portrait. In the *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin writes that “Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things,”¹²³ and it is precisely this relationship—and not solely that of the collector—that must be summoned to deal with the ways in which 16mm gallery practices mobilize notions of history and obsolescence. Here, the history of cinema is not a totalizable system, that great dream of the collector in which every object would have its place and every place would have its object. Rather, the cinema has been scattered, its legibility as a coherent object fractured. It is amidst these ruins that the allegorist wanders, producing provisional readings of what this constellation “cinema” might be, probing to which anxieties it might respond, or which desires it might elicit. This distinction between collection and allegory gets to the heart of how cinema has been reconceptualized in contemporary gallery film practices. While celluloid certainly functions as a technology of preservation in this context, it would be naïve to see the fact of filming as having saved these objects from the ruination of time. For cinema itself is, in Dean’s conception, a fragile ruin; it is fit to capture such objects for it shares in their stature. There is an acknowledgment that the desire to preserve for posterity is always haunted by a destructiveness that lurks at the heart of the desire to conquer finitude.¹²⁴ Cinema can reanimate life, but only as a ghostly apparition shot through with absence. In short, death cannot be vanquished. Cinema, once “substitut[ing] for our gaze a world

¹²³ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1985), 178

¹²⁴ See: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

that is better in line with our desires” and satiating the spectator with its illusory plenitude, is now truly “death at work,” “death twenty-four times a second.”¹²⁵

Nowhere does this changed status become so visible as in *Kodak*, which effectively functions as an elegy for 16mm film, the very material that makes the work possible [FIGURE 10]. Here, Dean turns her camera on the Kodak factory in Chalon-sur-Saône after learning they were to halt production of 16mm and produce only X-ray film. Using both black-and-white and colour, Dean explores the luminosity of celluloid through languorous takes. What appears at the beginning of the film as a fully functioning factory has, by the film’s end, been emptied of workers, some presumably soon to be without jobs. Industry has gone, but Dean has stayed; with a gesture that might metonymically stand in for her practice as a whole, here one glimpses the artist-as-lingerer amongst wreckage. The last shots of the film show disused celluloid on a dirty floor, the vibrant purples seen earlier in the film now grey and brown, ready to be swept into the garbage.

In both *Kodak*—to say nothing of *Noir et Blanc* (2006), a four-and-a-half-minute film shot with the remaining five rolls of Kodak film the artist had acquired before it became unavailable—the history of cinema as art and industry is held up as one of ruination. Yes—cinema can save, it can rescue. But throughout Dean’s work, its fragility is underlined. Cinema does not stand outside the system of novelty and obsolescence, transcending the realm of objects with the promise of preservation. Rather, like the Bubble House, abandoned by a French owner convicted of embezzlement before its construction had been completed, the cinema too is exposed to the rigours of time’s

¹²⁵ “Le cinéma substitue à notre regard un monde qui s'accorde à nos désirs” is spoken by Godard in the opening credits to *Contempt* (*Le Mépris*, 1963) and falsely attributed to Bazin. In fact, this misquotation is drawn from Michel Mourlet’s article, “Sur un art ignoré,” in which he writes, “Le cinéma est un regard qui se substitue au nôtre pour nous donner un monde accordé à nos désirs.” *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* is the title of Laura Mulvey’s 2006 book, while the notion that cinema is “death at work” has been attributed to Jean Cocteau by Godard, among others. See: Michel Mourlet, “Sur un art ignoré,” *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 98 (August 1959) 23-37; Jean Cocteau, quoted in: Jean-Luc Godard, “From Critic to Filmmaker: Godard in Interview (extracts),” trans. Tom Milne, *Cahiers du cinéma, The 1960s: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 62

passing, abandoned by many while its project remains unfinished. The technology of preservation is now in need of preservation itself. In Dean's employment of 16mm, a ruined medium serves as medium for examining ruins rather than constructing a collection safe from the degradation inherent in time.

In films such as *Kodak* or *Palast* and *Fernsehturm*, the latter two of which focus on the decaying monuments of the former German Democratic Republic, thinking history outside of a narrative of progress is central. In *Palast*, Dean languidly documents the Palast der Republik on the bank of the Spree near Museum Island in Berlin, slated for destruction by German parliament in 2003 [FIGURES 11-12].¹²⁶ The building, constructed between 1973 and 1976, was once the seat of the Volkskammer, the East German parliament, but also housed art galleries. Its architectural style was typical of the DDR, marking a major change from the building that had stood on the site until the Second World War, the Berlin Stadtschloss, a baroque palace that had formerly housed the monarchy. The East German government decided not to rebuild after the war, declaring the Stadtschloss a remnant of Prussian imperialism and thereby making way for the construction of a monument to the socialist future. Throughout the Dean's film, the sun sets on the Palast, its bronze-mirrored windows emitting a golden hue. On the soundtrack, cars and pedestrians pass down the nearby Unter den Linden. The changing states of light emerge as a major concern here—another reason that the artist insists that her films must be seen *on film*—but Dean differentiates her work from the formalism of a filmmaker like Nathaniel Dorsky by insisting on the historical dimension of her project.

The Palast, considered by many to be an eyesore, here attains a fading glory that surpasses both its contamination by asbestos (coincidentally discovered just prior to Germany's 1990 reunification) and the Bundestag's 2007 decision to rebuild a replica of the Stadtschloss on the site, thereby overwriting history with a simulation of it. As Dean

¹²⁶ Demolition began on 6 February 2006.

puts it, “Berlin needs to keep evidence of that other place, that country, and its corrupt mismanagement of a utopia that has now been crossed out as a mistake in the reckoning of history.”¹²⁷ The failure of utopia: a familiar theme from the work of Matthew Buckingham, it re-emerges here as an attempt to make sense of Berlin’s recent past. This is not a romantic overvaluation of a lost epoch, but a call for the necessity of remembering history’s failures as well as its successes; for it is these catastrophes and defeats that, unacknowledged, haunt our present. East Germany is one such failed utopia, but the cinema itself is another. They might be left to oblivion, hit with the passive violence of forgetting, but in Tacita Dean’s work, both are excavated with care.

Palast is closely linked to a film from several years earlier, *Fernsehturm* [FIGURE 13]. This forty-four-minute film shows (once again) the sun setting over a monument to the DDR often said to be a blemish to the cityscape. As the television tower slowly revolves, convivial groups eat dinner and look out at the panoramic view of the city below, with snatches of conversation here and there making their way onto the soundtrack. Constructed between 1965 and 1969 in Alexanderplatz, the centre of the former East Berlin, the 365-metre-high tower was a symbol of a socialist vision of a space-age future that has since turned into a tourist attraction and a remnant of a fallen regime. It is a 1960s imagination of the future that was devastatingly never to come true. As Dean writes, in a text entitled “*Fernsehturm: Backwards into the Future*,” “The revolving sphere in Space still remains our best image of the future, and yet it is firmly locked in the past.”¹²⁸ The film’s strange motion, initially appearing to be a slow pan, in fact results from the revolutions of the tower, inducing a parallax effect. The unusual movement of the film finds a counterpart in its temporal complexity. The 360-degree rotation of the tower and the diurnal cycle suggested by the setting sun bring forth a

¹²⁷ Tacita Dean, “Palast,” *Tacita Dean: Film Works*, 94

¹²⁸ Tacita Dean, “*Fernsehturm: Backwards into the Future*,” *Tacita Dean: Seven Books—Selected Writings* (Paris: Éditions des Musées de la Ville de Paris and Steidl Publishers, 2003), np

notion of eternal recurrence, but the film also stages a collision between the city's present, its past, and its unrealized futures that suggests a much more fragmented and irregular temporality than that of the cyclical return. East Germany's nation anthem, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen*—"resurrected from ruins"—proclaimed in its opening lines that the country was "faced towards the future" [*der Zukunft zugewandt*], but the collapse of the dream of this other future has now left in its wake phantoms of past trauma and no way of conceptualizing an alternative to the contemporary status quo. As Nabokov suggests, it is from the inability to know the future that the past emerges as such a source of fascination, for otherwise one would have nowhere left to turn but inwards on the hollow vacancy of the instantaneousness of the present.

Dean describes the tower as a "perfect anachronism," and yet one must caution against assertions such as Tamara Trodd's: "While Dean thus makes films which engage with the work of remembering the past, her work emerges from an engagement not so much with obsolescence *per se* as with the anachronistic *tout court*...Ruined and battered as they are, these objects are not so much obsolescent or simply outdated, as forever moored outside of time."¹²⁹ It must be remembered that anachronism is a concept far from achronism, which would denote a state of timelessness, a place outside of time. Rather, anachronism is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as, "An error in computing time, or fixing dates; the erroneous reference of an event, circumstance, or custom to a wrong date," and "Anything done or existing out of date; *hence*, anything which was proper to a former age, but is, or, if it existed, would be, out of harmony with

¹²⁹ This is a position Trodd repeats word for word at the end of her essay, "Lack of Fit: Tacita Dean, Modernism, and the Sculptural Film." Trodd's assertion that Dean's work cannot be seen as reactivating a "utopian promise dormant in cinema" is weak indeed, suggesting even that this is supported by the fact that Dean's is a failed cinema since it is not made for movie theatre exhibition, thereby revealing an incredibly narrow understanding of cinema and what it might mean to excavate an alternative future for it. See: Tamara Trodd, "Film at the End of the Twentieth Century: Obsolescence and the Medium in the Work of Tacita Dean," *Object*, vol. 6 (2003-2004), 60.

the present.”¹³⁰ Anachronism describes the coexistence of multiple temporalities that are found within the ruin, while obsolescence highlights the inevitability of entropic dispersion that is the underside of novelty, leading to disappearance. Obsolescence and anachronism are both at play in *Palast, Fernsehurm*, and across Dean’s body of work—but nowhere is there a removal from the vicissitudes of time.

Trodd is intent to argue that the emphasis on failure found in Dean’s practice makes her work incompatible with the imagining of utopia, since the only collectivity that can be imagined is either failed, temporally confused, or fictionalized.¹³¹ However, in an age that has lost its ability to imagine alternative futures, opening the possibility of past contingencies still serves to dislodge the necessity of our present. The utopian hopes that Trodd ascribes to an earlier generation of filmmakers (1970s figures such as Michael Snow and Anthony McCall) were themselves unachieved. And moreover, it is in the nature of utopia to always lie elsewhere—perhaps in the past, the future, or even in fiction—for if it were present, it would no longer be utopia. Thus, utopia and failure are by no means opposed concepts as they are deployed in Dean’s filmmaking, but must be seen as working together, much as they do in the work of Matthew Buckingham.

In contemporary German culture, the term *Ostalgie* (an English rendering of the term might be Eastalgia) has gained currency to describe a nostalgia for the former East Germany. Epitomized by films such as *Goodbye, Lenin!* (2001) and *Sun Alley* (*Sonnenallee*, 1999), *Ostalgie* offers up the DDR as so many signifiers to consume, as the films, in the words of Mattias Frey, “fetishize and indulge in blithe pastiche” of that country’s material culture.¹³² In these films, nostalgia functions much as it has been

¹³⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, second edition (1992-present).

¹³¹ Ibid., 64. Trodd writes, “Dean’s brand of medium-specificity—which mobilizes the particularity of the medium of film to explore the irreversibility of time and its reversibility—is a contradictory, failing project which does not achieve the social optimism—the utopianism—which for so long has been a mark of aesthetic quality for critics of the Left.”

¹³² Mattias Frey, “No(ir) Place to Go: Spatial Anxiety and Sartorial Intertextuality in *Die Unberührbare*,” *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Summer 2006), 76

famously elaborated by Frederic Jameson: as a predominant symptom of the waning of historicity associated with postmodernism.¹³³ However, if one sees nostalgia not merely as an unproblematic longing for the past satisfied through consumption, but takes up its etymological origin to see it as an affective tissue that also involves pain, it loses something of its reactionary value and comes closer to describing what is at play in Dean's *Palast* and *Fernsehturm*. Instead of engaging in the re-enactments of *Ostalgie* films, Dean reflects on the DDR through the ruin—that is, through the present.

Though Giuliana Bruno asserts that we live in an age “repelled by ruination,”¹³⁴ Andreas Huyssen sees an obsession with ruins as becoming pervasive over the last fifteen years, a time that—Huyssen does not make this connection, but it should be noted—witnessed both the flowering of the Internet and wireless technologies in a burst of technological novelty, as well as increasing desperation following the collapse of the USSR that there can be no alternative to global capitalism.¹³⁵ As Huyssen writes,

This contemporary obsession with ruins hides a nostalgia for an earlier age that had not yet lost its power to imagine other futures. At stake is a nostalgia for modernity that dare not speak its name after acknowledging the catastrophes of the twentieth century and the lingering injuries of inner and outer colonization. Yet this nostalgia persists, straining for something lost with the ending of an earlier form of modernity. The cipher for this nostalgia is the ruin.¹³⁶

Though Michael Newman's notion of “rescue” is persuasive in relation to some of Dean's work, *Fernsehturm* and *Palast*, in their remembrance of the failed utopia of the DDR,

¹³³ See: Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 1998), 133-135

¹³⁴ Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 82

¹³⁵ It should be noted that this is a renewal of an interest in the ruin, not its inauguration. In line with the Romantic imaginary, in 1911 Georg Simmel would describe the ruin as a “cosmic tragedy,” “an object infused with our nostalgia: for now the decay appears as nature's revenge for the spirit's having violated it by making a form in its own image.” The late nineteenth-century interest in ruins came, as does our own, at a moment of intense technological and societal transformation. The ruin provides a way of grasping hold of the continuity of time and reassuring oneself that things do indeed endure amidst such chaos. However, they do not endure unscathed, mingling the pleasure of the ruin with a pain of irrecoverable loss. The temporality of the ruin dwarfs human time with the time of history, rendering the historical a site of profound affective resonance. See: Georg Simmel, “The Ruin,” trans. David Kettler, *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy, and Aesthetics*, ed. Kurt Wolff (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 259

¹³⁶ Andreas Huyssen, “Nostalgia for Ruins,” *Grey Room*, vol. 23 (Spring 2006), 7

engage in something much closer to Huyssen's "nostalgia for ruins"—and more specifically, in a nostalgia for the ruined dreams of twentieth-century modernity. Like de Rijke and de Rooij's "halted quest for understanding," like Buckingham's inability to access the moments of inscription or abandonment, the fantasy of presence and preservation here withers within the vertigo of time. The aim of these films is not to unproblematically resurrect the socialist dream advanced by these architectural structures, but to emphasize the necessity of conceiving of history as a succession of ruins of failure as much as of monuments to success, to look at the spectral traces of the past. The ruin has the passage of time engraved on its very surface, thus baring witness to the movements of change and stasis with a fragile persistence that is becoming increasingly rare as digital novelty triumphs.

The "seamlessness" Dean sees as characterizing the digital must be opposed to the heterogeneous temporality of the ruin and the desires it engenders. Svetlana Boym asserts that, "The early twenty-first century exhibits a strange ruinophilia, a fascination with ruins that goes beyond postmodern quotation marks. In our increasingly digital age, ruins appear as an endangered species, as physical embodiments of modern paradoxes reminding us of the blunders of modern technologies and technologies alike..."¹³⁷ Boym makes the link explicit whereas Huyssen does not: this contemporary "ruinophilia" is linked to anxieties around digitization and tied inextricably to failures both technological and social. A sort of reaction formation, it is amidst an overproduction of novelty that the superannuated fascinates. In examining the contemporary proliferation of digital devices that function as so many bodily prostheses, one's gaze drifts back to the cinema, which suddenly appears different. Artistic practices such as de Rijke/de Rooij's, Buckingham's, and Dean's produce a meditation on the medium's specificity precisely at such a juncture, emphasizing its relationship to nonsynchronous temporalities and the ability to

¹³⁷ Svetlana Boym, "Tatlin, or, Ruinophilia," *Cabinet*, no. 28 (Winter 2007-2008), 44

produce an affectively charged experience of the past. Very different than conceptions of film's specificity throughout the twentieth century, now cinema lies in ruins and, as such, is invested with the curiosity and care that the ruin elicits. This can be dismissed as nothing but nostalgia, or as the product of a dangerous romanticization, but to do so would be to neglect to take seriously some of the most stimulating non-narrative film practices today and also to exhibit disinterest in attempting to understand precisely why and how the analogue and the obsolete fascinate in the way that they incontrovertibly do. In these practices, the cinema is seen as an apparatus that cannot be absolved of its sins, but that must dismantled and reassembled, anatomized and examined for its successes and shortcomings—like all the failed utopias of the twentieth century. Transfigured by the light of technological change, it now takes on something it was once said to destroy—aura.

Cinema's Halo, or the \$100,000 Question

Like an angel at apotheosis, the now-seraphic cinema gains an ethereal halo within the gallery. Salvaged from the ruins of twentieth-century mass culture, in which it had figured as an agent of image proliferation and circulation, within the white cube the cinema is aligned with preciousness and rarity. This is fiercely satirized in Cory Arcangel's *Personal Film* (2008) [FIGURES 14-15]. Arcangel, known for his blend of appropriation and new media art, here turns his particular brand of humour towards the fetishization of 16mm film that has become an inescapable trend in the othered cinema. Stumbling upon the work mid-loop, the viewer sees a cluster of quickly edited shots that recall the lyric filmmaking of Marie Menken or Stan Brakhage. But as the loop progresses, the viewer begins to realize that the film s/he is watching is not in fact an example of such "personal filmmaking" but rather is just a series of signifiers that connote it, jumbled together. And then, as the loop begins again, the punch line is

delivered: the Final Cut Pro logo appears on the screen and a digital countdown leader begins, images familiar to anyone who has used the editing suite. Arcangel downloaded the scrap footage from the Internet and pieced it together using the computer program, printing it to 16mm for exhibition only.

Poking fun at the modernism of 1950s and 1960s experimental filmmaking is only part of Arcangel's objective; *Personal Film* equally engages with the preciousness of contemporary gallery film, getting its emphasis on the medium "wrong" and revealing the cheat. While the Final Cut Pro joke might wear thin quickly, another aspect of *Personal Film* has a more lasting sting: it is a unique object. Unlike the rest of Arcangel's output—which is closely tied to open source culture and the hypothetically endless meme-like proliferation of the digitally disseminated artwork—the status of this 16mm film as a unique object hyperbolizes the widespread practice of gallery film to follow a distribution model of the limited, collectible edition sold as luxury good. If Tacita Dean produces an edition of four, Arcangel goes farther in defying the reproducibility of film even further by producing only one. With his trademark irony, Arcangel prompts us to ask: is there a reason to be suspicious of the patina attached to film in the gallery? What is one to make of its indulgence in the fetishization of rarity?

The preceding sections have grappled with the ways in which the recent employment of celluloid within the gallery reconfigures medium specificity in the light of obsolescence to see film as closely linked to disappearance, the historical trace, and the failed utopia from which hope for the future might be gleaned. This becoming-precious of the ruined cinema has taken place on the planes of technology, rhetoric, and artistic practice. However, no inquiry into artists' uses of celluloid would be complete without examining how the institutional and economic determinations of the gallery—foremost among them the prevalence of the limited edition as distribution model—intervene in the contemporary conceptualization of 16mm film in the gallery. If the cinema is liberated

from utility to enter over into the disinterestedness of aesthetic contemplation, it simultaneously enters a new circuit of exchange and commodification: the art market.

In his essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,” Benjamin famously stated that, “what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter’s aura,” and specified film as the primary agent in this liquidation.¹³⁸ The decline of aura is described as a “stripping of the veil” from the object that “extracts sameness even from what is unique.”¹³⁹ Linked to cult value and the artwork’s former emplacement in ritual, in the “Work of Art” essay, the aura is defined in an antithetical relationship to film, which replaces a unique location in space and time, a “unique apparition of distance, however near it may be,”¹⁴⁰ with a proliferation of copies that allows the masses to bring things closer by way of their reproduction. Cult value is replaced by exhibition value. When the aura is discussed in relationship to film, it is in the context of the “false aura” of the commodity, epitomized for Benjamin in the close-up of the movie star. What was once the preternatural halo of genuine aura has now been replaced by the “putrid magic of its own commodity character,”¹⁴¹ the very same transcendence of sensuousness that Marx attributed to commodity fetishism.¹⁴²

Nonetheless, even in the final, 1939 version of the “Work of Art” essay, a time by which so much of Benjamin’s writing had been infiltrated by a profound pessimism stemming from totalitarianism’s sweep across Europe and by which so many of the

¹³⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version),” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, *Selected Writings, Volume Three: 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 104

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 105

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 104-105

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 113

¹⁴² In *Capital*, Marx uses the example of a table to discuss the animistic magic of the commodity: “It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.” See: Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London, Penguin, 1990), 163-164

utopian hopes for film had already been dashed, Benjamin retains an investment in the revolutionary potential of the medium of film. This investment must be understood as twofold: first, film's destruction of aura has a positive valence, for it liquidates the categories of bourgeois aesthetics, a notion encapsulated in Benjamin's discussion of Dada; and second, the shock effects of film might help negotiate the traumatic effects of modernity, since its tactile visuality allows access to another nature than accessible to the naked eye, the "optical unconscious."¹⁴³ The task at hand is to evaluate how these two investments in the medium appear to us today.

To take up the first postulate, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it must be said that film has not so much aided in the destruction of traditional aesthetic values as it has been recuperated into them, thus neutralizing Benjamin's first hope for the medium. When the historical avant-garde made films such as *Entr'acte* (1924) and *Un Chien andalou* (1929), the aim was, among other things, to utilize technological media to critique the increasing autonomy of the work of art. By drawing attention to art's institutional framing, the historical avant-garde thereby aimed to reintegrate art into the praxis of everyday life.¹⁴⁴ When the Fluxus group produced limited-edition 8mm and 16mm films as a part of their Fluxboxes in the 1960s, once again the goal was to intervene in the ideological status of the work of art by insisting on the multiple as a form of artistic production. As Bruce Jenkins notes, in many ways, film embodied the aims of Fluxus as a whole, since it represented the "archetypal mechanically reproducible medium... Like the array of plastic boxes that served as supports for the Fluxus editions of games and scores, paperworks and appropriated readymades, the celluloid-based

¹⁴³ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)," 117-118

¹⁴⁴ This is the position of Peter Bürger, who in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* argues that the avant-garde negates the following determinations essential to autonomous art: the disjunction of art and the praxis of life, individual production, individual reception, and reception as detached from production. The use of film can be seen as an important intervention on the first three of these four postulates. See: Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 53

medium embodied in its own material origins the industrial, impersonal facticity of the age of reproduction.”¹⁴⁵

The contemporary situation sees an inversion of Fluxus’ use of the limited-edition film print. For Fluxus, film was a way to bring art to the level of the quotidian and the reproducible, to defeat its autonomy and uniqueness. Now, however, the limited edition is used to elevate the film to the status of an *objet d’art*, recuperating it into the economy that it once compromised. This becomes possible at this historical juncture in large part due to the increasing obsolescence of the medium. As Whitney Museum curators Chrissie Iles and Henriette Huldish put it, while the use of the film limited edition is not new, “...it is significant that many younger artists choose to work in a mode that treats film as object. This trend has everything to do with the ready availability on the consumer market of digital recording and editing devices that assert the medium of film as a precious, non-commercial material.”¹⁴⁶

In a similar vein, in his attempt to differentiate between experimental film and gallery film as modes of production, Jonathan Walley writes that, “Simply put, artists’ film regards the film print as an art object in a way that avant-garde cinema does not.”¹⁴⁷ Sharon Lockhart’s *Pine Flat* (2006) is a 138-minute 16mm film heavily indebted to James Benning (and indeed lists him as a creative consultant on the film). It features portraits of children amongst the landscape of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in a succession of twelve static long takes. In its quietude, long duration, attention to the registration of contingent details, and the care taken in examining the fleeting moments of childhood in a small town, Lockhart’s film resolutely fits the strain

¹⁴⁵ Bruce Jenkins, “Fluxfilm in Three False Starts,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 58-59. The same might be said of Andy Warhol’s turn to filmmaking.

¹⁴⁶ Chrissie Iles and Henriette Huldish, “Keeping Time: On Collecting Film and Video Art in the Museum,” *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*, ed. Bruce Altshuler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 81

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Walley, “Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde,” *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 187

of gallery-based 16mm production that has been examined throughout this chapter. Exhibited both as a looped installation on multiple 16mm projectors and in a traditional theatrical setting, for distribution the work was issued by Lockhart's Los Angeles-based gallery Blum and Poe in a boxed edition of six, comprised of nineteen photographic prints and each of the twelve shots on a different reel of film. The object was priced in the six figures.¹⁴⁸ Issuing editions of this kind and including supplementary materials such as still photographs has become standard practice within the art world.

Scott MacDonald, who reports that an edition of Lockhart's thirty-two-minute film, *No* (2003), was available from the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York for \$30,000, is hopeful about the possibility that the popularity of the limited-edition artist's film will lead to an increased interest in collecting 16mm prints of experimental films: "...*No*, and Lockhart's films in general, are often evocative of the films of James Benning, Morgan Fisher, and other filmmakers whom Lockhart herself considers her mentors. It is only a matter of time before the work of these mentors is accorded a similar level of financial respect that Lockhart's films receive."¹⁴⁹ Perhaps; and it would be well-deserved and lovely, indeed. But MacDonald's reasoning here is faulty, for he proposes that work of aesthetic similarity (here, the relationship between Lockhart and her mentors) should logically command a financial similarity. Rather, what is at stake is not an aesthetic criterion of value, but rather the vast difference in the distribution models espoused by these two sectors of film production. Experimental cinema has historically depended on a licensing model based on depositing prints with a distributor such as Canyon Cinema or Film-maker's Co-operative that then rents the prints according to a per screening fee. These fees can vary greatly, but often come in at between three to five dollars per minute of projected 16mm film. By contrast, the economy of gallery film makes use of a

¹⁴⁸ Paul Young, "Black Box White Cube," *Art and Auction* (February 2008); available online: <<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/26655/black-box-white-cube/>>

¹⁴⁹ MacDonald, "16mm: Reports of Its Death Are Greatly Exaggerated; In Focus: The Death of 16mm?" 128

purposeful scarcity, most often striking an edition of three to five copies of a given work (plus artist's proofs) so as to imbue the physical object of the film print with the pull of rarity. This allows for an entirely different price bracket, leading to Tacita Dean's *Michael Hamburger* (2007) and *Darmstädter Werkblock* (2007) to be offered for 80,000 and 60,000 Euros, respectively, at the Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, in Spring 2009.

When an institution or a collector purchases such an edition, standard practice is to receive an internegative and a sound negative that function as a master from which the owner can strike prints as needed. Once purchased, the potential for copies without originals inherent in the medium may be released, since the owner then can strike as many prints as he or she desires; until that time, the work exists as a very small number of collectible objects. The collector's ability to strike an unlimited number of prints is for the purpose of maintaining high quality exhibition copies for display in a single venue at a time, not for distributing the work to multiple exhibition sites at once. This marks another diversion from experimental film practices. Though experimental film is rarely seen on the collector's market, if a new print is, for example, purchased from a distributor (a practice that is rare but existent), a contract will be signed stating that the print is for the owner's use only, with any production of copies prohibited. Ownership is for the life of that print only. This has caused certain difficulties when these two systems cross over, as is the case when experimental films are purchased by museum collections.¹⁵⁰ In a part of her ongoing effort to bridge the divide between gallery film and

¹⁵⁰ The Museum of Modern Art in New York has circumvented such possible problems by forming, in 2006, a Department of Media responsible for the collection of media-based art works. According to the MoMA press release, the department, an offshoot of the Department of Film and Media, will "focus on contemporary art that reflects recent and current artistic practice, including moving image installations, exhibitions, and presentations of sound- and time-based works that are made for and presented in a gallery setting." Thus, Tacita Dean finds herself in the collection of the Department of Media, while Nathaniel Dorsky stays in the Department of Film and Video, thereby reinforcing the divide between experimental film and gallery film that others, such as Chrissie Iles, have worked hard to break down. This department has instituted practices of acquisition, preservation, and research significantly different from that of the

experimental film, Chrissie Iles has spoken of having difficulty with both museum administrators *and* experimental filmmakers. She has had to lobby to change the acquisition policies of the Whitney Museum, since “[t]he rules of the art museum anywhere in the world do not accept anything into the collection that is only for the life of the object,” but then also deal with the fact that “Stan Brakhage’s widow Marilyn thinks that [Iles is] somehow ripping her off because it’s not a distribution model.”¹⁵¹

Going against the capacity for reproducibility inherent in the medium, the wilful restriction of the number of prints available according to the limited-edition model prohibits excessive circulation of these works, artificially rendering back to film a quality of auratic distance. It becomes a privileged experience to be present before a de Rijke and de Rooij film, to share a room with it for a particular duration of time. In this respect, the becoming-auratic of film is of the same variety as the false aura of the movie star—a perfidious halo that smacks of the “putrid magic” of the commodity. One must sound a cautionary note against the manner in which the enforced scarcity of the limited-edition model of distribution contributes to the values of preciousness and antiquation one sees attached to celluloid film within the gallery.

However, it remains to account of what happened to Benjamin’s second investment in the medium of film, specified above as linked to the possibilities of the optical unconscious and the creation of alternative temporalities. Though film has been

Department of Film and Video, which has a closer kinship to an institution such as the Cinémathèque Française than it does to other departments of the MoMA. The Department of Film was established in 1935 by Iris Barry, concurrent with the formation of film archives worldwide and was a founding member of the Fédération Internationale des Archives de Film (FIAF) in 1938. The department’s name was changed to Film and Video in 1994 and then to Film and Media in 2001. See: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Department of Communications Press Release, “The Museum of Modern Art Creates New Curatorial Department,” (2 October 2006); available online:

<http://www.moma.org/about_moma/press/2006/Klaus%20Media%20Dept.%20ReleaseMAINSITEpdf.pdf>

¹⁵¹ To give another example of these difficulties, Iles has stated that “bringing a single Stan Brakhage print into the museum was the single most difficult thing I have done in the museum since I have been there.” See: Chrissie Iles, “Does the Museum Fail? Podium Discussion at the 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen,” *Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 139

thoroughly recuperated into the ever-redoubtable categories of bourgeois aesthetics, this second wager of film's potential might find itself ratified, rather than compromised, by the contemporary situation of film in the gallery. As Miriam Hansen has noted, understanding aura merely in terms of as a category of traditional aesthetics that might be falsely resurrected through technology rests on a reductive reading of Benjamin. Instead, Hansen excavates Benjamin's use of the concept to recover its multivalent meanings, emphasizing that in fact, aura—of a related but different variety—is equally at play in the optical unconscious, particularly in the Dauthendey portrait discussed in the “Little History.”¹⁵² This conception of aura is intimately linked to the indexical trace, the disjunctive temporalities that reside therein, and the relationship these qualities set up to the viewing subject—all of which are exploited in contemporary gallery film in a manner markedly absent from other sectors of filmmaking. Hansen explores connections between auratic distance and the sorrow of lost time, seeing the defining elements of the aura as “its sudden and fleeting disruption of linear time, its uncanny linkage of past and future—and the concomitant dislocation of the subject.”¹⁵³ In short, in this conception the aura is no longer defined in an antithetical relation to technological media, but takes on a much more complex relationship to it. The affective complex that has been discussed throughout this chapter as central to the idea of the medium put forth in contemporary gallery film is here named aura.

Thus, if, through its emphasis on the film print as rare object, gallery-based 16mm practice partakes of the false aura of the commodity, in its meditations of history, time, and desire, it nonetheless partakes of this other aura—an aura that is historically specific

¹⁵² Hansen writes, “The notion of aura as a premonition of future catastrophe harks back to medical theories since antiquity that use the term to describe symptoms of anxiety and unease preceding and foreboding epileptic or hysterical attacks. For Benjamin, the ominous aspect of aura belongs to the realm of the daemonic, in particular the phenomenon of self-alienating encounters with an older, other self. In a technologically refracted, specifically modern form, this aspect of aura resurfaces in his notion of an optical unconscious, which he unfolds from the passage about the Dauthendey portrait...” See: Miriam Hansen, “Benjamin's Aura,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 34 (Winter 2008), 342

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 347

and linked to an investigation of nonsynchronous temporalities and the contingent. Retrieved from the teleological narrative of history, the cinema emerges as a superannuated technology, a ruin to be explored so as to perhaps release, as Benjamin saw the Surrealists as having discovered, “the revolutionary energies that appear in the ‘outmoded.’” As he wrote, the Surrealists “bring the immense forces of ‘atmosphere’ concealed in these things to the point of explosion. What form do you suppose a life would take that was determined at a decisive moment precisely by the street song last on everyone’s lips?”¹⁵⁴

A life determined solely by the latest popular jingle would be impoverished, indeed, for it would reside solely within the perpetual novelty that is endemic to the motor of capitalism’s market. It would see the past products of this system, no longer tinged with the gleam that coats the ever-same presented as ever-new, fall into total oblivion. Instead, Benjamin advocates for a life, an artistic practice, informed by the complex affects that reside within the discarded objects of mass culture, for it is in them that history resides. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, one witnesses the dissolution of a certain phase of image production and apprehension that had dominated for a century—the traditional cinematic *dispositif*. While Hollywood’s products maintain a world-wide visibility, available in more formats and locations than ever before, in the

¹⁵⁴ Notably, the “atmosphere” discussed here is precisely the aura Hansen seeks to recover throughout her essay. Though Hansen does footnote the “Surrealism” essay as an example of one of the “productive reflections on the reconfiguration of distance and proximity in modernity, specifically as they revolve around new economies of body and image space and the role of film in enabling a collective, playful innervation of technology,” this passage curiously escapes her extensive research on the concept of aura. The original text reads, “Sie bringen die gewaltigen Kräfte der ‘Stimmung’ zur Explosion, die in diesen Dingen verborgen sind.” Instead of the more scientific *Atmosphäre*, the use of *Stimmung* suggests a more figurative usage linked to tone, feeling, or mood—in short, it describes the affective pull of the outmoded object. The emphasis placed on this word through the use of quotation marks signals its importance as a concept that carries beyond this particular context and may be linked to the lesser-known understanding of aura explored by Hansen. See: Hansen, 335; Walter Benjamin, “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, *Selected Writings, Volume Two, Part One: 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 210; Walter Benjamin, “Der Surrealismus: Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz,” *Angelus Novus: Ausgewählte Schriften 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 205

theories and practices discussed throughout this chapter, one glimpses a palpable act of mourning for a lost image-regime and a lost relationship to time that it made possible. As such, the notions of deathliness found within the concept of indexicality reference not merely a haunting of the Real, but are also symptomatic of the presence of another spectre, that of analogue film. The concept of indexicality thus indicates both death *in* the image and a death *of* the image.

The prominence the concept has attained in recent film theory is a kind of love at last sight, whereby the desire of the critic to resurrect this lost object parallels the pathos of the index's ability to point to a lost past. In *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Christian Metz begins by outlining the changed relation between theorist and film that would be spurred by the use of psychoanalytic semiotics as a critical methodology. Previous criticism, based on notions of aesthetic taste, constituted cinema as a love object and are described as beset by a sort of "siege psychosis": the task was to "to surround and protect [the film], according to the cocoon principle."¹⁵⁵ In such a scenario, cinema and its theoretical discourse remain firmly on the side of the imaginary, caught in the thrall of cinephilia. Metz figures the advent of psychoanalytic semiotics as the intrusion of the symbolic that breaks the mother-child dyad of critic and film, after which the critic should "not have forgotten what the cinephile he once used to be was like, in all the details of his affective inflections, in the three dimensions of his living being, and yet to no longer be invaded by him."¹⁵⁶ While certainly, discussions of indexicality have not forgotten the lessons of 1970s film, there is a clear desire to protect the cinema once again, a renewal of this "siege psychosis." This is a kind of cinephilia that is far from that of the Tarantino-esque video store clerk, but rather one that invests in the material of celluloid as evincing a privileged link to time, history, and finitude.

¹⁵⁵ Metz, 11

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 15

In the films of Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, and Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij, one finds these same preoccupations at work. The return to medium specificity here must be understood as a reaction formation to the forces of dissolution and fragmentation that pervade today's climate of convergence. Unlike artists such as Matthew Barney or Doug Aitken, who turn towards the language of cinema to recruit values of spectacle, these artists take up what is at stake in the passage of cinema into the gallery as a marginal form, a cast-off of mass culture, an old medium. The interrogation they stage into the medium-specific qualities of film does not seal off the work into a modernist spiral of recursivity, but rather interrogates the radical lack of autonomy found in the film image, its inextricable link to a trace of pastness and the haunted quality that results. The dialectical movement visible here is not merely between specificity and convergence, but also between the material limits of the medium and its placement within the institutional and discursive determinations of a larger *dispositif*. For the material base of the image certainly matters to these artists, but not for its own sake; rather, what is interrogated here is the way in which the constraints of materiality interact with the medium's ability to engage with the social and the historical. Central to this tension is the important role fears of obsolescence play in the current conceptualization of the medium of film. For when Tacita Dean obsessively attempts to grab hold of the green ray as it flashes up on the horizon, she is equally attempting to grab hold of film itself, to register its contingencies as it slips away.

III. The Remake: Old Movies, New Narratives

I suppose that if a work of art is by definition that which conserves, a mythology never ceases, on the contrary, to manage itself and to recycle itself according to the taste of the age and the state of technology... Nothing will be kept of cinema except that which can be remade.

—Serge Daney¹

Cinema is young—only one hundred years old—but for us, it is already dead.

—Douglas Gordon²

In the spring of 2006, Chris Moukarbel, an MFA student in the Yale University School of Art's sculpture department, was sued by Paramount. Why? The "nature of the case," according to the affidavit issued to the United States District Court, was as follows:

This is an action for copyright infringement pursuant to the Copyright Law of the United States, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.* (the "Copyright Act"). This infringement claim arises from defendant Chris Moukarbel's (the "Defendant") unauthorized creation and distribution of a twelve-minute motion picture which is a virtually identical copy of a substantial portion of the Plaintiff's copyrighted screenplay for its upcoming motion picture *World Trade Center*.³

With a budget of one thousand dollars, a screenplay bought from a bootlegger, and actors from the Yale School of Drama, Moukarbel remade—or rather *pre-made*, as the feature had not yet been released to the public—sections of Oliver Stone's film, *World Trade Center* (2006), as his MFA thesis project. Stone's \$100 million film⁴ set out to tell the "true story" of John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno, two of the last survivors to be pulled from underneath the rubble on 11 September 2001. Whereas Stone's version crosscuts between scenes of the men trapped underneath the collapsed Twin Towers and diegetically antecedent footage leading up to the event, Moukarbel stays underneath the

¹ Serge Daney, "Journal de l'an passé," *Trafic*, no. 1 (Winter 1991), 6; translation mine.

² Douglas Gordon, quoted in: Emmanuel Hermange "'Pour nous, le cinéma est mort': Notes sur quelques stratégies cinéphiles de l'art," *Parachute*, no. 103 (July-September 2001), 14; translation mine.

³ Paramount Pictures Corporation vs. Chris Moukarbel, "Complaint for Copyright Infringement," (14 June 2006), 1. All legal documents related to Paramount Pictures Corporation vs. Chris Moukarbel lawsuit appear courtesy of the artist.

⁴ Paramount's lawyers stated that the company has spent \$60 million on producing the film and had or would spend \$40 million on advertising. See: Paramount Pictures Corporation vs. Chris Moukarbel, "Plaintiff's Memorandum in Support of its Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction" (15 June 2006), 2

debris, stringing together several disparate snippets of Andrea Berloff's cliché-ridden screenplay [FIGURE 1]. Where Stone seeks to inject narrative interest through flashback, Moukarbel questions the very possibility of responsibly producing such a story. Stone's *World Trade Center* was marketed with the tagline "The World Saw Evil That Day. Two Men Saw Something Else." What is this "something else" that the men-turned-characters of Stone's movie supposedly saw? True to the conventions of the genre, perhaps it was the greatness of the human spirit. Moukarbel, by contrast, drains the screenplay of its promises of visibility, knowledge, and redemption. Throughout the video, it is very dark under the collapsed buildings and there is nothing to be seen; there is no exit from the claustrophobic enclosure, just a few lines of dialogue torn from context and unsentimentally delivered to the utter vacuity that Hollywood would bestow upon them. The radical insufficiency of the representation becomes clear, as the distance that separates it from the event it purports to depict becomes impossible to ignore.

When the work was shown at the sculpture department's thesis exhibition, Moukarbel installed a single upward-cast blue-tinted spotlight outside the gallery, recalling both a film premiere and the Tribute in Light ceremonies that have been held in lower Manhattan to commemorate the events of 9/11. By condensing the glitz of Hollywood and a monument in remembrance of national trauma in a single gesture, the spotlight speaks directly to what is at stake in the project that Moukarbel named *World Trade Center 2006*: it questions the cinema's role as repository of public memory, who has the right to tell a particular story, and why and how they will tell it. Five years after the event (too late) and four months before the Hollywood debut (too early), Moukarbel's (p)remake deftly utilized its purposeful untimeliness to perform the becoming-formulaic of an exceptional event with a difficult relationship to narration. Hollywood, with its astounding global reach, has emerged as perhaps the primary way the historical narratives of the twentieth century have been delivered to us. Trauma is

repackaged as spectacle, given an uplifting human-interest angle, and fed to the public for consumption, eliding the socio-political vicissitudes that reside therein in favour of individual-driven narratives with universal humanist themes. The artist told the *New York Times*, “I’m interested in memorial and the way Hollywood represents public events... Through their access and budget they’re able to affect a lot of people’s ideas about an event and also affect policy. I was deliberately using their script and pre-empting their release to make a statement about power.”⁵ By suing Moukarbel, Paramount compounded what his project had always been about: the lawsuit pushed questions of ownership to centre stage, prompting an inquiry into the relationship between narrative as private property and as public memory.

The word trauma comes from the Greek for “wound,” an etymology that evokes the manner in which the traumatic event punctures the fabric of signification. It is only through repetition that this asignifying blot can be recuperated into knowledge. The events of 11 September 2001 functioned as a national trauma that served to disrupt established frameworks of understanding, and yet in the months and years that followed, real dialogue in mainstream media outlets was quashed by the Bushism of “Either you’re with us or you’re with the terrorists.” As Judith Butler has written, “The articulation of this hegemony takes place in part through producing a consensus on what certain terms will mean, how they can be used, and what lines of solidarity are implicitly drawn through this use.”⁶ Stone’s *World Trade Center* was central to the production of this consensus, as it worked to suture over the wound of trauma with a representation that would deny ambiguity and contradiction in an embrace of American unilateralism that told the “true” story of innocent citizens menaced by an unseen and unknowable enemy. Moukarbel’s *World Trade Center 2006* starts from this problematic to ask: what

⁵ Chris Moukarbel, quoted in: Felicia R. Lee, “An Artist Releases a New Film After Paramount Blocks His First,” *New York Times* (8 July 2006); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/08/movies/08film.html>>

⁶ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 4

transformations take place across these proprietary retellings of an instance of national trauma? How does a fleeting event—one that troubles our comprehension and quickly recedes into the past—become digested, monumentalized, and standardized through the production of Hollywood’s “official” version of it? And what might result from moving beyond this practice into the domain of unsanctioned remakes that function as hostile takeovers of an industry obsessive about holding tight rein on its “intellectual property”?

Moukarbel distributed the video for free on his website,⁷ which eventually drew enough attention that the project became known to Paramount Pictures, resulting in legal action. Interestingly, the lawsuit names Moukarbel’s place of residence as Washington, D.C., even though the Whois record⁸ for the artist’s website included in Paramount’s dossier of supporting evidence lists his address as New Haven, Connecticut. By locating the artist in the nation’s capital (where he had resided some years prior), the lawsuit mobilizes a rhetoric of the “enemy within” the heart of America, thus setting up the production of *World Trade Center 2006* as an exemplary unpatriotic act—to rephrase one of George W. Bush’s favourite sayings, “Either you are with Hollywood or with the terrorists.” While this might seem like a stretch, it rhymes with a statement made by the late Jack Valenti, copyright extremist and longtime president of the Motion Picture Association of America; regarding unauthorized online distribution of Hollywood products, Valenti asserted, “We’re fighting our own terrorist war.”⁹ The lawsuit against Moukarbel also claimed that the “issuance of an injunction would not substantially harm

⁷ See: <www.pointsofdeparture.net/wtc>. The video has been removed, but the site that housed it remains. It is perhaps this method of online distribution that resulted in Moukarbel being sued when so many other artists remaking and recycling Hollywood films—many of them discussed in this chapter—have remained protected from litigation even though they profit substantially from the enterprise.

⁸ This service, available at <<http://www.whois.domaintools.com/>>, allows the user to obtain the name and address of any domain name registrant, as well as other significant information such as the number and geographical location of visitors to the site.

⁹ Jack Valenti, quoted in: Amy Harmon, “Black Hawk Download: Moving Beyond Music, Pirates Use New Tools to Turn the Net into an Illicit Video Club,” *New York Times* (17 January 2002); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/17/technology/black-hawk-download-moving-beyond-music-pirates-use-new-tools-turn-net-into.html>>

the other party”¹⁰ since he did not seek commercial gain from the enterprise, putting forth a notably circumscribed understanding of “harm” as well as making clear that the lawsuit was not a financial matter.

The lawsuit claimed that, “The preemptive release of the Moukarbel Film on the Internet before Paramount’s WTC Film means that unquantifiable but, most likely, large numbers of people will see the Mourkarbel Film first for free and determine, based on this poor-quality copy, that they do not want to pay to see the remainder of the WTC Film.”¹¹ An unnamed Paramount spokeswoman told the *Yale Daily News* that, “He stole our material, and he shot a script that we owned...People were confused, and that’s not something we want to happen.”¹² Obviously, the rhetoric of “confusion” is laughable, despite the fairly high production quality (given the available resources) of Moukarbel’s video. Though a case for fair use clearly presented itself, as Lawrence Lessig has written, “...fair use in America simply means the right to hire a lawyer to defend your right to create. And as lawyers love to forget, our system for defending rights such as fair use is astonishingly bad... It costs too much, it delivers too slowly, and what it delivers often has little connection to the justice underlying the claim. The legal system may be tolerable for the very rich.”¹³ For a graduate student, the cost of contesting the lawsuit made a claim of fair use unfeasible. The lawsuit was settled out of court on the condition that Moukarbel destroy all existing copies of the work.¹⁴

¹⁰ Paramount Pictures Corporation vs. Chris Moukarbel, “Plaintiff’s memorandum in support of its motion for temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction,” 4

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8

¹² Unnamed Paramount spokeswoman, quoted in: Sarah Mishkin, “Alumnus denies allegations of copyright infringement,” *Yale Daily News* (28 June 2006); available online:

<<http://www.yaledailynews.com/articles/view/17671>>

¹³ Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 187

¹⁴ Moukarbel complied with this request, but later produced a response to the lawsuit in the summer 2006 exhibition *Datamining*, curated by Joe Scanlan at Wallspace in New York City. Moukarbel exhibited a re-cut version of *World Trade Center 2006* comprised of outtakes from on set and including no dialogue from the *World Trade Center* screenplay, as well as the complete text of the destroyed video and facsimiles of the lawsuit.

Rather than any real fear that an unsuspecting Internet user might be dissuaded from a trip to the multiplex by coming across Moukarbel's MFA thesis project, Paramount's lawsuit speaks to the current climate of copyright paranoia brought about by the fact that, as Moukarbel himself has put it, "We're at a place now where technology allows the democratization of storytelling."¹⁵ Recent developments in hardware, software, and bandwidth have spurred practices of remaking, recycling, and retelling in a way that has disrupted Hollywood's near-sovereign majesty over the right to fictionalize history, to say nothing of its ability to regulate derivative¹⁶ uses of its products. The Internet is awash with amateur "mash-ups" and reenactments, the cultural significance of which has not been lost on contemporary art. While such non-professional online activities have become the object of litigation, Moukarbel's *World Trade Center 2006* is something of an exception in the art world, a space in which practices of basing works on pre-existing films have proliferated without major interference from those who hold copyright on the source texts in question. Since 1990, there has been an explosion of new narratives created out of old movies, often with something to say about "the way Hollywood tells it," to borrow from the title of David Bordwell's study of the narrative conventions of dominant cinema.¹⁷

This chapter will examine exemplary works of this tendency to remake commercial cinema, embracing the notion of the "remake" broadly to designate any artwork produced by reworking elements of an existing film. This might involve recycling existing footage, reenacting a scenario from a film, interviewing an individual whose life

¹⁵ Chris Moukarbel, quoted in: Lee, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ "Derivative" used here in a non-pejorative manner. The Copyright Act of the United States defines a derivative work as "a work based upon one or more preexisting works, such as a translation, musical arrangement, dramatization, fictionalization, motion picture version, sound recording, art reproduction, abridgment, condensation, or any other form in which a work may be recast, transformed, or adapted. A work consisting of editorial revisions, annotations, elaborations, or other modifications which, as a whole, represent an original work of authorship, is a 'derivative work.'" See: 630 F.2d 905 (2d Cir, 1980); available online: <<http://www.altlaw.org/v1/cases/551553>>

¹⁷ David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

has been involved with film production, or producing non-filmic objects by using an existing film as a source. Such practices appear as the progeny of appropriation art born in the Internet age, making use of commercially available software such as Final Cut Pro and manipulable digital video files to take up the products of Hollywood as raw material for an investigation into the ways in which—to now cite Friedrich Kittler in a manner slightly different than he intended (this is a chapter on appropriation, after all)—“media determine our situation.”¹⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss defined mythic narrative as an imaginary solution of a real contradiction, ascribing to it a fundamentally synthetic function,¹⁹ while Frederic Jameson has built upon this premise to demonstrate that this synthesis never takes place without a residue that may be read so as to reveal the “political unconscious” that lies latent.²⁰ The counter-narratives produced by artists remaking old movies often take this residue as a starting point and use it to produce narratives of analysis rather than synthesis. Instead of an imaginary resolution of contradiction, the very terms of conflict that had formerly been sublated now reemerge in tension with one another. In order to evade the traps of a discursive position falsely external to the spectacle it seeks to criticize, these artists bring together spectators through their common recognition of mass cultural icons and stories. This at once forces them to take account of how thoroughly such icons and stories have shaped the ways in which they understand their lives. It also, however, allows for the formation of a community around such collective recognition, repurposing the shared memory towards knowledge-producing ends.

Though the remake as a strategy in art since 1990 emerges as a privileged iteration of the contemporaneous rejection of the unique and the original, it is in fact as

¹⁸ Friedrich Kittler, *Film, Gramophone, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), xxxix

¹⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206-231

²⁰ Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982)

old as cinema itself, with the Lumière Brothers often making multiple versions of their short *actualités*. It has a long history in Hollywood in particular, from repeated literary adaptations such as *Imitation of Life* (by John Stahl in 1935 and Douglas Sirk in 1959), to Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Haneke's self-remakes (the former with *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in 1934 and 1956, the latter with *Funny Games* in 1997 and 2008) to the contemporary trend of the transnational remake embodied most forcefully in J-Horror crossovers such as *Ringu/The Ring* (1998/2002) and *Ju-on/The Grudge* (2002/2004) and seemingly undying action franchises such as *Rambo* and *Terminator*. Certainly, Hollywood has never had any qualms about remaking a foreign hit for its own purposes, a stance almost comically encapsulated by *Variety*'s 2007 report on Ron Howard's plans for a remake of Haneke's *Caché* (2006): "Universal's version, to be set in the U.S., is expected to amp up the suspense and consequences."²¹ The very action of remaking is central to the Hollywood system, which ceaselessly produces updates of the same themes and retells the same stories, feeding off of the corpses of national cinemas and cult genres when necessary. As Lessig notes, Hollywood is no bastion of originality, but was built by "fleeing pirates"—people who left New York for California in an effort to get away from the monopoly Edison had secured through his patent holdings.²²

Though the action is the same, the forms of remaking that have emerged in contemporary art often have very little in common with their Hollywood counterparts, working to question mainstream cinema rather than to ensure profit margins. When the tables are turned and Hollywood winds up as the host of the derivative work rather than the parasite that creates one,²³ the character of the remake shifts from a hope for

²¹ Diane Garrett and Steven Zeitchik, "Howard Decodes *Caché*: Director Eyes French Film," *Variety* (19 February 2007); available online: <<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117959689.html>>

²² Lessig, 53

²³ As Michel Serres has shown, "parasite" is a term with a rich polysemy. In a biological sense, the parasite is an organism who takes without giving anything in return, weakening its host but not killing it through the instantiation of a one-way vector of (ab)use. The parasite may also refer to a social parasite, such as a guest at a dinner party. But significantly, the French language offers an important third meaning of the word that

guaranteed revenue to a site of unsanctioned use. Here, one finds a practice of remaking that drastically diverges from that of Hollywood. Sven Lütticken's description of a relationship he sees exemplified by Godard's *Alphaville* (1964) and the Lemmy Caution series might begin to describe what is at stake here, although one would have to insist that in many cases contemporary art remakes depart from their host texts even more sharply than did Godard. As Lütticken puts it, "[A] different practice of the remake is possible: one that sees the 'original' not as a *Vorbild* to be followed (if only for its rudimentary storyline), but as something to be questioned and perverted. This kind of remake could be a free variation or permutation, which actualizes an implicit possibility."²⁴

Such works serve to call into question Hollywood's univocity, interjecting another perspective into a discourse that presents itself as seamless. As Daniel Birnbaum has questioned, "...[W]hy steal from cinema? Perhaps the answer is that video can pose questions to film that film is incapable of putting to itself."²⁵ Birnbaum's use of language risks suggesting that the matter is a question of the medium, that video might provide the remove necessary to ask questions that would be impossible to confront through the medium of film. Rather than a case of video versus film, however, what is truly at stake is a relationship between art and cinema: through appropriations of Hollywood films, artists address questions of ideology, subjectivity, history, and collectivity that are at

is absent in English but extremely apposite to the description of the relationship between Hollywood and these artists' remakes as "parasitical": the word *parasite* in French designates static or noise. According to this final meaning, the parasite interrupts a channel of communication, disturbs a message. Through the use of the prefix para-, the parasite also designates that which is beside or next to; this notion of proximity is also important to the closeness of the sometimes ambivalent relation these works set up to their "host" movie compared to the distanced critique of previous generations. See: Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

²⁴ The example of Godard's relation to genre film is particularly fitting since it is marked by such passionate ambivalence: a film such as *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1959) is both a radical contestation of Hollywood norms and a dedication to Monogram Pictures, that Poverty Row producer of low budget crime films. See: Sven Lütticken, "Planet of the Remakes," *New Left Review*, no. 25 (January-February 2004); available online: <<http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2491>>

²⁵ Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005), 75

once crucial to contemporary art practice and that reveal something about the past and present of cinema. These works attempt to tell the other side of the story of Hollywood's official discourse: they actualize a possibility that had rested dormant in the host text, sometimes in fierce opposition to it, sometimes in adulation, but most often with a marked ambivalence that embraces certain aspects of the text while challenging others. A remake might investigate the representational codes of an existing work, it might reflect on its relationship to history, it might focus on the labour of spectatorship, it might fetishize a loved film, it might question what new possibilities for freedom and control are made possible by the digitization of cinema, or it might do something else entirely. It is impossible to generalize a single relation between a remake and its host text, but what unites all the remakes that will be discussed in this chapter is that they all *exhibit cinema*: that is, they hold it up for examination and investigate its contemporary state by using its past products as raw material.

This chapter will bracket a consideration of cross-medium remakes that serve to illuminate medium-specific characteristics through hybrid formations of cinema/new media (such as Cory Arcangel's *Colors* [2006]) and cinema/painting (such as Sam Taylor-Wood's *Still Life* [2001] and *A Little Death* [2002]).²⁶ Instead, it will examine

²⁶ *Colors* belongs to a series of works that remake the products of film history using new media technologies to reflect upon the ways cinema has been subject to the laws of the algorithm and the database. Arcangel used a slit scan technique to sample a horizontal row of colours from a single frame of Dennis Hopper's *Colors* (1998) and extend them vertically to form an video of undulating vertical lines. The source film's audio plays in real time, but the image track must repeat some thirty-three days in order to display the "entire" film. While the source material is skeletally preserved by maintaining the integrity of the soundtrack, the representational function of the visual field has been eclipsed by a play of colour. Other works of this variety include Jim Campbell's *Illuminated Average #1* (2001), Vuk Cosic's *ASCII History of Moving Images* (1998), Kevin and Jennifer McCoy's *Learning from Las Vegas* (2003) and *201: A Space Algorithm* (2001), Jason Salavon's *Top Grossing Films* series (2000-2001), and Wolfgang Staehle's *Empire 24/7* (1999-2004). Sam Taylor-Wood's *Still Life* and *A Little Death* belong to a series of works that remake classical paintings as moving-image artworks to investigate the temporalities of the painted and moving images as well as to comment on the integration of film and video into the museum. Taylor-Wood filmed a small number of frames every several hours over the course of nine weeks to yield the four minutes of accelerated decay that make up *A Little Death*. A hare hangs above a wooden table in a scene reminiscent of Dirk Valkenburg's *Still Life with Dead Hare and Partridges* (1717) or Jean-Siméon Chardin's *Still Life with Dead Hare* (c. 1760). The hare, traditionally employed as a symbol of lust and earthly pleasures (and often laid at the feet of the Virgin to signal her triumph over them), is here invaded

how strategies of remaking serve to set up a relation to cinema as a social institution that functions as a cultural vernacular and a reservoir of shared experience. Through a discussion of work by Candice Breitz, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe, Chris Moukabel, and others, it will situate the popularity of the remake as an aesthetic strategy within the histories of art and cinema and provide an account of exactly what kinds of relationships to cinema—and to Hollywood cinema in particular—are imagined by these artists. For Moukabel, the concern is questioning how the cinematic institution digests and monumentalizes historical events, while Huyghe investigates the labour of culture industry workers. Breitz interrogates fandom in a digital age, while Gordon makes visible the contours of a post-VHS cinephilia. All of these artists, then, turn to Hollywood cinema for different reasons, but all of them find within it an ambivalent site of collectivity and make use of the shared cultural memory of cinema to tackle spectacular culture from within.

A Love/Hate Affair

While the remake may be used as a strategy of media critique, it must be emphasized that activities of remaking are by no means inherently critical; rather, a diversity of positions vis-à-vis the host text is possible, ranging from outright condemnation to lionizing homage. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, Chrissie Iles has remarked that “the relationship between art and film is a one-way love

by maggots until the liquid of putrefaction has spread over the wall and the blackened remnants of the corpse hang down into detached tufts of fur. Other works of this tendency include Eve Sussman’s *89 Seconds at Alcazar* (2004), a staging of Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656) in a 360-degree pan, and her feature-length *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (2007), which takes up Jacques-Louis David’s 1799 depiction of that theme. Bill Viola’s *The Greeting* (1995) and *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000) draw on the mise-en-scène of renaissance paintings to produce slow-motion investigations of human emotion and expression.

affair.”²⁷ If it is a love affair, it is most undoubtedly a love/hate affair. References to film history proliferate, making it possible to speak of a palpable cinephilia within contemporary art, but simultaneously, a large number of these references hold up dominant cinema as a great exemplar of the machinations of culture industries. One thus confronts a marked ambivalence towards the cinematic institution. On one end of the spectrum, Moukarbel’s *World Trade Center 2006* manifests nothing but contempt for Stone’s original. Similarly, *RSG-BLACK-1* (2005), Radical Software Group’s algorithmic re-editing of Ridley Scott’s *Black Hawk Down* (2001), reverse engineers the racial segregationism of what group member Alex Galloway called a “Jim Crow film”²⁸ by algorithmically editing out all white characters. This reduces the running time of the film—which is “based on a true story” of the U.S. Army mission to Mogadishu, Somalia on 3 October 1993—from 144 minutes to only 22:04.²⁹ Works such as these engage the legacy of appropriation art as a mode of critique, invoking the Situationist International’s technique of *détournement* as an important precedent.

This outright condemnation of the appropriated film is by no means generalizable as a characteristic of contemporary art remakes of old movies. In some cases, a distinct cinephilia emerges. Take, for example, Kota Ezawa’s *LYAM 3-D* (2008), a three-dimensional animated remake of Alain Resnais’ *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L’Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961) or Stan Douglas’ *Inconsolable Memories* (2005), a loose remake of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memorias*

²⁷ Chrissie Iles, “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” *October*, no. 104 (Spring, 2003), 74

²⁸ Telephone conversation with the author, 9 April 2009.

²⁹ Radical Software Group used custom-designed software to eliminate all white characters. A computer isolated each shot of the film and then did “blob detection”—that is, it scanned every shot for a small oval over a small rectangle so as to identify a human figure. Once this “blob” had been isolated, the pixels therein would be scanned for hue, resulting in a decision to keep or exclude the shot. The result is that almost all dialogue and individuated characters are deleted, leaving a teeming mass of African bodies to fight and/or be killed. *Black Hawk Down* is ostensibly about a Somali conflict, but it becomes clear throughout this re-edit the extent to which this event is used as a mere backdrop for an action movie blow out that will reproduce jingoistic American values of the heroism of overseas intervention.

del subdesarrollo, 1968) transposed to the Mariel boatlift of 1980: here, loved art cinema classics are appropriated as a way to investigate temporality and historical memory, respectively [FIGURES 2-3]. There is no move to dismantle the host films, but on the contrary a desire to mobilize the discourses they explore and bring them into confrontation with present concerns. Meanwhile, Christoph Draeger's *Schizo (Redux)* (2004) stages a cinephilic comparison between *Psycho* (1960) and Gus Van Sant's 1998 remake of that film by laying one on top of the other in a ghostly doubling that highlights the many differences between Hitchcock's film and its supposed shot-by-shot copy [FIGURE 4]. In *Feel Lucky, Punk??!* (1997-2000), Draeger moves into the fantasies of cinematic identification by engaging friends to recreate hold up scenes from *Magnum Force* (1973), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Taxi Driver* (1976), and *Thelma and Louise* (1991). In describing the production of the work, Draeger invoked a gathering of friends happy to return to the playacting of childhood and the joy of pretending to be robbers.³⁰

Most often, the polarities of love and hate are co-present in a decidedly ambivalent relationship to cinema that sees them intermingle within a single work. If, as chapter one demonstrated, the moving image in contemporary art must be seen as a major component of the spectacularization of that domain, practices of remaking make use of the ambivalent pleasures of cinema and its status as a cultural vernacular to problematize spectacular culture from within. Rather than unqualified aggression or unqualified affection, one finds a conflicted relationship to cinema that sees it as occupying a double position: its mass appeal is valorized for its ability to forge an imagined collectivity, but this massness is simultaneously acknowledged as a site of ideological interpellation and possible exploitation. In terms of the formal operations of remaking, one might say that film history is submitted to a kind of murder by scissors,

³⁰ Conversation with the author, 25 March 2009.

but this recontextualization can also be a form of homage or tribute. Taking up the former position, Dominique Païni has described recyclings of old films (and the work of Douglas Gordon in particular) as a kind of violence brought against the cinema:

These manipulations of cinematographic images attempt to *desublimat*e the art of film. Everything that has manifested itself for a hundred years in an unprecedented manner within this narrative art—the idealized beauty of the actors, the superhuman speed of bodies achieved through montage, the vertigo of contracted diegetic time—is systematically reduced or cut up or ironized or banalized or atomized. It is as if the cinema had to withstand this ordeal—being blown up, slowed down, image and sound separated, plagiarized—in order to be exhibited, to enter into the museum and share the same playing field with the great contemporary arts.³¹

Païni suggests that the cinephilia of contemporary art is not cinephilia at all, but rather the cinephile's worst nightmare. It is true that the act of remaking can entail a certain element of aggression, something made clear by both *World Trade Center 2006* and *RSG-BLACK-1*. It is undeniable that certain artists are keen to make use of the opportunity to mutilate cinema, seeing it as an exemplar of the culture industries' colonization of subjectivity, leisure time, and historical narratives. Such a dismantling of narrative cinema's illusionism has long been a key element of politically engaged moving-image practices. But even works that are decidedly cinephilic in character, such as Draeger's *Schizo (Redux)*, might be seen as disrespectful to the films they repurpose. Païni's melancholic position, however, neglects to take into account the productive potential of such desublimation, as well as its intimate relation to cinephilia.

Cinephilia is marked by the desire to dismantle its object into singular moments that live on after the viewing of the film. This might involve latching on to a fleeting moment or investing in a favourite scene. As Paul Willemen has written, "The cinephiliac discourse tends to work on scenes, on moments of gesture, on looks" rather than on the

³¹ Dominique Païni, *Le temps exposé: le cinéma de la salle au musée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002), 67; emphasis in original, translation mine.

film as a whole.³² Central to this love of cinema is the interpenetration of affection and aggression, a desire to tear cinema apart so as to possess it more fully, something that becomes possible in new ways with the digitization of cinema.³³ If Païni looks to the recycled products of film history to provide the same pleasures their hosts texts did, he will never escape the contempt he demonstrates in the citation above and the strategies of remaking at play in contemporary art will never be able to be seen as anything but destructive of the cinema's pleasures. However, if one approaches such works with another objective, keen to take up a different kind of cinematic interest, the reduction, cutting up, and atomization he describes might in fact yield new insights and new pleasures that will allow the source texts to be revisited afresh.

Writing of the limits imposed on film analysis by the characteristics of the cinematic signifier, Raymond Bellour suggests of the film text that "the body that seduces is also a body that flees: one cannot truly cite it nor embrace it," whence the proliferation of stills that populate the pages of an article like "To Enunciate (On *Marnie*)" and yet fail to truly communicate the experience of viewing the analyzed sequence.³⁴ This desire to penetrate the body of the film, to rupture its integrity in order to subject it to analysis, is a key feature of both cinephilia and film analysis. It is also a

³² Paul Willemen, "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered," *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 235

³³ It must be noted, however, that Willemen proclaims 1968 to signal the death of cinephilia and asserts that cinephilia refers to a relationship to cinema still uncontaminated by television. This chapter, by contrast, sees this form of cinephilia as one historical formation among many and casts doubt on the possibility that a love for cinema in the 1950s and 1960s—the years of the invasion of television—might be "uncontaminated" by that medium. Dudley Andrew, for example, has argued that French cinephilia at this time rebelled against the *cinéma de papa*, but it was also "a quiet, defensive war against another, less evident enemy: the disorganized, unaccredited, and unencumbered images beginning to pour out of television screens, in France and elsewhere." See: Dudley Andrew, "Jules, Jim, and Walter Benjamin," *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 35; Willemen, 227-235.

³⁴ In "To Enunciate (On *Marnie*)," Bellour acknowledges this fact, beginning his third paragraph with the statement, "No frame enlargement can ever reproduce the variable speed at which this body is offered and then taken away from us." See: Raymond Bellour, "L'Analyse flambée," *L'Entre-images: Photo. Cinéma. Vidéo* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 2002), 19; translation mine; Raymond Bellour, "To Enunciate (On *Marnie*)," trans. Bertrand Augst, Hilary Radner, and Constance Penley, *The Analysis of Film*, ed. Constance Penley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 217

feature that remains impossible to fully achieve through written prose, wherein one always reaches a limit in the attempt to reconstruct the filmic experience. When one turns to strategies of remaking as a way of producing a textual analysis of existing films, the situation changes. Films become citable and possessable. The artist can take hold of the host film and insert him- or herself into its diegesis through reenactment or create a cinephilic homage through the use of found footage. For all the uses of recycled footage as a critique of media, one also finds the genre given over to declarations of amorous analysis. In works as diverse as Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller's *The Phoenix Tapes* (1999), a found-footage work made from forty Alfred Hitchcock films, and Draeger's *Schizo (Redux)*, there exists a found-footage practice that contradicts Stefano Basilico's suggestion that found-footage film and video necessarily engage a "*gestural* use of editing" that serves to "foreground the deconstructive nature of this act, whose purpose is to destroy illusion and reveal the inherent manipulative powers of the medium."³⁵ This is certainly one strain of found-footage practice, but it must be acknowledged that such aggression can stem as much from love as from anti-illusionist critique.

Deadpan Nostalgia for a Lost Object

One thus discerns a distinct ambivalence towards the products of commercial cinema in contemporary practices of remaking. This affective complex is intimately tied to the historical position of the cinematic institution. If, in the 1960s and 1970s, cinematic hegemony made Hollywood into a bad object to be refused and dismantled, since the 1990s, changes in the status of the medium have allowed for a reevaluation of its cultural position. Hitchcock—the director referenced by contemporary artists more

³⁵ Stefano Basilico, "The Editor," *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, ed. Stefano Basilico (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004), 30; emphasis in original.

than any other—once suggested, “One of television’s greatest contributions was that it brought murder back into the home where it belongs.”³⁶ But another contribution of television, perhaps more significant given the concerns of this chapter, was to initiate a domestication of cinema that has only intensified since and in relation to which the increasing integration of cinema within the museum must be seen. It is no coincidence that the tendency to remake old movies reaches full force in the mid-1990s, contemporaneous with the centennial of cinema and the popularization of the Internet. The plethora of references to film history in art at this time make use of the remake so as to reflect on the digitization of cinema and what film historical narratives might emerge in light of it.

Douglas Gordon, perhaps the best known of the artists working with filmic found footage, has proclaimed that, “for us”—presumably his generation of artists—the cinema “is already dead,” while Pierre Bismuth easily shrugs off any apparent relation to cinephilia: “Anyways, I am not really that interested in the cinema. I used it as a tool for capturing the viewer’s attention.”³⁷ In a similar vein, Pierre Huyghe has stated that,

The label of being nostalgic for cinema has been glued to me in an easy way. As if one was to say of Cézanne that he liked apples or that Picasso liked bulls! I have no fascination for the cinema. I’m interested in it because it is the vehicle of our collective unconscious, of our relationship to the scenario.³⁸ But only as much as the supermodel Kate Moss, an advertisement, or a music video!³⁹

Statements such as these seem to support Raymond Bellour’s assertion that Douglas Gordon is “without nostalgia” and suggest that it might be extended to other artists

³⁶ Alfred Hitchcock, “After-Dinner Speech at the Screen Producers Guild Dinner,” *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 58

³⁷ Pierre Bismuth, quoted in: Thierry Davila, “Inventing Consciousness,” trans. C. Penwarden, *Art Press*, no. 326 (September 2006), 47

³⁸ It should be noted that the French *scénario* is used not only in the sense of an outline or sequence of events designated by the English “scenario,” but also may be translated as “screenplay.” The cinematic resonances of this term will become paramount to its central employment in Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Postproduction*, as will be discussed shortly.

³⁹ Pierre Huyghe, quoted in: Emmanuelle Lequeux, “La Vie rêvée des images,” *Beaux Arts Magazine*, no. 263 (May 2006), 108; all translations from this text are my own.

working with the remake.⁴⁰ And yet, the often deadpan work of Bismuth, Gordon, and Huyghe witnesses the continuation of cinema by other means, a cinema that is perhaps uncannily “undead” rather than already buried and gone. The disavowal of cinephilia in these artists’ statements does not neutralize the ways in which their work makes use of a love for cinema; it does not do away with the fact that their work manifests cinephilia even if the artists themselves do not profess to be cinephiles. Significantly, Huyghe never does investigate “Kate Moss, an advertisement, or a music video,” but instead returns to the cinema again and again as a repository of material to be replayed and remade. Gordon may personally lack nostalgia, blissfully unaware of the experimental film traditions his work sometimes engages and seeing the historical products of cinema as nothing but a moribund set of images ripe for recontextualization, but his work nonetheless depends for its success on cultural climate characterized by a widespread nostalgia for classical cinema. This nostalgia is not that of the postmodern historicism described by Jameson, marked by an eclectic mixing of signifiers at odds with genuine historicism and exemplified by films such as *American Graffiti* (1973) and *Body Heat* (1981).⁴¹ Rather, though these works share “‘intertextuality’ as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic effect,”⁴² they in no way function as quotations that seek to displace history with surface effects. On the contrary, many of these works use strategies of remaking precisely to agitate against the ways in which cinema has functioned to spectacularize the past and reduce it to nothing more than a space to be colonized by glossy surface styles. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, they serve to assert cinema as a site of collectivity and shared cultural memory, very other than the amnesiac pastiche of Jamesonian postmodernism.

⁴⁰ Raymond Bellour, “Le Corps de la fiction,” *Trafic*, no. 30 (Summer 1999), 116, translation mine.

⁴¹ See: Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 18-20

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20

To assert a cinephilic tendency of contemporary art is not to suggest that the artists involved profess a personal love for cinema or have any extensive knowledge of film history. Rather, it is to discern, on a cultural plane that extends far beyond the subjectivity of a given artist, the emergence of narrative cinema as a highly cathected object within the artistic production of the last two decades. This is, of course, not the case without exception, as *World Trade Center 2006* suggests. But the impact of a work such as *24 Hour Psycho* (1993)—to be discussed at length in the coming pages—cannot be considered outside of its relation to a public intimately familiar with Hitchcock's films, a public that finds in these films something to trigger a memory that returns with all the bittersweetness of time lost and regained.⁴³ Through this employment of the resurrected familiar made strange, the commemorations of classical Hollywood in contemporary art draw on the cinema as a shared memory and a site of imagined collectivity—whether or not the artist himself cares an ounce about whether cinema is “alive” or “dead.”

The cinephilia of contemporary art is not an exhaustive cinephilia, interested in sourcing obscure films, nor a purist cinephilia committed to celluloid. At times, as the statements above indicate, there might even be a disavowal of cinephilia. But none of this is to suggest, however, that a cinephilic impulse is not at play. The generation of artists under consideration here are the children of television, or even of videotape, lending their cinephilia a character very different than that of the Hitchcocko-Hawksians sitting in the first rows of the MacMahon cinema. Susan Sontag declared cinephilia dead in 1999, curiously neglecting to take account of the new Tarantinoesque video store

⁴³ The reference here to Proust's *madeleine* is purposeful. In his *Immemory* CD-ROM (1997), Chris Marker draws a comparison between the tea-soaked biscuit of *In Search of Lost Time* and the character of Madeleine Elster from *Vertigo*, proclaiming, “I claim for the image the humility and powers of a *madeleine*.”

“cinophile” caught up in cult genres.⁴⁴ However, as Marijke de Valke and Malte Hagener suggest, since the 1980s cinephilia has not perished but rather transformed itself, gaining new life via home viewing technologies and the Internet.⁴⁵ It is important to understand cinephilia not as a love for the movies that has perished, but rather as a historical formation that metamorphoses over time.⁴⁶

Along with the nomads of the global festival circuit and the users of invitation-only BitTorrent sites specializing in hard-to-find films of all varieties, certain contemporary artists who make reference to cinema account for—despite all of their differences from classical cinephilia and to use Sontag’s own term in a way of which she would most likely not approve—“a new kind of cine-love.”⁴⁷ These works stage a relation between the private and public dimensions of contemporary cinema, as they are made possible by the private cinema of VHS and DVD and yet, through their location within the museum and their resurrection of a past image-regime, offer a possibility of recovering a relation to collectivity crucial to the specificity of theatrical exhibition. The production of art derived from old movies provides a way of taking the private cinephilia of watching films on television and video back into the public sphere and subjecting it to scrutiny. It enacts a love for cinema while simultaneously questioning it.

Thomas Elsaesser writes that, “Cinephilia, then, whenever it is practiced around the globe, is not simply a love of the cinema. It is always already caught in several kinds

⁴⁴ Kent Jones has suggested that Tarantino functions as a structuring absence in Sontag’s argument. He writes, “The problem for her is not so much that he’s *not* a cinephile but that he’s the *wrong kind* of cinephile.” See: Kent Jones, “Movie Mutations: Letter from (and to) Some Children of 1960,” *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia*, ed. Adrian Martin and Jonathan Rosenbaum (London: BFI Publishing, 2003), 8; Susan Sontag, “The Decay of Cinema,” *New York Times* (25 February 1999), available online: < <http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html> >

⁴⁵ Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, “Down with Cinephilia? Long Live Cinephilia? And Other Videosyncratic Pleasures,” *Cinephilia: Movies, Love, and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 12

⁴⁶ This task is admirably taken up in de Valck and Hagener’s volume, as well as the anthology *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia*, ed. Adrian Martin and Jonathan Rosenbaum (London: British Film Institute, 2003), especially 1-35 and 166-188

⁴⁷ Sontag, *op. cit.*

of deferral: a detour in place and space, a shift in register and a delay in time.”⁴⁸

Elsaesser cites the delayed reception of American films in France after the Liberation as the first of such lags, but one might understand the cinephilia of contemporary art as resting on a similar displacement of time and space: it is by moving out of the movie theatre or the home and into the gallery, by looking back at a golden age of movies from a digital present, that this particular brand of cinephilia is born. Far from a postmodern pastiche that would see styles ripped from their historical mooring and set adrift in a patchwork of surfaces, certain contemporary manipulations of existing films suggest, by contrast, a memorialization of cinema, a concern with history, and an interest in how the cinema might function as a privileged conduit for negotiating cultural memory. Even those works, such as *World Trade Center 2006*, that cannot by any means be considered to advance a position of affection towards the host film, share these concerns and acknowledge the power the cinematic institution wields, even today.

The Four Operations

Contemporary practices of remaking may be grouped into four primary operations that describe the technique used to repurpose an appropriated film: interviewing, reenacting, recycling and translating.⁴⁹ Before delving into the further implications of the works under consideration, it will be helpful to lay out a schematic typology of these operations so as to provide a broad overview of the techniques employed in the practices that have come to prominence since 1990.

⁴⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, “Cinephilia, or the Uses of Disenchantment,” *Cinephilia: Movies, Love, and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 30

⁴⁹ There are, of course, important examples that defy such easy categorization and/or engage in hybrid categories. Pierre Huyghe’s *The Third Memory* (1999) for example, employs recycling, reenactment, and interviewing. These categories are intended as schematic guide to the variety of practices included in the umbrella heading of the “remake,” but it must be understood that they are by no means mutually exclusive.

• REENACTING

Reenactment has become a widespread practice in contemporary art, extending beyond references to film history to also include the reenactment of events both historical (Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* [2001]) and art historical (Marina Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces* [2005], for which the artist reenacted seven canonical performance art pieces in one week at the Guggenheim Museum in New York).⁵⁰ In contradistinction to these examples, instead of reenacting a singular event, the reenactments under discussion in this chapter repeat something that already existed as a repetition, as a representation already mobile within culture. For *Erased James Franco* (2008), New York-based artist Carter had James Franco desultorily reenact segments from all his previous roles, as well as that of Julianne Moore as Carol White in *Safe* (1995) and Rock Hudson as Tony Wilson in *Seconds* (1966). Brice Dellsperger's *Body Double* series (1995-ongoing) consists of over twenty reenactments of segments of popular films that serve to investigate the performativity of gender and the question of authenticity. Often the artist will play all parts within an excerpt, as in *Body Double 1* (1995), which remakes the elevator murder scene from Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980) [FIGURE 5]. A male artist playing both the female victim and the transvestite male murderer remakes a movie that is itself in large part a very loose remake of Hitchcock, thereby throwing into crisis any stable sense of copy and original. Later in the series, Dellsperger explores having multiple non-professionals reenact the same role and exhibits all performances simultaneously as a multi-screen installation; *Body Double 9* (1997) uses nine screens for nine reenactments of the scene from the conclusion of *Blow Out* (1981) where Jack (John Travolta) finds Sally (Nancy Allen) dead on the roof during

⁵⁰ On this trend in contemporary art, see: Sven Lütticken, ed. *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2005) and Inke Arns and Gabriele Horn, eds., *History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Reenactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007)

the fireworks.⁵¹ Stan Douglas' *Subject to a Film: Marnie* (1989) is a six-minute black-and-white 16mm remake of the robbery sequence from *Marnie* (1964) that loops back to the beginning when the title character's hands are on the safe [FIGURES 6-7]. Instead of continuing the narrative to depict the discovery of Marnie's crime, Douglas imprisons her in a nightmarish eternal return of never-ending theft but gives her salvation from another kind of imprisonment—marrying Mark Rutland. Through this tension between the loop (common in gallery exhibition) and the teleology of start-to-finish viewing (proper to the cinema), Douglas highlights the important question of how experiences of narrativity are impacted by cinema's integration into the gallery space.

Reenactment emerges as a way of producing difference from repetition, of producing the new from the old at a time when notions of novelty and originality are held under suspicion. It introduces a complex and fractured temporality, as it summons an earlier event while remaining distinctly anchored in the present. It acknowledges that the only access to the past is through a representation of it, but by remaking this representation, it can point to its failures, omissions, and biases. Maeve Connolly has suggested that, "The rise of reenactment may also signal a crisis of belief in the future, in line with the economic and social developments of the post-68 era."⁵² But rather than the conception of the past-as-panacea that this position would suggest, contemporary

⁵¹ Brian De Palma, that *grand pasticheur*, is a recurring interest of Dellsperger's, making up eleven out of the twenty-four existing installments of the *Body Double* series and lending that series its title. *Body Double* 2 and 3 (both 1995) remake scenes from *Body Double* (1984) including the 360-degree pan around the kiss on the beach, a clear reference to Scottie (James Stewart) and Judy's (Kim Novak) eerie union in *Vertigo* (1958). *Body Double* 6 and 7 (both 1996) take up *Sisters* (1973), a story of pathological doubling, while *Body Double* 15 (2001) remakes *Body Double* 5's (1996) remake of the pick-up scene at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from *Dressed To Kill*. Though the series does include remakes of other filmmakers, such as David Lynch, Gus van Sant, and Stanley Kubrick, the overwhelming presence of De Palma is significant as it allows Dellsperger to explore multiplying layers of citation and performance. De Palma's cinema is a cinema of the copy, integrating numerous references to Hitchcock and others into his decidedly unoriginal filmmaking. True to the preoccupations of Hitchcock, mistaken identity, *doppelgängers*, and fatal coincidences abound. De Palma repeats texts that already contain within them mirrorings and repetitions, thus rendering Dellsperger's reenactments of De Palma repetitions of repetitions of repetitions, the origin of which infinitely recedes.

⁵² Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site, and Screen* (London: Intellect, 2009), 130

strategies of reenactment most often return to an event precisely in order to re-open its questions and make use of them to move into the future.

• INTERVIEWING

In these works, artists engage in interviews with individuals whose lives have become intertwined with the production of feature films in one way or another. The reified images of the culture industry occlude the labour that goes into their production, seemingly materializing out of nowhere as glossy ciphers. Countering this prevailing regime, the action of interviewing individuals involved with the making of feature films reintroduces a social relation into the circulation of images and prompts a consideration of the affective labour that goes into their production. For example, when Jane and Louise Wilson were commissioned to make a work in response to the holdings of the Stanley Kubrick Archives, they delivered *Unfolding the Aryan Papers* (2009). For this work, the artists interviewed Dutch actress Johanna Ter Steege, who was set to play the lead role in the *Aryan Papers* project, a film about the Holocaust that Kubrick researched for many years but never made. The work functions as a portrait of the actress and of a failed project, but also mobilizes discourses of the Holocaust as an unrepresentable event, as Ter Steege recounts that the film remained unfinished because Kubrick couldn't bear the responsibility; she says, "No one can represent this."

Omer Fast's *Spielberg's List* (2003) responds to a similar question from another angle. In this double channel installation, Fast interviews Polish extras who participated in the production of Steven Spielberg's Holocaust blockbuster *Schindler's List* (1993) [FIGURES 8-9]. Taking up a film that received both glowing praise and virulent criticism,⁵³ Fast makes use of three kinds of footage, each performing its own negotiation

⁵³ Upon its release, the film received much popular acclaim: Roger Ebert called it "brilliantly acted, written, directed and seen," praised it for its avoidance of "the directorial and dramatic contrivances that would inspire the usual melodramatic payoffs." It went on to win seven Oscars. It also attracted the most virulent criticism from none other than Godard, who took shots at the film in his *In Praise of Love* (*L'Éloge*

between the Hollywoodization of the Shoah and the historical Real: there are talking head interviews with these extras, footage of the replica of the Plaszow camp built as a film set and never fully dismantled, and segments of the “Schindler’s List Tour” that caters to the many (mostly American) tourists that have visited Poland since the film’s release. Often, a tour operator tells us, these visitors make little distinction between remnants of the Second World War and their film set replicas. Throughout the interviews, the distinction between personal experience and acted role blurs, as one respondent abruptly shifts from a discussion of her own life in wartime Poland to some fifty years later when she acted in Spielberg’s film.

• RECYCLING

These works make use of footage from existing films, evincing a certain kinship to the subgenre of experimental cinema known as the found-footage film but often rejecting the model of start-to-finish viewing proper to it. The digitization and networking of cinema that took place in the 1990s with the advent of DVDs and the mainstreaming of high-bandwidth Internet access allowed what was once a technique requiring access to stock footage and equipment such as an optical printer to become something able to be accomplished with minimal skill, resulting in an explosion of recycled works on the Internet and in galleries. Many of these works make use of kinds of recycling that would have been difficult or impossible before these developments, such as an increased emphasis on remaking popular films. The found-footage genre has a rich history within experimental film, but before the 1990s, often such films made use of repurposed footage

d’amour, 2001), in which an exploitative production company named Spielberg Associates Incorporated tries to buy the rights to the story of an old couple who fought in the resistance. When Godard refused to accept an award for career achievement from the New York Film Critics’ Circle in 1995, he sent a fax supplying nine reasons; number one was that he was not able “to prevent M. Spielberg from rebuilding Auschwitz.” For an exploration of Godard’s many problems with *Schindler’s List*, see: Duncan Wheeler, “Godard’s List: Why Spielberg and Auschwitz are Number One,” *Media History*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 185-203. See also: Roger Ebert, “Schindler’s List,” *Chicago Sun Times* (15 December 1993); available online:

<<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19931215/REVIEWS/312150301/1023>>

with no intent that the spectator would or should identify the original source.⁵⁴ Since this time, due to technological developments, the recognizability of the source footage has become an integral part of much found-footage practice. The present viewing is always redoubled by a memory of seeing the source film in the past, introducing a different relation to the host footage than the ur-text of the found-footage film, Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936). It is widely known that the footage of Cornell's homage stems from *East of Borneo* (1931), in which Hobart starred. And yet, Cornell's re-editing of Hobart's appearances in that film by no means necessitates a familiarity with it in order to achieve its full impact. Quite differently, since 1990, many recycled works depend on their host films' popularity and recognizability across a wide demographic. Gordon is perhaps the best known of artists to engage the operation of recycling, famously subjecting feature films to extreme temporal dilation: *24 Hour Psycho* is fairly self-explanatory, while *Five Year Drive By* (1995) made the running time of *The Searchers* (1956) coextensive with its diegetic time, resulting in one second of the Ford film lasting 6.46 hours.⁵⁵ Gordon has completed numerous multi-screen reedits of films concerning riven identity and the double, including *through a looking glass* (1999), which excerpts seventy-one seconds of

⁵⁴ Indeed, often filmmakers use amateur footage, educational films, and footage of which they themselves may not know the provenance, such as Peggy Ahwesh's *The Color of Love* (1994). This is in all probability due to the material restrictions of working on film rather than video. Found-footage works made on film would need to make use of whatever scraps of stock were available, while video allows for easy, accessible copies of well-known films to be appropriated for recycling. Despite this material limitation, in the 1990s, German-Austrian filmmakers such as Martin Arnold, Peter Tscherkassky, and Matthias Müller all came to prominence with found-footage films of recycled Hollywood movies. While Arnold and Müller would later work in a gallery context, Tscherkassky has stayed within the exhibition situation of the movie theatre. For an in-depth discussion of the found-footage genre of experimental filmmaking, see: William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).

⁵⁵ Gordon has provided a detailed account of the math involved in determining this length and says of the project, "It's quite simply a question of time. How can one film, which lasts only two hours, possibly convey the fear, the desperation, the heartache, the real 'searching and waiting and hoping' that my father had tried to explain to me when I was younger? How can anyone even try to sum up five miserable years in only 113 minutes? Now, it's important to say that this is not a criticism directed at John Ford, nor the motives behind making the movie. But, for me, it does open a gap in the way we experience the experience of cinema; and this is the basis of my proposal." See: Douglas Gordon, "...an apology as a short story/a short story as an apology," *Douglas Gordon: Kidnapping* (Eindhoven: Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1998), 138-139

the “You talkin’ to me?” sequence from *Taxi Driver* (1975), and *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1995-1996), which uses Rouben Mamoulian’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), looping three sequences of transformation from good to evil in a double projection.

• TRANSLATING

Here, an artist produces a non-filmic product by subjecting a pre-existing film to a cross-medium process of translation. Here, one might invoke Angela Bulloch’s *Z-Point* (2001), which translates the closing sequence of Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point* (1970) into a bank of forty-eight “pixel boxes,” six high and eight wide to mimic the aspect ratio of 35mm film [FIGURE 10]. Each box is a fifty-centimetre glass fronted square containing within it three fluorescent tubes. Using custom software, Bulloch’s pixel boxes can produce up to sixteen million colours, as many as possible from a computer screen.⁵⁶ *Z-Point* samples one frame from each second of the excerpt (since the pixel boxes are limited to one change per second) and translates it into an array of forty-eight large pixels, one for each box. Colour and movement are retained while the representational powers of the image are obliterated. The result is a pulsing grid that brings together a sense of bodily rhythm with geometric rigour. *Z-Point* recycles an art cinema classic as new media artefact, bringing into tension the poles of senescence and novelty that this dissertation argues as marking the integration of cinema into the museum since 1990.

⁵⁶ Bulloch describes the process as such: “It is tremendously laborious to make these works. I work directly with one person only [Holger Friese] to make these programmes. For example, there are 48 cubes in *Z-Point* and in each one of those cubes are three lamps, three channels, and if you think about the duration—it is 8’13” looped, that makes 493”—so for each of those seconds, there are 48 x 3 changes or shifts in value made (144 x 493 = 70 992 different values in this piece). On a human scale, it is hard to imagine so many changes of values simultaneously...” Angela Bulloch, quoted in: Maria Walsh, “The Light Fantastic: Angela Bulloch Interviewed by Maria Walsh,” *Art Monthly*, no. 292 (December-January 2005-2006), 4

Pauline Kael called *Zabriskie Point* a “crumbling ruin” of modernist art cinema.⁵⁷ Its final sequence, with its fantastic explosion of modernist architecture and all the consumerist comforts of American life, demonstrates the corruption of modernist aspirations and imagines a need for their annihilation in a *tabula rasa* of culture. *Z-Point* takes this sequence and translates it into the arch-modernist structure of the grid, a fact that Branden W. Joseph sees as relating the work to a history of modernist painting and sculpture while also participating in a postmodern nostalgia that, unlike Jameson’s formulation, engages with the legacy of modernism to put forth a “recognition and presentation of [its] foreclosure.”⁵⁸ A meeting of old and new media provides a way to bring the past into collision with the present in order to enact a commentary on the utopian promises of modernity and their failure.

The remakes that engage in translation may remediate old media into new media, much as takes place in culture at large, but they may also translate cinema into older media. Examples of such this kind of cross-medium translation are to be found in Fiona Banner’s transcriptions of Vietnam War films, such as *Apocalypse Now* (1997), a hand-scribbled text measuring some seventeen square metres, or her artist’s book *THE NAM* (1997), which compiles typewritten transcriptions of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), and *Platoon* (1986) into a single, nearly unreadable text [FIGURES 11-12]. Pierre Bismuth’s *Following the Right Hand of...* series does exactly what its title suggests: the artist watches a DVD behind a plexiglass sheet and uses a marker to trace a shaky line that follows the female star’s right hand throughout the film. This is placed on top of a still of the actress, resulting in a defiled portrait of, for example, Louise Brooks in *Prix de beauté* (1930, remade by Bismuth as *Following the Right Hand*

⁵⁷ Pauline Kael, quoted in: Harry Medved and Randy Dreyfuss, *The 50 Worst Films of All Time* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1978), 277

⁵⁸ Branden W. Joseph, “Future Anterior: History and Speculation in the Work of Angela Bulloch,” *Grey Room*, no. 32 (Summer 2008), 116 and 136

of Louise Brooks in *Beauty Contest*, 2008) [FIGURE 13]. The scribbled line indexes Bismuth's viewing of the film, its nervous energy pointing to a thorough redirection of attention away from the narrative progression and towards the movements of an actress' right hand. In the translations produced by both Banner and Bismuth, the labour of spectatorship is made visible in the production of manually-produced artefacts that index the time spent as a viewer.

Historical precedents and narratives of recuperation

Basing an artwork on an existing cultural product is by no means new, nor is making use of the gallery space to comment upon the mass medium of cinema. Strategies of appropriating mass media imagery are very familiar within art historical discourse, prompting a need to parse out the differences between the proliferation of remakes in art since 1990 and three important antecedent moments: 1) the Situationist International and their strategy of *détournement*; 2) the counter-cinematic and iconoclastic film installations of the 1960s and 1970s, and; 3) the Pictures generation of 1970s and 1980s appropriationists and their interest in a politics of the sign.

When Angela Bulloch substitutes the soundtrack of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (*Solyaris*, 1972) with her own audio to make *Solaris* (1993) or dubs Jean Rouch's *Gare du nord* segment of *Paris seen by...* (*Paris vu par...*, 1964) into German or English based on interior and exterior shots and adds scenes filmed in Vienna to make *From the Eiffel Tower to the Riesenrad* (1993), her gestures have a clear precedent: in 1973, René Viénet, member of the Situationist International, took the martial arts film *Crush* (*Tang shou tai quan dao*, 1972) and dubbed his own soundtrack to make *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (*La Dialectique peut-elle casser des briques?*). This is a classic example of Situationist *détournement*, that process by which mass cultural products are “diverted” or “hijacked” towards critical ends, thus contesting the spectacle from within. And yet,

Bulloch's use of this operation possesses none of the potency of the Situationists, none of the desire to appropriate an existing mass cultural text in an indictment of that realm. For the S.I., *détournement* is an operation of radical negation; in a critique of the *Tel Quel* group's literary avant-guardism, Guy Debord states, "Not some 'writing degree zero'—just the opposite. Not the negation of style but the style of negation."⁵⁹ This contestation must maintain a critical distance towards its object so as to restore "the ancient kernel of truth" that might be excavated from amidst the petrified surfaces of spectacle.⁶⁰

Notably, while the formal operations of some of the strategies of remaking that have emerged since 1990 resemble those of Situationist *détournement*, on the whole they by no means maintain its virulence towards the appropriated objects, its critical distance from them, nor its focus on negation as a way of instituting a new totality founded on a recovered truth. The S.I. aimed at nothing less than cultural revolution, seeing the divide between art and life as an integral part of the separations that characterized spectacular culture. In this sense, their militant interventions must be seen as attempting to destroy the category of art⁶¹ as much as violently contesting mass culture, seeking a Hegelian *Aufhebung* that would institute a new totality free of the alienation and separation of spectacle. Remakes of existing films since 1990 have abandoned the Situationist call for an abolition of art as a distinct category and have ceased to view mass culture as an unqualified villain. Firmly ensconced within the institution of art, they leave behind negation and totality to instead forge an ambivalent and conflicted relationship to the

⁵⁹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 144

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 145-146

⁶¹ As the editorial notes of issue three of the *Internationale Situationniste*, entitled "The Meaning of Decay in Art" explain, "For revolutionaries, there can be no turning back. The world of artistic expression, whatever its content, has already lapsed. It repeats itself scandalously in order to keep going as long as the dominant society succeeds in preserving the privation and scarcity that are the anachronistic conditions of its reign." See: Editorial Notes, "The Meaning of Decay in Art," trans. John Shepley, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 90; originally printed in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 3 (December 1959), 3-8

fragmentary network of signs that constitutes popular culture.

McKenzie Wark has written that “On Debord’s account at least, the [Situationist International] was dissolved precisely because its recuperation”—an operation that can be seen as the opposite of *détournement* wherein the dominant culture reabsorbs and makes use of that which once challenged it—“was by 1972 already complete... It had become merely a collective celebrity, part of the spectacular consumption of ‘radical chic.’”⁶² When evaluating the appropriation of old movies in the creation of new works, the recuperation of the radical challenges of the S.I. is crucial to acknowledge. However, conceding the recuperation of *détournement* as a strategy is not to say that recent remakes renounce the political, nor that they evince a neutral stance towards the works they appropriate.⁶³ Rather, it is to emphasize the differences between the contemporary generation and the well-known politico-aesthetic precedent of the Situationists by underlining that today the act of appropriation in itself guarantees no criticality, but rather functions as a starting point to open other avenues of investigation, some of which may entail a critique of media, others not.

Contemporaneous with the Situationists’ attempt to use the strategy of *détournement* to demolish spectacle from within, in North America the first wave of film installations was partaking in a decidedly anti-spectacular iconoclasm that claimed art as a sphere autonomous from the machinations of mass culture. If the Situationists sought to abolish the divide between art and life, here this barrier is purposefully fortified. If there is indeed a “story” to Michael Snow’s *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974), a double 16mm installation, it is one of the spectator’s phenomenological engagement with the work and not any narrative per se [FIGURE 14]. The relation to Hollywood and mass culture found in Snow’s generation appears as the non-relation of the modernist avant-

⁶² McKenzie Wark, *Fifty Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 10

⁶³ As we shall see in what follows, these are two characteristics of the prevailing account of these works, Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay, How Art Transforms the World*.

garde, famously formulated by Theodor Adorno. The dominant system of illusionistic representation from which the filmmaker-artists of this earlier generation actively sought to extricate themselves has been embraced anew since the 1990s. Now, artists insinuate themselves into Hollywood, narrative, and visual pleasure with a proximity that speaks to the annihilation of critical distance. They mobilize ambivalent structures of feeling that dramatize the extent to which they are embroiled within the very same mythologies they are confronting. This differs greatly from the utopias of autonomy that permeate the first generation of film installations in that it rejects the possibility of an “outside” to ideology and the existence of an unalienable truth that might reside beneath mystifying appearances.

The first generation of film and video installations turned to those media as a way out of the enclosures of traditional forms of art making. They provided an escape route from aura, an entry into the economy of the multiple, and a chance to interrogate the role of the viewer in relation to the work. If the expanded cinema of the 1960s and 1970s was interested in exploding the apparatus so as to interrogate the phenomenological relation between the viewer’s body and the moving image, opening up a spectator-screen relationship very different from that of conventional cinema, by the 1990s, these concerns had shifted to a new interest in narrativity, fiction, the virtuality of a represented world, and Hollywood itself. The development of home viewing technologies, cheaply available data projectors, and the digitization of production, postproduction, and exhibition contributed to an increasing malleability and transportability of cinema that has mitigated the political imperative to break apart the apparatus, since this now appears as a central characteristic of culture at large. While it is still imperative to analyze the representational codes of cinema, dismantling the apparatus is less of a concern given the fact that this now occurs, albeit in a very different manner, as a part of the movement of convergence.

The contemporary imperative is to acknowledge that the grounds of a possible politics of the image have changed. Just as the postmodernists of the 1980s could be divided into the reactionaries and what Hal Foster called the “postmodernism of resistance,”⁶⁴ so can the contemporary artists engaging with the moving image and its relation to spectacle be parsed into a similar division of affirmation and ambivalence, though the line between them can become fuzzy. At the risk of oversimplification, the contemporary realignment might be summarized as follows: if this earlier generation interrogated film *as film* to turn away from the ideological enclosures of “the movies,” the generation under examination in this chapter takes *cinema*, including its popular dimension, as a central area of inquiry. This means that rather than an interest in the materiality of the medium, they evince an interest in the cinematic institution as a mass-cultural leisure activity and its accompanying attributes—stardom, screenplays, extras, studios, stories, sets, spectators—as a way in to a discussion of its codes of representation and how it circulates throughout culture. These artists take up the histories, conventions, and social functions of cinema as the mass cultural medium responsible for the production of narratives and experiences shared by a society.

Given this focus on the circulation of cinematic signs throughout culture, much is to be gleaned from a brief comparison between the contemporary generation and the “Pictures” group of American appropriationists. In combining multi-screen film and video installations with a suspicious embrace of mass cultural codes and the poaching of signs, the contemporary generation synthesizes elements of 1960s expanded cinema with 1970s and 1980s appropriation. In the “Pictures” generation, one once again encounters an example of appropriation art whose history is marked by neutralization and recuperation. In Douglas Crimp’s “Pictures,” a 1979 article largely based on the catalogue text he wrote as curator of the 1977 Artists Space exhibition of the same name, the author

⁶⁴ See: Hal Foster, “(Post)Modern Polemics,” *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 121-136, as well as footnote 29 of chapter two of this dissertation.

attaches a necessarily critical valence to the strategies of appropriation and citation he saw around him.⁶⁵ However, by 1982, Crimp would revise his position, putting forth a qualified view that has only increased in relevance today:

The strategy of appropriation no longer attests to a particular stance toward the conditions of contemporary culture. To say this is both to suggest that appropriation *did* at first seem to entail a critical position and to admit that such a reading was altogether too simple. Appropriation, pastiche, quotation—these methods extend to virtually every aspect of our culture, from the most cynically calculated products of the fashion and entertainment industries to the most committed critical activities of artists, from the most clearly retrograde works...to the most seemingly progressive practices...⁶⁶

Here, Crimp importantly points out that strategies of remaking and recycling by no means inherently guarantee a particular political position—if they ever did. Though the strategies of appropriation and pastiche might be deployed towards progressive ends, they possess no inherent criticality vis-à-vis the dominant culture. Rather, the textuality and citational practices of the Pictures generation are symptomatic of the very same fading of the real and the loss of historicity described by Jameson in his *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* and may be employed in retrograde works that affirm that logic.⁶⁷ Remaking might be thought of as a privileged way of delivering the ever-same with hollow promises of novelty; recycling might be seen to rip styles from historical contextualization and allow them to circulate as floating signifiers. The now hackneyed collapse of high and low, the fascination with degraded cultural forms, and the schizophrenic rubble of signifiers are able to be put in the service of the reactionary as much as the progressive. Though the late 1970s were marked by a whole host of practices—think of Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler, or Cindy Sherman—that actively recruited such strategies as a part of a politics of representation, the works under

⁶⁵ Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October*, vol. 8 (Spring 1979), 75-88

⁶⁶ Douglas Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation," *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 126

⁶⁷ The examples of regressive uses provided by Crimp are "Michael Graves's buildings, Hans Jürgen Syberberg's films, Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, David Salle's paintings." See: Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation," 126; Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Culture Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1-6

discussion in this chapter come well after this generation of artists; that is, they come after the radical challenges of its interventions had been thoroughly recuperated as just another art world M.O. stripped of its potency.⁶⁸

Compounding this historical neutralization, the tendencies of remaking that emerged in the 1990s take a significant step even closer to mass cultural forms than the “Pictures” generation did before them due to their frequent choice to work in film and video. Acknowledging the fact that recycling and remaking are a central part of the dominant cultural logic rather than an oppositional stance, these artists make use of the very tools of spectacle against itself. Instead of following the earlier artists in an examination of the iconography of cinema through the stillness of photography⁶⁹—thereby freezing circuits of desire and identification into the stasis of a single image to be held up for analysis—now artists delve into an engagement with moving images themselves. In the 1970s and 1980s, appropriation was more a matter of reframing the object rather than internally tampering with it. Sherrie Levine would rephotograph Walker Evans, while Cindy Sherman would produce film stills that looked as if they could have been pulled from a 1945 *film noir*—what changed was the context [FIGURES 15-16]. While there is a distinct link between the earlier Pictures group and the artists under consideration in this chapter, it must be noted that the contemporary generation moves away from the older paradigm of appropriation-as-reframing to one of appropriation-as-tampering, as *insinuation*. Most often, appropriated material reappears with changes much more substantial than, for example, Richard Prince’s

⁶⁸ In “Appropriating Appropriation,” Crimp qualifies his earlier argument not only by insisting on regressive uses of pastiche and citation, but also by noting that the radical interventions of the Pictures generation blunted as the 1980s progressed and the artists gained wider acceptance: they began to “allow themselves simply to enter that [institutional] discourse (rather than to intervene within it) on a par with the very objects they had once appeared ready to displace.” See: Crimp, “Appropriating Appropriation,” 135

⁶⁹ There are occasional uses of 16mm film and video by the earlier generation, but as a rule photography functioned as the medium of choice. Particularly worth mentioning in this context is Jack Goldstein’s *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* (1975), a two-minute 16mm film that loops found footage of the MGM lion logo that appears at the beginning of the studio’s films. In video, Dara Birnbaum’s *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-1979) is an important precedent to the work under consideration here.

Spiritual America (1983), in which the artists rephotographed Gary Gross' 1975 image of a naked, ten-year-old Brooke Shields and depended on its change of context to supply the critical apparatus necessary for a reassessment of the image. Reframing maintains the formal integrity of the appropriated object but shifts its context so as to (supposedly) change its meaning, whereas insinuation troubles strategies internal to the text, working within it rather than at a critical remove.

The move towards interrogating moving images through the deployment of moving images⁷⁰ is in large part made possible by developments in home viewing technology, data projection, and postproduction software that made making and exhibiting video easier than ever before. However, it also speaks to something very different—the obliteration of the last millimetres of critical distance. As Jameson suggests,

No theory of cultural politics currently on the Left today has been able to do without one notion or another of a certain minimal aesthetic distance, of the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital, from which to assault this last. What the burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that distance in general (including “critical distance” in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism.⁷¹

Even though the “Pictures” group took steps towards formulating a politics of the image that recognized the postmodern blurring of the line between complicity and critique, a commitment to critical distance was maintained—though this distance was in practice difficult to safeguard. Though Crimp does rightfully acknowledge that the account of appropriation as inherently critical needs refinement, he clings to a narrative of recuperation, the very possibility of which suggests that a critical distance had indeed once existed and had progressively dissipated. The generation that emerged in the 1990s ruefully recognizes the impossibility of an “outside” and instead sets forth to move within

⁷⁰ Of course, as the “translating” operation described above suggests, not all artists engaged in remaking existing films produce moving images. The majority, however, do.

⁷¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 48

the colonized spaces of capital in the most candid way possible. The employment of the moving image is a part of this acknowledgement, as it refuses the false sense of remove that might be achieved by the use of photography in favour of making work using this most spectacular of media.

The disarmament and reabsorption of any and all critical distance described by Jameson begs the question: then what now? How might a politics of the image persist beyond the obliteration of critical distance? How can one move beyond a nostalgic longing for a time when real opposition was possible (if it ever was) and seek forms of agitation that respond to the contemporary diagram of power? This problematic emerges as to a key strand of remaking in art since 1990. Artists make use of the pleasures of recognizability as central to the affective resonance of their work, playing off of a conception of cinema as a storehouse of communally shared narratives and resurrecting the utopian spark of cinema as an alternative public sphere. But at the same time, it often surfaces that this shared cultural memory is also a site of ideological interpellation to be questioned, as the cinema is seen as a spectacular machine churning out image-commodities, regulating cultural norms, and impacting the way we understand history. Stemming from this is an irreducible ambivalence towards the mass cultural texts that are integrated into the production of new works. This ambivalence must never be taken for indifference, but must be seen as describing strong forces that refract, splinter, and enter into tension with one another. The challenge now is to *take ambivalence seriously*, seeing in it an opportunity to render visible the contradictory libidinal investments elicited by the culture industries.

This ambivalence may be seen as an important response to the collapse of the complicity/critique divide after postmodernity's spectacular colonization of the last zones of resistance, the realm of art foremost among them. In a discussion of the work of Pierre Huyghe, Mark Godfrey writes, "Rarely has an artist associated with a critical

position been canny enough to work *with* affection, attraction, and amazement and not just against them.”⁷² This coexistence of a critical position with “affection, attraction, and amazement” is the affective structure characteristic of the ambivalent engagement with cinema that marks many strategies of remaking since 1990. Leaving behind the anti-pleasure polemics of the 1960s and 1970s, the disavowal of enjoyment has ceased to be a necessary prerequisite for critical engagement. Through such ambivalence, these artists rewrite the dominant narratives of Hollywood into an array of multi-faceted and contradictory stories that negotiate the borders between truth and fiction, industrial production and personal experience, visibility and invisibility, fantasy and criticality, the event and its narrativization. Rather than intervening solely at the level of representational codes, central to many of these works is an attempt to interrogate the gap between lived experience and cinematic representations, to locate the various vectors that bind subjects to the image-repertoire of popular culture and constitute them as viewing publics.

Like the work of the filmic avant-garde that preceded and paralleled it, the artists making film installations in the 1960s and 1970s maintained a belief in an “outside” to ideology. Indeed, the guarantee of a secure, external space from which one might produce a critique of ideology served as one of the cornerstones of filmic theories of “political modernism” of this time.⁷³ Today, there is a widespread acknowledgement that one cannot mark out an “outside” to ideology, with the result that the contests with narrative, the assaults on representation and spectacle, and the polemics against cinematic pleasure no longer stand as viable political strategies. Easy divisions of inside and outside are rejected in favour of a shifting topology of forces that takes care not to

⁷² Mark Godfrey, “Pierre Huyghe’s Double Spectacle,” *Grey Room*, no. 32 (Summer 2008), 58

⁷³ D.N. Rodowick uses the term “political modernism” to refer to “the expression of a desire to combine semiotic and ideological analysis with the development of an avant-garde aesthetic practice dedicated to the production of radical social effects.” See: D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1-2

deny the involvement of one's own discursive position within the libidinal and economic structures of image-based capital. Enjoyment is not at odds with critical engagement; rather, both coexist. Harnessing the pleasures of Hollywood cinema within practices that acknowledge the historical recuperations of expanded cinema, Situationist *détournement*, and Pictures appropriationism, these works try to find a way towards a different politics of the image. It must be remembered that there are different ways of being bedfellows with spectacle. The examples of Doug Aitken's *Sleepwalkers* (2007) and Pipilotti Rist's *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Metres)* (2008) provided one paradigm in chapter one; now, the time has come to examine a series of very different engagements with spectacular culture, engagements that prove that knowledge can and *must* be produced from within the colonized spaces of the culture industries. For if it doesn't come from there—a there that is *everywhere*—where will it come from?

The False Promises of the “Utopia of Use”

World Trade Center 2006 and the lawsuit it inspired are significant, for they speak to several of the key issues confronting the understanding of the remake as a practice in contemporary art. That the art world has been cheerfully exempt from the increasing copyright regulation of recent years has not prevented the most prominent theorization of the remake in contemporary art to see it as a part of a utopian move towards sharing and a testament to the new activity and freedom afforded to the consumer by the advent of digital, networked media. To great popularity and great dispute, Nicolas Bourriaud's *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay, How Art Reprograms the World* sees its title operation as a “neutral, zero-sum process” wherein “the material [these artists] manipulate is no longer *primary*.”⁷⁴ Ignoring the history of appropriation art as embroiled in a politics of representation, Bourriaud advances a new

⁷⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay, How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002), 37 and 13; emphasis in original

paradigm of derivative artmaking wherein the work no longer reflects back on its appropriated material in a critical relation, but instead merely reuses it to advance an emancipatory economy of sharing that makes the formerly “passive” consumer into an “active” producer who creates new cultural objects from the availability of the old. We no longer merely consume media, but take part as active participants.

In his 1998 book *Relational Aesthetics* (translated 2002), Bourriaud links what he calls “post VCR art” to a “democratization of viewpoints” made possible by technology that echoes Moukarbel’s statement about the “democratization of storytelling.”⁷⁵ However, where Moukarbel was intent to use the availability of such technologies in a critique of the representations of dominant cinema (democratization as allowing for new forms of contestation), in both *Relational Aesthetics* and *Postproduction*, critique is left behind in favour of a harmonious community of sharing and the production of benign social relations (democratization as an egalitarian inclusiveness). Under such a paradigm, it becomes impossible to take account of, for example, the ways in which remaking has been employed to investigate the narrativization of historical events. Political intervention is jettisoned in favour of a joyous proclamation of neutrality.

Bourriaud draws heavily on the work of Michel de Certeau to champion a “culture of use or a culture of activity” that allows one to “make do” and better inhabit the world.⁷⁶ The DJ and the programmer⁷⁷ are named as the archetypal figures of the

⁷⁵ It is in relation to this “post VCR art” that Bourriaud cites the very same Serge Daney text used as the epigraph to this chapter. Tellingly, Bourriaud misquotes Daney to write, “[Post VCR art] explains Serge Daney’s prediction about film: ‘*The only thing that will be retained (from art) is what can be remade.*’” Bourriaud’s misquotation is slight but significant, especially given that he radically changes the context and meaning of Daney’s statement without making note of it. Daney was writing of the tragedy of how profitable it was for “the entertainment industry to simply remake “epic films” [*films de légende*]*—and only those.*” Bourriaud changes this lamentation to an exhilaration concerning the artistic possibilities afforded by home viewing technologies. See: Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Paris: les presses du réel, 2002), 77; emphasis in original, and Daney, 6; emphasis in original, translation mine.

⁷⁶ “Making do” is the accepted translation of the French *se débrouiller*, which also means “to cope” or “to get along.” A famous example of “making do” is the *perruque*, or wig. Here, the worker diverts labour time towards his or her own, personal work. De Certeau provides the example of a secretary who might use

operation, which proceeds with a neutrality that cannot help but be enfolded in an affirmation of neoliberal consensus culture. Bourriaud valorizes participation and activity without interrogating their character or their place in structures of domination. As chapter one suggested following Deleuze and Foucault, the pervasive form of the administration of power is no longer the injunction to conform and stay in place (though such forms persist as important survivals, as will be explored through the work of Candice Breitz), but rather is the incitation to participate and circulate. The inside/outside distinctions of disciplinary power have largely given way to the diagram of the control society, a robust and flexible network that thrives on principles of connectivity and communication. As an economy based in material goods shifts to one founded in services and the creation of “experiences,”⁷⁸ a new “performative imperative”⁷⁹ arises: participation and conviviality are far from oppositional but, in fact, a new terrain of possible exploitation and expropriation.

A changed relation between production and consumption signals this shift, but its character differs from the emancipatory thrust of Bourriaud’s description. Rather than erasing the difference between production and consumption, post-Fordist production, as Maurizio Lazzarato has elaborated, is characterized by a shift to immaterial labour whereby the act of consumption becomes an integral part of capitalist production. Therefore, participation cannot be seen as inherently oppositional, but is in fact precisely what is required for the capitalist production of value. As Lazzarato writes,

company time to write a love letter. See: Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 26; Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 19

⁷⁷ Ibid., 13. The word “programmer” brings with it a perhaps purposeful ambiguity. Bourriaud’s constant return to digital media tropes makes it possible that he is making reference to a computer programmer. However, the word also invokes resonances of a culture worker, such as a film programmer or even a curator. Given Bourriaud’s status as an international curator whose fame in some ways eclipses that of the artists with whom he works, this second meaning has added interest. Is the intent to suggest that artists are now learning from curators how best to be artists?

⁷⁸ See, for example: B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Every Work is a Theater and Every Business a Stage* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1999)

⁷⁹ The term is Sven Lütticken’s. See: Sven Lütticken, “Progressive Striptease: Performance Ideology Past and Present,” *Secret Publicity: Essays on Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 174

“Participative management is a technology of power, a technology for creating and controlling the ‘subjective processes’...First and foremost, we have here a discourse that is authoritarian: one *has to* express oneself, one *has to* speak, communicate, cooperate, and so forth,” as consumers are called upon to invest immaterial products with value by integrating them into social communication.⁸⁰ Here, subjectivity itself is commodified, as tastes, affects, and desires rather than material labour become the locus of value production. The consumption of immaterial commodities is an activity that does not destroy the object but produces its value through integrating it into the fabric of life. As such, the “culture of activity” Bourriaud champions must thus be seen not as inherently oppositional but rather as native to the relationship between power, labour, and subjectivity that marks the twenty-first century.

It is in light of this understanding of the administration of power that one must read the assertion in *Relational Aesthetics* that, “[Modernism] was based on conflict, whereas the imaginary of our day and age is concerned with negotiations, bonds, and co-existences. These days we are no longer trying to advance by means of conflictual clashes...”⁸¹ As Hal Foster has written in his review of that book and of *Postproduction*, “Apparently, if one model of the old avant-garde was the Party à la Lenin, today the equivalent is a party à la Lennon”⁸²—to carry forth Foster’s analogy, in Bourriaud’s reading, “all you need is love.” While it may be true that the old oppositions of modernism no longer hold true—the lines, for example, between work/play, high/low, and complicity/critique have been thoroughly blurred—the false permissiveness of neoliberalism is a fatal problem in Bourriaud’s analysis. The kind of co-existence and cooperation he valorizes is, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri emphasize, immanent

⁸⁰ Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor,” trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emery, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 135 and 145

⁸¹ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 45

⁸² Hal Foster, “Arty Party,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 25, no. 23 (December 2003); available online: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n23/fost01_.html>

to immaterial labour and as such to the contemporary mutations of capital.⁸³

Postproduction retains the Situationist term of *détournement* but cleanses it of the negativity on which it was founded without acknowledging the conditions and implications of such a recuperation. Harmony, sharing, and conviviality become keywords in a paradigm that overwrites a politics of the sign with a complacency toward the status quo that mirrors, rather than agitates against, new forms of power.

Conceiving of the reuse of existing products as a “culture of constant activity based on a collective ideal: sharing”⁸⁴ not only buys wholeheartedly into the control society’s injunction to participate, but also occludes the real existence of proprietary media, the high financial stakes involved, as well as the fact that much of the source material has not been “shared,” but rather has been poached against the will of its original producer, as Paramount’s lawsuit against Moukarbel makes clear. There is no disputing the fact that the Internet has made media available like never before. As Moukarbel has suggested, “I think that the Internet has changed the relationship with found media. I used to make work from videos that I would find in thrift stores or literally pick up off the street. YouTube quickly made that kind of archaeological process less interesting to me because it presented access to fringe media.”⁸⁵ However, despite such unprecedented access, as Alex Galloway and Eugene Thacker point out, “...the liberation rhetoric of distributed networks...is a foil for the real workings of power today. The rhetoric of liberation is also a foil for the real nature of threats.”⁸⁶ Decentralization diffuses power but does not dissipate it; to buy into the myth of the unqualified freedoms of Internet culture is to ignore the ways in which power continues to operate in and through decentralized and distributed networks.

⁸³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 294

⁸⁴ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 9

⁸⁵ E-mail correspondence with the author, 21 May 2009.

⁸⁶ Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 16

Tom McDonough's consideration of the work of Pierre Huyghe, "No Ghost," appears in something of an anti-Bourriaud issue of *October*.⁸⁷ Criticizing Bourriaud for his transposition of de Certeau's "making do" from everyday life to the gallery, McDonough writes, "Bourriaud adopts this schema wholesale and, somewhat paradoxically if not perversely, returns it to the artistic realm where it originated."⁸⁸ It is de Certeau himself who reminds that the everyday activity can only be understood in

⁸⁷ Included in volume 110 of the journal were Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," Tom McDonough's "No Ghost," and an interview between George Baker and Pierre Huyghe, all prefaced by an introductory note from Baker. Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"—perhaps the most widely read response to *Relational Aesthetics*—is worth extended commentary here, as its misguided theoretical logic and factual errors make it unworthy of discussion within the body of this text. Bishop mobilizes Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's notion of antagonism, which argues that a democratic society is one that sustains rather than erases conflict. The harmonious social relationships produced under the paradigm of relational aesthetics are seen to erase such antagonism, resulting in a consensus that does away with debate. While this is accurate, unfortunately Bishop's very valid critique of Bourriaud fails due to ascription of an "ideal of subjectivity as whole" (67) that would be a prerequisite for community that appears nowhere in nor is implied by Bourriaud's text. Moreover, Bishop reifies the very either/or oppositions (notably that between democracy and liberalism) that Mouffe and Laclau's notion of antagonism would refuse, rejecting as it does the possibility of self-identical entities coming into a binary conflict with one another. Additionally problematic is her privileging of the work of Santiago Sierra for its ability to induce uneasiness rather than conviviality in the relations produced between and among viewers. Sierra has often been accused of exploitation and sensationalism; he is fond of paying disenfranchised groups to undergo unpleasant or degrading tasks, famously remunerating drug-addicted Brazilian prostitutes in their drug of choice to tattoo a line across their backs, poor Cuban men to masturbate in front of surveillance cameras in Havana, or illegal workers to lug a two ton block around a gallery without purpose. This is exemplary of Bishop's vulgarization of antagonism as elaborated by Mouffe and Laclau into mere antipathy and unpleasantness. She fails to confront that just as the relational aesthetics paradigm may reproduce the false liberties of consensus culture, Sierra's actions reproduce the exploitation of marginalized communities. They do so in a manner that produces global fame for the artist and shock-tainment for art world spectators without undertaking any real intervention into the conditions of existence endured by those Sierra employs as temporary labourers. Moreover, the antagonism here is purely class-based, while Mouffe asserts that—and here we find an essential part of her intervention into the Marxist tradition—the concept of antagonism is not reducible to class struggle. Sierra's actions take the multiple subject positions of those he employs—a fact insisted upon by Mouffe—and reduce them to a single, deterministic position. In Liam Gillick's response to Bishop, which assiduously points out several factual errors of her article, the author writes that, "...the true nature of Mouffe's plea for a more sophisticated understanding of the paradox of liberal democracy concerns the recognition of the antagonism suppressed within consensus-based models of social democracy, not merely a simple two-way relationship between the existing sociopolitical model and an enlightened demonstration of its failings" (100). Thus, while Bishop's desire to describe the ways in which *Relational Aesthetics* might consolidate hegemony is honourable, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" is a critique plagued by errors, misappropriations, and oversights and for these reasons cannot be endorsed. See: Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004), 51-79; Liam Gillick, "Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,'" *October*, no. 115 (Winter 2006), 95-107; Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," trans. Stanley Gray, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 89-104, especially 94-95.

⁸⁸ Tom McDonough, "No Ghost," *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004), 118

relation to the precise circumstances in which it is deployed, that is to say, in relation to its conditions of enunciation.⁸⁹ If de Certeau wanted to inject an “art of doing” into everyday life—the original French title of *The Practice of Everyday Life* is *Arts de faire*—and addressed his book to the “murmuring voice of societies,” “a common hero, an ubiquitous character,”⁹⁰ Bourriaud reverses such a motion by returning to the gallery and its high-paid cultural producers. He describes an altogether different context as if such a transposition would have no effect on the efficacy of the gesture. This changed site of enunciation allows the power asymmetry between strong and weak insisted upon by de Certeau to fade into obscurity in Bourriaud’s analysis; the international art stars he discusses are by no means “weak,” but rather are invested with a richness of cultural (and financial) capital possessed only by a small elite. Bourriaud portrays a constant and equal availability of texts and outlets of expression, drawing on the rhetorics of democratization and emancipation that still characterize some discourses of online creativity despite their mythic character.⁹¹ The elision of the discursive position of the artists equally allows Bourriaud to ignore how the rigidification of copyright law over the last twenty years⁹² might temper his ideal of sharing precisely because major artists are provided a substantial degree of protection via their professional status as “fair users” with gallery-funded legal teams to back up the claim if necessary. When Brian O’Doherty

⁸⁹ de Certeau, 33

⁹⁰ Ibid., v

⁹¹ Internet utopianism is central to the vocabulary of *Postproduction*, which includes terms such as “download” (93-94) “hacking” (77) and “programming” (14). Bourriaud also makes an analogy between the postproduction artist and the Web surfer, writing that both are “semionauts” that navigate “the links, the likely relations between disparate sites” (18). “[W]e surf on a network of signs,” while the artwork is a “site of navigation” (19).

⁹² For example, the 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act (also known as the Sonny Bono Act) serves to extend copyright the life of the author plus seventy years or to 120 years after creation or ninety-five after publication (whichever is earlier) for works of corporate authorship. This represents an extension of twenty years over the Copyright Act of 1976. Aside from extending copyright longer than it has ever been before, this act sets a precedent for indefinite extensions of copyright that goes against the spirit that it would be for “limited times” as set forth in the U.S. Constitution, essentially sounding the death knell of the public domain.

described the white cube as a “survival compound,”⁹³ he meant something very different, but now again the gallery functions as a barrier between these artists and the inevitability of legal proceedings that could threaten them in the “real world.”

McDonough also points out that de Certeau’s notion of “making do” smacks of a post-’68 defeatism that abandons both imagining an alternative to the status quo and visible agitation against it in favour of clandestine and temporary actions that improve one’s quality of life under conditions taken to be permanent. Though McDonough does not, one might forgive de Certeau for laying out ways in which an individual might make the best of it through micro-interventions. However, art is a sphere of relative freedom that does allow for creative imaginations of alternative modes of life as well for as fierce indictments of existing conditions, activities that have constituted an important part of the political function of art throughout the twentieth century. The power relations at stake are different: the factory worker might lose a job that feeds his family if he dissents; an artist might make the cover of *Artforum* or drive up prices. The arguable resignation of “making do” is problematic but understandable within de Certeau’s framework; its appropriation by Bourriaud speaks to a much more troubling renunciation of the political, of the desire for real change, and of the possibility that art might provide a valuable space in which to criticize the mass media. According to McDonough, both de Certeau and Bourriaud buy into “a ‘utopia of use’ that resists the logic of reification only by recourse to a kind of petit-bourgeois fantasy of consumption as a realm of personal autonomy.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 80

⁹⁴ McDonough, “No Ghost,” 121

Pierre Huyghe, *Post-Postproduction*

Perhaps more than any other artist, Huyghe has explored forms of remaking as a way of operating within the colonized spaces of advanced capital, focusing on the labour of immaterial production through an insistent concern with culture industry workers. In 1995, he re-shot the entirety of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1956) with amateurs in a French housing project and titled the result *Remake* [FIGURE 17]. Emptied to a bare minimum of action, the video becomes a document of an attempt at reenactment much more than it is a replaying of the pleasure and suspense of the original, with the replacement of the original's Greenwich Village courtyard by a construction site indicating this emphasis on labour and process.⁹⁵ For *L'Éclipse* (1998), Huyghe engaged Bruno Ganz to shoot a sequence to fill in the time elided by a cut in Wim Wenders' *The American Friend* (*Der amerikanische Freund*, 1977) twenty years after the actor had participated in the original production. The artist placed an advertisement for amateurs to attend a casting session where they would be videotaped while reenacting scenes from Pasolini's *Hawks and Sparrows* (*Uccellacci e Uccellini*, 1965), resulting in *Casting* (1995). Investigating another normally unseen operation of the commercial film industry, in *Dubbing* (1996), the artist filmed fifteen individuals at work on the French dubbing of *Poltergeist* (1982) [FIGURE 18]. Through these four varieties of reenactment, Huyghe explores five elements of filmmaking: cinematography and direction (*Remake*), editing (*L'Éclipse*), casting (*Casting*), and sound recording (*Dubbing*). Huyghe turns to cinema as a site of labour, moving through the glossy images produced by the culture industries into the mundane, quotidian functioning of its mechanisms of production.

⁹⁵ As Jean-Christophe Royoux has put it, Huyghe's projects "present the representation not as 'finished product' but as *work*. It is putting the representation to work, or in work, that interests the artist." See: Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Leisure Time Workers and the Reconfiguration of Public Space: Several Hypotheses on the Work of Pierre Huyghe," *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (Manchester: Metropolitan University of Manchester, 2003), 182

Huyghe has produced several works based on interviews with individuals associated with the culture industries, sometimes in hybrid formations that include recycling and reenactment. These works feature as prominent examples in Bourriaud's *Postproduction*, where they are read as fables of emancipation that use art to render back to these subjects what had been expropriated from them by the culture industry. *The Third Memory* (1997)—the work for which Huyghe is likely best known—is a two-screen installation that takes as its point of departure the robbery of a Chase Manhattan Bank in Brooklyn attempted by John Wojtowicz on 22 August 1972 and its subsequent adaptation by Sidney Lumet as *Dog Day Afternoon* in 1975. Huyghe has Wojtowicz reenact the robbery (or perhaps the robbery as depicted in *Dog Day Afternoon*) on a Paris sound stage, sometimes intercutting scenes from the film starring Al Pacino. Periodically, Wojtowicz will pause to provide background information concerning the event, including that he had gone to see Pacino and Marlon Brando in *The Godfather* (1972) just before committing the robbery as a way of “rallying the troops.” Throughout these works, Huyghe stages a confrontation between the individual subject and a media representation of which s/he has been a part. If studies of the culture industries’ effects normally focus on audiences, Huyghe shifts his focus to examine individuals who are involved in the production of media images.

Blanche Neige Lucie (1997) tells the story of Lucie Dolène, the woman who dubbed the voice of Snow White in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) into French in 1962. In the mid-1990s after receiving no royalties from the film’s 1993 VHS release, Dolène successfully sued Disney and regained the legal rights to her voice. In Bourriaud’s account of these works, possibilities of emancipation are key; the many works Huyghe has based on existing films are seen to provide a chance for freedom and autonomy through remaking. Describing *Blanche Neige Lucie* and *The Third Memory*, Bourriaud would have it that, “...individuals reappropriate their story and their work,

and reality takes revenge on fiction.”⁹⁶ But is it quite this easy to oppose “good” reality to “evil” Hollywood fiction?

The Third Memory begins with the familiar FBI warning against copyright infringement, doubly humourous since Huyghe makes use of clips of *Dog Day Afternoon* without permission, while Wojtowicz complains of another theft, that the makers of that film haven’t sufficiently remunerated him for the use of his story: “It’s twenty-eight now years that I’ve been fighting Warner Brothers trying to get my movie money back and they keep giving it to the hostages. I’m a millionaire living on welfare”⁹⁷ [FIGURE 19]. Throughout most of the work, the same action is present on the installation’s two screens but is filmed from different angles, suggesting the instability of any “objective” position one might take with regard to the event. No attempt is made to disguise the artificiality of the sound stage on which the reenactment takes place; this is a site of production explicitly dramatized as such. As Wojtowicz—whose name was changed to Sonny Wortzik in Lumet’s adaptation—gives instructions to the actor-hostages, he periodically pauses to explain his story to the camera.

“Reality” and “fiction” become confused, as Wojtowicz explains that it is from seeing *The Godfather* that he got the idea for the note he would write—“This is an offer you can’t refuse. Signed, The Gang”—and makes statements such as, “In the real movie the cops fire on us and we have to shoot back at them.” Rather than resting on the binary between reality and fiction that underwrites Bourriaud’s understanding of the work, the third term of *The Third Memory* is precisely the impossibility of their separation. Not the event and not its fictionalization, but a hybrid tertiary memory that would contest the

⁹⁶ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 51

⁹⁷ At the time of the film’s release, Wojtowicz wrote a letter to the *New York Times* explaining what he saw to be the discrepancies between the event and the movie, but it was rejected for publication. The letter was printed, along with the rejection letter from *New York Times* arts and leisure editor William H. Henan in *Gay Sunshine: A Journal of Gay Liberation*, no. 29-30 (Summer/Fall 1976) and reprinted in *Jump Cut*, no. 15 (1977), 31-32; available online: <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC15folder/RealDogDay.html>>

false purity of the first two. This is emblemized in the closing image of the work, which is pulled from television footage of the 1972 robbery. This is neither reality nor fiction, but a spectacularized media representation manufactured for mass consumption.

Huyghe's choice to display reproductions of news articles covering the event as a part of the installation reinforces this interest in the constitution of the robbery as media event.

In "No Ghost," McDonough develops a reading of *The Third Memory* that contests an understanding of the artist as excavating possibilities for emancipation. As McDonough notes, Jean-Charles Masséra's catalogue essay "The Lesson of Stains," advances a reading of the piece that is similar to Bourriaud's: the work is a way of "reappropriating the representations that speak in our place and our name, an enterprise where the subject represented—or figured—is invited to take back his place at the very heart of the spectacular machinery that has dispossessed him of his own identity..."⁹⁸ But what "place" does he have to take back? While the documentary *Based on a True Story* (2005) attempted to parse out the "real truth" of the events behind *Dog Day Afternoon*, Huyghe does nothing of the sort. Instead, an additional layer of self-consciously fictional performance is added to an event that has already been narrativized and re-narrativized, spectacularized and re-spectacularized. As Frederic Jameson notes in his analysis of *Dog Day Afternoon*, one of the novelties of the event on which the film was based was that the presence of television cameras made it a "media event" from the very beginning⁹⁹; one might say that Wojtowicz's story was produced by television, remade by cinema, and then remade again by Huyghe, leaving no unmediated truth to uncover. The lived experience of the man who stands before us onscreen is incommunicable, save for the ways it is made visible through its mediation by television, cinema, and art. Behind the

⁹⁸ Jean-Charles Masséra, "The Lesson of Stains," trans. Brian Holmes, *Pierre Huyghe: The Third Memory* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2000), 95

⁹⁹ The other two novelties were that the crowd sympathized with the robber rather than the police and the bisexual robber's claim that he had undertaken the robbery to finance his partner's sex change operation. See: Frederic Jameson, "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film," *Signatures of the Visible* (London: Routledge, 1992), 53

veil lies only another veil, so the best strategy might be to add another to at least make visible the pattern of the lace. The Real of the event remains forever inaccessible, as knowledge of it may be produced only through multiplying the refractions of media representation. There is no redemption here, McDonough suggests, but rather,

What we witness in *The Third Memory*, then, is not one subject's reassertion of control over his "gestures and deeds," nor the revenge of "reality" on the "fictions" of spectacle-culture. It is rather the ever-increasing conscription of the subject by the mechanisms of that culture, the culmination of more than a half-century of attempts to colonize everyday life down to its most minute aspects.¹⁰⁰

Though the operation of the interview might seem to provide an opportunity for the individual subject to finally gain access to a media outlet in which to voice his claims and regain the right to his own story, here it is mobilized as a way to highlight the impossibility of an uncontaminated outside.

In *Blanche Neige Lucie*, a four-minute 35mm film, Lucie Dolène sits on a sound stage singing "Un jour mon prince viendra," the French version of "Someday My Prince Will Come" [FIGURE 20]. Or rather, she does so for about half of the running time of the film. Just as *The Third Memory* made clear its use of sets as sets, here, the film begins and ends with lengthy shots of an empty studio. This brings the viewer into a certain proximity to the normally occluded labour of the culture industries, something the artist also takes up in his *Casting* and *Dubbing*. McDonough notes that *Blanche Neige Lucie* must be viewed in the context of the fixing of quotas to determine the proportion of American programming able to be broadcast on television in the European Union (an effort to combat the United States "and its culture as the leading edge in a neoliberal advance") but one must also add that such works must be seen in relation to the mid-1990s labour struggles of French freelance media workers—*les intermittants du spectacle*—against the increased precarity of their situation.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ McDonough, "No Ghost," 109

¹⁰¹ Tom McDonough, "Production/Projection: Notes on the Capitalist Fairy Tale," *The Art of Projection*, ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 134-145; on the struggles

Throughout the film, the narrative of Dolène's encounter with the story of *Snow White* and recording the French soundtrack appears in the first-person as italicized subtitles, which finish with Dolène telling of her legal proceedings against Disney to recover unpaid royalties. At the end of the film, the official voice of non-italicized subtitles appears onscreen: "In November, 1996, Lucie Dolène, the interpreter of *Snow White* won her case and regained the ownership of her voice." As Bourriaud would have it, there is a righting of wrongs, a reappropriation of a dispossessed voice. And yet, one must remain attentive to the film's use of subtitles. *Blanche Neige Lucie* never allows Dolène's speech and voice to unite, but instead enacts a division that troubles any easy sense that her voice is her unalienable property. What issues from her mouth is a hit song from a hit film; what issues from her mouth is the commodity she brings to market. In a postscript that only confirms the ways in which Huyghe's film tempers any sense of real victory, Disney removed her voice when they released the DVD version of *Snow White* in 2003 and have also replaced dubbing she did on French versions of *The Jungle Book* (1967) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991).

In McDonough's reading of *Blanche Neige Lucie*, in keeping with his understanding of *The Third Memory*, he describes it as a "capitalist fairy tale":

Lucie Dolène's story, then, was already one of capital's transformational power over the subject: the adoption of a stage name, the abandonment of her regional accent, the move from an internal French cultural market to an ever-more Americanized space of cultural consumption—long before Disney failed to pay the royalties owed to her, Dolène had lost possession of her voice and entered the polyphonic world of the commodity.¹⁰²

McDonough's reading of Huyghe is rigorous, sophisticated, and a much needed corrective to Bourriaud's *Postproduction*; in large part it will not be contested in these pages. However, it is important to signal a crucial omission that leaves this account

of *les intermittents du spectacle*, see: Christopher Bodnar, "Taking it to the Streets: French Cultural Worker Resistance and the Creation of a Precariat Movement," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2006); available online: < <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1768/1887> >

¹⁰² McDonough, "Production/Projection: Notes on the Capitalist Fairy Tale," 134

incomplete: pleasure. *Blanche Neige Lucie* is indeed a story of capital not emancipation, but it is one told through a beautiful rendition of a song tinged with childhood magic; recall that the story of exploitation is read silently by the viewer through subtitles, while the soundtrack consists of Dolène's voice singing Snow White's famous anthem of hope, romance, and faith. For a French audience, the soundtrack would have the additional affective resonance of being the same voice of Snow White remembered from childhood, while for an English audience, the song is powerfully evocative nonetheless. This mobilization of shared memory and of the pleasurable dimension of spectacular culture must be taken seriously, for when one takes into account the spectator's response to the song, the capitalist fairy tale becomes not just Dolène's but our own. Our childhood memories and fascinations come into collision with an adult awareness of Disney not as a weaver of dreams but as a machine of corporate exploitation. The attachment that so many share to this song and to the narrative to which it belongs now becomes a site of the putrid, rather than innocent, magic that is proper to the commodity form. "[C]apital's transformational power over the subject" is recognized as extending not merely over of a worker within the entertainment industry, who might be thought to be more vulnerable to the machinations of a media conglomerate, but over the viewer as well.

Blanche Neige Lucie uses the affective power of song to summon a childhood memory as memory of media consumption. Through the ambivalent coexistence of pleasure and a revelation of exploitation, this critique becomes not merely known but felt. Though McDonough takes care to rescue *The Third Memory* from reduction to "an all-too-familiar variety of ideology critique,"¹⁰³ that would reveal the truth behind mystified appearance, his reading implicitly falls back into a very different trap of that same old ideology critique: the notion that playfulness and pleasure are necessarily at odds with a serious critical edge. *The Third Memory* invites the pleasure of recognizing

¹⁰³ McDonough, "No Ghost," 109

the story of *Dog Day Afternoon* and partakes of the same curiosity regarding the ins-and-outs of Hollywood's storytelling process that many "behind the scenes" television programs and tell-all books regularly cash in on. In protesting so much against Bourriaud's happy-go-lucky participation, McDonough loses sight of the centrality of entertainment and commonly shared cultural memories to Huyghe's practice. It is certain that perhaps more than any other contemporary artist, Huyghe has commented on the commodification of subjectivity and the transformation of leisure time in contemporary capitalism, but in order to engage in his potent critiques of the spectacle from within, he also makes use of it. There is a sense that McDonough's overwhelming negativity is a compensatory measure undertaken in an effort to counterbalance the discourses of emancipation that mark the prevailing critical literature. In order to fully take account of Huyghe's strategies, one must acknowledge that the pleasure and fantasy so central to his work really do play a part in our consumption of both the original texts and their remakes.

The Possibilities of Counterspectacle

McDonough's reading follows the lead of a major endorsement of Huyghe's 2001 French pavilion installation at the Venice Biennale. Surrounded by the large number of moving-image installations at Venice that year, Benjamin Buchloh reacted violently but singled out Huyghe's installation, *Le Château de Turing*, as an antidote to the numerous "retardataire humanist" spectacles on view.¹⁰⁴ Stating that the artist mobilized an

¹⁰⁴ A palpably disgusted Buchloh writes, "Exhibition value—the condition of the secularized modern work as fully emancipated from cult value and myth—has been replaced by spectacle value, a condition in which media control in everyday life is mimetically internalized and aggressively extended into those visual practices that had previously been defined as either exempt from, or oppositional to, mass-cultural regimes, and that now relapse into the most intense solicitation of mythical experience. Paradoxically, the more noisily this electronic apparatus voices its totalizing claims, the more it expectorates its *retardataire* humanist, if not outright mythical or religious, themes and messages." Bill Viola was excoriated as exemplary of this tendency. See: Benjamin Buchloh, "Control, By Design," *Artforum* (September 2001), 124

“allegorical counterforce,” Buchloh said of *Atari Light* (2001), “Thus the modernist promises of emancipatory inscription and ludic self-realization returned here in a nightmarish hybrid where spectatorial participation only furthers the spectator’s seemingly inexhaustible submission to the mechanisms of the societies of control.”¹⁰⁵

While the end result of Huyghe’s work is, according to this account, “seemingly inexhaustible submission,” it is important to take note of how this indictment of the societies of control is achieved—through a return or remaking of “the modernist promises of emancipatory inscription and ludic self-realization” that are never fully quashed. Though Buchloh and McDonough’s accounts share much in common, this acknowledgement of the ways in which Huyghe assiduously integrates playfulness and pleasure into his work is key. Emancipation is not refused outright, nor humour. Rather, they return in a hybrid form—an *ambivalent form*—that seeks to dramatize their hollow promises by staging within the work an irresolvable contradiction between the ways in which the work opens onto fantasy and memory and the ways in which it reveals them to be commodified, contaminated, and yet persistently pleasurable. This ambivalence emerges as a way of strengthening his critique of spectacular culture while acknowledging his position inside of it.

This is not an antispectacular mode, as McDonough’s pessimism might suggest, but a *counterspectacular* mode.¹⁰⁶ As Huyghe has said,

The point is not as an artist to occupy the position of simply rejecting the spectacle or entertainment as bad; this is a form of escapism. Nor is the point just to incorporate spectacle, and occupy the position of an artist saying, “I will also just be an entertainer.” The point is *to take the spectacle as a format*, and to use it if the need presents itself.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ While the term “counterspectacle” may echo Peter Wollen’s “counter-cinema,” the two are quite distinct. Whereas Wollen’s counter-cinema set up a purely oppositional relationship to dominant cinema, the counterspectacular mode embraces certain elements of spectacle in order to pervert their functioning. See: Peter Wollen, “Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d’Est*,” *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 120-129

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Huyghe, quoted in: George Baker, “Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004), 105104; emphasis added

Taking spectacle as a format means making use of its affective possibilities. Rather than static containment, Huyghe finds room to maneuver within the “holding-in-place” of entertainment, going against rather than confirming its etymological sense. Huyghe makes use of spectacle to re-narrativize that which has already been narrativized—in large part by the institution of cinema—in order to construct allegories of the techniques of subjection under advanced capital. This does not mean dismantling spectacle, nor does it mean recovering a truth behind appearances. Rather, it attempts to use cinema to investigate the spectacularization of what was thought to be one of the last refuges of the uncommodifiable—subjectivity—precisely because of the extent to which it has historically participated in such processes. Acknowledging the full reification of internal and external life, Huyghe mobilizes the accessibility and pleasure that cinema affords to produce counter-narratives of the subject’s relation to the totality. In this way, Huyghe activates the contradictions of our contemporary situation rather than pacifying them or offering false utopias of emancipation.

One finds a similar ambivalence in the work of Candice Breitz. Breitz adapts the found-footage tradition to an gallery context by producing multi-screen installations that investigate the libidinal vectors that bind cinema to its public, as well as how they have been impacted by the recent advent of the fan’s ability to manipulate and remix existing films. Breitz’s installations ask: what kind of balance exists between control and freedom when a tool of ideological interpellation such as Hollywood cinema becomes available for recycling and remixing in new contexts? And what residues of disciplinary power persist within this institution when it is networked and malleable? Far from being seen as an obsolescent technology or a historical set of great directors, here old cinema is used to generate the very image of contemporaneity, producing narratives that are decidedly new; that is, cinema is used to articulate how the shift to a post-Fordist economy spawns

new opportunities for control as much as freedom. Breitz complicates Bourriaud's assumption that all participation is inherently positive by instead excavating the ways in which the ideological interpellations of cinema persist in and through fan participation.

In *Becoming* (2003), Breitz makes use of seven different romantic comedies, pruning them down to a key scene involving their female protagonist and removing the appearance of any other actors [FIGURE 21].¹⁰⁸ The work consists of seven screens. On one side of each screen, there is an excerpt from a romantic comedy; on the other, Breitz acts out the star's role in black and white and mouths her lines. Due to the piece's spatial configuration, the spectator has to move around the seven screens of the installation to evaluate the effectiveness of each impersonation. Breitz might be said to engage in the "zero-sum" game of postproduction, reclaiming the pleasures of fan culture and making them visible and valorized within contemporary art; or, one might recognize in the artist's laborious attempt to imitate these actresses a commentary on the violence of attempting to mold oneself in the image of the star. Imitation is a central aspect of stardom, as the star both sets a standard to be followed yet retains an existence as an impossible fantasy projection. Breitz's imitation of these female stars requires diligent and purposeful rehearsal, but also points to the subtle and scarcely noticed imitation that occurs whenever Hollywood influences fashion, cosmetics, language, or even the way we negotiate interpersonal relationships.

Becoming—which draws its title from the name of an MTV reality series that gives fans makeovers to look like their favourite star and produces a reenactment of one of the star's music videos—explicitly takes up the relationship between a digitized and networked cinema available for recycling and remaking and the false positions of "activity" it may produce. The drained black and white of the reenactment image, Breitz's

¹⁰⁸ The stars and films used are: Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* (1990), Cameron Diaz in *The Sweetest Thing* (2002), Neve Campbell in *Three to Tango* (1999), Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde* (2001), Jennifer Lopez in *Angel Eyes* (2001), Drew Barrymore in *Wishful Thinking* (1997), and Meg Ryan in *You've Got Mail* (1999).

cropped hair, and her plain white shirt all appear in stark contrast to the lush colour of the source films and the costuming of the star. Unlike Cindy Sherman's elaborate self-fashionings, Breitz's reenactments are spartan. In *Postproduction*, the script is a jumping off point for creative endeavor, but it must also be remembered that a script is something to be followed. Breitz inhabits this contradictory position, showing how fan freedom and fan control are in fact two sides of the same story, just as the images of *Becoming* are projected onto two sides of the same screen.

What is perhaps most striking about Breitz's appropriation of these romantic comedy screenplays is the absence of her own voice—something the installation shares in common with Huyghe's *Blanche Neige Lucie*. *Becoming* makes use of the soundtrack from the source film, with the result that the Hollywood texts seem to speak through Breitz's body, usurping her voice and vernacular in favour of a global narrative of heteronormative romance. The script is no longer the locus of a generative freedom, but of an imperative to stay synchronized with the voices that speak through the dispossessed subject. If according to Bourriaud's paradigm, she is the empowered consumer, then following this alternate reading, she has instead become a ventriloquist's dummy. The strength of *Becoming* is that it allows for both readings at once, holding them in suspension. For even if Breitz's recycling and reenactment of these romantic comedies is one that points to the ideological interpellations of popular romance films, the mere possibility that such a statement can be made rests on the activity of a fan/artist who chooses to make use of the availability of such media representations to create a work that will serve to interrogate them. In this sense, Breitz's self-placement as the one who imitates the star is crucial, as the artist is present both as dupe and as demystifier.

In the works *Him* (1968-2008) and *Her* (1978-2008), Breitz creates stuttering kaleidoscopes of Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep by combining clips from various roles

In addition to their function as star studies, *Him* and *Her* take up Hollywood's constitution of gender roles, a preoccupation evident in the impersonal pronouns used in the title of the piece. Throughout the work, Meryl Streep comes to stand in for the idealized-yet-recognizable femininity of Hollywood, defining herself solely, as one clip from *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979) says, in her role as daughter, mother, and wife. The topic of marriage is a continual reference, as is self-sacrifice. Here, the friction between particularity and generality reemerges, as the star is eminently relatable and also larger than life. Meanwhile, *Him* takes up a very different set of thematic concerns, such as anger, sex, and as just mentioned, an anxiety over identity—all of which speak to a particular constitution of American masculinity.

In this interrogation of archetypal norms through exceptional personalities, *Him* and *Her* are the development earlier works entitled *Mother* and *Father* (both 2005) [FIGURE 23]. These works each use six screens placed in a row to form a constellation of mothers and fathers culled from various Hollywood films.¹¹⁰ This allows for an exploration of gendered parental roles to be explored across a body of films, letting the viewer witness the father's hysterical policing of his daughter's chastity and the mother's teary unhappiness and frigidity. By selecting excerpts from numerous popular films, Breitz highlights the monolithic nature of Hollywood's depiction of parental roles. Though the excerpted characters have various surface level differences, it quickly becomes clear that certain fundamentals about what constitutes motherhood are shared across films as different as the sappy *Stepmom* (1998) and the grotesque *Mommie Dearest* (1981). To use Siegfried Kracauer's language, they all have the same secret to

¹¹⁰ In *Mother*, one finds Shirley MacLaine's alcoholic mom in *Postcards from the Edge* (1990), Julia Roberts and Susan Sarandon from *Stepmom* (1998), Faye Dunaway as Joan Crawford in *Mommie Dearest* (1981), Meryl Streep from *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), and Diane Keaton in *The Good Mother* (1988); in *Father*, one finds Steve Martin in *Father of the Bride* (1991), Tony Danza in *She's Out of Control* (1989), Harvey Keitel in *Imaginary Crimes* (1994), Donald Sutherland in *Ordinary People* (1980), Dustin Hoffman in *Kramer vs. Kramer*, and Jon Voight in *The Champ* (1979).

confess.¹¹¹ As the original narratives of these films fall away, so do their particularities. One is left with attributes and words that might stem from a specific movie, but circulate throughout culture as detached but recognizable signifiers of the essence of motherhood. Out of six seemingly different Hollywood mothers, Breitz produces one Mother; particularity gives way to generality in a meta-mythology. The individual star performances of Hollywood entertainment lose whatever specificity they might have had as they are recuperated back into the archetypes of which they have always made use.

Breitz has described her practice using the abject metaphor of excretion¹¹²:

We have no choice...but to consume the cultural produce of global capitalism. But consumption must be followed by digestion, and digestion must be followed by excretion. This is a polite way of saying that if we have no choice but to consume what the mass media feeds us, then we must insist on completing the digestive cycle—we must insist on the right to chew up, process and regurgitate mass media forms such that they might service us rather than merely milking us.¹¹³

The invocation of the abject gets to the confounding of interior and exterior distinctions that takes place in a work such as this, figuring the way in which they are borne of the system of image-capital that Breitz describes and yet mark out some difference from it. Breitz uses the availability of commercial DVDs and editing software to divert performances from their original context, a process she calls “involuntary acting,” since

¹¹¹ In his essay, “The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies,” Kracauer provides an interesting account of the role of the film critic vis-à-vis the mythologies that circulate in popular film, one that many of the artists under discussion in this chapter might well be said to take up: “In order to investigate today’s societies, one must listen to the confessions of the products of its film industries. They are all blabbing a rude secret, without really wanting to. In the endless sequence of films, a limited number of typical themes recur again and again; they reveal how society wants to see itself. The quintessence of these film themes is at the same time the sum of the society’s ideologies, whose spell is broken by the interpretation of the themes.” See: Siegfried Kracauer, “The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies,” *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 294

¹¹² In his text *Dispersion*, Seth Price has also used the metaphor of excretion to describe working with found materials: “The last hundred years of work indicate that it’s demonstrably impossible to destroy or dematerialize Art, which, like it or not, can only gradually expand, voraciously synthesizing every aspect of life. Meanwhile, we can take up the redemptive circulation of allegory through design, obsolete forms and historical moments, genre and the vernacular, the social memory woven into popular culture: a private, secular, and profane consumption of media. Production, after all, is the excretory phase in a process of appropriation.” See: Seth Price, *Dispersion*, 18; available online: <www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion08.pdf>

¹¹³ Candice Breitz, quoted in: Nicholas Chambers, “Candice Breitz: *Mother + Father*—Interview with Nicholas Chambers,” *Artlines*, vol. 2 (2005), 12-13

she “kidnaps” stars and puts them to work within her own densely woven textile.¹¹⁴ The fan’s fetishism that appears here has also been extensively explored and valorized in Breitz’s multi-channel installations of popular music fans such as *Legend (A Portrait of Bob Marley)* (2005).¹¹⁵ Once again, one sees here how Breitz’s practice would lend itself to Bourriaud’s discussion in *Postproduction*: the formerly passive consumer is made active through production. According to such a reading, these works would be a part of a fan’s remix culture, playfully combining clips into a new form that creates a utopian space for maneuvering within the enclosures of mass media. However, more than simply embracing this supposed freedom, Breitz never loses sight of the force-feeding of mass media texts she describes in the passage cited above—“we have no choice...but to consume the produce of global capitalism.” Consumption and production are linked but *separate* activities, with numerous relations of varied character that can serve to connect the two. This vector between the consumption of mass media texts and what their spectators do with them is the central point of inquiry across Breitz’s practice. Rather than asserting the inherent positivity of participation, she insists on the need to examine the activity itself. Sometimes it can lead to the possibility of turning against dominant ideologies, other times it can confirm and reproduce them, and still more often it can do both at once. There is a striking ambivalence present that allows Breitz to at once embrace the activities of fandom as offering something other than a soporific intoxication with the culture industries, but also to cast a suspicious glance on its hollow promises of emancipation.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 13

¹¹⁵ This thirty-channel installation shows thirty Bob Marley fans singing along to a compact disc of Marley’s songs they listen to on headphones. Unlike the film fandom of *Becoming*, which sees the amateur’s voice usurped by the Hollywood text, here a chorus of fans passionately performs Marley’s songs. Breitz has made similar installations concerning Michael Jackson (*King*, 2005), Madonna (*Queen*, 2005), and John Lennon (*Working Class Hero*, 2006). These works posit fan activity as a site of joy, endowing the fan’s mimetic activity with a very different quality than that of *Becoming*, *Him*, *Her*, *Mother*, or *Father*. Perhaps this difference resides in the fact that the *Legend* family of works makes use of popular music fans while the others make use of Hollywood cinema, which is less affiliated with oppositional cultures than pop music.

Just as the playfulness of Breitz's reenactments of Hollywood actresses gives way to a sense of violation and confinement of the voice and body by the norms it would seek to replicate, it is important to note that the overall experience of viewing *Him, Her, Mother*, and *Father* is one of dislocation resulting from an incessant stammering and twitching. Jerkiness is cultivated, as Breitz will loop a tiny snippet of dialogue and image over and over so as to result in a kind of stutter. Something sinister emerges from within these entertaining montages. The work oscillates between a single composite voice that speaks as the archetypal "Mother" and a schizophrenia resulting from the chatter of so many quickly edited snippets, mimicking the very structure that governs the relationship between the univocal encoding of the Hollywood text and its polyvocal decoding by audiences, but never resolving this productive tension.¹¹⁶ For the spectator, the fun of enjoying the star's performance—taking pleasure in the clever correspondences Breitz excavates and playing the "name that clip" game—is balanced with the realization that such performances play a key role in the formation of the gender and parental norms that frequently pass unquestioned. The opposition of critical distance versus entertaining engagement is breached. There is no denial of the immense pull of celebrity culture, no assertion by the artist that she is somehow above it or beyond it, and at times even a real sense that the fan's reproduction can bend and twist these texts into something new, different, and oppositional. At the same time, the mimetic function of the star and the

¹¹⁶ The terms "encoding" and "decoding" are used here following Stuart Hall. Hall rejects a simplistic textual determinist model of communication in favour of emphasizing the ways in which encoding can impose limitations on decoding but can never fully determine it. Hall identifies three different relations that decoding may enact to encoding: a dominant/hegemonic position, whereby the viewer receives the message as the receiver intended; a negotiated position, whereby the viewer understands the message but also contests some aspects of it in a discursive position ridden with contradictions that only occasionally become visible; and a "globally contrary" position, wherein the viewer fully understands the text and yet rejects it, dismantling it and reassembling it according to another frame of reference. Hall writes that at this moment, the viewer is "operating with what we must call an *oppositional code*. One of the most significant political moments...is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading. Here the 'politics of signification'—the struggle in discourse—is joined" (138, emphasis in original). See: Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis (New York: Routledge, 1980), 128-138.

ideological interpellations of the cinema are constantly called into question. The ambivalence of this work is not to be mistaken for indifference, but rather is marked by contradiction and the antagonism of irreconcilable and often asymmetrical forces. The ubiquitous availability of the star's image offers itself up for recontextualizations that haggle with the text of celebrity while embracing it, assert the agency of the fan/consumer while dismantling it, and revel in the malleability of poached signs while testifying to the persistence of cinema as an ideological apparatus.

“A film is a public space, a common place”

Breitz makes clear that the “activity” of the consumer may no longer be held to be an inherently subversive action that would contest the megaphone of the producer.

Rather, producers call upon their consumers to be “active” and to invest their immaterial products with value. As Lazzarato writes,

The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the “ideological” and cultural environment of the consumer. This commodity does not produce the physical capacity of labor power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labor produces first and foremost a “social relation.”¹¹⁷

Whereas Huyghe focused on the affective, immaterial labour of individuals who participate in creating the products of the culture industries, Breitz insists that the reception of these products is similarly a form of such labour. Rather than seeing the activity of the consumer as an inherently oppositional or as a free space of play, this paradigm allows for an understanding of fan/user activity as value producing. Instead of unproblematically championing the activity of today's consumers who download and remix, Lazzarato reminds that this is in fact indicative of a colonization of that time once thought to be free from capitalist exploitation:

¹¹⁷ Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” 138

Play...no longer constitutes an alternative to work as domination. The dialectical opposition between play and work has been transformed into a continuum, of which play and work are only the two extremes. Between the two, it is possible to arrange a thousand different ways the coefficients of work and play, autonomy and subordination, activity and passivity, intellectual and manual labour, which nourish capitalist valorization.¹¹⁸

Given that this paradigm achieves its full realization with Web 2.0 technologies of participation and social networking,¹¹⁹ why look back at the cinema in order to discuss a condition largely associated with digital media? Why is it that the narrativization of this new mutation of capital takes place through old medium of cinema rather than through engagements with new media technologies?

Of interest here is a peculiar disjunction, an anachronism: cinema—a technology that has historically been aligned with a unidirectional vector of mass consumption and the enclosures of disciplinary power—becomes the primary way that contemporary art speaks about a diagram of power (control) and an organization of labour (immaterial) that are typically aligned with digital technologies. Why this asynchrony? One might venture that it is because cinema has historically participated in the colonization of leisure time, making it a major site of immaterial labour before it became increasing dominant over manual labour. When immaterial labour produces a “social relation,” it is engaged in the production of subjectivity immanent to a process of capitalist valorization. The film industry has always relied on the affective investments of its audiences to give its products value, occupying their free time with activities that would not merely produce value for the studios but also *reproduce* ideology, as Breitz makes clear. The cinema is a technology of reproduction in a double sense: it reproduces images and it reproduces ideology through these images, serving to create subjects. The cinema epitomizes Lazzarato’s description of the immaterial commodity as something that

¹¹⁸ Maurizio Lazzarato, “Art, work, and politics in disciplinary societies and societies of security,” *Radical Philosophy: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Philosophy*, no. 149 (May/June 2008), 27

¹¹⁹ On the relation between networked digital media and immaterial labour, see: Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy,” *electronic book review* (20 June 2003); available online: <<http://electronicbookreview.com/thread/technocapitalism/voluntary>>

“enlarges, transforms, and creates the ‘ideological’ and cultural environment of the consumer.” Today, as cinema is increasingly digitized and available for fan manipulation, it presents an especially strong site at which to diagnose the dissolution of work and play, autonomy and subordination.

If all of this provides possible reasons that artists might turn to cinema to explore the increased opportunities for control and exploitation that stem from the centrality of immaterial labour in what Yann Moulier Boutang has called “cognitive capitalism,”¹²⁰ there might be other, very different reasons that cinema—rather than television or digital media—emerges as the privileged way of interrogating this transition. Immaterial labour makes possible new zones of colonization, but so too does it make possible new forms of resistance. There is always a certain contingency to the consumer’s participation in the creation of value, an evental space that is opened up for diversion and self-determination that one sees distinctly paralleled in theorizations of the collective reception of cinema. Lazzarato again: “What the transformation of the product into a commodity cannot remove, then, is the *character of event*, the open process of creation that is established between immaterial labor and the public and organized by communication.”¹²¹ The event is an unforeseeable and singular force that is marked by the opening of potentiality. As such, the ways in which spectators reproduce the immaterial commodities they consume can give way to negotiation from within the colonized space of capital. This is not a “making do” that attempts to get by within unchangeable structures, but a negotiation that takes place immanent to the production of value.

This understanding of a film reception as a node of interconnection proposes another, alternate reason why the old cinema might be used to talk about the new diagram of power: there was a time when the collective mode of spectatorship proper to

¹²⁰ See: Yann Moulier Boutang, *Le Capitalisme cognitif: la grande transformation* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2007). Boutang’s terminology, however, risks sounding as if this is purely a matter of intellectual labour, eliding the importance of affect and care to instances of immaterial labour.

¹²¹ Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” 145

cinema was endowed with a utopian potential. Walter Benjamin wrote that, “To put it in a nutshell, film is the prism in which the spaces of the immediate environment—the spaces in which people live, pursue their avocations, and enjoy their leisure—are laid open before their eyes in a comprehensible, meaningful, and passionate way.”¹²² Though much has changed in the institution of cinema since Benjamin’s time of writing, it would be difficult to find another “prism” that might fulfill the same function today. For Benjamin, this refractive “room-for-play” [*Spiel-Raum*] made available by the cinema was one of its most important and progressive attributes.¹²³ It is a space that is resurrected and redoubled by artists remaking the products of film history, as they optimize the prismatic and transformative ability that already resided in cinema by transforming existing films in turn. If, for Benjamin, the cinema could take what was second nature and deliver it over to a space of eventfulness, unforeseeability, and the generation of new attitudes, the practice of remaking cinema shifts this activity into a second-order system.

When artists call upon the shared narratives of cinema, they find within them a Janus-face: they are mechanisms of ideological interpellation but they also open a possibility of shared experience. Collectivity thus emerges as a distinctly double-sided notion, a concept that may function as a site of domination but may also carry within it the utopian spark Benjamin gleaned. This hints at a possible reason that the cinema has

¹²² Walter Benjamin, “Reply to Oscar A.H. Schmitz,” trans. Rodney Livingstone, *Selected Writings, Volume Two, Part One, 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 17

¹²³ In the second version of his “Work of Art” essay, Benjamin notes that “what is lost in the withering of semblance and the decay of aura in works of art is matched by a huge gain in the scope for play [*Spiel-Raum*]. This space for play is widest in film” (127). As Miriam Hansen has argued, the notion of play “provides Benjamin with a term, and concept, that allows him to imagine an alternative mode of aesthetics on a par with modern, collective experience, an aesthetics that could counteract, at the level of sense perception, the political consequences of the failed—that is, capitalist and imperialist, destructive and self-destructive—reception of technology” (6). While this is important to Benjamin’s discussions of children’s toys and gambling, it is most centrally elaborated with reference to the cinema. See: Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility (Second Version),” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 101-133; Miriam Hansen, “Room-for-Play: Benjamin’s Gamble with Cinema,” *October*, no. 109 (Summer 2004), 3-45

had such a forceful appeal for artists in the 1990s and 2000s. Cinema undoubtedly partakes in the Adornian paradigm of mass culture as mass deception, but it also functions as a horizon of collective, public experience. Chrissie Iles has suggested that, “[A]rtists’ use of film in the 1990s, particularly popular Hollywood film, is partly to do with wanting to engage with, and perhaps influence, the connective tissue that film creates, and participate in a common language of communication.”¹²⁴ The value attached to this “common language of communication” is decidedly ambivalent. As an agent of standardization, the commonality generated by film spectatorship might be thought to be inextricable from its functioning as an ideological apparatus, teaching its spectators to be “good subjects” at the movies by disguising as natural highly cultural and historically specific notions of race, class, gender, decorum, et cetera. And yet, the fervour with which artists have returned to the products of film history as a reservoir of this “connective tissue” suggests a desire to understand cinema as a repository of cultural memory and shared experience despite its ideological workings—or perhaps *because* of them, so that they might be pried open for negotiation. One finds a distinct effort to work through the vicissitudes of the relationship between subjectivity and spectacle. Rather than throwing the cinematic baby out with the ideological bathwater, so to speak, remaking cinema emerges as a way of gleaning a utopian possibility of belonging from within a realm once dismissed as suspect.

Miriam Hansen has drawn upon Benjamin to outline the ways in which cinema functioned as an alternative public sphere during its first decades, a potential that was increasingly quashed by the consolidation of Hollywood hegemony and the increasing disciplining of spectatorship.¹²⁵ The mobilization of references to cinema in contemporary art recalls this emphasis on the publicity of the institution, which as

¹²⁴ Iles, 73

¹²⁵ See: Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), especially 90-125

chapter one demonstrated, has taken on a renewed importance given the atomization of spectatorship proper to electronic media. One must historicize both Hansen's intervention and the tendency of artists to espouse a similar view of the cinema. Now that cinema has definitively ceded its cultural dominance, the promises of this modernist utopia may be recalled, and the redemptive possibilities of cinema's status as a shared vernacular acknowledged. A statement from Pierre Huyghe exemplifies this view of cinema: "A film is a public space, a common place. It is not a monument but a space of discussion and action. It's an ecology."¹²⁶ The preceding chapter argued that artists such as Matthew Buckingham and Tacita Dean interrogate untaken paths of film history and excavate the ruins of utopias that might have been. Despite the very different concerns of the artists under interrogation in this chapter, one might venture that the contemporary proliferation of remakes also attempt to resuscitate a the failed utopia of cinema in their insistence on the intersubjective space opened by the shared nature of cinematic narratives. Both the promises and the failures of film history are invoked in an effort to reimagine collectivity anew without forgetting the ways in which the radical potential of cinema was marshaled into a powerful ideological apparatus. From within a space of commonality, these transformative works can open possibilities of reassessment, turning the spectacle in on itself by confronting the gaps and fissures that puncture and rend its attempt at totality.

VCR Memories

The insistence on recovering the utopian potential of collective reception that had been dissipated by cinema's role as a disciplinary technology becomes possible under the spectre of a perceived crisis of the institution. While the uses of 16mm discussed in the previous chapter respond to the superannuation of celluloid as a material substrate,

¹²⁶ Pierre Huyghe, quoted in: Baker, 96

practices of remaking take up the notion of cinema as a lost object on the level of the institution. The many references to classical Hollywood cinema function as a shared cultural memory and site of collective experience now perceived as lacking. In 2006, Time magazine proclaimed “You” the person of the year in a gesture that explicitly linked the individualist thrust of the 1990s and 2000s to the popularity of YouTube as a new venue of personalized image consumption [FIGURE 24]. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to speculate on the new forms of collectivity and publicity that might be made possible by this website and other comparable developments, there is no avoiding the fragmentary and dispersed nature of this archive when compared to the mass reception of the classical Hollywood cinema. The return to classical Hollywood in the art since 1990 provides a way of excavating an experience of collectivity stemming from a shared reception of media at a time when images are most often consumed individually and directed towards increasingly specific niche markets.

The many works that Douglas Gordon has made in reference to Alfred Hitchcock take up old Hollywood cinema as a lost image-regime, fixating on the director as a kind of hinge between cinema in its classical incarnation and the many transformations to which it has been subjected since the disintegration of this regime.¹²⁷ As Raymond Bellour has put it, for Gordon, Hitchcock represents “the ironic and fascinated demiurge that engineered with an unequalled consciousness the mediatized art of possessing his public through image and sound, and *did so in a cinema pushed from then on towards*

¹²⁷ These works extend beyond the well-known recycled footage installations of *24 Hour Psycho* and *Feature Film* (1999), which isolates the soundtrack of *Vertigo* (1958) and uses extreme close-ups to depict James Conlon conducting Bernard Hermann’s score on a large screen while the original plays silently on a small monitor. *Surface Mail White Portrait* (1999) is a work consisting of over two square metres covered with the Hitchcock postage stamps issued by the United States Postal Service in 1998. For *Empire* (1998), Gordon reproduced the neon hotel sign from *Vertigo* and installed it on a Glasgow street. For *A Souvenir of Non-Existence* (1993), he mimicked the actions of Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly) in *Rear Window* by sending a letter to Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr), the film’s villain, reading “What have you done with her?” only to have it returned by the postal service.

television."¹²⁸ This final assertion concerning the relationship between Hitchcock's cinema and television is key. Hitchcock's *oeuvre* includes multiple, seemingly contradictory responses to the disintegration of classical cinema: he broke down classical norms in his films—notably, *Psycho*—and produced TV shows, but also participated in technological novelties designed to maintain cinematic hegemony over this competing medium.¹²⁹ These responses position Hitchcock definitively on the cusp between one cinema and another, straddling a moment of intense transition—precisely the sort of condition in which cinema found itself again in the mid-1990s as it reached its one-hundredth birthday. For Laura Mulvey, *Psycho* might be the last film of the classical cinema, "stand[ing] on the edge of the divide" between an old Hollywood and what it has become in the years since the film's release in 1960: "The crisis in the old Hollywood film industry, caught at a crossroads, faced with its own mortality, gave [Hitchcock] the opportunity to write its epitaph, but also to transcend its conventions and create something startling and new."¹³⁰ In *24 Hour Psycho*, perhaps the best-known remake of the past two decades, Gordon telescopes this past moment of transition with that of the present, confronting the possibilities of a VHS cinephilia while fetishistically overvaluing the director who both emblemized and reflexively interrogated the institution in its classical form.

The exhibition specifications Alfred Hitchcock laid out for the theatrical release of *Psycho* would be virtually impossible to apply to Gordon's remake. Through lobby posters [FIGURE 25], special trailers, and the cooperation of movie theatre owners, Hitchcock instituted a special policy for the film. Perhaps as a publicity stunt or perhaps out of fear the audience would be disappointed if they arrived to find the female star

¹²⁸ Bellour, "Le Corps de la fiction," 116; emphasis added.

¹²⁹ These included in the widescreen process, VistaVision, which Hitchcock employed in *To Catch A Thief* (1955), *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest* (1959), and experimenting with 3-D in *Dial "M" for Murder* (1954).

¹³⁰ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 85

already dead, Hitchcock required spectators to show up on time or they would be refused admission. In an era of moviegoing when it was common to duck in and out of screenings at will, such a practice was unheard of. As a result, Hitchcock has often been credited—perhaps wrongly—with single-handedly changing habits of film spectatorship.¹³¹ With *24 Hour Psycho*, Gordon changes the protocols of spectatorship once again, altering the way the spectator views this most familiar of films by eliminating its soundtrack, stretching its duration to the titular twenty-four hours, and projecting it on a translucent screen that cuts through the centre of the gallery space like a knife [FIGURE 26]. The spectator is free to walk around the image, which also is visible in reverse on the recto of the screen, lending the work a sculptural quality.

Philip Monk has written of the relationship between the temporal distension of *24 Hour Psycho* and the film's "symbolic condensation" in the iconic shower scene. For Monk, the slowed version "denies the pleasure of this sight: it takes too long to reach this 'climax.'" ¹³² Given the unique position *Psycho* occupies in the disciplining of spectatorship and the requirement to watch a film start-to-finish, in addition to this instance of denial in Gordon's appropriation of Hitchcock, one must add another: no spectator, save for an incredibly patient insomniac lucky enough to be at a gallery staying open all night,¹³³ will be able to show up "on time" for *24 Hour Psycho*, nor see it in its entirety. Viewing the work is a necessarily fragmentary experience; even staying for 109

¹³¹ The poster read, "The manager of this theatre has been instructed at the risk of his life, not to admit to the theatre any persons after the picture starts. Any spurious attempts to enter by side doors, fire escapes or ventilating shafts will be met by force. The entire objective of this extraordinary policy, of course, is to help you enjoy PSYCHO more. —Alfred Hitchcock" For an account of these release practices and their implications, see: Linda Williams, "Discipline and Distraction: *Psycho*, Visual Culture, and Postmodern Cinema," *"Culture" and the Problem of the Disciplines*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 103-107

¹³² Philip Monk, *Double Cross: The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon* (Toronto: The Power Plant and the Art Gallery of York University, 2003), 59

¹³³ Some galleries have held special events during which they stay open for twenty-four hours to show *24 Hour Psycho* in its entirety. For example, the Guggenheim Museum, New York, exhibited the work in its lobby on 6-7 January 2009 as a part of a twenty-four hour marathon of talks and performances concerning the concept of time.

minutes, the original duration of the film, will result in seeing what used to be about nine minutes of it. This has led some critics to see it as a “celebration of peripatetic mobility” that overcomes the physical paralysis of the cinema.¹³⁴ The assignments of mobility and immobility that marked movie theatre spectatorship here exchange places, as now, instead of an immobile spectator seated in front of a moving image, one finds a mobile spectator who moves around a relatively immobilized image. According to such a reading, *24 Hour Psycho* is a critical intervention that dismantles the visual pleasure of Hollywood and liberates the viewer from the disciplined spectatorship of the movie theatre.

It would be easy to understand *24 Hour Psycho* in this way, seeing the installation as an attempt to demystify the manipulative powers of narrative cinema. However, as elaborated in chapter one, it is important to acknowledge that the perambulation of the gallery spectator by no means guarantees a critically “active” viewer. And what of the claim that Gordon’s use of slow motion might tear the viewer out of absorption and into a distanced, intellectual engagement with *Psycho*? Daniel Birnbaum advances this position by comparing Gordon’s work to the anti-illusionism of Peter Gidal, writing that, “Here nothing is hidden, and the tools are displayed in such a fashion that nobody can forget that this is all highly artificial stuff, and that there is nothing natural about the ways stories are told on the screen through complex editing technique intent on effacing the marks of the editing slice.”¹³⁵ There is no dispute that *24 Hour Psycho* refuses the pleasures on which Hitchcock’s film rests. But, in a manner that puts it greatly at odds with Gidal’s anti-representationalism, the work retains a distinct investment in the pleasures of the image. In Gordon’s installation, iconophilia is not refused, but rather one kind of pleasure in the image is substituted for another. Instead

¹³⁴ Maria Walsh, “Cinema in the Gallery: Discontinuity and Potential Space in Salla Tykkä’s Trilogy,” *Senses of Cinema*, no. 28 (September-October 2003); available online: <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/28/salla_tykka_trilogy.html>

¹³⁵ Birnbaum, 63

of viewing *24 Hour Psycho* as a series of denials, it should be understood as an analysis of the transformations to which cinematic pleasure is subject when classic films are watched on video, an analysis made possible by importing VHS-based cinema into the museum and rendering it gigantic. For instead of holding a fascination with the cinematic image under suspicion, *24 Hour Psycho* uses the analytic powers of slow motion to fetishize detail and monumentalize a new form of cinephilic spectatorship, that of the VCR and the remote control.

These domestic media technologies played an important role in the genesis of the installation. Gordon explains how the project came to be:

In 1992 I had come home to see my family for Christmas and I was looking at a video of the TV transmission of *Psycho*. And in the part where Norman (Anthony Perkins) lifts up the painting of *Suzanna and the Elders* and you see the close-up of his eye looking through the peep-hole at Marion (Janet Leigh) undressing, I thought I saw her unhooking her bra. I didn't remember seeing that in the VCR version and thought it was strange, in terms of censorship, that more would be shown on TV than in the video so I looked at that bit with the freeze-frame button, to see if it was really there.¹³⁶

In search of a cinephilic fragment, Gordon used the capabilities of home viewing technologies to slow the film and attempt to find the desired image.¹³⁷ With a video dubbed off of a televised broadcast of the film, the artist went in search of a memory, perhaps one of adolescent desire. Gordon has remarked that, "Slow motion is truly the desire to see what is hidden, it's very erotic."¹³⁸ Erotic, but also marked by death; here one finds a sadistic impulse of possession that returns the liveliness of cinema to the quietus of the photograph. This is not a temporal protraction that would produce a distanced, critical commentary, but a libidinally charged penetration of the film that recalls the violent effort to tame life evoked in *Psycho*'s taxidermy birds and the

¹³⁶ Douglas Gordon, quoted in: Amy Taubin, "24 Hour Psycho," *Spellbound: Art and Film*, ed. Ian Christie and Philip Dodd (London: BFI Publishing, 2006), 70

¹³⁷ Incidentally, this shot was not included in the theatrical cut of the film but can be seen on the special features documentary *The Making of Psycho* on the *Psycho: Collector's Edition* DVD released by Universal.

¹³⁸ Douglas Gordon, quoted in: Hermange, 19

embalmed corpse of the mother. Slow motion is here employed in its capacity to make possible a kind of viewing not afforded by a film rushing through the projector with little regard for a spectator who might want to return to a favourite scene or review a line of dialogue. Laura Mulvey has described this form of spectatorship, designating it “possessive”: “With electronic or digital viewing, the nature of the cinematic repetition compulsion changes. As the film is delayed and thus fragmented from linear narrative into favourite moments or scenes, the spectator is able to hold on to, to possess, the previously elusive image.”¹³⁹ In *24 Hour Psycho*, each image is present as a still for about half a second before giving way to the next, allowing for the spectator to grasp filmic instants, but only through their mutilation.

Videotape is not merely the inspiration for *24 Hour Psycho*, but is also key to the work’s material and aesthetic dimensions. Working in the early 1990s before the rise of DVDs, Gordon produced the piece using a commercially available VHS tape and an industrial Panasonic VCR that plays at a speed of roughly two frames per second.¹⁴⁰ The artist did nothing to alter the tape itself; his intervention took place on the level of technologies of spectatorship. Amy Taubin compares the use of slow motion in *24 Hour Psycho* to Ken Jacobs’ *Tom, Tom the Piper’s Son* (1969), but Gordon’s work is far removed from this optical reprinting of individual frames for it makes no material alteration to the videotape.¹⁴¹ Her comparison to Warhol’s early films—despite the fact

¹³⁹ Mulvey, 161

¹⁴⁰ Christy Lange notes that though the work was originally produced using this VCR, in recent years, the work has been digitized and its slow motion regulated by a computer. While this is an interesting case of how to preserve and exhibit media artworks amidst technological change, my analysis considers *24 Hour Psycho* as an installation using a commercially-available videotape and a VCR since this is how it was originally exhibited. See: Christy Lange, “Douglas Gordon: Ten Years Ago Today,” *theanyspacewhatever*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2008), 70

¹⁴¹ Taubin, 71-72. More than *Tom, Tom the Piper’s Son*, which involves extensive reediting, *24 Hour Psycho* does find a precedent in Jacobs’ *Perfect Film* (1985), for which the filmmaker found outtakes from a television studio’s reportage after the Malcolm X assassination, named it *Perfect Film*, and circulated as a film without any alteration. A perhaps more relevant film from the American experimental tradition is Ernie Gehr’s *Eureka* (1974), which optically reprints the entirety of an early phantom ride film of a trolley moving down Market Street in San Francisco in slow motion.

that they make no use of found footage—is more accurate, for here sound film was projected at silent speed so as to create slow motion at the moment of exhibition.

However, neither one of these comparisons captures the centrality of video to *24 Hour Psycho*. The use of the VHS format causes a significant degradation of the image when compared to a 35mm print, made especially evident by the large-scale projection of the image, a scale for which VHS is by no means suited. *24 Hour Psycho* is not merely *Psycho* slowed to an approximate duration of twenty-four hours; it is also an unabashedly *video*-based copy of *Psycho* slowed to an approximate duration of twenty-four hours. Along with inserting *24 Hour Psycho* into an existing history of found footage and slow motion, its relationship the home video technologies that made it possible must be emphasized.¹⁴²

Though it was certainly possible for non-professionals to make copies of films before the popularization of the VCR, it was difficult and required both expensive equipment and technical knowledge that few amateurs possessed. The mass marketing of home video technologies made the bootlegging of movies a real possibility for the first time, leading to the 1984 Sony vs. Universal lawsuit, popularly known as the “Betamax case.” Home video marks the first time that movies could be dubbed and manipulated by the average viewer, inducing an anxiety on the part of the studios as to the ability to protect their intellectual property. It is significant that when Gordon returned to his

¹⁴² In his Deleuzian reading of *24 Hour Psycho*, Mark Hansen does acknowledge the relationship between *24 Hour Psycho* and the temporal changes brought to moving images with the advent of video. Hansen writes, “...[A]gain and again, [Gordon] insists that video time—the time of slow-motion, freeze-framing, and repetition—is the ‘given time’ of his generation” (242). However, Hansen does not discuss home video in particular and demonstrates a carelessness when dealing with the specificity of video. First of all, he describes *24 Hour Psycho* as an example of “digital manipulation of found film footage” (242), when in fact Gordon makes use of neither digital manipulation nor found film, but an analogue videotape and VCR as source and method manipulation, respectively. Hansen writes that Gordon “slows down its projection speed to 2 frames a second (instead of 24),” when video possesses a frame rate of thirty frames per second, rather than the twenty-four of film (243). Lastly (and somewhat inexplicably), he asserts that the image of *24 Hour Psycho* changes only once every twelve seconds, a statement that is both untrue and in contradiction with his earlier statement (repeated in an image caption) that the projection speed is slowed to two frames per second. See: Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 242-249

parents' house at Christmastime, it was a copy of *Psycho* recorded off of television that he chose to review—it was a VHS copy of a televised copy of a 35mm film, already two steps removed from the original format. The ability to produce private copies and shift formats is central to *24 Hour Psycho*, which makes monstrous a VHS copy of *Psycho* and shifts formats again, this time to a gallery installation. Such activities are inextricably linked to ways in which spectators' relations to cinema changed after the domestic use of videotape. The VHS format, which incidentally owes much of its early success to the pornography industry,¹⁴³ allowed illicit channels of tape circulation to emerge. As Lucas Hilderbrand has suggested, “[B]ootlegging is exemplary of videotape: it foregrounds the technology as a recording format, it exposes the formal degeneration of the signal, it stresses the importance of access, and raises issues of intellectual property rights.”¹⁴⁴ Though *24 Hour Psycho* does not in fact produce a new copy of Hitchcock's film (it exhibits a commercially available copy under unusual circumstances to change the parameters of aesthetic experience), it monumentalizes bootleg aesthetics to highlight precisely these attributes of videotape. Unlike early artists' uses of the medium, which often foregrounded the technical possibilities of closed-circuit video, feedback, and real-time playback, here video is investigated as a social technology that makes cinema both mutable and available within the home.

24 Hour Psycho is an artefact of a post-VHS cinephilia, exploiting the increased playback control afforded to the viewer by that technology, as well as making visible the ramifications for image quality and copyright that result from its capacity for dubbing. In

The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles, Hillel Schwartz

¹⁴³ As Frederick Wasser has written, “Porno became a major propellant in the development of prerecorded cassettes. The VCR easily captured the preexisting porno audience and added a larger public composed of viewers who would never think of stepping into an adult movie theatre. The concurrence of Betamax and the new, more plot-driven erotica led to adult titles become the first big genre for prerecorded cassettes.” See: Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 92-93

¹⁴⁴ Lucas Hilderbrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 61

asserts that, “In our post-industrial age, the copy is both degenerate and regenerate.”¹⁴⁵ The copy cannot help but throw the original into crisis, and yet it also expands the reach of that object, disseminating it in new contexts. How else to think of the specificity of the VHS format and its relationship to cinema as demonstrated by *24 Hour Psycho*? Dominique Païni has called VHS an “antibody” against the dissolution of cinephilia.¹⁴⁶ If this is true, it is an antibody that fights the immune system as much as the virus that affects it. It makes possible obsessive re-viewings of films and a greater access to the products of film history, but does so through a degraded image and CinemaScope frames subject to pan-and-scan. Though thankfully these qualities have been minimized by the advent of DVDs, there is nonetheless a discernible loss (of scale, of attention, of publicity, of historicity) that still accompanies the increased access and control afforded by home viewing technologies. *24 Hour Psycho* captures the contradictions of this new cinephilia, and does so by rendering these private rituals of image consumption gigantic, taking them back out into the public sphere for examination thanks to the portability of video. It combines the large-scale projection and collective reception of the cinema with newer, home video practices of copying and altered playback to create a hybrid aggregate that brings into relief the tension between its constituent parts.

While *24 Hour Psycho* carries weight as a conceptual gesture, it must be emphasized that the work also possesses an important phenomenological dimension. Gordon has discussed the experience of viewing *24 Hour Psycho* as one of a riven temporality: “The viewer is catapulted back into the past by his recollection of the original, and at the same time he is drawn into the future by his expectation of an already familiar narrative...a slowly changing present forces itself in between.”¹⁴⁷ The installation

¹⁴⁵ Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 257

¹⁴⁶ Païni, 34

¹⁴⁷ Douglas Gordon, quoted in: Russell Ferguson, “Trust Me,” *Douglas Gordon*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 16

draws upon the viewer's memory of the original film for its appeal and its success, calling upon him or her to contextualize and give meaning to the slowed snippet in relation to a larger whole recalled from past viewings. If *24 Hour Psycho* incessantly summons the past, its future can be difficult to access since any sense of anticipation is frustrated by viscous slowness. Even the future Gordon describes in the above quotation remains a matter of pastness; it is generated out of the viewer's previously established familiarity with the film. Any true sense of futurity, of time moving forward in a meaningful way, is palpably lacking. Temporal progression splinters into a succession of disjoined instants that are exhausting to assemble into a continuous trajectory. While viewing the work, it can be difficult to anticipate what will happen next, even for a viewer intimately familiar with *Psycho*. The grueling pace of the film and the absence of the soundtrack disrupt the patterns of editing and the narrative cues that would normally serve to structure spectatorial expectation. Anticipation brings frustration more than anything else, leaving the viewer stalled in the "slowly changing present," weighed down by memories of the past.

As a result, *24 Hour Psycho* possesses none of the suspense that marks the original. While this appears to pit the dilation of time against the functioning of suspense, temporal protraction is in fact central to the building of such tension, particularly in Hitchcock's cinema.¹⁴⁸ *24 Hour Psycho* does away with suspense by hyperbolizing the very same temporal techniques on which it depends, making Gordon's alteration of the film an exaggerated allegory of its own temporality. Without suspense to infuse time with desire, *24 Hour Psycho* might be thought to possess no affective resonance for its spectator in its current form, just nostalgia for the film it remakes. This

¹⁴⁸ Pascal Bonitzer writes that in the deployment of filmic suspense, "This subjective stretching, this viscosity of time, is related to eroticism, and it concerns the eroticized time in the prolonged, necessarily disturbing undecidability of an event. Suspense is the erotic prolongation of the trajectory of a coin thrown up in the air, before it falls on one side (tails: yes) or the other (heads: no)." Pascal Bonitzer, "Hitchcockian Suspense," trans. Martin Thom, *Everything You've Always Wanted To Know About Lacan...But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1992), 28

however, is far from the case. While the installation lacks suspense, it does maintain a relationship to the eroticization of time. However, instead of the erotic delay of suspense, this temporal erotics is linked to a freezing of the film into a slowed, fetishistic crawl as described above with reference to Mulvey's notion of the "possessive spectator"—with the important difference, of course, that the spectator-visitor *24 Hour Psycho* has none of the control Mulvey ascribes to the possessive spectator.

Out of the degeneration of narrativity and suspense, these other possessive pleasures are cultivated. With each frame lasting approximately half a second, the enduring present of *24 Hour Psycho* is a present of scrutiny, one in which each frame of the film offers itself to the viewer for a moment before passing on. This present is not the present of the unfolding of the film's diegesis; attempting to follow a developing narrative would quickly exasperate the viewer. Rather, it is the present of the spectator's perceptual encounter with the cinema itself, redoubled by the past memory of seeing *Psycho*. Because the spectator is severed from absorption in the diegesis and the soundtrack has been eliminated, a hyperawareness of detail and minute changes sets in. As the extreme slowness works to defamiliarize these recognizable images, sometimes a perfectly normal continuity cut can become unexpectedly surprising, introducing the eventfulness of *kairos* into the dull crawl of *chronos*. It is as if the work were obeying what Bonitzer has designated to be a law of Hitchcockian narrative: "the more a situation is somewhat a priori, familiar or conventional, the most liable it is to become disturbing or uncanny, once one of its constituent elements begins to 'turn against the wind.'"¹⁴⁹ The *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) reference is apposite here, as the uncanniness of *24 Hour Psycho* is, like the windmills turning against the wind, a matter of aberrant movement. The intensity of the slow motion strips the film of the terror it once induced but introduces a new feeling, the eerie return of the familiar made strange. These moments

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 23

appear suddenly and without warning, possessing nothing of the gradually augmenting intensity one associates with Hitchcockian suspense. These jarring instants constitute a kind of cinephilic detail that protrudes from the text as a point of interest for the attentive spectator. They serve to puncture the empty time of *24 Hour Psycho* with bursts of revelation that telescope past and present viewings, bringing together the movie theatre, the VCR, and the gallery (and wherever else the viewer might have previously watched *Psycho*) into a single, temporally-disjointed experience of cinema.

In a seemingly simple gesture, *24 Hour Psycho* effects a complex triangulation of issues of technology, temporality, and spectatorship. The represented time of *Psycho*—the time of the narrative—is overtaken by the time of the apparatus and the time of reception. These temporalities come into tension with one another, as the regimented slow motion evinces a patient regularity that contrasts with the contingent meandering of the spectator-visitor around the room. As the viewer wanders around the sluggish movements of the work, she will cross over to the other side of the screen and see a mirror reflection of Hitchcock's iconic images, creating an even stronger sense of defamiliarization and disorientation than had already been induced by the stagnation of the image, as they nearly match a memory of an earlier viewing but not quite. But of course, in memory things are never exactly as they really were. Anthony McCall has noted that, "With Douglas Gordon's work, there is a strong element of nostalgia for a particular period of Hollywood, a classical period that never actually existed in fact."¹⁵⁰ It may not have existed then, but it certainly exists now. This idea of classical cinema, and indeed, of a golden age of cinema in general, is retroactively produced in the present amidst fears of the institution's future.

24 Hour Psycho is an encounter with extreme slowness in a culture of increasing speed and also an encounter with cinema in an era when, as A.O. Scott has pithily

¹⁵⁰ Anthony McCall, "Round Table: The Projected Image in Art," 86

remarked, in Hollywood, “Auteur is French for unemployed.”¹⁵¹ *24 Hour Psycho* replaces the animation of cinema with the mortification of the still and does so through a regime of viewing largely thought to be responsible for the death of that cinema, the VCR. And yet, it by no means asserts such developments as lamentable; rather, it proposes that such a mode of spectatorship can cull new pleasures from an old cinema. It enacts the very kinds of transformations to which cinema is now subject, but does so with a reflexivity that allows for an assessment of what is at stake in the contemporary cinematic migration. The individual spectator is engaged in a comparison between the “then” of *Psycho* and the “now” of its gallery-based remake that is equally a comparison between the “then” and the “now” of moving-image culture. *24 Hour Psycho* is a swollen emblem of commemoration, offering a public performance of grief that would be taken up by numerous artists throughout the 1990s. Even Gordon himself would resuscitate the work with 2008’s *24 hour psycho back and forth and to and fro*, a double screen projection that plays the slowed down film forward on one screen and backward on the other.

In the art of the 1990s and 2000s, the obsession with remaking cinema may be understood as indicative of an anxiety over the proliferation of digital media and the attendant effects it would have on the cinema, as well as an embrace of the new possibilities offered by these technological developments. But as this chapter has suggested, this obsession with remaking cinema has a symptomatic meaning that goes beyond a concern for the medium in it and of itself. In its general usage, a medium is defined as “an agency or means of doing something,” “an intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed.” In their repurposing of Hollywood movies, these artists mobilize cinema as a medium in this sense of the word: they use it to grasp at

¹⁵¹ A.O. Scott, “Open Wide: Spoon-Fed Cinema,” *New York Times* (7 August 2009); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/movies/09scot.html>>

something else, as a way of relating to history and of recovering an imagined collectivity felt to be lacking. Recycling and citation are aesthetic strategies most often associated with postmodernism and its accompanying atrophy of history and swell of amnesia. In the practices discussed throughout this chapter, however, these techniques are put to work within a framework that insists that media images, after they have aged, might in fact work with rather than against attempts to recover a memory of collective experience and a relationship to the past.

As noted in the previous chapter, in the 1970s, cinephilia received a bad name as an apolitical, unquestioning, mystified love caught up in aesthetic appreciation. In recent years, it has become more palatable within academic film studies amidst fears of a crisis of cinema, but it has remained attached to associations of film buffery and fandom. While such dimensions are undoubtedly present at times, these artists take up Serge Daney's idea of what it means to love cinema: "Cinephilia was not a relation to cinema, it was a relation to the world through cinema."¹⁵² Changing Daney's past tense to a present assertion, these artists look to cinema precisely because of its role as a mediator of memory and experience, as a way of knowing the world. It is this conception of cinephilia that allows one to claim that an artist such as Huyghe is deeply engaged with a form of contemporary cinephilia. Even Chris Moukarbel's *World Trade Center 2006*, which finds nothing of value in the movie it appropriates, asserts the important role cinema plays in an understanding of historical events and makes use of this terrain as a site of intervention into a contemporary politics of narrative and image.

The remake of contemporary art emerges as the inverted twin of the Hollywood remake; that is, rather than remaking the ever-same with a false promise of novelty, since the 1990s, artists have been remaking old Hollywood films so as to explode what

¹⁵² Serge Daney, *La Maison cinéma et le monde. I. Le Temps des Cahiers, 1962-1981* (Paris: P.O.L., 2001), 23; quoted and translated in: Emilie Bickerton, "Adieu to *Cahiers*: Life Cycle of a Cinema Journal," *New Left Review*, no. 42 (November-December 2006), 97

resides latent within them and put them in service of the present. If Daney worried that only the mythologies of cinema would be kept and remade, these artists take up such a condition to replay conventions, tropes, and myths in order to sometimes indicate what the repetitions of Hollywood might elide, other times serve as an act of mourning, and still others, to do both at once. Whether this is accomplished by sharply diverging from the host text, such as *Becoming*, or by repeating it almost exactly, such as *World Trade Centre 2006*, such works attempt to work within the interstices of dominant cinema to rather than refusing it outright. The remake, which is itself a process of translation, is used to interrogate the processes that translate experiences and events into images, questioning the assumptions, omissions, and affects that reside therein.

With ambivalence as their primary affective mode, such practices parasitically make use of the pleasures of dominant cinema while contesting their very foundation. The function of cinema as a site of affective labour and ideological reproduction remains central, and yet a certain “room for play” is opened that makes use of cinema as a common cultural vernacular and a site at which mass media representations become integrated into subjective experience in a way that might disrupt the dominant order. This ambivalent structure of feeling provides a way of acknowledging that there is no outside from which one might critique the representations of the mass media; rather, these representations are understood to make up the fabric of our everyday lives. Though these artists take up Hollywood cinema as an industry that concocts fantasy simulations for the masses, they locate other possibilities for the moving image alongside and within its function as image-commodity.

Artists embrace cinema due to its status as a vast cultural commons, a lowest common denominator that comprises a shared vernacular that connects subjects to representations and to each other. These works engage in acts of filmophagy, cannibalizing Hollywood—sometimes violently, sometimes playfully—in order to reflect

on the mediation of experience, what Huyghe terms “our relationship to the scenario,”¹⁵³ something that engages both power and pleasure. What does Huyghe mean by the scenario? Nothing other than the grammar of everyday life as set by an organization of capital that leaves no interstice safe from infiltration. When Huyghe asserts that the task of art is to “‘re-scenarize’ the real,”¹⁵⁴ he is suggesting that strategies of derivative artmaking may be employed to draw attention to the ways in which dominant processes of codification narrativize reality, to suggest alternatives to it, and to scout out interstices that may be used to upbraid the habitual ways we understand our relationship to the media. Recognizing the extent to which Hollywood functions as dream factory, as myth factory, as history factory, many of the artists producing derivative works turn to cinema as a site that crystallizes the pleasures and horrors of capitalist societies of control, finding in it a synecdoche for a spectacle that is inescapable.

Mulvey writes that, “Just as *Psycho*, in 1960, marked a final staging post in the history of the studio system as a basis for the Hollywood film industry, *24 Hour Psycho*, like an elegy, marks a point of no return for the cinema itself.”¹⁵⁵ It is true, there is no going back. In very different ways, the works discussed in this chapter all serve to memorialize a particular age of cinema as over and gone, and yet summon it as a “connective tissue” that might have something to offer in the present. The much-vaunted “death of cinema” never really means the death of cinema full stop, but the death of a certain idea of cinema. When Douglas Gordon proclaims that the cinema is dead, he does so very much in the same way as another figure who as consistently promulgated the idea, Jean-Luc Godard: he declares cinema dead while at the same time continuing to make cinema. Drawing on a nostalgia that calls upon the products of film history as a reservoir of collective memory, these artists come to terms with the passing of one

¹⁵³ Pierre Huyghe, quoted in: Lequeux, 108

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Huyghe, quoted in: Baker, 105

¹⁵⁵ Mulvey, 102

cinema while laying the ground for the birth of another. Next to the continuation of blockbuster spectacle in the multiplexes, this “othered cinema” is emerging, often marked by an interest in what the cinema once was, but also actively contributing to what it will become. For within all of the reflections on the senescence of cinema, there is also a trajectory that moves forward to clear a space for a new cinema of the gallery, a cinema of artists who will continue to push the boundaries of what is possible with the moving image as cinema moves into its second century. It must be remembered that these remakes are not only works *about* cinema; they are works *of* cinema. Their contributions—like those of all the artists discussed throughout this dissertation—must be understood as contributions to film history as much as art history, moving beyond the movie theatre to find new ways of exhibiting cinema.

IV. The Fiction of Truth and the Truth of Fiction

Every film is a fiction film.

–Christian Metz¹

Every film is a documentary.

–Bill Nichols²

Upon entering Omer Fast's *The Casting* (2007), two screens hang from the ceiling and confront the viewer with *tableaux vivants* of a casting session. It is the beginning of the work's fourteen-minute loop, and the action is taking place on a soundstage. A man with chin-length hair and wearing a plaid shirt is in the middle of an audition, responding to questions asked by another man seated behind a video camera. The images appear to be still photographs, so this dialogue is delivered in voice-over, invoking the formal system of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962). But looking closely, one notices that this is not a montage of stills, but rather a series of shots in which the actors attempt to hold frozen poses. Eyes blink and hands quiver. Like *La Jetée*, however, the organization of these tableaux follows a logic similar to that of continuity editing: when a character speaks via voice-over, the image-track cuts in for a medium close-up, and shot/reverse-shot structures are used to depict conversational exchange. One finds here a contamination of media, an exemplary instance of what Raymond Bellour has termed the *entre-image* or "between-image"; between media, between stillness and movement, *The Casting* stakes out a strange formal system founded in principles of contamination and a lack of unity.³

The interviewer asks the man if he likes improvising and suggests that they give it a try. The man agrees, and a story begins. Or rather, two stories unfold, woven together through the deictic shifting of the pronoun and through narrative linkages. The man

¹ Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 44

² Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 1

³ Raymond Bellour, "L'Entre-images," *L'Entre-images: Photo. Cinéma. Vidéo* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 2002), 11-17

intertwines a story of his experiences as a U.S. Army soldier stationed in Iraq with that of a disastrous first date with a self-mutilating girl at Christmastime. He says, “I had met a German girl, a beautiful redheaded German girl and I didn’t know that she was completely and absolutely insane.” As he speaks, the images on the screens visualize his narrative in the same almost-frozen tableaux of the casting session. On the left, there is a small house in Germany; on the right, a beautiful redhead smokes a cigarette, her face bathed in pink light [FIGURE 1]. He continues, “She would stand on the side of the road as we’d drive past.” The “she” here at first seems to refer back to the German redhead, but the images that accompany the sentence tell a different story. One screen shows a Humvee parked in the desert, the other a Muslim woman wearing a khimar with a Humvee approaching in the distance [FIGURE 2]. This transition introduces a second story, in which the man recounts his experiences as soldier in the Iraq War. It focuses on what he calls “probably one of [his] worst days,” when he shot at a windshield to scare the driver into stopping, not realizing the car was full. The act resulted in the death of a young man in the backseat. This narrative is braided together with that of the redhead and her mental instability. She asks him to hurt her, professes her love for him though they have just met, and undresses to reveal numerous self-inflicted scars covering her body—an unveiling that functions almost as a displaced visualization of the way in which psychic scars of the shooting continue to plague the soldier. At times, the casting director interrupts with a question, such as “Are you afraid?” or “How did you know you weren’t dreaming?”

At the end of the story, we learn that our narrator has been unsuccessful in his audition. The casting director tells him that his story was too long, that he isn’t looking for a political angle. Curiously, he goes on to say, “I’m interested basically in the way that experience is turned into memory and the ways that memories become stories, the ways that memories become mediated, they become recorded and broadcasted and things like

this”—a question that, as *World Trade Center 2006* suggested, is intensely political indeed. A discernible element of contradiction has entered the voice-over, suggesting that perhaps something is awry. The remark reads like an artist’s statement by Fast, someone who, as noted in chapter three, interviewed *Schindler’s List* (1993) extras to make *Spielberg’s List* (2003). This is fitting, indeed, since the voice of the casting director/interviewer belongs to none other than Fast himself.

When the spectator-visitor walks around to the reverse side of the screens, another perspective on the soundtrack is revealed, quite different than that available when one first enters the black box. *The Casting* is a two-screen installation, but a quadruple projection. On the other side of the screens, rather than the elaborate *mise-en-scène* of the projections visible when one first enters the room, each projection shows a talking head, one of a young sergeant in the U.S. Army and the other of the artist [FIGURE 3]. The two come together to form the shot/reverse shot of an interview. The dialogue that had been in a relation of voice-over with the two frontal projections here is synchronized. The audition is recontextualized as an interview, fiction meets documentary, and the same words are given a radically different meaning due to their accompaniment by different images. The high gloss, professional actors, and vibrant colour of the tableaux projections give way to a relatively muted video aesthetic showing two regular people discussing difficult memories. What had appeared as fictional improvisation now appears as the painful recollection of lived trauma.

To make *The Casting*, Fast interviewed numerous soldiers returning from the Iraq War, but chose to work with the stories of one man in particular. These stories, however, are not faithfully relayed. Rather, as Fast put it, “I used the interview almost as a pool of words from which to edit new sentences and new thoughts that were not said in

any interview.”⁴ Fast espouses a conception of the interview that foregoes any link to objective truth in favour of approaching it as malleable discourse that may be recombined at will, insisting on the ability of montage to endow an inherently variable utterance with meaning. This becomes evident in the prominence of the jump cut as the privileged formal device of the interview projections. What is initially apprehended as a continuous voice-over is revealed to be a Frankensteinian assemblage of conversational snippets. Dialogue that had been heard as seamless speech is now invaded by strange tics and intonations that one only notices when cued by the visual discontinuity of the jump cuts. In particular, the interviewer’s rejection of the story near the end of the loop (“I think it’s too long, people’s attention span is not that long”) is revealed to be fully fabricated out of a quick succession of edits that are almost audibly—but far from visually—seamless. As the spectator-visitor moves around the work, he or she is able to blend together the documentary interviews with their spectacular dramatization, mixing these two modes of representation in a purposeful contamination of the complex affects induced by testimony on the one hand and fiction on the other.

This hybrid mixture of documentary and fiction matches the hybrid visual form of the almost-frozen tableaux, thereby redoubling *The Casting*’s status as a “between-image.” The use of near-still tableaux within moving images allegorizes memory’s fragile nature, refusing the determinative stasis of photography in favour of an unsettling formal strategy that evokes an eerie pastness while remaining fluid, open to contingency, and marked by the present tense of unfurling movement. Though the figures stay frozen, clothing billows in the wind on the desert road and the flicker of a television is reflected on the faces of the family in the German home at Christmastime. The work thrives on this intermedial tension, using it as an anti-realist device to temper the potential

⁴ Omer Fast, quoted in “Whitney Focus” (16 May 2008); available online: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYflxEfywKM>>

impression of reality that might otherwise arise from the spectacle of the frontal projections. Spectacular representation has been described as a kind of freezing that halts narrative,⁵ something that here, as in the cinema of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, is exaggerated and used against itself. But in addition to serving this critical function, the tension between stillness and movement in *The Casting*'s frontal projections points to the desire to situate the installation within an in-between space characterized by a contamination of boundaries.

This contamination takes place not just between media and between regimes of representation but also between institutions: even though it leaves behind the references to film history found in *Spielberg's List*, cinema remains a central component and concern of *The Casting*. Instead of engaging in an importation of celluloid (as in the work discussed chapter two) or existing cinematic texts (as in the work discussed in chapter three), *The Casting* engages in an importation of cinematic techniques and forms. It makes use of an element of the production of a film, the casting session, as a fictional conceit that will provide a way in to examining the relationship between memory, narration, and spectacle—a triangulation in which the cinema has historically participated in a powerful manner. Though the *dispositif* of *The Casting*—with its quadruple projection, mobile viewer, and art institutional context—differs greatly from that of classical cinema, one can say that it nonetheless that it makes use of cinematographic vocabularies and techniques such as projection, the shot/reverse shot, and *mise-en-scène*. The scale of its projected images aligns it with the gigantism and forgetting of material support that are central attributes of the cinematic apparatus, while the frontal projections espouse a high gloss aesthetic evocative of commercial cinema. In addition to these formal characteristics, *The Casting* foregrounds and

⁵ See: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 198-209

interrogates two of cinema's key abilities: fictional storytelling and documentary testimony. Both of these abilities rest on a conception of cinema as a technology of the virtual, something that has historically been rejected in artists' employments of the moving image but that has been key to the history of cinema. *The Casting* is one of a whole host of artworks produced since 1990 that return to these previously rejected modes in order to interrogate a tension central to the cinema: the tension between referentiality and representation, between a fidelity to the world and a fictionalization of it.

But what exactly is the status of documentary vis-à-vis the real in *The Casting*? Fast asserts the all-pervasiveness of fabulation, suggesting that so-called non-fiction imagery is functionally equivalent to fiction due to the ways in which it is processed through highly conventional structures of representation. Through extensive editing, the soldier's words are emptied of any attestation to the real. Though the frontal projections seem to be generated by these words—they seem to be a kind of parasitical discourse that feeds off of the documentary testimony—the editing of the interview suggests that in fact the opposite is true: the shaping of the soldier's discourse is determined by the exigencies of the spectacular representation of the frontal projections. In this respect, *The Casting* mimics the modes of representation that govern mainstream news media, as reports from Iraq are redacted and repackaged to be maximally telegenic. The installation unveils the workings of these prevalent representational practices and subjects them to a critical gaze, but does nothing to contest them or offer alternatives.

In her article "Omer Fast: When Images Lie... About the Fictionality of Documents," Maria Muhle writes that, "Fast undermines the relationship between the fictional and the factual, and reveals the equally artificial nature of both."⁶ Of course, the

⁶ Maria Muhle, "Omer Fast: When Images Lie... About the Fictionality of Documents," *Afterall*, no. 20 (Spring 2009), 37

factual image is as constructed as the fictional image, but is it “equally artificial”? Is there a danger in negating the referential power of the documentary image and placing it on the same plane as fiction? What responsibility to his interview subject does Fast abandon when he carves up the man’s words for art world consumption? In *Spielberg’s List*, Fast used an existing film as a launching pad for an exploration of the fictionalization of reality and presented the confusion of history and the historical film as unsettling and dangerous. In *The Casting*, however, this indiscernibility of fiction and reality is staged by the work itself. While the objective may be to draw attention to the ways in which this equivalence works in television and cinema, *The Casting* reproduces it in the process. One might say that *The Casting* makes use of documentary images in order to assert a lack of belief in the possibility of documentary. It is based on a non-fiction interview, but sets to work on doubly fictionalizing it through extensive editing (on the rear projections) and cinematic visualizations (on the front projections). Far from asserting the ability to testify to an event that telescopes personal and historical experience, it suggests that in fact all such narratives are processed through highly conventionalized representational structures that distort and transform them. Reality has receded behind media images, as fiction and fact occupy the same plane of representation.

This position finds a theoretical buttress in the work of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard describes the contemporary obsolescence of the paradigm of representation, which would correlate referent to image in a kind of doubling, and the rise of the age of simulation, in which a hyperreality of simulacra—copies with origin, without anchorage in reality—governs visual culture. Images refer not to the real, but to each other, linking together along a differential chain of signs. The fading of the real is a process intimately linked to technology, and in particular to technologies of image reproduction such as the cinema: “[T]he age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials—worse:

by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs...”⁷ A lived relation to reality is replaced by the hyperreal of media images. The real disappears not out of rarity, but out of surfeit: as it is produced and overproduced by the media, every real event is preceded by its fictional precursor. Reality becomes a mere byproduct of representational codes, as technologies such as the cinema produce intense reality effects in the absence of any relation to the real as such. In a chapter called “The Murder of the Real,” Baudrillard states his point in a characteristically totalizing and declarative manner: “In our virtual world, the question of the Real, of the referent, of the subject and its object, can no longer even be posed.”⁸

Since the early 1980s, Baudrillard’s work has been especially embraced by artists and curators, perhaps more so than that of many other French poststructuralist theorists whose writings also entered art critical discourse at this time.⁹ As *The Casting* demonstrates, this interest continues even as forms of artistic practice have changed. In a manner consonant with Johan Grimonprez’s *Double Take* (2009), another documentary-fiction hybrid, *The Casting* questions the referential claims of the documentary image, melding it with fiction to suggest that our contemporary moment is marked by a recession of the real beneath a veil of fiction. While *The Casting* serves to direct attention to the ways in which such events are spectacularized for media consumption and to undercut any unqualified claims of documentary truth, one might question its participation in a rhetoric that claims the image has been stripped of its relation to the real.

⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Philip Beitchman, Paul Foss, and Paul Patton (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), 4

⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion*, ed. Julia Witwer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 62

⁹ In his introduction to *Forget Foucault*, Sylvère Lotringer notes the extent to which, “*Simulations* became a best-seller of sorts, especially in the art world.” See: Sylvère Lotringer, “Exterminating Angel: Introduction to *Forget Foucault*,” in Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, trans. Philip Beitchman, Lee Hildreth, and Mark Polizzatti (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2007), 7. For an account of the art world’s embrace of Baudrillard that argues it rests on a misreading of the author’s work, see: François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. Jeff Fort (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 235-421

Other artists, meanwhile, have explored the interaction of reality and fiction in a less cynical manner that retains an investment in the referential status of the image. They turn to hybrid formations of documentary and fiction not to assert their interchangeability, but in order to explore the multiplicity of relations that mediate between the real and the image. They reject documentary transparency, but so too do they contest the logic of simulation by insisting on the moving image as manifesting a trace of the real precisely at a time when the referential power of images finds itself in question. The proliferation of digital media has resulted in a much greater ability to produce and disseminate non-fiction images, but in the process it has provoked a crisis in the faith spectators invest in these images as “authentic.” Rather than see this condition as doing away with any possibility of documentary practice, artists such as Kutlug Ataman, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Amar Kanwar, and Steve McQueen have underlined the coexistence of referentiality and representation in order to both problematize documentary’s truth claims and underline the truth that can be produced through fiction. Where Baudrillard engages in a postmodern revival of Platonism that sees the image as a mere semblance, these artists assert that, more than just functioning a vessel of empty spectacle supplying spurious reality-effects, the moving image—with its anchorage in physical reality—can be used to inform, to move, and to imagine change. It can provide a way to encounter alterity, to rethink received narratives, and see the world anew.

This desire to interrogate the relationship between reality and fiction is palpable in moving image art since 1990 and, as such, will be the focus of this final chapter. The double turn to documentary and fiction at this time marks an embrace of the moving image as a technology of the virtual, a quality of film and video that had been extensively problematized in earlier artists’ employments of the moving image. Responding to Anthony McCall in a roundtable on the projected image in contemporary art, Hal Foster

remarked that, in the contemporary moment, “There’s a rampant pictorialism, which is also a rampant virtualism, that the sculptural and spatial interests of your generation, Anthony, wanted to challenge, or at least to probe.”¹⁰ Pictorialism and virtualism, as Foster put it, were key qualities of dominant cinema that the artists of McCall’s generation were keen to reject. The shift Foster points out—the shift from material actuality to virtuality—is thus an important factor in conceptualizing how artists’ uses of the moving image since 1990 demonstrate an increased affinity with cinema when compared to their precursors, individuals who aligned their uses of film and video with other media such as sculpture and/or performance. It is easy to see how uses of 16mm or the remaking of the products of film history invoke the realm of cinema. Less obvious but no less important to the increased presence of cinema in the art of the past two decades is manner in which artists have embraced the moving image as a technology of the virtual.

The preceding two chapters of this dissertation have examined strains of artistic practice that locate cinematic specificity both within and beyond the material basis of the apparatus. Chapter two asserted that cinema’s task lies in the spectral reanimation of contingent traces of pastness, while chapter three emphasized the public dimension of the institution and its status as a repository of shared cultural memory. In both cases, one finds propositions as to what cinema might be at this historical juncture that investigate how this material apparatus functions historically and/or socially. Following this objective to locate cinematic specificity as encompassing and but also exceeding its supporting technology, this chapter will offer one final proposition concerning how cinema is “exhibited” or held up for examination in contemporary art: it will investigate the ways in which artists have latched on to the cinema’s ability to narrativize,

¹⁰ Hal Foster, “Roundtable: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” *October*, vol. 104 (Spring 2003), 75

fictionalize, and document the world—in short, to offer spectators a revelatory, virtual encounter with another place and time. The transformative mechanisms that intervene between the real and its representation may come under attack, as they do in *The Casting*, or, as the following pages will demonstrate, they may be mined for their potential to generate an ethical encounter with the documentary archive, as they are in Amar Kanwar's *The Torn First Pages* (2004-2008). Whatever the stance taken, the works under examination in this chapter investigate the modes of fiction and documentary as always already coexisting in the moving image and as constituting a vast measure of its power.

Rather than see fiction and non-fiction as opposed or separate, these works redouble the “aesthetics of confusion” that Bellour has deemed central to the othered cinema with the additional confusion of the division between fabulation and reference. They assert a space of overlap that maintains that, just as “every film is a fiction film,” so too is “every film a documentary.” As T.J. Demos has written, there has been a “significant convergence in the art of the moving image over the last decade, one that is remarkable for advancing political investment by means of subtle aesthetic construction, doing so by joining documentary and fictional modes into uncertain relationship.”¹¹ These works offer possibilities of disentangling documentary from its problematic relationship to authenticity and problematizing spectacle by insisting on the documentary value of the image that always lurks beneath it. They demonstrate that the museum and gallery now serve as sites at which to think beyond simulation and instead reimagine the tension and overlap between fiction and documentary—a tension to which,

¹¹ Demos names Anri Sala, Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, Pierre Huyghe, Amar Kanwar, Steve McQueen, the Otolith Group, Walid Raad, and Hito Steyerl as important figures related to this tendency. See: T.J. Demos, “Moving Images of Globalization,” *Grey Room*, no. 37 (Fall 2009), 10

as Jonathan Rosenbaum has noted, “[f]rom the beginning, film has owed an important part of its fascination.”¹²

While they may not evince the material relationship to cinema found in the celluloid works of Tacita Dean or Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij, nor the citational relationship to cinema found in the practices of Candice Breitz or Pierre Huyghe, the works explored in this chapter are nonetheless evidence of the ways in which moving-image art since 1990 has both interrogated and participated in the institution of cinema as it enters its second century. Unlike the practices discussed in the last two chapters, which focused on cinema as a superannuated medium to be commemorated and/or interrogated within the space of the gallery, this chapter explores a site at which the cinema is embraced at least in part for its novelty. These diverse practices leave behind cinephilia and nostalgia to instead see cinema as offering new artistic possibilities and new opportunities to engage the social and political. As such, they constitute a site of novelty that is irreducible to a technophilic spectacularization of contemporary art, a novelty that is not the ever-same in the guise of the ever-new that is the hallmark of the commodity form. Rather, they invoke the novelty of the blind spot, as they renegotiate formerly distinct categories and muddle boundaries.

A Technology of the Virtual

The interest in documentary and fiction in moving-image art since 1990 indicates a waning of the phobic relationship to cinematic illusionism that had marked earlier generations of film and video artists. Fiction and non-fiction practices have emerged that explore the new possibilities for storytelling afforded by the multiple projection environments of the gallery space, while a whole host of critical and curatorial projects

¹² Rosenbaum cites diverse works by Lumière, Méliès, the Italian neorealists, the members of the French New Wave, Robert Altman, and Iranian filmmakers of the 1990s as support for this claim. See: Jonathan Rosenbaum, “The Creation of the World: Roberto Rossellini’s *India Matri Bhumi*,” *Outsider Films On India, 1950-1990*, ed. Shanay Jhaveri (Mumbai: The Shoestring Publisher, 2010), 49

have explored what has been called the “documentary turn” of contemporary art.¹³ In short, one confronts diverse practices that embrace the technical and aesthetic possibilities of cinema while leaving behind specific reference to film history.

For Dominique Païni, such practices displace the emphasis on remaking to constitute the next stage in a generational progression of moving-image art—even though, one must assert, both tendencies appear contemporaneously in the early 1990s. Païni sees “recyclers” like Pierre Huyghe and Douglas Gordon as comprising a third generation of video artists that is superseded by a fourth generation interested in exploring the spatialization of narrative and that “makes use of the moving image to exhibit a new material: time.”¹⁴ In this account, what is at stake in the work of such artists “is less an iconographic borrowing from the cinema than the structural importation of cinema into the space of the museum,” allowing cinematic temporality

¹³ A partial list of such exhibitions and publications includes: *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Göttigen; Steidl, 2008); *Being Singular Plural: Moving Images from India* (2010), curated by Sandhini Poddar at the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin; *Documenta 11* (2002), curated by Okwui Enwezor, Kassel; *Documentary Now: Contemporary Strategies in Photography, Film, and the Visual Arts*, ed. Frits Gierstberg (Amsterdam: NAI Publishers, 2006); *Experiments with Truth* (2006) curated by Mark Nash at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia; *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive in Contemporary Artists' Film and Video*, ed. Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (London: Picture This, 2006); *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Document and Contemporary Art #1*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin and Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Sternberg Press and Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2008); and *Time Zones: Recent Film and Video* (2004) curated by Jessica Morgan and Gregor Muir at Tate Modern, London. While this “documentary turn” extends beyond uses of the moving image to include still photography, the vast majority of the work that belongs to this tendency employs film and video.

¹⁴ The first generation is comprised of “pioneers” such as Vito Acconci, Nam June Paik, and Woody Vasulka; the second is made up of “painters and sculptors” such as Gary Hill, Tony Oursler, and Bill Viola. See: Dominique Païni, *Le temps exposé: le cinéma de la salle au musée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002), 66–67; all translations from this text are my own. It should be noted that the recent activities of Gordon and Huyghe have not been limited to the genre of remaking. Gordon’s *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait* (2004, made in collaboration with Philippe Parreno) and Huyghe’s *Streamside Day Follies* (2003) and *A Journey That Wasn’t* (2006) all fit with Païni’s “fourth generation,” disrupting somewhat the clean divisions he hopes to make. It should also be noted that the notion that these “fourth generation” practices engage in an exploration of temporality is echoed by Daniel Birnbaum’s *Chronology*, a text that takes up concepts drawn from phenomenology and Deleuze’s writings on cinema in order to grapple with the relationship between time and subjectivity found in moving image works by Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Doug Aitken, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and others. See: Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005).

and storytelling to be explored outside of the restrictions imposed by the movie theatre.¹⁵ Païni exhibits a discernible preference for the artists of this fourth generation, looking to them to provide the title of his book, *Le temps exposé (Time Exhibited)*, and content that they cease what he perceives to be desublimating assaults against classical cinema perpetrated by artists such as Gordon.¹⁶

Though Païni names Doug Aitken, Pipilotti Rist, and Sam Taylor-Wood as the key representatives of the tendency he describes, one might also add to the list figures such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Kutlug Ataman, Matthew Barney, Stan Douglas (also something of a “recycler”), Omer Fast, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Amar Kanwar, Isaac Julien,¹⁷ Steve McQueen, and Fiona Tan. It perhaps goes without saying this far from exhaustive inventory brings together a great diversity of practices by no means reducible to a single set of concerns. However, what all these artists share in common is a use of projection in tandem with a valorisation of the moving image as a technology of the virtual over its sculptural or material attributes. The primary emphasis is on a represented scene or event rather than on the apparatus itself, whether this scene consists of a fictional scenario or a documentary portrait. This is not to suggest that the actuality of the apparatus ceases to be a concern for these artists; indeed, they are sharply attuned to the material specificities of the media in which they work. They do not, however, turn inwards to construct a recursive spiral of reflexivity but rather use the moving image to turn outwards and open artistic production to an encounter with subjective and historical experience. In *The Casting*, for example, the sculptural configuration of the quadruple projection is key to the work, but it is key as a *means* rather than an end in

¹⁵ Ibid., 69

¹⁶ Ibid., 67; for my discussion of this issue, see chapter three, page 201.

¹⁷ Julien constitutes an interesting case, given that his background was firmly anchored in film production for many years before moving into gallery-based work. Many filmmakers have produced works for an installation context, but they are sometimes one-offs (Godard) or other times in a derivative relation to work made for theatrical exhibition (Akerman). Julien, by contrast, has fully entered the world of video installation, currently make work in this format much more often than for theatrical distribution.

itself. The reflexivity exhibited here has less to do with the material attributes of the apparatus and altogether more to do with a desire to probe cinema's double relationship to representation and referentiality—two qualities that depend on its status as a technology of the virtual.

Though the notion of virtuality is often invoked in reference to new media (think of “virtual reality”), Anne Friedberg has noted that it is necessary to challenge such restrictive accounts. Rather, as Friedberg suggests, “The virtual is a substitute—‘acting without agency or matter’—an immaterial proxy for the material.”¹⁸ Together, fiction and documentary designate two ways in which cinema is a technology of the virtual; that is, they are terms that describe the relationship between “material” reality and its “immaterial proxy,” the image. Despite their ontological differences, they both make visible another space and time before the spectator. To assert that cinema is a technology of the virtual is not to suggest a transparency between the image and the material reality it represents; as Friedberg writes, it is not a matter of original and copy “because the virtuality of the image does not imply direct mimesis, but a transfer—more like metaphor—from one plane of meaning and appearance to another.”¹⁹ Rather, the invocation of the category in relation to contemporary artists' employments of the moving image is a way of marking out a difference in the conceptualization of the apparatus relative to that of the 1960s and 1970s. As will be explored in the pages that follow, artists of this earlier generation refused a notion of the moving image as immaterial proxy and instead insisted on it as a material surface that functioned as a part of a larger apparatus, the materiality of which was similarly emphasized.

The modes of documentary and fiction might seem antithetical to one another. One suggests a fidelity to the real, while the other signals a departure from it into the

¹⁸ Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 7-8

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11

realm of fabulation. As Bill Nichols has put it, in fiction film, it is “a likeness rather than a replica to which we attend,” whereas with documentary “we are offered access to *the* world” rather than “*a* world.”²⁰ Both, however, are always integral to the moving image, whether one is speaking of a feature-length narrative or a documentary short relatively devoid of cause-and-effect logic. The authors of *Aesthetics of Film* write that every film—even the documentary—is a fiction film because of “the law requiring that every film, by its materials of expression (moving images and sounds), ‘unrealizes’ what it represents, transforming it into a spectacle.”²¹ In other words, what the spectator sees is not the thing in itself but its virtual double. The real even is fictionalized as it is channelled through structures of representation. All films are fictional in this sense, while the fiction film is doubly so: “it is unreal because it represents the fiction and because of the way in which it represents the fiction (using images of objects and of actors).”²²

At the same time, though, every film is a documentary film. Even if it “‘unrealizes’ what it represents,” it is nonetheless first and foremost a photographic record of its referent, a revelatory trace of a particular space and time. It may not transparently reflect this reality, subjecting it to various kinds of transformations through the work of representation, but it nonetheless does maintain a relation to it. Excluding the cases of animation and computer-generated imagery (about which more will be said later), the cinematic image is a document of a profilmic event. Very different than the “impression of reality” created by, for example, the classical Hollywood cinema²³ or the specious

²⁰ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 109

²¹ Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, and Marc Vernet, *Aesthetics of Film*, trans. Richard Neupert (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 77

²² Ibid.

²³ This “impression of reality,” a major preoccupation of 1970s film theory, is created as much or more by an organization of filmic space and techniques of spectatorial identification than with any link to the profilmic real. This allows a film like *Avatar* (2009) to produce a profound impression of reality—akin to the willing suspension of disbelief—while asserting a notable distance from the profilmic. For a canonical discussion of some of the questions surrounding this issue, see: Christian Metz, “On the Impression of

dramatizations of so-called “reality television,” this understanding of the relationship between the filmic image and the real asserts, in short, that due to the recording function of cinema, the referent adheres.

The tension between documentary and fiction is thus in play in almost all encounters with the moving image and is intimately bound up in the pleasures it provides and the knowledge it promises. Most often, this interplay is minimized as a given work will firmly inhabit one camp and disavow its relation to the other. In other words, a fiction film will attempt to minimize the force of the profilmic so as to strengthen the impression of reality of its diegetic world, while a documentary film will bracket the necessary unrealization of the filmic image and the factors that intervene between the real and its representation in order to better communicate a sense of immediacy and veracity. In certain instances, however, the coexistence of documentary and fiction is taken up as a specific point of interrogation and the tension between them is cultivated rather than subdued. In foregrounding a combination of the two within the textual fabric of a single work, it becomes possible to destabilize an easy opposition between truth and falsity and in its place introduce a complex interaction between them that is shifting and uncertain. Given the dangers of falling back into an unreconstructed belief in documentary or of resuscitating the still powerful ideological function of fiction, this is a particularly attractive option for contemporary artists who seek to interrogate these modes without inheriting the problems that they have historically posed. Moreover, it provides a way of reflecting on the cinema itself, caught between the traditions of realism and formalism, the registration of the physical world and the creation of grand spectacle. The hybridization of fiction and documentary dramatizes this essential friction.

Reality in the Cinema,” *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3-15

Documentary is always already present beneath the fiction, lending it a relation to the archivization of the past not present in theatre or literature; at times, the testimonial value of this documentary witnessing can erupt, exceed the fabulation that seeks to contain it, and fracture the veneer of fiction so as to render problematic its ontological status.²⁴ Meanwhile, one can highlight the manner in which documentary is always subject to layers of mediation that work to unrealize the profilmic event and channel it through the codes of cinematic representation—something very much at play in *The Casting*. There can be no access to the real in itself; to cite Jacques Rancière, “The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought.”²⁵ By blending documentary and fiction, these ever-present issues can be explicitly foregrounded and interrogated. Many films throughout the history of cinema have done precisely this through varied strategies: Abbas Kiarostami’s *Close-Up (Nema-ye Nazdik)* (1990), Chris Marker’s *Sans soleil* (1983), Gillo Pontecorvo’s *Battle of Algiers (La Battaglia di Algeri)* (1966), and Orson Welles’ *F for Fake* (1973) are only a few of the most prominent examples. These diverse films strike to the very heart of cinematic fascination in their interrogations into spectatorial belief and the referential and epistemological status of the image. In their exploration of such hybrid documentary/fiction formations, the artists discussed throughout this chapter continue this investigation while displacing its sphere of inquiry from the movie theatre to the art gallery. This displacement, of course, raises issues and has consequences of its own.

²⁴ This eruption of the documentary value of the image might be described as a moment when *presentation* punctures the fabric of *representation*. Jean Renoir’s *Rules of the Game (La Règle du jeu)* (1939) evinces such a moment in the hunting sequence when a rabbit is killed. As Vivian Sobchack has put it, the spectator knows “that the murder of the young aviator André Jurieu is merely represented, whereas the rabbit’s death is not only represented but also presented... [Jurieu’s] death is not merely contained by the codes governing the narrative but is, in fact, constituted and determined by them. The rabbit’s death, however, exceeds the narrative codes that communicate it. It ruptures and interrogates the boundaries (and license) of fictional representation and has a ‘ferocious reality’ that the character’s death does not.” See: Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 246-247

²⁵ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 38

One such issue is the relative novelty of the modes of documentary and fiction in moving-image art. The two share the status of being thoroughly rejected in artists' uses of the moving image in the 1960s and 1970s and thoroughly embraced in those of the 1990s and 2000s. As will be explored further in the pages that follow, cinematic virtuality and illusionism—central to documentary and fiction alike—are precisely the attributes of the moving image that artists once refused. How might one account for this reversal? What practices emerge from it and what consequences does it have for an understanding of the relationship between art and cinema? As Kerry Brougher has put it, “If any one theme is present in most ‘structuralist,’ as P. Adams Sitney terms it [sic], or ‘materialist’ cinema, as Peter Gidal calls it, it is the sense of film as a literal object, and the subsequent infringement of film’s illusionistic properties.”²⁶ Brougher emphasizes that this concern must be understood in relation to the broader context of aesthetic production at this time and indeed, it is a theme that carries over to many other employments of the moving image of the period far beyond structural film. As Okwui Enwezor—a figure who, as artistic director of *Documenta 11* (2002), was a major proponent of the “documentary turn” of contemporary art—has noted, Greenbergian modernism “purges the external world from the space of art, wishing for it a state of purity, a state which rejects not only illusionism, but also asserts that the full meaning of any art is to be found in its specific medium.”²⁷ With the disintegration of the modernist paradigm, both virtuality and intermediality become increasingly possible and increasingly appealing. In order to take account of the new prominence of fictional and documentary modes in moving-image art, it is first necessary to briefly explore the

²⁶ P. Adams Sitney never termed this tendency “structuralist” film, but rather “structural” film. See: Kerry Brougher, “Introduction,” *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945*, ed. Kerry Brougher and Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 82-83

²⁷ Okwui Enwezor, “Documentary/Verité: Bio-Politics, Human Rights, and the Figure of ‘Truth’ in Contemporary Art,” *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin and Annandale-on-Hudson: Sternberg Press and Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2008), 64

virulent rejection of these attributes in the art and theory of the moving image in the 1960s and 1970s.

Iconoclastic Revolt and After

The double rejection of fiction and documentary in the 1960s and 1970s is inextricable from a larger repudiation, that of narrative. While fiction and documentary are terms that designate a relationship to the profilmic, narrative describes the organization of time and event—thus placing the terms in distinctly different registers. Nonetheless, an important bond exists between them. Fiction is impossible without intimations of narrative (however weak they may be) and while documentary may exist in non-narrative form (such as Joris Ivens' *Rain* [*Regen*, 1929], to cite a famous example), it frequently makes use of narrative to organize its recorded events. Moreover, the three terms are bound together by their participation in a regime of illusionism and in a conception of the film frame as a virtual window. As such, exploring the rejection and rehabilitation of narrative will be an important step in conceptualizing how and why fiction and documentary have been mobilized in moving-image art.

In 1970, Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* advocated for pioneering new moving-image environments beyond the movie theatre, but specified storytelling as a specific point of derision:

Plot, story, and what commonly is known as “drama” are the devices that enable the commercial entertainer to manipulate his audience. The very act of this manipulation, gratifying conditioned needs, is what the films actually are about... The viewer of commercial entertainment cinema does not want to work; he wants to be an object, to be acted upon, to be manipulated. The true subject of commercial entertainment is this little game it plays with its audience.²⁸

According to such logic, narrative, in large part due to the structures of identification on which it relies, elicits passive audiences content in their pacification. Rather than

²⁸ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1970), 60

advocating for experimentation with and/or a subversion of narrative,²⁹ Youngblood rejects it entirely—and his position is far from exceptional. Despite the dismantling and reconstruction of narrative forms that mark the cinemas of the 1960s and 1970s across the globe, uses of the moving image in art—even those by no means aligned with *Expanded Cinema*—largely stayed away from narrative, seeing it as an agent of mystification, ideological naturalization, and of the sublation of contradiction. Both modernist medium-specific works and the intermedia experiments that challenged that paradigm shared in common a refusal of narrative and illusionism. This generation was marked by iconoclastic efforts to dismantle the apparatus and reveal its constitutive heterogeneity, resulting in a stance that was as anti-documentary as it was anti-fiction. Works like Paul Sharits' *Shutter Interface* (1975), for example, refuse representation and concentrate on the planar surface of the image rather than any impression of depth. The aim was to problematize film's capacity for illusionism, even when representational elements were maintained and the subject of narrative invoked, as in Michael Snow's *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974).

As noted above, every film is a documentary film insofar as it creates a lasting image of a profilmic event. In this sense, there are, of course, numerous “documentary” employments of the moving image by artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Film and video were frequently used to document performance-based and other ephemeral artworks, but in such instances these moving images are distinct from the work itself, functioning as documentation rather than as artworks in their own right. Early video art registered representational images—thus partaking in documentary in the broadest sense of the word. These works, however, are qualitatively different than those that have come to prominence in the last two decades as they largely forego an interest in virtuality in

²⁹ Also in 1970, Roland Barthes wrote, “The *contemporary* problem is not to destroy narrative but to subvert it; today's task is to dissociate subversion from destruction.” See: Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 64

favour of feedback loops and sculptural arrangements that foreground the actuality of the apparatus. The aim is not to provide images of another place and time, to welcome in the external world, but to insist on the here and now of spectatorship. In a work such as Vito Acconci's *Centers* (1971), video is not used to capture a trace of the external world but instead to form a tautological circuit. In her landmark essay, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," Rosalind Krauss noted that in the medium's early uses, "the mirror-reflection of absolute feedback is a process of bracketing out the object... [V]ideo's real medium is a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object—an Other—and invest it in the Self."³⁰ The advent of video could have provided artists with a way of turning away from the enclosures of self-referentiality and outwards to an encounter with the world, but this was not to be the case for some years. Instead, artists focused on qualities of the apparatus that might mark out its specificity from film, such as real-time feedback.

By contrast, in the modes of documentary practice that have come to prominence over the past two decades, one finds an interest in conveying information, experiences, and images culled from the world. Rather than turning inward to comment on the apparatus or the "Self," there is a concern with exploring the collective and the social. As Vít Havránek has put it, "[T]he decision to work in a documentary manner primarily situates the Not-I, other people, creators, works, social phenomena and so on, at the center of the thinking and acting of the creative subject."³¹ The moving image is mobilized as a kind of archive of existence, but in a manner that raises questions concerning the relationship of the referential image to any promise of authenticity or immediacy. The work of Kutlug Ataman, for example, relies on the interview—an intersubjective, narrative situation—as a basic unit of composition. For *Women Who*

³⁰ Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October*, vol. 1 (Spring 1976), 57

³¹ Vít Havránek, "The Documentary Ontology of Forms in Transforming Countries," *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin and Annandale-on-Hudson: Sternberg Press and Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2008), 131

Wear Wigs (1999), the artist interviewed four Turkish women who all wear wigs for different reasons: an activist gone underground, a cancer survivor, a Muslim university student not allowed to wear a veil to school, and a transsexual prostitute and activist whose head was shaved by the police [FIGURE 4]. The four interviews are exhibited as four projections placed side by side to form a polyphonic panorama.

The installation asserts that the wig is not simply a surface level adornment that covers over the women's essential selves, but rather an important element in their conception of self and their relation to others. Though this foregrounding of the multivalent meanings of appearance, disguise, and performance, as well as the potential for producing truth that resides therein, *Women Who Wear Wigs* troubles any notion of objectivity or transparency that the interview mode it espouses might invoke. This is no simple politics of the signified that would use the medium of video as a mere container. Rather, instead of unmediated testimony, one becomes aware of how fabulation and mythology are always already present in the recounting of personal experience; *Women Who Wear Wigs* actively interrogates the signifying mechanisms that work to constitute identity. Here, as in many other works by Ataman—such as *The 4 Seasons of Veronica Read* (2002), *Twelve* (2003), and *Küba* (2004)—there is an insistence on the moving image as a document of lived experience very other than both the simulationism of Omer Fast and the brand of reflexivity proper to uses of film and video in the 1960s and 1970s.

Paul Willemen has pinpointed history and “the social anchorage of meaning production” as two blind spots of vanguard media practices in the 1960s and 1970s.³² Though the object of Willemen's criticism is an area of politically committed film theory and practice that existed at a certain distance from the art world, a distance that was in some cases wilfully imposed, his criticism holds true of artists' film and video practices

³² Paul Willemen, “An Avant-Garde for the ‘90s,” *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 141

as well. Questions of materiality, process, and subject formation superseded any interest in historical specificity or experience. Willemsen writes that British avant-garde film production in the 1990s begins to react against the omissions of the preceding generation in such a manner that

narrative becomes an issue again, rather than simply a bad object to be disarticulated or eliminated. Narrative, as the process through which the articulation of subject and history is elaborated in the text as well as in relation to the text, is thus unavoidable if one point of the discourse is precisely to trace the existence of the political within particular histories.³³

Moving beyond the Adornian position that advanced art in a capitalist society must be governed by a relentless negativity, this return to narrative means a reengagement with the specificity of subjective and historical experience, whether through fiction or documentary. It does not advocate abandoning of a politics of signification altogether, but rather aims at integrating an interest in the processes of making meaning with a concern for history and social existence.

This rehabilitation of narrative is also present in Laura Mulvey's "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative, and Historical Experience," a 1986 essay in which the author returns to the problematic of cinematic representations of sexual difference she outlined in 1975's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In "Changes," Mulvey suggests narrative as a possible way out of the ahistorical structural oppositions (such as woman : man :: spectacle : narrative) that had governed much of feminist theory in the 1970s, be it film-related or otherwise. Mulvey admits in "Changes" that the conceptual framework she employed in "Visual Pleasure"—the frozen time of structuralist synchronic analysis—might have in fact enacted a blockage that would prohibit a consideration of her ideas in relation to temporal change, in relation to history.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 154

³⁴ Laura Mulvey, "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative, and Historical Experience," *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 163

Instead, she turns to narrative as a locus of transformation that may leave resolution and closure in suspension, never fully dissipating the possibilities it opens.

If narrative resolution often works recuperatively, absorbing back into normality the disruptive element that initiated the story, Mulvey's interest is in mobilizing narratives that resist such recuperation and in investing in what she terms the "*liminality*" of the middle of the story, that interstitial stage in which real change occurs. She encourages the reader to remember that structures of sexual differentiation and identity formation such as the Oedipus complex function as "temporal forms, narrative forms," and asserts, "If narrative, with the help of avant-garde principles, can be conceived around ending that is not closure, and the state of liminality as politically significant, it can question the symbolic and allow myth and symbols to be constantly revalued."³⁵ The gallery space, with its rejection of start-to-finish viewing and possibility for multi-screen environments, seems especially poised to pioneer the creation of these new narrative forms that might integrate experimental strategies and problematize closure.

Accordingly, though both Willemsen and Mulvey are more fully aligned with film studies than with gallery practice, this rehabilitation of narrative—be it fictional, documentary, or a hybrid combination of the two—occurs with force in the artistic production of the 1990s. In its most successful instances, it is not a simple embrace of the forms of narrative that Youngblood saw as inducing spectatorial pacification, nor a return to a prelapsarian belief in the truth of the image. Rather, as Willemsen describes it, "It is no longer the narrative that tells 'the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary,' nor the deconstruction of such a procedure, but a narrative that 'brushes history against the grain'" and acknowledges that cinema must be understood historically but also that

³⁵ Willemsen, 175

history must be understood cinematically.³⁶ Rather than the ahistoricism of the psychoanalytic conception of subject formation Krauss sees in *Centers* and a number of other video works from the 1970s, in *Women Who Wear Wigs*, Ataman examines a complex and located nexus of gender, subjective experience, collectivity, and the political. Narrative is a central element of this undertaking, both as it functions in the individual women's testimonies and in the larger assemblage they create together. As Emre Baykal has written, the four screens of the installation work in tandem "so that the work completes itself into a full and wider picture: a fifth frame that amplifies a polyphonic sound of a wider reality, which is related to the identity problem of the country, rather than to the problems associated with certain identity politics."³⁷

New Fictions

At the risk of overgeneralization, one might venture that a curious reversal has taken place: in the 1960s and 1970s, narrative was to be rejected in favour of an iconoclastic experience of space and medium, but since the 1990s, narrative has been explored as a fragmentary and open terrain of socio-political inquiry, while certain non-narrative explorations of spectacular intensity, such as Rist's *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Metres)* (2008) have engaged in a replication of the forms of subjectivation and image circulation that are endemic to advanced capitalism. This reversal is a result of certain impasses reached in earlier forms of politically invested media production, outlined by Willemen and Mulvey, and of the emergence in the intervening years of postmodernism as a cultural logic marked by a spatial diagram and the disintegration of the syntagmatic chain. In such an environment, the characterization of narrative can easily shift from being seen as complicit with ideological hegemony (as it was in the

³⁶ Ibid., 155

³⁷ Emre Baykal, *Kutlug Ataman: You Tell Me About Yourself Anyway!*, trans. Nazim Dikbas (Istanbul and Köln: Yapi Kredi Publications and Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 49

1960s) to something that in fact has the possibility of departing from the dominant cultural logic. There are, of course, instances in which narrative and spectacle jostle fiercely with each other; the work of Matthew Barney and Doug Aitken, for example, makes use of a narrative as something of a skeleton to cloak in spectacular robes, much like a post-classical Hollywood blockbuster such as James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). However, narrative may also be marshalled as a way of intervening in economies of signification and reimagining the relationships between subjectivity, memory, and history. Through its organization of time and event, it can counter the prevailing logic of fragmentation and piece back together syntagmatic units in new ways. It has ceased to be a bad object in artists' employments of the moving image, emerging as one strategy that might rein in the intensities of spectacle and stage important investigations into historical change and subjective experience.

Narrative has emerged not only in documentary practices such as Ataman's, but also in the fiction-based practices of artists such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Stan Douglas, and Isaac Julien. Ahtila's *If 6 Was 9* (1995) is a triple-projection installation that engages a topic dear to the history of video art: subject formation. However, its predecessors lie less in that tradition than in the fragmentary and multi-faceted narratives of 1960s' European art cinema, owing much its loosening of the causal chain and indiscernibility of past, present, reality, and fantasy. The ten-minute loop reimagines gendered subject formation outside of a psychoanalytic paradigm of lack, instead insisting on the productivity of becoming. Though the work finds its basis in documentary interviews, Ahtila uses fictional strategies to create a quasi-utopian space of possibility in which gender relations and attitudes towards sexuality find radically altered expression, something that suggested in the topsy-turviness invoked by the installation's title, drawn from a Jimi Hendrix lyric: "Got my own world to live through/And I ain't gonna copy you/If six turned out to be nine/Oh I don't mind." A group of teenage girls candidly

discuss their views on gender, sexuality, and sexual experience, criss-crossing the public and private realms to engage the world of MTV and magazines alongside intimate recollections shared between friends [FIGURE 5]. The girls move between three modes of discourse—memories, fantasies, and perceptions—that are at times indiscernible from one another. An alternating use of voice-over and synchronized sound troubles any easy knowledge as to whether the speaker is addressing someone else within the diegesis or presenting a monologue accessible only to the spectator.

As noted above, *If 6 Was 9* is a work of fiction, but was informed by interviews with young girls Ahtila conducted in Helsinki. The influence of documentary in the work is felt in its formal vocabulary, which makes frequent use of direct address and the device of the interview. The installation sets up a series of contaminations of normally upheld boundaries—self/other, fiction/non-fiction, public/private—that carry over into what is perhaps the central conceit of the work: its temporal regime. A girl of approximately fifteen delivers an anecdote in the past tense about her sexual activity in high school and how the other girls treated her because of it. She says, “Flat-breasted bookworms wondered if I had too big a mouth and fake eyelashes. Tough girls called me a whore and sapling feminists thought I was just stupid.” This summons a schism within the audio-visual representation, as it occupies two temporal locations at once. A teenage girl speaks the words of a woman much older; perhaps they belong to another and perhaps they belong to her future self, but in either case they are reflecting back from a time to come on the present tense of the image, young adulthood. In the following scene, Ahtila moves towards a more blatant proclamation of such anachronism: a young girl sits on the railing outside her school and proclaims, “Here I sit with my legs apart like a little girl who hasn’t learned anything about sex, who has no idea that a woman must hide her private parts and lust. In fact I’m thirty-eight years old” [FIGURE 6].

The anachronism of *If 6 Was 9* effects a dislocation, as the girls sometimes speak what the viewer presumes to be their “own” words—intensely personal words, at that—and other times parrot the words of women who are their senior. In either case, these words are not their own, but those of documentary subjects interviewed by Ahtila. This ventriloquism allows for a loosening of the connection between the speaker and what is spoken to allow for fantasy and memory to circulate through the work in a depersonalized and temporally fluid manner. Ahtila has said, “Instead of just getting characters to talk about feminist issues, I wanted to incorporate feminism deeper into the structure of the work.”³⁸ *If 6 Was 9* both recalls and points to the limitations of the feminist consciousness-raising documentary by introducing a series of refractions that makes evident the impossibility of a stable subject who would utter “I” or who would communicate authentic experience. The work remains grounded in a discussion of the experiences of women and girls, but these stories are mediated through fictional conceits that allow them to reflexively confront the conditions of their enunciation and the non-transparency of both language and the filmic image.

In her analysis of the installation, Alison Butler has suggested that,

The installation’s form, through its spatial and temporal articulation, embodies a micropolitics of becoming, even as its content—its insistent concern with women’s experience—defines this field of micropolitics in terms of molar identity. From a feminist perspective, *If 6 was 9* is especially interesting because of it explores a feminist politics of temporality.³⁹

One thus finds an alliance between a feminist politics grounded in the specificity of women’s experience and a “micropolitics” that refuses such identitarian logic in favour of molecular becoming. It is by maintaining these two approaches in play at once that Ahtila overcomes a problem that has plagued feminism: how to rally around the signifier “women” while also engaging in a critique of the logic of identity that has subtended the

³⁸ Eija-Liisa Ahtila, quoted in: Samantha Ellis, “Eija-Liisa Ahtila,” *Make*, no. 92 (2002), 48

³⁹ Alison Butler, “Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 Was 9*,” *Camera Obscura* 58, vol. 20, no. 1 (2005), 25

regime of phallogocentrism. The looped format and the refusal of a developmental logic move away from any possibility of narrative closure, something that film history has shown rarely ends well for women. Instead, *If 6 Was 9* remains open, inhabiting a space of liminality.

In its looped, multi-screen format and accompanying temporal dislocations, the work avoids narrative closure and instead insists on the powers of fragmentation, recombination, and becoming. The figures of *If 6 Was 9* are not girls and not women, as they are placed in an interstitial position that allows them to shift age brackets, knowledges, and discursive registers. Girlhood ceaselessly oscillates between being championed as a site of potentiality and freedom and being retrospectively viewed from the future of womanhood as a painful training ground for what will follow. One voice asserts, “One thing is certain for us all, the players in this game: we have future,” only to have another respond, “But I’ve been there already: educate yourself.” There is an interplay here between determination and room to manoeuvre, inevitability and unforeseeability, that refuses to allow the possibilities of girlhood to be entirely recuperated into a traditional developmental narrative. Ahtila has remarked, “The idea of linearity bothers me, as does the notion of causality that accompanies it and the assumption that a story should become understandable only through that formula.”⁴⁰ Linearity and causality are refused in *If 6 Was 9* both in its account of gender formation and in its narrative and formal structure. In this way, Ahtila rehabilitates fictional narrative as a possibility for political engagement and draws out the new possibilities for cinematic storytelling that are made possible by multi-screen projection.

⁴⁰ Eija-Liisa Ahtila, quoted in: Malm, 69

A Return of the Real

Just as the revival of fictional narrative may be seen as both a response to the omissions and impasses of an earlier generation and as a byproduct of a change in the dominant cultural logic that enacts a shift in the available possibilities for opposition, the recent embrace of documentary may be seen as a desire to re-inject questions of history and the social into aesthetic production as well as a reaction to often hyperbolic proclamations of the fading of the real and a concomitant proliferation of simulacra. As noted with regard to *The Casting*, certain artists continue to affirm the rule of simulation even as they expose it to critique. But others—and here one might invoke Ataman’s commitment to the interview and contrast it to the way Fast uses the interview in *The Casting*—reassert the referentiality of the moving image precisely as an intervention into a visual culture that all too often treats documents like entertainment.

In *The Return of the Real*, Hal Foster diagnoses the fascination with trauma and abjection in the art of the 1990s as in part symptomatic of “a dissatisfaction with the textualist model of culture as well as the conventionalist view of reality—as if the real, repressed in poststructuralist postmodernism, had returned as traumatic.”⁴¹ Just as poststructuralism’s emphasis on signification as a process grounded in a differential system of signs rather than any referent in the external world led artists to return to the fleshy obstinacy of the body, so too one might suggest that the surge in documentary practices is another such “return of the real” after its long time bracketing.⁴² The return to the real of documentary comes at a time when technological advances in image production have displaced the acheiropoietic images of film and video with images in which the human hand (albeit via a computer mouse) once again intervenes. Commercial

⁴¹ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 166

⁴² It is a return felt in critical theory as well as in artistic practice. Georges Didi-Huberman, for example, has written that, “Photography, from this angle, shows a particular ability...to curb the fiercest will to obliterate... Photography works hand in glove with image and memory and therefore possesses their notable *epidemic power*.” See: Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 23

cinema increasingly relies on computer-generated imagery in a manner that substantially alters its ontology and weakens its link to the real. Lev Manovich has suggested that this precipitates a condition in which “cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation.”⁴³ Though animation has long been considered to be one particular case of cinema, Manovich asserts that the proliferation of digital imagery in contemporary cinema reverses this notion to make cinema “*one particular case of animation*.”⁴⁴

In such a climate, declarations such as “the Gulf War did not take place”⁴⁵ have dialectically reversed into a renewed interest in referentiality. Baudrillard predicted this reaction already in 1983’s *Simulations*: “When the real is no longer what it used to be...[t]here is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience, a resurrection of the figurative where object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential...”⁴⁶ Of course, a cynical view of this interest in the referential would see it simply as a nostalgic pastiche of history and a false production of the real that remains fully within the realm of the simulacrum, perhaps of the *American Graffiti* (1973) variety or even that of the nightly news. Or to follow a diverging but equally cynical path, the so-called documentary turn, with its ability to render the distant proximate, might be understood as fully complicit in the art world’s opportunistic forays into the exoticism of otherness, providing a thoroughly demarcated and reified zone of “realness” for ready consumption.⁴⁷ However, the recent turn to

⁴³ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 295

⁴⁴ Ibid., 302, emphasis in original.

⁴⁵ See: Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 12-13

⁴⁷ This element is without a doubt at play. In 2003, Pamela Lee wrote that, “For close to ten years now, that ambient phenomenon known as the art world has been hit by what amounts to an identity crisis, more often than not figured under the sign of globalization. Flip through the catalogues and magazines, survey the principal actors and bit players, track the ever-proliferating biennials—from Sao Paulo to Shanghai to Istanbul—and witness the art world’s struggle to rethink its audiences and range of influence, its norms and procedures.” This, of course, is a welcome change from a conception of the art world and of art history as

documentary in contemporary art practice also attests to the possibility of refusing the logic of the simulacrum and reveals the extent to which proclaiming the recession of the real serves to perpetuate the very forgetting of history it seeks to describe. The political imperative was once to dismantle the simulation machine, but now it is to embrace that very same machine's powers of registration as they are increasingly displaced by manufactured images that have little to no anchorage in physical reality.

Amar Kanwar's *The Torn First Pages* both insists on the testimonial value of the image *and* engages in strategies that "unrealize" the image and assert a distance from the referent. Under the military junta in Myanmar, the State Peace and Development Council requires that all publications include state objectives and slogans on their first page. In December 1994, Ko Thon Htay, a bookseller, was arrested for removing these first pages in the printed matter he sold. *The Torn First Pages* draws its title from this act of protest. The installation consists of nineteen video projections on paper, so many torn first pages now rid of government slogans and given over to serving as a material support for a heterogeneous array of images that respond and testify to the struggle for democracy in Myanmar [FIGURES 7-8]. The projections, arranged in three structures, mobilize the traditions of found footage, reportage, ethnography, and activists' video in mobile constellations of meaning that never resolve in a finite manner. The spectator-visitor is free to move around these projections at will, here encountering a found-footage work by Kanwar that makes jarring interventions into the audio-visual archive, there coming across interviews with the Burmese diaspora in India, Norway, and the United States, and still over there pausing to watch video footage smuggled out of the

thoroughly western and located in a handful of American and European cities. However, as Lee suggests, "something of a colonial logic underwrites the expansion of the art world's traditional borders, as if the art world itself were gleefully following globalization's imperial mandate." Art can provide a critical space to reflect upon the processes of globalization, but it also is a realm that can sometimes mirror its quest for new markets and new subjects, with difference and exoticism as commodities to be brought to market. The current fixation on documentary participates in not just the first of these functions, but both indeed. See: Pamela Lee, "Boundary Issues: The Art World Under the Sign of Globalism," *Artforum* (November 2003), 164-167

country. Michael Renov has enumerated four modalities of documentary poetics: preservation, persuasion, analysis, and expressivity.⁴⁸ Through its nineteen projections, *The Torn First Pages* engages all four of these discursive functions: it asserts the image as a trace of the historical real, it argues for the cause of democracy in Myanmar, it produces knowledge of this struggle by interrogating a selection of images stemming from it, and it does so with a formal and aesthetic acuity that heightens the work's affective resonance.

In order to reimagine the developmental narratives of gender, *If 6 Was 9* fictionalized a series of documentary findings. By contrast, Amar Kanwar's *The Torn First Pages* stays firmly grounded in the documentary mode. In this installation of nineteen projections on paper, there is a strong commitment to the testimonial powers of the image. Where, then, lies its alliance with fiction? Rather than in the staging of scenarios or in any recourse to a likeness of *a* world rather than a replica of *the* world, *The Torn First Pages* evinces a relationship to fiction in its wholehearted embrace of the manner in which the projected image is always fictional insofar as it "unrealizes" the referent, even when it makes documentary claims. Recall the axiom cited above: every film is a fiction film since "every film, by its materials of expression (moving images and sounds), 'unrealizes' what it represents, transforming it into a spectacle." Certain strands of documentary filmmaking—notably direct cinema and *cinéma vérité*—have attempted to combat this necessary unrealization by cultivating formal techniques that would allow for a collapse of the image and referent in the production of objective truth. Rather than work to close this gap, Kanwar acknowledges it, pries it open, and mines it for its potential for intervention. He pulls the referential image farther away from the real in order to return to the world a greater truth than would inhere in the image alone.

⁴⁸ Michael Renov, "Toward a Poetics of Documentary" *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 21

The notion that there is a need to depart from the reproduction of physical reality in order to produce knowledge of this reality has a long history in debates around the relationship between aesthetics and politics. In a reaction to the aesthetic writings of Georg Lukács entitled “Reconciliation Under Duress,” Adorno writes,

The truth of the matter is that except where art goes against its own essence and simply duplicates existence, its task vis-à-vis that which merely exists, is to be its essence and image. This alone constitutes the aesthetic; art does not become knowledge with reference to mere immediate reality, i.e. by doing justice to a reality which veils its own essence and suppresses truth in favour of a merely classificatory order. Art and reality can only converge if art crystallizes out its own formal laws, not by passively accepting objects as they come.⁴⁹

Where Lukács had advocated for realism, Adorno asserts a divergence from the world as necessary to avoid simply replicating the petrified surfaces of capitalism. Unlike evidence, which is constituted as a category through its proximity and fidelity to the world, art, for Adorno, essentially diverges from it. Art would be “go[ing] against its own essence” to duplicate the physical world. If art were to replicate empirical appearances, it would merely reproduce the reified surfaces that exist there, obfuscating any true knowledge of the economic and social realities of the capitalist system that underlie its superficial functioning. By producing a “negative knowledge of the actual world,” art is able to remain committed only insofar as it diverges from empirical reality.⁵⁰ And yet, Adorno’s position risks turning a blind eye to the vicissitudes of social and historical existence. How might one synthesize a commitment to reality and an acknowledgement that merely reproducing images of the world is insufficient? In *The Torn First Pages*, one witnesses a careful negotiation of departing from and returning to existence. Rather than simply reproducing existing images of the Burmese struggle for democracy, Kanwar subjects them to dissection and cross-analysis and situates them in relation to larger constellations of meaning. He sees them as documents of an event *and* as images that

⁴⁹ Theodor Adorno, “Reconciliation Under Duress,” trans. Rodney Livingstone, *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ernst Bloch (London: Verso, 1980), 159-160

⁵⁰ Ibid.

possess their own formal and material specificity. Rather than assuming that the image might self-evidently hold forth, Kanwar follows Georges Didi-Huberman's proposition: "Images become precious to historical *knowledge* the moment they are put into perspective, in *montages* of intelligibility."⁵¹

At times, *The Torn First Pages* utilizes multiple projections to offer a number of perspectives on an event. In the work's second part, for example, seven projections are used to show the houses of Burmese exiles living in the United States and then to offer glimpses of an English language class. The images are self-consciously fragmentary and draw attention to what resists visibility as much as to what is visible. *The Torn First Pages* also incorporates small, quasi-autonomous works that embrace formal strategies that similarly question the premises of visibility. One such video is *The Face* (2005), shot on 25 and 26 October 2004 when the head of the military junta, Senior General Than Shwe, visited Mahatma Gandhi's memorial site in New Delhi.⁵² *The Face* begins with a shaky, handheld shot of Than Shwe being greeted with a garland of flowers in a crowded room. After some twenty-three seconds, a hand covers the lens and a small title appears at the bottom of the screen: "no cameras allowed." Once again, the obstacles to visibility are underlined. After several seconds of blackness, one grainy image dissolves into another, a barely visible close-up of Than Shwe. The work's title and date of filming appear onscreen. Grainy slow motion footage of a wreath of flowers gives way to an intertitle: "The next morning/ Senior General Than Shwe/ Supreme Head of the Burmese Military Dictatorship/ visited/ the cremation memorial site of Mahatma Ghandi in New Delhi to pay his respects." The remainder of *The Face* is given over to Kanwar's manipulations of footage of this visit. In the absence of being able to film the

⁵¹ Didi-Huberman, 159; emphasis in original.

⁵² Kanwar published a short article about this visit, entitled "Gandhi and the General." In this article, Kanwar also discusses the histories informing two other segments of *The Torn First Pages*, *Ma Win Maw Oo* (2005) and *Thet Win Aung* (2005). See: Amar Kanwar, "Gandhi and the General," *Himal Southasian* (February 2007); available online: <<http://www.himalmag.com/read.php?id=2214>>

day before (“no cameras allowed”), the artist intervenes into the sanctioned imagery in order to speak to the absurdity of event: the leader of a country that violently represses non-violent opposition is paying tribute to Ghandi, the man who said, “I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.”⁵³

Two men carry the floral wreath in front of Than Shwe, who lays it on the memorial site and poses for the cameras, the shutters of which are heard clicking on the soundtrack along with Gandhi’s favourite hymn, “Vaishnava Janato.” Than Shwe walks around the memorial as a voice from off-screen shouts, “Excuse me, sir! Wait, wait, sir!” As the camera pans to follow Than Shwe, it reveals a white barrier behind which the press stand. As cameras click, Than Shwe begins to throw pink flower petals on the memorial, surrounded by functionaries. The voice from off-screen coaxes, “One more, sir, one more!” As if following the injunction of this onlooker, Kanwar isolates this throw and repeats it over and over again faster and faster, causing the music on the soundtrack to turn into an increasingly high-pitched, frenzied chirping. He zooms in on the basket of flower petals and isolates the faces of a number of onlookers, ending on Than Shwe. With the grating audio still on the soundtrack, Kanwar moves to an image of the face of a young man on a poster, the kind carried by activists to recall individuals who have been killed or imprisoned by the regime. Frames are blended together so as to create a tension between stillness and movement. The soundtrack goes silent and the face stays onscreen. The video ends with a dissolve to black.

The Face foregrounds questions of media representation and suggests how false a documentary image can be. Than Shwe presents a benign visage to the world in a ceremony staged for news media, a complete fiction when considered in relation to his

⁵³ Mahatma Gandhi, “On the Verge of It,” *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, ed. Dennis Dalton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), 43

government's policies. The opening of the video, with its abrupt disturbance of the image of Than Shwe receiving the flower garland, explicitly stages the problem of the *absence* of images due to the rigid censorship of the press in Burma since the 1962 military coup. By the end of the video, the official face of the military junta has been replaced by languid close-ups of a Burmese citizen: from the face of power to the face of the oppressed. Kanwar's manipulations of the footage reveal the monstrosity and absurdity of the event, reframing this document of a state visit as a document of falsity. The onlookers at the ceremony turn into so many willing accomplices to this pretender, called out in a series of close-ups that isolate their facial expressions during the flower throwing. In their passive acceptance of this feint, they come to stand in for an international community that has largely turned a blind eye to the human rights abuses under the military junta.

The Face is one of six projections in part one of *The Torn First Pages*. It occupies the upper left corner of the apparatus, positioned immediately above two mirrored projections of *Thet Win Aung* (2005). This short video concentrates on the face of its titular individual, a thirty-four-year-old man who died in Mandalay Prison while serving a fifty-nine year sentence for organizing student protests. His photo is affixed to a placard in a solemn gesture of remembrance. *The Face* is next to *Ma Win Maw Oo* (2005), an anatomization of a photograph of the titular individual, a high school student shot and killed in the 1988 student protests. The video is comprised of a series of pulsating, blurry close-ups of details of a photograph of her body being carried away by two medical students. The entire image becomes visible just briefly at the end of the video. The soundtrack of *The Face* jostles for attention with the sounds of a brass band playing jazz on the projection on the extreme right, which documents the experiences of Burmese exiles in Norway involved with the Democratic Voice of Burma, a radio station that broadcasts via shortwave into the country. The connections that arise between *The*

Face and these surrounding projections are of central importance. While one might well view *The Face* as an independent work, it achieves its full resonance within the larger constellation of the other projections. The face of the military dictatorship stands above and next to the faces of individuals whose lives were lost in connection with their political activism; the spurious ceremony of official government functions on the left side of the apparatus finds an inverted double in the oppositional media activities of the Democratic Voice of Burma on the right.

Throughout its tremendous and unruly archive, *The Torn First Pages* remains partial in a double sense: it is both fragmentary and subjective rather than totalizing and objective. This partiality troubles any pretence to fully delivering over the non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma to comprehension or visibility. Instead, the gaps between all the fragile paper projections and the frequent strategy of blacking out certain projections to draw attention to others summons an image of Burmese history as rent with lacunae and marked by opacity. It is here that one might locate Kanwar's engagement with a fifth discursive function of the documentary, one that Renov adds to his list in a later article: the ethical. Renov has described the ethical function of documentary as, "its attentiveness to the mutuality and commensurability of self and other, despite differences of power, status and access to means of representation, a 'you' and 'I' placed in a delicate balance" and invokes Emmanuel Levinas as an important thinker of this kind of relation to alterity.⁵⁴ In *The Torn First Pages*, Kanwar takes care to negotiate a commitment to making visible multiple facets of recent Burmese history while circumventing the possible violence that resides in the ethnographic gaze. He instead incessantly circles back to the limits of representation, to the points at which the Burmese experience becomes opaque.

⁵⁴ Michael Renov, "Away from Copying: The Art of Documentary Practice," *Truth or Dare: Art and Documentary*, ed. Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007), 23

Following Levinas, Édouard Glissant has argued that the right to opacity is a prerequisite to an ethical relation to alterity. Though Glissant does not specifically invoke the visual, considering his insistence on opacity in relation to documentary production—a filmic mode with a mandate to make the world visible—yields insight into the formal strategies of *The Torn First Pages*. Glissant suggests that barbarism does not lie in the admission that one does not understand, but rather in imposing one's own frameworks of understanding and desire for transparency on the other in a violent assertion of comprehension that would reduce the other to the same.⁵⁵ To insist on opacity is to trouble the epistemological drive of the gaze and to register what cannot be seen as much as what can. It is to point to the necessary insufficiency of representation and to undo the arrogant posture that the documentarian might present a complete picture of the event. One is incessantly caught between the obligation to not turn away from the other's pain and the equally pressing obligation to not objectify the other. In order to circumvent this dilemma, Kanwar intervenes into the audio-visual archive and insists on producing a set of multiple perspectives and meanings. He marshals opacity and partiality in order to negotiate an ethical relation to the display of images of struggle and violence. He insists on the way the moving image unrealizes or fictionalizes the referent, while still asserting that the referent adheres.

In *Ma Win Maw Oo*, for example, a horrific photograph is re-filmed detail by detail, with blurriness and pulsation obscuring the representational function of the image. When it does appear, and Ma Win Maw Oo's corpse and the men who carry it attain legibility, it is briefly and at a smaller scale, centred in the frame and surrounded by blackness. Kanwar is interested in interrogating the status of these images as material artefacts as much as he is mining them for their testimonial force. One might accuse

⁵⁵ See: Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

Kanwar of a dangerous aestheticization of images of atrocity, but to do so would be to neglect to consider these manipulations of the image as strategies that mediate the potentially violent and exploitative nature of the documentary gaze while still according an evidentiary force to the image. There has been a longstanding opposition, however false it might be, between evidence and art, beauty and reality. Kanwar wilfully trespasses these oppositions by recruiting aesthetic strategies that will temper the possibility of seeing the image not as an image but as an unmediated truth. There is a violence to invisibility, to leaving these abuses unpublicized, but so too is there a violence to visibility, to subjecting them to a visual economy eager for sensationalized images of trauma. The fragmentariness of *The Torn First Pages* serves to mitigate any pretence to totality or objectivity and acknowledges that the historical real will invariably exceed its representation. It insists on affective resonance as much as it does information or argumentation, thereby constructing an alternative economy of signification that undoes longstanding assumptions that visually seductive images and incisive commentary are antithetical to one another.⁵⁶

Hybridity, or Greyhounds in Venice

Both Ahtila and Kanwar mix elements of fiction and documentary, but do so while staying grounded in one mode or the other. Steve McQueen's *Giardini* (2009), by contrast, is a thoroughly hybrid work that embraces an observational mode of documentary and asserts a proximity to physical reality only to slyly and slowly undo it by means of unobtrusive intrusions of fiction into the fabric of the text. However, unlike *The Casting*, which annulled the documentary value of the image, *Giardini* hybridizes

⁵⁶ In her work on the category of the pretty, Rosalind Galt has shown that the notion that "the visually attractive image can only work against true radicality" is "a mode of thought that is all too common in film theory" and that "in one form or another, runs through the history of writing on film, intertwining an often implicit aesthetic judgment with a usually explicit political critique." See: Rosalind Galt, "Pretty: Film Theory, Aesthetics, and the History of the Troublesome Image," *Camera Obscura* 71, vol. 24, no. 2 (2009), 1-41

fiction and documentary in order to show their mutual coexistence. One does not trump the other; rather, the tension between them is demonstrated to be precisely the tension that sustains the spectator's fascination with the image. As much as it is a work of landscape and atmosphere, *Giardini* is an interrogation into the cinema itself.

Giardini was made for the British pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale. As noted in chapter one, the work garnered attention for its imposition of scheduled screening times and an insistence that the work be viewed start-to-finish. During the preview days, queues formed outside the pavilion and disgruntled visitors mulled about, unhappy that they had not arrived early enough to secure a place for that particular day. Chapter one suggested that such an exhibition practice was adopted as a way of offering an alternative to the distracted spectatorship of most moving-image installations. Instead of a spectator-visitor that would glance while walking past, McQueen asserted the persistence of the spectatorial gaze in a manner with distinct alliances to the movie theatre. Given that *Giardini* documents the grounds of the Biennale during the winter—that is, during its non-spectacular down time—the decision to oppose the hoopla of Venice in exhibition strategy as well as in content makes perfect sense.

However, one might suggest another reason that *Giardini* in particular was suited for this kind of viewing: it relies heavily on durational progression in its negotiation of the tension between documentary and fiction and necessitates a start-to-finish viewing in order to unfold its interplay between the two. In most moving-image installations, it is uncommon that the spectator-visitor sees the beginning of a work, let alone the work in its entirety, making the apprehension of narrative elements contingent and partial. Instead of a sequential beginning, middle, and end, often the spectator-visitor will see only a portion of the entire running time of a work without awareness of where this segment fits in the larger whole. While these attributes of the exhibition space would seem to work against narrative, many installations are designed for precisely this

form of distracted engagement, often making use of the vignette form and a relative self-sufficiency of the individual scene vis-à-vis the complete work. Stan Douglas' recombinant narratives, such as *Win, Place, or Show* (1998), deal with the problem of how one knows when one has seen “enough” of a moving-image installation (which frequently possess running times longer than the usual duration spent looking at a single work in a museum) by generating permutational narratives that truly have no beginning, middle, and end. In Ahtila's *If 6 Was 9*, the loop structure is integral to the work's refusal of a developmental trajectory, while in Kanwar's *The Torn First Pages*, the three groups of projections necessitate that the viewer move around the room and draw connections between the heterogeneous components of the work. *Giardini*, however, is altogether different. Throughout its thirty minutes, it asserts its documentary status and closeness to reality—indeed, to the reality of the gardens that house many of the Biennale's national pavilions, a reality just outside the door of where the spectator is seated—in order to then put forth a series of subtle fictional devices that undercut the assumptions that the spectator had made during the earlier minutes of the work.

Giardini takes as its subject the gardens of the Venice Biennale. But unlike the sunny grounds in summertime, filled with art and tourists, McQueen's double projection takes place in the rainy winter when the area is quiet and bleak [FIGURE 9]. In turning to the Biennale itself as subject matter for a national pavilion installation, McQueen joins a number of artists—such as Isa Genzken and Dorit Margreiter—who have intervened into the architecture of the Biennale grounds, a space with roots in the tradition of world's fairs and close links to the age of European nationalism.⁵⁷ However, unlike the many artists who have concentrated their efforts on a single national pavilion, McQueen takes as his subject the Giardini itself, using it both as a singular location and as a

⁵⁷ The Biennale was first held in 1895 and the composition of the Giardini is still largely reflective of the balance of power at this time, with two-thirds of the national pavilions included belonging to European countries.

metonymic stand-in for the global art-stravaganza that is the Venice Biennale. There is, then, from the very outset a doubleness to these images that goes beyond the conceit of double projection: they denote an existing landscape, but also carry a connotative import in their suggestion of the position the Giardini occupies in the art world imaginary. By setting *Giardini* in the wintertime, McQueen induces a cognitive dissonance between these two levels of signification: the gardens remain recognizable, but McQueen troubles the usual connotative value by showing a bleak and unspectacular Giardini clouded over, without tourists. He thereby forces an art audience in the thrall of Biennale high season to direct attention back to the specificity of a place that exists beyond the exhibition, but so often appears as only a backdrop to it. The Giardini is usually a shell of a space used as a way of experiencing something else—be it art or art parties. In this way, during the Biennale the space possesses a virtual element; it is a proxy that is not experienced in itself but as a conduit. In *Giardini*, McQueen exploits the cinema's status as a technology of the virtual to explore the actuality of the garden and thereby undo the virtualization of a space that so often occurs. The spectator is returned to the insects and pebbles of the garden, to the relation between architecture and landscape, and to the changing conditions of light.

An interest in documentary extends to many of McQueen's other works, such as *Western Deep* (2002), which was shot near Johannesburg in the deepest goldmine in the world,⁵⁸ and *Gravesend* (2007), which deals with mining for coltan (a mineral used in

⁵⁸ For an account of this works and McQueen's career leading up to and including *Western Deep*, see: T.J. Demos, "The Art of Darkness: On Steve McQueen," *October*, no. 114 (Fall 2005), 61-85. Demos' focus in this article on the documentary aspects of McQueen's work—his desire "both to represent *and* to disrupt" (85)—is so strong that it is surprising to find it absent in his *Giardini* catalogue essay, as will be discussed in the pages that follow. Demos also articulates a strong connection between McQueen's earlier work, such as *Catch* (1997) and *Just Above My Head* (1996) and an earlier generation of artists such as Peter Campus, Dan Graham, and Michael Snow that initially appears to be in conflict with a central claim of this chapter, namely that the recent embrace of fiction and documentary might be read as a reaction to this earlier generation rather than a continuation of their concerns. While Demos claims that this interest continues to inform McQueen's work in *Western Deep*, it must be noted that as the artist's career progresses one notices an increasing emphasis on the virtuality of the image over its material actuality, a trajectory that might be

cell phones that is so precious it has been likened to diamonds) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In these works, as in *Giardini*, McQueen eschews the analytic and persuasive modalities of the documentary in favour of the preservational and the expressive, the last of which Renov has noted is “the aesthetic function that has consistently been undervalued within the non-fiction domain,” perhaps for fear that the evidentiary value of the image would be overtaken by formal beauty.⁵⁹ McQueen’s works are undoubtedly beautiful and perhaps actively cultivate their somewhat mannered visual style as a part of a larger resistance to any possibility of documentary transparency. But nor is the artist a stranger to staged situations, as is evident from his Buster Keaton remake *Deadpan* (1997) and his Caméra d’or-winning feature-length narrative *Hunger* (2008). Across this wide-ranging body of work, McQueen exhibits an abiding interest in interrogating the essential push and pull between the presentational values of documentary and the representational values of fiction that is integral to cinematic fascination. Perhaps more than any of the artist’s previous works, *Giardini* stages this tension.

The work begins with church bells on the soundtrack before the image reveals a grey day with dogs roaming around the grounds, sniffing around for food. In its opening minutes, a series of images ranging from long shot to extreme close-up gradually work to construct an atmospheric portrait of the space. It moves from day to night and back again, rain drips, an old lady pulls a cart, a stack of blue platforms lies piled up, and still the dogs scavenge for food. This first half of *Giardini* possesses no narrative progression to speak of. Given over to cultural production in the kinder seasons of every year (with alternating art and architecture biennials), McQueen’s initial investment seems to be showing the *Giardini* rendered back unto nature in all of its unruliness and entropy.

thought to reach a dual culmination in the production of *Hunger* for a movie theatre context and *Giardini*’s conversion of the British pavilion into a makeshift cinema hall.

⁵⁹ Renov, “Toward a Poetics of Documentary,” 32

There is an accumulation of sensations and textures, the referential value of which is underlined by the fact that they document the very same spaces currently inhabited by the spectator. Unlike most virtual images, which bring the viewer an image of another space and time, *Giardini* shows the viewer the very grounds on which he or she has been walking that day—simply shifting the time of year to deliver a powerful meditation on the ways in which time intervenes in the experience of place. Reality and its representation are temporarily brought closer together, with the spatial likeness persisting regardless of the temporal schism. In this respect, the work evinces a certain affinity with Morgan Fisher's *Screening Room* (1968), a site-specific film that consists of a tracking shot through the space in which the audience is watching it.⁶⁰ McQueen shares with Fisher the creation of a heterochronic experience of a single space, but unlike Fisher, he shows a desire to move beyond an interrogation into cinematic apparatus to instead question how this apparatus engages in the documentation and representation of the external world.

In the second half of the film, the referential status of this apparently documentary image begins to come into question. At twilight, the illumination of lamps along a walkway is accompanied by an electronic hum. Night falls and both screens show a man smoking, looking around, seemingly waiting for something or someone. On the left screen, he is in long shot, while on the right screen he is in medium close-up. The proximity of the shot on the right screen breaks with the near absence of human presence that has marked the work thus far. Now, in however inchoate a fashion, *Giardini* hints at character and verges on fiction. Then it is daytime, with extreme close-ups of beetles and worms. A Greek cruise ship leaves the Venice harbour. Nighttime again, and now two men meet outside the Israeli pavilion. In long shot, we see one man

⁶⁰ As Fisher has written, "Every theatre where the film is shown requires its own version, so the film must be shot again and again... A new place, a new shot; a different place, a different shot" (86). For a full discussion of the work, see: Morgan Fisher, "Screening Room and Death," *Kinomuseum: Toward an Artists' Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Köln: Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 85-94

finish his cigarette and embrace the other. The shot lasts and the embrace continues. The natural life of the Giardini in winter had been presented as the unfamiliar side of a familiar space, but now McQueen unfolds another level of the garden's extra-biennial existence—the Giardini as cruising spot—and does so through self-conscious fabulation. Though the events depicted onscreen are fictional, they are hardly outside the realm of possibility. The alternation between a series of daytime shots focusing on the details of nature in close-up and a nighttime scene suggestive of anonymous erotic encounter is repeated once more. This time, the face of a man in medium close-up occupies each screen as he stands alone, waiting. There is no way of ascertaining the relationship between the two shots: the men could be looking at each other from a short distance or they could belong to completely different spaces. The dual screen format of *Giardini* allows both to be true at once, both invoking and undoing the shot/reverse-shot structure. After an extreme close-up of a snail, *Giardini* ends by pausing on a drop of water about to fall from a slim branch.

As a general rule, the overtly fictional elements of *Giardini* are confined to the nighttime scenes, while the daytime scenes are given over to documentary observation of flora and fauna. McQueen's insistent return to close-ups of insects and flowers becomes important when considered as the counterpoint to the hints at fabulation that punctuate the second half of the film. As a shot scale, the close-up annihilates distance and carries with it an epistemological promise. It suggests that the physical world might be made knowable through the mechanical eye of the camera. However, it also possesses a transformative power in that it can render the familiar strange through extreme magnification. Siegfried Kracauer vividly captures this dual function of the device:

Any huge close-up reveals new and unsuspected formations of matter; skin textures are reminiscent of aerial photographs, eyes turn into lakes or volcanic craters. Such images blow up our environment in a double sense: they enlarge it

literally; and in doing so, they blast the prison of conventional reality, opening up expanses which we have explored at best in dreams before.⁶¹

Even within a fiction film, herein lies the documentary power that always underwrites the fascination of the cinematic image. Due to its aberration of scale, the close-up possesses a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the diegetic space to which it belongs. “Blast[ing] open the prison of conventional reality” can also mean blasting open the fabric of fiction. If there is a single filmic device able to disrupt the tentative move towards fabulation present in the nighttime sequences, it is the close-up. As Mary Ann Doane notes, theorizations of this shot scale tend to treat it “synchronically rather than diachronically, as stasis, as resistance to narrative linearity...”⁶² The close-up often stands out from the textual fabric of which it is a part, as a moment of excess that is too close and too much to be recuperated entirely into the flow of the narrative, thus threatening to puncture the diegesis with a presentational force.

In their protrusion from the rest of the film and in the visual curiosity they inspire, the many close-ups of insects—tiny creatures of the physical world—emblemize the documentary pole of the image and serve as the counterpart to the nighttime dramatizations, which emblemize its capacity for fiction (not coincidentally around the familiar topic of sex). The alternation of day and night initially appeared to be linked to the diurnal rhythms of life, serving to unite the various microevents McQueen documents into the recognizable fabric of daily experience and provide structure for the work. As *Giardini* progresses, however, their alternation accelerates and they increasingly serve as manifestations of the tension between documentary and fiction that the work investigates. The fictional encounters between men in the evening and the documentary close-ups of nature in the day serve to mark out the two seemingly

⁶¹ Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 48

⁶² Mary Ann Doane: “The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema,” *differences: a journal of feminist and cultural studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Fall 2003), 97

conflicting relationships to the profilmic that inhere in the moving image. In *Giardini*, they come together in the creation of a universe that melds the two—an amalgamation that reflexively performs the very grounding paradox of cinematic fascination. *Giardini* sets up an opposition between documentary and fiction, not to sharply legislate between them, nor to proclaim that one undoes the other (as in *The Casting*), but rather to demonstrate their mutual coexistence. In doing so, it launches an investigation that locates cinematic specificity not in the material components of the apparatus, as had an earlier generation of film and video artists, but in its fraught relation to the profilmic.

In *Giardini*, McQueen creates a world in which the coexistence of reference and representation is held up for examination. Though the fabulation remains tentative and fragile, it is enough to render uncertain the status of the image. As the overtly fictionalized vignettes of the nocturnal inhabitants of the Giardini accumulate, one begins to question elements of the film that had previously been taken as possessing a documentary value. A question arises concerning the packs of dogs that prowl through the gardens throughout the film: *Are there feral greyhounds in Venice?* No, there are not—they have been imported specially for the shooting. The ontological carpet has been pulled out from beneath the spectator's feet. Did McQueen happen to stumble across that remarkable looking insect, or was it too imported for the purposes of filming? A principle of indiscernibility is at play, but it is one that is very different than that which subtended *The Casting*. Instead of positing the negation of documentary through fiction, McQueen points to their mutual imbrication. *Giardini* highlights the extent to which, even in fiction filmmaking, cinematic fascination is closely tied to the ability of the motion picture camera to produce an image of existence free from the intervention of the human hand and then to weave it into the creation of diegetic worlds.

In his catalogue essay, T.J. Demos describes the work as fictional from the outset. He writes, "*Giardini*, then, constructs a fictional world and does so with great care,

although its stories are not necessarily impossible accounts of what might actually happen. This fiction, which exists within the realm of the possible, displaces another fiction, an exhibition that brings the Giardini to life every year.”⁶³ This serves as an articulate summary of how fiction operates within the work, but on the whole Demos’ account of the work minimizes the documentary authenticity it stages and then problematizes. Perhaps if one knew that the greyhounds had been imported expressly for the shooting of the film, *Giardini*’s fictional status would be clear from the very outset. But as one watches the emaciated dogs in long shot as they rummage around for food, fiction—both the fiction of *Giardini* and the fiction of the Venice Biennale—seems very far away. The insistence on a start-to-finish model of viewing and the absence of overtly fictional elements (those linked to the intimations of cruising) in the first half of the work suggest an attention to establishing spectatorial expectation and belief in order to significantly complicate them. In and through any fabulation that occurs in *Giardini* resides an investment in the revelatory capacity of the moving image as a document of the physical world. It is, however, an investment that is tempered by an acknowledgement of the inherently fictional nature of cinema. McQueen confronts cinema’s capacity to “unrealize” reality precisely by introducing elements of the unreal (but still possible) that destabilize the documentary image’s truth claims while underlining its testimonial power. As in Ahtila’s *If 6 Was 9*, here fiction is used not to dramatize the unreal or the fantastical, but to open actuality to the unrealized possibilities that reside within it.

Two Images of Death

Thus far, this chapter has outlined how artists who explore the modes of documentary and fiction have rehabilitated cinema’s status as a technology of the virtual

⁶³ T.J. Demos, “Giardini: A Fairytale,” *Giardini Notebook* (London: British Council, 2009), np

after its thorough rejection in earlier artists' employments of film and video. They do so not out of a simple fascination with illusionism, but to articulate complex aesthetic and political commitments and to open artists' film and video to encounters with subjective and historical experience. In the process, they offer a reflection on the extent to which the specificity of cinema rests on the tension it stages between referentiality and representation. Omer Fast's *The Casting* invokes the testimonial powers of the moving image only to demonstrate how they have been obliterated as fiction has invaded the production of historical fact and neutralized the image's referential value. As a reaction to this widespread condition, Kutlug Ataman's *Women Who Wear Wigs* and Amar Kanwar's *The Torn First Pages* insist on the continued importance of the documentary image, but do so while deploying strategies that mediate any claims to authenticity or objective truth. In both cases, the artists acknowledge the old Roman law, *testis unus, testis nullus*—"one witness is no witness"—and instead produce polyphonic and collective testimonies that telescope the singular and the plural, the individual and the collective. In Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *If 6 Was 9* and Steve McQueen's *Giardini*, fiction and documentary join into productive contaminations that allow for the imagination of temporalities and narratives that would be impossible in either modality alone.

To conclude this examination of how documentary and fiction have been mobilized in artists' employments of the moving image, it is worth returning to this chapter's beginning, to the work of Omer Fast. A single image from Fast's three-part video installation *Nostalgia* (2009) encapsulates the work's proposition concerning the relationship between reality and its representation. In a science fiction film, a woman lies on the ground in an underground tunnel, dead or dying. She has been brutally assaulted by police and their dogs. A close-up on her face pans across to reveal a spatter of vomit that issued from her mouth. The camera follows along the stream in all of its glistening abjection. Small, whole blueberries start to appear within it, then strawberries,

then flower petals. As the pan continues, the vomit turns into a vibrant array of cherries, grapes, roses, figs, pomegranates, daffodils, and other flowers arranged just so [FIGURE 10]. It is the sole shot throughout the three parts of the installation that breaks from verisimilitude and yet it might be the shot that most truthfully encapsulates *Nostalgia*'s central thesis: from the visceral real of violence, bodily matter, and death, the camera will find composed beauty. Or, in other words, representation will betray the real.

Nostalgia carries on the project of *The Casting*, though with a more intricate formal structure and with an increasingly nuanced position taken with regard to its central issues. The work begins with a 4:35-minute looped video on a flatscreen television. On the soundtrack, the voice of a Nigerian refugee seeking asylum in London tells of his upbringing, his experiences in England, and discusses in some detail how one might go about building a trap for a partridge. On the image-track, a white man in a forest builds a similar trap out of sticks [FIGURE 11]. When the trap goes off, there is a cut away from the forest to the interview that has occupied the soundtrack. A black man, framed only from the neck down, is demonstrating how to build the trap in front of a green screen. Fast's voice is heard for the first time: "Let's go back in time. Tell me about where you're from." This prompts the loop to begin again with the man responding, "I'm from the Niger Delta. I've been here for over ten years." This interview and its story of building a trap will serve as a generative mechanism for the installation's following two components.

The second component of the installation consists of a two-channel video lasting 9:49 minutes, exhibited in a black box on two flatscreen monitors. Here, actors playing Fast and the asylum seeker restage a fictionalized version of the interview from part one. Adopting the same double screen expansion of the shot/reverse-shot structure used in *The Casting*, the Nigerian occupies the screen on the left and Fast the right [FIGURE 12]. Once again, the Nigerian stands in front of a green screen, used in industrial filmmaking

to impose the desired background behind the filmed subject, as if to point to the mutability of context. Though it deals with many of the same subjects, the tone of this interview is very different than that of part one. The actor playing Fast (hereafter referred to as “Fast”) intervenes much more often and displays a visible suspicion toward his interview subject. Fast’s sole interjection in part one, “Let’s go back in time,” turns into “I want to go back in time,” as the interviewer asserts control, presses his subject for details, and becomes irritated when they are not supplied. He is anxious to hear about the man’s experiences as a child soldier—a potentially lurid and sensational narrative—but instead is told in detail how to build a trap for partridges. The story quickly turns from catching a partridge to catching monkeys to eat or sell to tourists. Instances of disbelief and misunderstanding proliferate. “Fast” looks bewildered as he asks, “You really eat monkeys?” The jovial interview subject momentarily turns angry and forces “Fast” to admit that he has never been to Africa.

This second part of the installation highlights the variable power dynamics that underwrite the interview situation, as “Fast” paradoxically asserts a certain authority over his subject and yet requires this subject in order to discover the narratives he seeks. “Fast” says he is planning to make two movies, one that will be composed of interviews with asylum seekers and another that will use a detail from one of these interviews to construct an old science fiction film. He is using their lived experiences as material for an art project for which he will claim sole authorship. Given that Omer Fast does precisely this in both *The Casting* and *Nostalgia*, it is striking that the character of “Omer Fast” is represented as at best insensitive and at worst exploitative. In this middle section of *Nostalgia*, the problematics of the interview form become visible. This is a sharp departure from *The Casting*, which confronts neither the issue of authorship nor the possible injustice of using the soldier’s words as mere fodder for recontextualization.

Might *Nostalgia II* be a form of autocritique, a self-indictment for absolute devaluation of documentary that took place in the earlier installation?

The viewer leaves this black box and walks down a dim corridor to reach the third part of *Nostalgia*. Unlike the first two sections, which were shot on high-definition video and displayed on flatscreen televisions, *Nostalgia III* is a large-scale projection that was shot on super 16mm and transferred to video so as to achieve an appropriately cinematic look. The 32:48-minute narrative concerns a post-apocalyptic future in which an unnamed African country, wealthy and safe, has its fortified borders overrun by Britons fleeing a devastated England. An underground passage provides a way of circumventing the policed border. The viewer is introduced to a world in which only aid workers and hippies visit England to help the country build irrigation systems and in which schoolchildren give presentations to the class on how things like milk and bread were once made. It is an imagination of a dystopian future, but one that might have stemmed from the mind of the 1970s: old surveillance monitors, clothing fashion, and rotary telephones bespeak a very different vision of the future than would be found today. Summoning both the future and the past, its peculiar temporality is augmented by a non-chronological arrangement of sequences that are loosely linked together but leave many questions unanswered. A British man that happens to make it through the tunnel—after having sold his bike and a kidney to traffickers to take him across the “lake” of the Mediterranean—is interviewed by an African immigration official who offers him citizenship if he tells her where the underground tunnel is located [FIGURE 13]. She asks him about his life in England and inquires as to where he found his food. The man describes hunting and tells her how he made a trap for partridges out of sticks. As the woman asks, “What kind of sticks?” a new scene begins of the man running through the underground tunnel with his friends. Police and their dogs pursue the immigrants, leading to the death of the woman whose vomit metamorphoses into flowers.

Nostalgia begins with the testimony of a Nigerian refugee and uses it to generate a series of fictions. The story of the partridge trap reappears across all three components of the work, linking them together through a detail that might be thought to function as something of a metaphor for the process of storytelling itself: a structure built out of unwieldy bits and pieces that attain a tremendous force when assembled together in the proper manner, a force that can function as a trap. Despite the potential criticism of *The Casting*'s interview techniques found in part two of the installation, like *The Casting*, the testimonial value accorded to interview upon which *Nostalgia* is based is nil. It functions almost as a red herring, promptly obliterated by the layers of fabulation that accumulate on top of it. In these two installations, Fast might be accused of a rather opportunistic use of the Iraq War and the civil strife in Nigeria, respectively. They function as germs that flower into fictions, but ultimately the installations have little to do with them.

Fast himself has equated the tasks of fiction and documentary: "After all, both 'fiction films' and 'documentaries' present stories that ask for their viewers' beliefs, and both activate and suspend their viewers' judgment with regard to what they represent."⁶⁴ This may be the case, but there is a profound ontological difference between documentary and fiction, even though elements of both inhere in the moving image. Fast's insistence on subsuming the documentary image by fictionalization suggests that *Nostalgia*, like *The Casting*, foregrounds the notion that contemporary visual culture is marked by a crisis of referentiality in which reality has truly been overtaken by simulation. However, rather than counteracting this condition, Fast compounds it. In order for documentary images to function as documents, they require spectators who will invest in them as such. *Nostalgia* refuses to take the document seriously and thus further exacerbates the crisis of visual evidence that it seeks to diagnose.

⁶⁴ Omer Fast, quoted in: Henriette Huldish, "Three Sides To Every Story: The Art of Omer Fast," *Omer Fast: Nostalgia* exhibition flyer (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2009), np

There is, however, a second image of death in *Nostalgia* that suggests that this may not be the case. In the science fiction narrative, the three Britons running through the tunnel come across an eerie figure. A shirtless man with a shaved head sits back on in a chair, facing the wall. His posture is slumped and, given the circumstances, there is a fair possibility he might be dead. The trio casts a strange glance at the man as they walk by and continue onwards, hoping to find asylum. But after they pass, the man looks up, turns back around in his chair and—despite the fact that he is sitting in an abandoned subway tunnel where border patrol police search out refugees—begins to watch a film. It is projected against the wall he originally faced and then comes to occupy the entire screen. The film is none other than one of the most striking scenes of Chris Marker's *Sans soleil*: the archival footage of the death of a giraffe.⁶⁵ In *Sans soleil*, the giraffe sequence follows a scene at a Japanese zoo where families pay tribute to the animals that died throughout the year, but as it appears onscreen the voice-over commentary that runs throughout almost the entirety of the film stops. As the giraffe is shot, bright red blood spurts out of its neck and it flails around before lying down on the ground to die.

The image of death is something of a limit case that tests the image's powers of documentary and the spectator's relation to them. As Vivian Sobchack has written, "The conjunction of death, representation, and documentary film foreground what is true of all vision as it engages a world and others;" that is, it generates an "ethically charged" situation in which both filmmaker and spectator are held accountable for their gazes.⁶⁶ As the single found-footage shot in *Nostalgia*, an installation that jettisons an interest in referentiality in favour of a treatment of the documentary image as fiction, what purpose does this "return of the real" serve? This image may be seen as the antithesis of the image of death described above, in which a representation of death is used to critically

⁶⁵ In the credits of *Sans soleil*, Marker acknowledges Danièle Tessier for this footage.

⁶⁶ Sobchack, 257

comment on the way in which scenes of violence and atrocity are processed by cinema and television into highly conventionalized forms that aestheticize their horror. *Giardini*, too, relied on settling up poles of documentary and fiction, but served to demonstrate their imbrication. Here, on the contrary, they remain opposed. Unlike the representation of the woman's death, the death of the giraffe protrudes with the presentational force of the real. It testifies to its persistence amidst simulation, even though it is an image already familiar from another film. Images may relate to other images, but they can still relate back to the real. The death of the giraffe punctures the representational fabric of *Nostalgia* and reasserts the manner in which the documentary image can asymptotically approach the real. It invokes *Sans soleil*, a docu-fiction hybrid with a marked investment in the referential image and one that interrogates its fate in an age of electronic media while never relinquishing a commitment to it. The image of the giraffe recasts the entire enterprise of *Nostalgia* as haunted by an outside, as troubled by the referential value of the image it has worked hard to exclude from its representational system.

At the end of the world, when the great veneer of simulation has been torn away and these precarious immigrants are truly inhabiting the "desert of the real," a man still turns his gaze to cinema. As a way of remembering another time, perhaps, one before whatever unnamed events precipitated the global reorganization that differentiates this world from our own, or perhaps as an effort to gain understanding of death when it is close at hand. This would seem to speak to a faith in the image in spite of the ways in which it has been marshalled by media spectacle. But the man manifests a glimmer of insanity and the dramatization of filmic projection underground while surveillance monitors reign above suggests an alliance of this image-regime with the outmoded. Perhaps the image of the giraffe is simply a remnant of another time, an emblem of a relation to the world through technology that is no longer possible in the futuristic society depicted. Perhaps it is an instance of nostalgia that lends the installation its title.

This spectator of documentary images might be longing for a lost relation to the real and pursuing its recovery through cinema, that technology that paradoxically unrealizes and re-realizes the physical world, creating a lack and compensating for it by the very same means.

But all of this speculation about the mental and affective state of this character relates to the world of the fiction, to the diegesis of the third part of *Nostalgia*. The image of the giraffe, meanwhile, has exceeded this future anterior science fiction plot and has recast its images as mere simulacra. The “impression of reality” carefully manufactured by the installation’s third part is destabilized by the return of the real that occurs through the excerpt from *Sans soleil*. The entire storytelling venture of *Nostalgia* is thrown into crisis as the image of the giraffe obliquely points back to all that has been excluded from the story of the Nigerian refugee as it has been channelled into fictional codes of representation. The presentation of the animal’s death stands in for the bracketed real that begins to encroach on Fast’s elaborate fabulation, suggesting its injustice. It signals that referentiality does indeed persist as long as there are spectators to attend to it. In the words of Serge Daney, “There has to be some risk and some virtue, that is, some value, in the act of showing something to someone who is capable of seeing it. Learning how to ‘read’ the visual and ‘decode’ messages would be useless if there wasn’t still the minimal, but deep-seated, conviction that *seeing* is superior to not seeing...”⁶⁷

Despite its commonalities with *The Casting*, *Nostalgia* introduces a measure of suspicion towards its own strategies that had been absent in the earlier installation. It moves from simply dismantling the conventions of realism in film and television to interrogating how the objections frequently levelled against this paradigm (such as the notion that all documentary images have now become inextricable from fiction) might in

⁶⁷ Serge Daney, “The Tracking Shot in *Kapo*,” *Postcards from the Cinema*, trans. Paul Douglas Grant (New York: Berg, 2007), 31; emphasis in original

fact contain certain spurious assumptions of their own. The image of the woman whose vomit turns to flowers may indict the way violence is processed in fictional cinema, but the prominence of the giraffe's death suggests an uneasiness with the discrediting of referentiality that appears in both *The Casting* and *Nostalgia*. As Hito Steyerl has noted, documentary testimony can be unreliable, can lie, and will not necessarily transmit events in any transparent manner, and yet it "can express the unimaginable, that which has been silenced, the unknown, the saving, and even what is monstrous—and thus create the possibility of change."⁶⁸ To give up on this possibility of change by depriving documentary images of their relation to the real is tantamount to a resignation that there is no alternative to the representational systems that govern today's mass media. One must attend to the documentary image with the attention that it demands, seeing in it neither the truth of the event nor a simulacrum, but a material image to be confronted, questioned, and considered.

Anne Wagner has suggested that what is missing in Bill Viola's work is "any built-in mistrust of his medium... Instead his work insists—sometimes to the point of coercion and against the grain of his predecessors' sheer reluctance and scepticism—that we believe in the magnitude and meaningfulness of what camera and artist give us to see."⁶⁹ Certainly, Viola's work suffers from a techno-spiritualism that attempts to reconstruct subjective wholeness and auratic experience; Wagner's critique of the artist undoubtedly holds weight.⁷⁰ However, the opposition that she sets up between a mistrust of the

⁶⁸ Hito Steyerl, "Can Witnesses Speak? On the Philosophy of the Interview," *Afirmar la Realidad?/To Affirm Reality?* (Mexico City: Injerto Symposium, 2009), 85

⁶⁹ Anne Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," *October*, no. 91 (Winter 2000), 80

⁷⁰ *The Incarnation* (2008), for example, is an 8:55-minute loop in which two naked figures, one male and one female, walk forward in slow motion towards the camera. The image is a grainy black and white that recalls surveillance video. As they walk through a sheet of falling water, they emerge into the foreground of the image in crisp, high definition colour. They stay in this position, the camera registering expressions

medium and a belief in the meaningfulness of the referential image must be put into question. In the work of many of the artists discussed in this chapter, there is a demonstrable interest in combining these two qualities. Embracing the power of cinema as a technology of the virtual does not necessarily mean ceasing to interrogate the way a medium intervenes between physical reality and its representation. At times, there is a magnitude and meaningfulness of what the moving image can present to view and one has an ethical obligation not to look away but to look sensitively.

As Susan Sontag has written, “To speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breathtaking provincialism. It universalizes the viewing habits of a small, educated population living in the rich part of the world, where news has been converted into entertainment... It suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real suffering in the world.”⁷¹ Precisely because our news media have been converted into entertainment and precisely because our artistic media increasingly resemble entertainment, it is necessary to reassert the spaces of the gallery and museum as institutional and discursive sites that can contest the derealisation of spectacle. By reimagining the relationship between documentary and fiction—by recognizing their imbrication rather than asserting their ontological equivalence or refusing them entirely—contemporary artists repurpose an apparatus that has so often been put in the service of forgetting the world in order to return to it, while producing a sustained reflection on the status of the moving image in

acted so as to convey the deepest of interiorities before retreating through the water and into blurry greyness once again. The work is a part of a series entitled *Transfigurations*, which includes the similar works *Acceptance* (2008) and *The Innocents* (2008). Viola describes transfiguration as occurring when “the transformation of the Self, usually provoked by a profound inner revelation or an overwhelming sensation of clarity and fathomless emotion, overcomes the individual until literally a ‘new light’ dawns on him or her... Some of the most profound human experiences occur at times like these, arising at the outer limits of conscious awareness.” At stake here is the production of a false immediacy of an intersubjective encounter achieved through technological means. Viola summons the nobility of painting by exhibiting the work on plasma screens, thus attempting to lend the weight of tradition to what is in essence a spurious manufacturing of pseudo-spiritual intensity. See: Bill Viola, quoted in: James Cohan Gallery press release, “Bill Viola: *Bodies of Light*”; available online: <http://www.jamescohan.com/exhibitions/2009-10-23_bill-viola/press-release/>

⁷¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 110

the process. They locate one of the many specificities of cinema as residing in its capacity to produce images caught between referentiality and representation. In this way, though they may leave behind the concentration on the materiality of the apparatus that had been deemed a progressive attribute of earlier moving-image art in favour of the formerly anathematic qualities of virtuality and pictorialism, they by no means renounce reflexivity, nor do they lapse into idealism and mystification. Rather, they constitute a site at which cinema is embraced and interrogated not as an old medium but as a new way of bringing art into conversation with existence.

Conclusion: “Cinema and...”

And, finally, Z is for Zero—*Zero for Conduct*, zero visibility, and Godard’s slogan, “Back to Zero.” As we enter the age of new media, the cinema is reinventing itself. We need to see that reinvention in radical as well as mainstream terms, to try and reimagine the cinema as it might have been and as, potentially, it still could be—an experimental art, constantly renewing itself, as a counter-cinema, as “cinema haunted by writing.” Back to zero. Begin again. A is for Avant-Garde.

—Peter Wollen¹

Without a doubt, one must see here neither the completion of cinema nor its death, but simply the development of this singular situation: next to cinema, which continues its existence as a celibate art, an exploded and metaphorized cinema is unfolding, muddling the borders of the art that is now becoming art.

—Jacques Rancière²

In his “Alphabet of Cinema,” Peter Wollen implies that the age of new media constitutes something of an end for cinema, but also an opportunity to begin again. This chance at recommencement is borne precisely of the ways in which digitization has prompted a simultaneous compromise and reassertion of the boundaries of cinema. “Z is for zero”: a point that marks both a complete exhaustion and a reservoir of possibility from which the new might spring; “Z” arrives at the end of the alphabetic sequence but as the “Z” of zero, it is also a beginning. This dissertation has attempted to provide an overview of one site—contemporary art—where such a new beginning is occurring. It has traced the emergence of what I have called, in a slight adjustment of Raymond Bellour’s term, the “othered cinema”—that is, a cinema that has become other to itself by entering into aggregate formations with elements that have historically not been a part of it. This emergence takes place, as Jacques Rancière suggests, alongside what has traditionally been considered to be cinema, both paralleling it and commenting on it. It must be noted, however, that the continued existence of this traditional cinema may not be as

¹ Peter Wollen, *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 21

² Jacques Rancière, “Le cinéma dans la ‘fin’ de l’art,” *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 552 (December 2000), 51; translation mine

“celibate” as Rancière takes it to be; rather, Rancière provides a better description of the contemporary situation when he speaks of a muddling of borders.

Exhibiting Cinema has argued that the increased integration of cinema into the spaces of art after 1990 enables a rethinking of the histories of cinema and provides a microcosm in which to take account of its contemporary mutations and its possible futures. This integration abides by a tension between old and new media: older than new media and newer than old media, cinema enters the gallery under the spectre of mass cultural obsolescence but also infuses that space with spectacular novelty. Over the past two decades, curators, artists, and critics have conceived of cinema as an old medium linked to cult value, historicity, and patrimonial inheritance. Notions of ruination and refuse come to figure the way elements of this now old apparatus persist and reappear in new configurations. This becoming-old of cinema in an age of new media is important, for it not only traces an historical trajectory that sees cinema change from a technological novelty at the end of nineteenth century to an old medium at the beginning of the twenty-first, but also opens the possibility of extrapolating from this to think about how today’s new media will one day become old as well. Alongside this senescent cinema, a notion of cinema-as-spectacle-machine continues to exert a prominence and a deep-seated fascination within the gallery and without. Just as the multiplexes have recently turned (once again) to the technological marvel of 3-D to ensure box office revenues, so have museums exploited the sensory possibilities of large-scale projected images in their efforts to maintain relevance and appeal to broad demographics. This spectacularization of the museum space has constituted one major site of cinema’s novelty within an art context, but it is matched by another: the cinema’s ability to forge the novelty of the blind spot, the newness that disturbs established frameworks of understanding.

This tension between old and new has been unfolded throughout the preceding chapters, ranging across four primary sites of inquiry: the way cinema transforms the

space of the museum and is transformed by it, uses of celluloid that align the material of film with a spectral historicity, practices of remaking that ambivalently call upon cinema as a lost site of collectivity, and large-scale projected images that hybridize the modes of fiction and documentary in order investigate subjective and historical experience. With these propositions established, it is now time to return to the primary question posed in the introduction to this dissertation, namely: how does the progressive integration of film into the gallery and the museum, as it mutates and fractures, change our conception of cinema? The characterization of cinema as older than new media but newer than old media is one principal answer to this question. But what other answers might obtain? To rephrase the question: if the tendency under discussion here “exhibits cinema” in the sense of holding it out for examination, what qualities or attributes—other than an interplay between novelty and obsolescence—are repeatedly exhibited or “held out”?

Whereas the investigations into cinematic specificity undertaken by artists in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the materiality of the apparatus, contemporary artists interested in “exhibiting cinema” fasten onto historical and social dimensions of cinema, foregoing materiality as their primary focus (though this is remains important at times, as in the case of the embrace of 16mm). They allow one to see anew what the cinema has been all along, though not always recognized as such: an institution at once public and historical that extends far beyond the hegemony of the fiction feature and that is in conversation with competing media forms. It may sound obvious and uncontroversial to characterize cinema in this manner, but it is in fact quite different from conceiving of the cinema as a primarily narrative form made for the purposes of entertainment, as have the dominant cinemas of the world, or from seeing it as a pure entity used for formal experiments of light and sound, as the avant-garde so often has. These four attributes emerge as particularly salient features of the institution as anatomized in contemporary art. It is worth examining each one briefly.

- **PUBLICITY:** Though the cinema has always been a public institution, canonical accounts of filmic spectatorship advanced in the 1970s focused on the two-term relation of the spectator to the screen. Echoing the heterodox account provided during this time by Roland Barthes in his “Leaving the Movie Theatre,” Walter Benjamin’s notion of cinema as allowing “room for play,” as well as more recent accounts of cinema as an alternative public sphere, the othered cinema evinces a distinct emphasis on cinema as a public institution throughout its many facets. The museum and gallery emerge as public sites of spectatorship in an era marked by individual, domestic viewing, while many artists take up questions of collectivity and publicity in their work, ranging from the artistic investigation of the movie theatre discussed in chapter one to the emphasis on classical Hollywood cinema as a shared cultural vernacular discussed in chapter three.

- **HISTORY:** Cinema has come a long way as an historical institution since the era in which film prints were burned as soon as they were no longer commercially exploitable. Throughout the twentieth century, one may glimpse moments at which the cinema manifested an interest in its own history (be it in the found-footage genre of the avant-garde or in Hollywood’s homages to the silent era such as *Sunset Boulevard* [1950] and *The Night of the Hunter* [1955]) and others at which it served as a way of investigating historical experience. In artists’ employments of the moving image since 1990s, such concerns become primary. A desire to grapple with the history of cinema through cinema is paramount, celluloid’s link to a spectral historicity has been underlined repeatedly, artists question the way Hollywood has informed our understanding of historical events, and artists engage the moving image as a way of grappling with historical experience. Owing to the digitization of media (which both recasts analogue specificity and allows for the easy recycling of footage), tied to fears of the institution’s future, and in reaction to a postmodern waning of historicity, the othered cinema is a key site at which the relationship between cinema and history is

investigated. This relationship has three primary facets: the history of cinema, the historicity of analogue film, and the notion of the moving image as producing an historical archive.

- **BEYOND THE FICTION FEATURE:** The hegemony of the fiction feature film has held strong since the consolidation of the form in the late 1910s, but alternatives to it have always existed. It is precisely such alternatives that achieve a new regularity and visibility in the othered cinema. Documentary and non-narrative forms are common, as are short works and works too long to be apprehended in a single museum visit. Quite simply, a principle of variability obtains, taking the cinema back to the multiple exhibition situations and non-standardized formal structures that marked both its pre-institutional years and the non-institutional experiments of the avant-garde. From the permutational narratives of Stan Douglas to the movie theatre protocols of Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij, from the multi-projection documentary of Amar Kanwar to the extreme slowness of Douglas Gordon, this unleashing of cinematic heterogeneity and multiplicity emerges as one of the most striking attributes of the othered cinema, mirroring the new malleability and transportability of cinema noticeable across the cultural field.

- **COMPETITION OF MEDIA FORMS:** As noted in chapter two, Tom Gunning has written that, though all too often forgotten, cinema has always existed within a competitive media environment.³ However, this has never been truer than today, when a multi-mediascape of miniature devices, gigantic video billboards, and everything in between has definitively dislodged the traditional viewing situation of cinema. Cinema is both in competition and in aggregate formations not only with television, its long-time opponent, but also with video games, amusement park rides, and the Internet. The othered cinema is constitutive of an arena in which this contemporary “battle of the

³ Tom Gunning, “Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality,” *differences: a journal of feminist and cultural studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), 35

images,” to use Bellour’s term, is not only witnessed, but also interrogated. The relationships between convergence/specificity and hybridity/purity are relentlessly negotiated, whether it is in the return to 16mm as an outmoded device, in cross-medium remakes, or in the creation of new intermedial configurations that bring elements of cinema into confrontation with those of other media.

To conclude, it is worth examining two works that foreground this competition of media forms. Thus far, this dissertation has focused on ways in which film history, celluloid, and cinematographic techniques have been mobilized in art since 1990. It has not, however, discussed any instances in which this exchange moves in the opposite direction. As a final demonstration of the complex renegotiation of the relationship between art and cinema that has taken place over the last two decades, these concluding pages will examine two instances of artists adopting methods of production, distribution, and exhibition proper to cinema: Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002) and Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno’s *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait* (*Zidane: Un portrait du 21^e siècle*, 2006). In both of these works, the artists make use of the multi-platform distribution of products proper to the contemporary film industry and the space of the movie theatre as a site of exhibition. Barney and Gordon/Parreno are not alone in turning to the infrastructure of cinema; it also witnessed in Bernadette Corporation’s *Pedestrian Cinema* project (2006-2007),⁴ and in the creation of the Anna

⁴ *Pedestrian Cinema* involved setting up a temporary underground film studio, based in Berlin but with activities also taking place elsewhere. Bernadette Corporation, an artists’ collective founded in 1994, inhabited the structures and demands of a film studio, setting out a monthly budget with deadlines for production and exhibition. The title *Pedestrian Cinema* invokes a sense of being on the ground, at street-level, while also carrying a very different sense of the word “pedestrian”: being purposefully dull or lacking in inspiration. The project incorporates both these meanings, at existing as a seemingly haphazard bricolage of opportunities and situations, while also inhabiting a set of well-worn conventions and templates with a

Sanders Films production company in 1997 by Charles de Meaux, Pierre Huyghe, and Philippe Parreno,⁵ among other ventures. However, the high visibility of *The Cremaster Cycle* and *Zidane* extended beyond the art world to truly penetrate the worlds of film and film studies in a manner unprecedented in artists' uses of the moving image. Though very different, in both projects one finds a mixture of media forms and infrastructures that speaks to the necessity of considering both cinema and art as existing within a complex ecology that exceeds them both.

resolute lack of irony. Cinema is evoked as a useful fiction that will generate scenarios for cultural production, such as the videos *Out of Space Out of Time* (2006), *Be Corpse* (2006), and *Imperio* (2007) and the published screenplay for an impossible film, *Eine Pinot Grigio, Bitte* (2007). In their "Project Description," they describe their undertaking as such: "The possibility is to borrow cinema as narrative device / instrument of propaganda / entertaining distraction / analytic tool and lend it to: whatever unfolds in an event and encounter; a place as beacon of activity, bringing bodies together; work-hours as a metronome that marks the present moment; the materialism of improvisation and working with what is available; mobility in thought, inspiration, or whim." Or, as group member John Kelsey described the project in e-mail correspondence with the author, "*Pedestrian Cinema* is really not so much about videos, or producing finished film works. It was a conceptual and fictional framework within which BCorp dealt with ideas of production, non-production, being in Berlin for a year, and politics of display." Work stemming from *Pedestrian Cinema* has been included in several exhibitions by the collective, including *Bernadette Corporation* (2005) at Witte de With, Rotterdam, *King Kong* (2006) at the Hamburger Kunstverein, and *Multiplyplex* (2007) at the Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart. It was also included in the 2006 Whitney Biennial, *Day for Night*. For a longer discussion of the group's activities, see: Janet Sarbanes, "An Independent Group? Bernadette Corporation, Post-Pop Collective," *Afterall*, no. 14 (Autumn/Winter 2006), 47-53; Bennett Simpson, "Techniques of Today," *Artforum* (September 2004), 220-223. For more specific information on *Pedestrian Cinema*, see: Bernadette Corporation, "*Be Corpse*," *Afterall*, no. 14 (Autumn-Winter 2006), 57-59; Bernadette Corporation, *Eine Pinot Grigio, Bitte* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007); Bernadette Corporation, "Project Description"; available online: <<http://www.bernadettecorporation.com/pedpropos.html>>; John Kelsey, "Moving Images Moving Images," *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 401-405.

⁵ Anna Sanders Films is named after a character invented by Huyghe and Parreno in their single-issue magazine, *Anna Sanders: L'histoire d'un sentiment* (1997). Though a fictional personage, she is registered as a producer at the Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie in Paris. Anna Sanders Films has produced work for both art and cinema contexts, sometimes crossing over between the two. Huyghe's *Blanche Neige Lucie* (1997) and Parreno's *El Sueño De Una Cosa* (2001), for example, reside firmly within the sphere of art, while Apichatpong Weerasethakul's feature-length films *Blissfully Yours* (*Sud sanaeha*, 2002) and *Tropical Malady* (*Sud pralad*, 2004) have been global festival darlings. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's short films, meanwhile, are exhibited primarily in art contexts, though *Riyo* (1999) and *Centrale* (2001) were shown in the "En avant!" section of the Director's Fortnight at Cannes in 2001 and a collection of them was released by Anna Sanders Films as the *Parc Centrale* DVD in 2006. The company is responsible for numerous DVD releases and has also screened programmes at The World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam (2004), Kunst-Werke, Berlin (2005), Tate Modern, London (2006), and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2008). See: Tom Morton, "Anna Sanders Films: There is no Screen and it is Invisible," *theyanyspacewhatever*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2008), 187-192; *Anna Sanders Films: The In-Between* (Paris: les presses du réel, 2003).

As Boris Groys sees it, this desire to engage with mass media channels of distribution is far from an example of the old avant-garde project of reintegrating art into the praxis of life. Rather, it

allows the artists to address and seduce a much larger audience...It gives the artist a new sense of power, social relevance, and public presence rather than forcing him or her to eke out a meagre existence as the poor relative of the media. So the call to break loose from the museum amounts to a de facto call to package and commercialize art by accommodating it to the aesthetic norms generated by today's mass media.⁶

A kinship with mass media spectacle is undoubtedly at play, and yet it is far too simple to describe such art/cinema contaminations as simply a capitulation to it. The desire to direct a feature film—as have Steve McQueen, Shirin Neshat, and Sam Taylor-Wood—or to exhibit an artwork in a movie theatre—like Barney and Gordon/Parreno—might have less to do with a commercialization of art (which, in any case, is always already thoroughly commercialized) and more to do with the temporal regime of that venue and its altered possibilities for aesthetic experience. Groys dismisses this movement out of the gallery and into the cinema, seeing in it little more than artists who, hungry for fame and mass cultural acceptance, participate in a commercialization of art that renders it intelligible and digestible within the sphere of popular media. This position fails to recognize that one need not exit the institution of art to seek accessibility and entertainment value; within the gallery, too, the artist is a Hollywood director, as it were. So why venture into the structures of the film industry?

Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* encompasses five episodes and numerous sculptures, drawings, and photographs produced between 1994 and 2002 [FIGURES 1-4]. Taking its title from the muscle that controls the suspension of the testicles, the monumental cycle combines myriad mythologies (appropriated and invented) within the

⁶ Groys is perhaps being sarcastic here, but one wonders how “meagre” is the existence “eked out” by successful artists based solely in the gallery. See: Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 19-20

overarching narrative of the transition from the pure potentiality of undifferentiation to the fall into sexual difference. The series stars Barney himself, who undergoes a series of bodily feats as a host of characters including Gary Gilmore (2), the Entered Apprentice (3), and a satyr named the Loughton Candidate (4). In an interview with Doug Aitken, Barney remarked, “Hollywood blockbuster films are so over the top, they have become something else entirely. Like you, I am interested in either end of the spectrum. It is everything in the middle—the straight-on storytelling stuff—that I am not really that interested in, like so-called independent film.”⁷ This is perhaps the simplest way of understanding the peculiar mingling of avant-guardism and blockbuster spectacle that characterizes Barney’s moving-image work: as figuring the point at which the two ends of the spectrum meet one another, at the expense of an excluded middle. And yet, at least in the structures of production and distribution Barney has embraced, independent film is not just a point of comparison for his practice, but is in fact a realm in which he participates.

The first episode of *The Cremaster Cycle* to be produced was *Cremaster 4*, in 1994.⁸ This episode manifests a heavy reliance on repetitive structures that would seem to compensate for the likelihood that the ambulatory viewer would stay for only a fraction of the episode’s forty-two-minute duration. The same may be said of the next instalment produced, *Cremaster 1* (1995). If one examines the cycle in its chronological order of production, there is a discernible trajectory that moves from work suited primarily to an installation context, where it would be viewed alongside the numerous

⁷ Doug Aitken, *Broken Screen: Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2005), 72

⁸ The cycle was produced out of order. The chronological order of production is: *Cremaster 4* (1994), *Cremaster 3* (1995), *Cremaster 5* (1997), *Cremaster 2* (1999), and *Cremaster 3* (2002). As Nancy Spector notes, “[W]hile the *Cremaster* cycle should certainly be viewed in its specified numerical sequence, it should also be experienced in the order it was made (4, 1, 5, 2, 3), for this will reveal the development of Barney’s relationship to the material and his thinking process.” See: Nancy Spector, “Only the Perverse Fantasy Can Still Save Us,” *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2002), 30

auxiliary photographs and sculptures Barney produced as a part of the cycle, to an increasing need for the kind of start-to-finish viewing afforded by the movie theatre. The running times of individual episodes increase,⁹ while their compensatory redundancy decreases and their internal narrative trajectories become stronger, culminating in the all-out grandiosity of the three-hour *Cremaster 3*. While all the episodes were shot on video, the changing formats employed suggest an increasingly strong alliance with the image quality of cinema as the cycle progresses. *Cremaster 4* was shot on Beta SP, *Cremaster 1* and *5* on widescreen digital BetaCam, *Cremaster 2* on high definition, and *Cremaster 3* on a format called 24P HDTV. As Matt Wallin, who worked on special effects for episodes 2, 3, and 5 explains, this last format “records pictures at twenty-four frames per second, which is the exact same rate as film, so it’s a direct transfer, giving the video a much more ‘filmlike’ look.”¹⁰

Despite this trajectory, even the earliest *Cremaster* episodes were exhibited in movie theatres from the time of their release, primarily though not exclusively in venues with some affiliation to the art world, such as the auditoria housed in the basement of many large art museums.¹¹ These screenings were independently organized through consultations with Barney’s gallerist and co-producer of the cycle, Barbara Gladstone, and so remained relatively distinct from the structures of the film industry. The videos were also frequently shown in an installation format, accompanied by the object-based works of the cycle. Such multi-platform distribution echoes contemporaneous transformations in film marketing, distribution, and exhibition. Until the mid-1980s when home viewing technologies become affordable to the masses, the revenue

⁹ *Cremaster 4* has a duration of 42 minutes, *Cremaster 1* is 40 minutes, *Cremaster 5* is 55 minutes, *Cremaster 2* is 79 minutes, and *Cremaster 3* is 182 minutes.

¹⁰ Matt Wallin, quoted in: “Personal Perspectives,” *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2002), 502

¹¹ The screening history provided as an appendix to the Guggenheim catalogue of the work provides an extensive list of the venues that hosted various episodes of the cycle from 1995 through 2002. See: “*Cremaster* Screening History,” *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2002), 519-521

generated by a given film primarily stemmed from box office receipts. Since this time, there has been a notable dispersion of the sites of income generation. There may be synergetic tie-ins in the form of fast-food promotions or toy merchandising and multi-platform distribution of a single product. Barney's sculptures, priced in the six figures, are a far cry from a McDonald's Happy Meal toy; the decision to exhibit in both galleries and movie theatres is slightly different than distributing a film for theatrical release, DVD, and Internet download. And yet, the principle remains the same: there is a horizontal network of profit-generating outlets for a single motion picture, some directly linked to the selling of the film itself and others to its ancillary products, but all invested in the creation of a total brand identity.

Cremaster 3 premiered at the Ziegfeld Theater, New York, on 1 May 2002 as a benefit for the Guggenheim Museum before opening commercially at Film Forum on 15 May. Made with a budget of at least \$5 million¹² and an enormous cast and crew, this final instalment, in the words of Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward, "spectacularizes the endurance of avant-garde performance, as, true to its other set of roots in blockbuster movies, the tasks Barney performed—a *Die Hard*-like stunt with an elevator shaft, climbing the curved interior of the Guggenheim, killing a leopard woman, and scaling a skyscraper—have much more in common with fantasy, action, and adventure movies."¹³ In early 2003, Palm Pictures acquired distribution rights to the entire cycle for North America and the United Kingdom, bringing *Cremaster 3* to the Sundance Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival that year before distributing the entire series to theatres with this final instalment as the centrepiece. The work was repackaged to

¹² Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward report a rumoured \$8 million budget, while the *New York Times* reported a budget of \$5 million. See: Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward, "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster," *Cinema Journal*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Winter 2006), 9; Steven Henry Madoff, "Bewildering, Bewitching, Above All Strange," *New York Times* (16 February 2003), available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/arts/art-architecture-bewildering-bewitching-above-all-strange.html>>

¹³ Keller and Ward, 6

make it amenable to the standard duration of a theatrical screening by bundling episodes together 1 and 2, 4 and 5 and distributed to cinemas specializing in art house and independent film.

The worldwide gross of *Cremaster 3* was a paltry \$520,196.¹⁴ However, understanding the revenue generated by the work in this limited way neglects to take into account the primary site of profit generation for Barney and Gladstone: the sale of limited editions of the videos and the host of other collectible art objects produced as a part of the series. At the time of Barney's 2003 Guggenheim exhibition—which attracted over 300,000 visitors¹⁵—the *New York Times* reported that the Gladstone Gallery was selling photographs from the series for anywhere from \$10,000 to \$70,000, drawings cost \$40,000, and sculptures much more. *Cremaster 3* was issued in a sold-out edition of ten including small objects and a double DVD of the film, priced at \$400,000.¹⁶

As these numbers suggest, the exhibition of *The Cremaster Cycle* in the movie theatre is hardly a financial venture—that is, contrary to Groys' assertion, the desire to move into this realm is by no means a simple matter of a “commercialization of art.” Rather, despite its historical alignment with mass markets, here theatrical distribution is primarily a way of showing the cycle to a wider audience in a venue that will allow for the attentive viewing that the films (particularly the episodes produced later, such as 2 and 3) necessitate. The money is made elsewhere. That said, the very possibility that an independent film distribution company might be interested in buying the rights to such films is intimately linked to their grand scale and visual bombast—qualities that have led Keller and Ward to give *The Cremaster Cycle* the purposefully oxymoronic label of a “neo-avant-garde blockbuster.” To revise Groys' statement, one might say that the movement into media channels is less “a de facto call to package and commercialize art

¹⁴ See: <<http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/2003/0CRM3.php>>

¹⁵ Greg Allen, “When Fans of Pricey Video Art Can Get It For Free,” *New York Times* (17 August 2003); available online: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/17/arts/design/17ALLE.html>>

¹⁶ All price figures are drawn from Madoff, *op. cit.*

by accommodating it to the aesthetic norms generated by today's mass media" than it is indicative of the fact that such art is already in enough of a harmonious accord with such norms so as to constitute a viable product for this kind of distribution. If anything, the exhibition of such work in the movie theatre might in fact contribute to an experience of sustained consideration virtually impossible within the economy of the glance that governs contemporary museum spectatorship. If *The Cremaster Cycle* is to be endorsed, dismissed, loved, or hated, it is this exhibition situation that will provide the viewer with the time necessary to take the work under close scrutiny.

Barney's involvement with the structures of the film industry only goes so far, however. As already noted, *Cremaster 3* was sold as a limited-edition double DVD to ten collectors. Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps to restrict any widespread possibility that the work might be viewed in less than favourable circumstances (such as on a laptop screen), there is no official non-editioned DVD release of *The Cremaster Cycle*.¹⁷ Palm Pictures released a thirty-minute portion of the cycle—a coda entitled *The Order*, in which Barney scales the walls of the Guggenheim Museum—in 2003, but there are no plans to release the entire cycle for home viewing. Similarly, Barney's *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005) premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2005 before being distributed by IFC Films to eighteen American cities in the fall of 2006. It pulled in a worldwide gross of only \$243,743 and no DVD exists, but like *The Cremaster Cycle* before it, its large budget is carried through the sale of editions, sculptures, and photographs.¹⁸ The DVD format is refused, perhaps for its associations with mass-market consumerism, and the purchase of *Cremaster*-brand products is restricted to the luxury market. One might expect a similar opposition to be constructed between the populism of the movie theatre and elitism of the museum, but both of these spaces are embraced—a fact that is

¹⁷ Good quality bootleg copies of the cycle have circulated freely and the work is widely available for downloading. On this issue, see: Allen, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ <<http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/2006/0DR9.php>>

suggestive of the ways in which the status of the movie theatre (and a certain kind of movie theatre in particular) is in the process of changing from a marketplace of images to a milieu of aesthetic contemplation that might provide a favoured venue for contemporary moving-image art.

Barney's horizontally integrated franchise is no stranger to spectacle. Benjamin Buchloh has said that Barney, even more than Jeff Koons, has exploited art's function as "commodity production, investment portfolio, and entertainment."¹⁹ For Buchloh, Barney is "a proto-totalitarian artist...a small-time American Richard Wagner who mythifies the catastrophic conditions of existence under late capitalism."²⁰ The work's formal strategies certainly work towards such a mythologization, and yet the choice to exhibit *The Cremaster Cycle* in the movie theatre does not. Somewhat paradoxically and contrary to Groys' assertion, Barney's move into the structures of distribution and exhibition proper to the film industry is resolutely not a matter of finance and not a matter of "accommodating" art to the norms of today's mass media. These norms—distracted viewing, a spectator free to choose how little to view at a given time—are precisely at play within the spaces of art.

Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno's 2006 feature-length film and video installation, *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait*, was first presented at Art Basel in a stadium designed by architects Herzog and de Meuron before going on to play in galleries and movie theatres and to be released on both mass market and editioned DVD [FIGURES 5-6].²¹ Like the structure of artworks and revenue generation proper to *The*

¹⁹ Benjamin Buchloh, "Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art," Yve-Alain Bois, *et al.*, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism, Volume 2, 1945 to the present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 673

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The film played at the Cannes Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival in 2006. In 2009, it was exhibited as a two-channel installation at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. It was released on DVD in the United Kingdom by Artificial Eye and in France by Universal Pictures Video. A limited edition of seventeen was also produced, pairing a DVD of the film with rush footage from one of the seventeen cameras.

Cremaster Cycle this array of versions and formats mirrors the status of most image-commodities today as transmedia artefacts that may exist in different modalities for different platforms. However, unlike *The Cremaster Cycle*, which resurrects the mythic intensity of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the notion of the artist as demiurge, at the levels of both form and content *Zidane* interrogates precisely the questions concerning the availability and circulation of images that it embodies in its distribution channels and exhibition formats.

As its title suggests, the film is a ninety-minute portrait of Zinédine Zidane, a French-Algerian halfback for Real Madrid and one of the most famous football players in the world. Unlike a figure such as David Beckham, who participates in a highly visible public life that extends far beyond his sport, Zidane remains something of an enigma off of the field. As Hugh Dauncey and Douglas Morrey suggest, “[T]he quiet tranquillity of his public persona and his placid inscrutability are both the means and the sign of his stardom”; in the French popular press, he is seen as an “cipher” who is “notoriously uncommunicative.”²² In keeping with this, Douglas and Parreno go against the historical vocation of the genre of portraiture—namely, to offer privileged access to the subject’s interiority—by providing no biographical information about Zidane, nor any speculation as to his personality outside of the game. Instead, they follow the player throughout an entire football match, staying with him even when the ball goes elsewhere to capture those empty moments of waiting that normally are excluded from television broadcasts. Though the artists reported bringing the crew to the Prado before shooting to examine portraits by Velázquez as inspiration, rather than the ideal, pregnant instant of painted portraiture, *Zidane* exaggeratedly embraces the any-instant-whatever of recording

²² Hugh Dauncey and Douglas Morrey, “Quiet Contradictions of Celebrity: Zinédine Zidane, image, sound, silence, and fury,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2008), 303 and 308

temporality proper to the moving image.²³ It is a matter of accumulated time rather than meaning; it is a drama of hypervisibility that carries with it no promise of knowledge. Or, to be more precise, it carries no promise of knowledge about the interiority of the subject. It does, however, offer both a performance of and a commentary upon the mobility of images and the commodity of celebrity in an age of multimedia proliferation and convergence.

Tim Griffin notes that, "...[A] football player such as Zidane now operates in the densest microcosm of contemporary post-Fordist society—a spectacularized workplace designed almost exclusively for sight; a landscape premised on immanent reproducibility..."²⁴ The technical specifications of *Zidane*—by now well known—re-stage and hyperbolize this microcosm. During the match between Real Madrid and Villarreal in the Estadio Santiago Bernabéu in Madrid on 23 April 2005, Gordon and Parreno positioned seventeen synchronized cameras around the stadium and trained them on Zidane for the entirety of the game—or at least until he was red-carded near its conclusion in an uncanny prefiguration of his infamous headbutt in the final match of the 2006 World Cup. The artists directed the camera operators from a trailer outside. In their cinemagraphy of the match, Gordon and Parreno employed both anamorphic 35mm and pioneered the first commercial usage of a high definition camera with an extreme zoom lens developed by Panavision for the United States Army. The work was produced in collaboration with a crew of some 150 people, including cinematographer Darius Khondji, who has worked for prominent art cinema auteurs such as Bernardo Bertolucci, Michael Haneke, and Wong Kar-Wai. From extreme close-up to extreme long

²³ Here I am drawing on the typology of instants elaborated by Raymond Bellour in "The Film Stilled." Bellour makes use of Deleuze's category of the any-instant-whatever to designate the equidistant instants sampled so as to create the illusion of movement. The any-instant-whatever is opposed to the Lessing's meaningful instant or pregnant moment, which "doesn't refer to anything real, it is a fiction, a kind of image of synthesis" (107). For Bellour, even in its privileged instants, cinema and photography can never achieve this pregnant moment. See: Raymond Bellour, "The Film Stilled," trans. Alison Rowe and Elisabeth Lyon, *Camera Obscura*, vol. 24 (Fall 1990), 100-108

²⁴ Tim Griffin, "The Job Changes You," *Artforum* (September 2007), 336

shot, from the precision of high def to the graininess of rephotographed television broadcasts, *Zidane* varies both shot scale and image quality in a patchwork of proximities and textures²⁵ that come together in a portrait whose subject is media exposure as much as Zinédine Zidane.²⁶ On the soundtrack, an instrumental score by Scottish band Mogwai makes the game appear as cinematic choreography, while clips of Spanish and French commentators anchor it firmly to the regime of real-time television broadcasting, thus contributing at a sonic level to the admixture of media forms the work explores.

Zidane brings together elements of cinema, painting (in particular the genre of portraiture), television, and digital media in a hybridized work that challenges the very notion that such media might maintain fixed borders between them. The film opens with the familiar Universal Pictures logo rephotographed off of a television screen so as to make scan lines and pixilation visible in a gesture that immediately signals the possibilities of remediation and the contamination of formerly discrete image regimes. The playing field is lined with screens advertising products from cereal to petroleum, while even Zidane's jersey is sponsored by Siemen's Mobile and Adidas. Throughout the game, titles appear on top of the image drawn from statements made by Zidane in press interviews that describe a relation to sport that has always been mediated by television, even when he was young. He expresses, for example, how when he was playing football as a child he would hear the voice of a popular television commentator running through his head rather than his own, or how he would watch televised football by sitting as close to the screen as possible. The regime of the televisual, with its overcoming of distance and its ability to transmit images and sounds in real-time is invoked, and yet Douglas

²⁵ For a reading of *Zidane* in terms of a textural "haptic visuality," see: Martine Beugnet and Elizabeth Ezra, "A Portrait of the Twenty-First Century," *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 77-85

²⁶ In this respect, it is unsurprising that Gordon and Parreno have stated that Warhol's film work was the "direct source for the portrait that [they] hoped to paint." Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, quoted in: Michael Fried, "Absorbed in the Action," *Artforum* (September 2007), 333

and Parreno hold fast to the styles of cinematography and scale of presentation proper to the cinema. They embrace the inscrutability of Zidane's star persona rather than attempting to channel it into the communicative transparency of television. The artists prefer the opacity of mute observation to the transmission of action and information as if to recall Manoel de Oliveira's description of cinema: it is "a saturation of magnificent signs bathing in the light of the absence of their explanation."²⁷

Zidane loosely mimics the real-time temporality of television but also sharply departs from it, a strategy that is particularly evident in its halftime break sequence. Here, the piece moves away from the field to construct a montage of things happening around the world on the same day as the game—perhaps, the implication is, at the very same moment. Moving from Ipanema Beach to Cuba, Toulouse to Iraq, a set of clips of variable quality depict a puppeteer's activity, news broadcasts, the release of new video games, the destruction caused by a car bomb (a bystander of which wears a Zidane jersey), and a host of other occurrences, many of them banal. The image quality of these clips is of even greater inconsistency than the footage of the match, ranging from impeccable sharpness to the full exposure of digital artefacts one would see if watching a low resolution YouTube clip on full screen mode. In contrast to the unwavering fixation on Zidane throughout the game, this halftime sequence introduces a brief flash of the image detritus of the world at large, a heterogeneous sampling of the diverse range of media images produced every minute of every day. It is a collage of images that blends the silliness of viral video memes with the atrocity of war in a categorical contamination both unsettling and unsettlingly familiar.

For Cyril Neyrat, the imagery of *Zidane* has three origins: televisual, pictorial (which, though Neyrat does not make the distinction, might be parsed into the cinematic

²⁷ Manoel de Oliveira, quoted in: Jean-Luc Godard, *For Ever Mozart* (1996).

and the painterly), and intersidereal.²⁸ These halftime images are Neyrat's primary example of the "intersidereal" origin, as they provide an interruption into the real-time broadcasting of television by what he understands to be a satellite-like perspective from the distant future that he notes is a recurring feature of Parreno's oeuvre.²⁹ However, one might just as easily understand this sequence as resolutely located in our digitized, networked present. The half-time sequence shatters the single perspective of a television broadcast into the multiple windows and hyperlinks of an online imaginary dominated by a paradigm of mapping. Action that had seemed contained within the single space of the football field is now brought into contact with a global network of images and sounds. Personal remarks such as "My son had a fever this morning" and "I had something to do today..." blend with faraway events in a manner that suggests how media flows bind together the local and the global, the here and the elsewhere, the banal and the exceptional so as to complicate the internal consistency of those very categories. As Irit Rogoff has suggested, location can no longer be understood in a strictly geographical sense but "...is increasingly a slippery construct of conjunctions between virtuality, materiality, and the vicissitudes of circulating signs."³⁰ This sequence unfolds the multiplicity that inheres in the notions of "here" and "now" that seemingly underwrite *Zidane's* conceptual wager. If the decision to follow Zidane through the limited space of the football field for ninety minutes seemed to suggest an extraordinary restriction of what "here" and "now" might denote, the halftime sequence explodes these categories, which had seemed to be the bedrock on which the entirety of the work depended. The dismantling of "here" and "now" overflows into the apparently unitary space of the football stadium to constitute it too as a theatre of reproducibility, an incubator for a circulation of image-commodities that will extend around the globe.

²⁸ See: Cyril Neyrat, "Rêverie d'un solitaire," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 613 (June 2006), 29-30

²⁹ Indeed, it is: Parreno's 2003 short film, *The Boy from Mars*, is exemplary in this respect.

³⁰ Irit Rogoff, "The Where of Now," *Time Zones: Recent Film and Video*, ed. Jessica Morgan and Gregor Muir (London: Tate Modern, 2004), 85

At the end of this sequence, as a transition back to the game's second half, a line introduced at the beginning of the film is repeated: "Who could have imagined that in the future, an ordinary day like this might be forgotten or remembered as anything more or less significant than a walk in the park." There is an ambiguity in this statement: it is unclear whether it refers to the notion that people living in the past would find it remarkable that to archive any and every event has today become so easy, or whether it invokes Neyrat's intersidereal perspective by referring to someone from the future looking back with surprise at the excessive archive Gordon and Parreno have produced of ninety minutes in Madrid on Saturday, 23 April 2005. In either case, in relation to this hodgepodge digital archive that accompanies the statement, this somewhat cryptic line resonates with the paradoxical capability of digital media to achieve a new disposability of images while also making storage easier than ever before. Ours is an age simultaneously marked by an unprecedented amnesia and an obsession with memory.³¹ The Internet constitutes is an indiscriminate archive of events significant and insignificant, created and destroyed with the click of a mouse, making media images at once more ephemeral and more enduring. Though *Zidane's* debts to cinema and television are most visible, the whole of the work dramatizes this fantasy of total coverage, total access, and total archivization—precisely the dream of the digital age—as it is concerned with registering those "meaningless" moments that even television cameras would not. It performs an accumulation of time rather than meaning in an era when more and more is archived just as more and more is forgotten.

The constellation of image-regimes and temporalities found in *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait* moves far beyond a simple dialogue between art and cinema. The "battle of the images" it choreographs brings onto the field the persistent

³¹ See: Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995)

ubiquity of television, the mobile screens of advertising, and the global networks of digital media. It is a work that is multiply hybrid in its institutional affiliations, its mode of production, and its aesthetic choices. To conclude with *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait* is to suggest that it functions not simply as the kind of portrait fit for the twenty-first century, but indeed as a portrait of the early twenty-first century, or at the very least of the state the relationship between media, art, and technology therein. It serves as a reminder that, though this dissertation has honed in on the interactions between the two terms “art” and “cinema” since 1990, the very reasons this pair emerges as entangled as they are has to do with the larger developments in image culture that have taken place during this period, which encompass art and cinema while extending far beyond them both.

The portrait of the twenty-first century offered by *Zidane* and, for that matter, *The Cremaster Cycle*, is one of competing media that may no longer be considered outside of their encounters with one another. Infrastructures, personnel, modes of production, aesthetics, and technologies are shared between cinema and art. At such an historical moment, if art history is to keep pace with the developments of contemporary art, it must expand into the vocabularies and methodologies of film studies. And if film studies is to keep pace with the changing shape of its object, it must take seriously cinema beyond what has traditionally considered to be cinema. Together, both of these disciplines must confront the implications of digitization, not merely at the level of materiality but also as it affects the time and space of aesthetic experience, the relation between image and commodity, the parameters and mandates of their institutions, and an understanding of history. In this regard, these disciplines might learn much from the artistic practices confronted throughout this dissertation, for these are precisely the issues they address. At stake here is the need to maintain an attention to specificity of the

aggregate formations that arise while *at the same time* making interdisciplinary connections in order to best grapple with interstitial objects of study.

In a tribute to Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour attempts to describe the contribution Metz made to the study of film, using Foucault's concept of the *fondateur de discursivité*, or "founder of discursivity" to do so.³² He writes,

Which would, then, be discursivity established by Metz, the equivalent of his "Marxism," his "psychoanalysis," his "archaeology," and mainly of what is implied by the rather diabolical force of the singular effect Foucault tries to recover? In my opinion, neither the semiology of the cinema, nor the relation postulated between psychoanalysis and the cinema, nor the sum of both, nor the one modified and enriched by the other. Put in a simpler and more secretive way, a movement which, closer and beyond the relation it established, appears to consist in the establishing of the relation in itself, the *and*. It is the force, at once simple and unexpected, which consists in saying *cinema and....*: and thus accepting all the consequences.³³

Bellour locates, then, at the very foundation of what is now considered to be orthodox film studies, a transgressive "and...." This small conjunction functions to describe the ways in which, from its beginnings in the academy, film studies has always opened onto an outside and has made use of this outside while retaining an attention to the aesthetic, historical, and material specificities of cinema. Though the contemporary moment is one in which the discipline feels in crisis in large part due to the uncertain status of its object,³⁴ it by no means is time to invoke the call to order and imperative to obey inherent in the term "discipline" in an attempt to shore up the boundaries of what properly does or does not belong to it. Rather, this state of affairs means that it is more than ever the time to reinvigorate the study of cinema by returning to Metz's wager of

³² For an explanation of this concept, see: Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" trans. Josué V. Harari, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101-120, especially 113-117

³³ Raymond Bellour, "Cinema and..." *Semiotica*, no. 112-1/2 (1996), 209

³⁴ See, for example: Brian Price, "The Latest Laocoön: Medium Specificity and the History of Film Theory," *The Oxford Handbook of Film and Media Studies*, ed. Robert Kolker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 38-82. In his discussion of this article, Dudley Andrew adds that, "Art history may sense itself in a parallel situation as objets d'art now share attention with innumerable phenomena comprising the strategically undefined zone of visual culture." See: Dudley Andrew, "The Core and Flow of Film Studies," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35 (Summer 2009), 912

cinema and.... Saying “cinema and...” is very different than asserting an undifferentiated plane of converged media forms. It is, rather, to understand the self-difference of cinema as always engaged in a process of becoming-other while still maintaining an investment in the rich historical traditions of both film and film theory. This dissertation has attempted to draw upon the many insights that stem from the film theoretical tradition embodied by Metz’s dare of the “and.” It has brought the history of film theory in conversation with developments in contemporary art to argue that these contributions to art history are also contributions to film history. It has modestly attempted to propose another conjunction—cinema *and* contemporary art—and to accept all the consequences.

Appendix A. Timeline

This timeline delineates key exhibitions, artworks, and other related developments during the two decades under consideration in this dissertation. While not all exhibitions and artworks mentioned in *Exhibiting Cinema* appear here, the list includes all those discussed at length in the dissertation, as well as others considered to be of key importance. Related developments include industrial and technological events, significant publications, and important moments in the changing relationship between art and cinema.

YEAR	EXHIBITIONS	WORKS	RELATED DEVELOPMENTS
1990	<i>Passages de l'image</i> , curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, Christine van Assche; Centre Pompidou, Paris.	Cindy Bernard, <i>Ask the Dusk: North by Northwest</i> ; <i>Ask the Dusk: Vertigo</i> Stan Douglas, <i>Overture</i> (1986); <i>Subject to a Film: Marnie</i> (1989) Christian Marclay, <i>Vertigo (Soundtrack to an Exhibition)</i> Chris Marker, <i>Zapping Zone</i>	More than two-thirds of American households own VCRs The Dycam Model 1, the first commercially available digital camera, is released. Projectavision, Inc., the world's first LCD projection company, goes public on Nasdaq
1991		Gary Hill, <i>Between Cinema and a Hard Place</i>	Tim Berners-Lee's 1989 protocol for information distribution becomes the World Wide Web
1992			
1993		Angela Bulloch, <i>Solaris</i> Douglas Gordon, <i>24 Hour Psycho</i> ; <i>A Souvenir of Non-Existence</i>	
1994		Matthew Barney begins <i>The Cremaster Cycle</i> Tony Oursler, <i>Movie Block (Sony)</i>	Apple's QuickTake 100 camera is the first consumer-level digital camera to work with a home computer via serial cable U.S. Government privatizes the Internet backbone, doing away with former pretences of limiting commercial use
1995	<i>Illusion—Emotion—Realität, 100 Jahre Kino: Die 7. Kunst auf der Suche nach den 6 Andern</i> , curated by Harald Szeemann; Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich	Eija-Liisa Ahtila, <i>If 6 Was 9</i> Chantal Akerman, <i>Bordering on Fiction: D'Est</i>	David Salle releases <i>Search and Destroy</i> ; Robert Longo releases <i>Johnny Mnemonic</i> Centennial of the Lumières' Grand Café screening

		Brice Dellsperger begins the <i>Body Double</i> series Douglas Gordon and Rikrit Tiravanija, <i>Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge</i> Pierre Huyghe, <i>Remake</i> Chris Marker, <i>Silent Movie</i>	Invention of the digital video disc, or DVD
1996	<i>Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945</i>, curated by Kerry Brougher; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles <i>Scream and Scream Again</i>, curated by Chrissie Iles; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford <i>Spellbound: Art and Film</i>, curated by Ian Christie and Philip Dodd; Hayward Gallery, London	Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij, <i>Voor Bas Oudt</i> Douglas Gordon, <i>Words and Pictures</i> Pierre Bismuth, <i>Post-Script/The Passenger</i> Wolfgang Staele, <i>Empire 24/7</i>	
1997		Pierre Huyghe, <i>Blanche Neige Lucie; The Third Memory</i>	Netflix, an online DVD rental service that delivers discs through the post, is established Founding of Anna Sanders Films
1998		Douglas Gordon, <i>Empire</i>	Digital Millennium Copyright Act is passed by a unanimous vote in the U.S. Senate and passed into law
1999	<i>Cinéma Cinéma: Art and the Cinematic Experience</i>, curated by Jaap Gulemond; Van Abbemuseum, Rotterdam <i>Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art</i>, curated by Kerry Brougher, Michael Tarantino, and Astrid Bowron; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford	Kutlug Ataman, <i>Women Who Wear Wigs</i> Matthew Buckingham, <i>Situation Leading to a Story</i> Vuk Cosic, <i>ASCII History of Moving Images</i> Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller, <i>The Phoenix Tapes</i> Douglas Gordon, <i>Feature Film</i>	Apple introduces Final Cut Pro at the National Association of Broadcasters' exhibition Centennial of Alfred Hitchcock's birth Darcy DiNucci coins the term "Web 2.0" George Lucas' <i>Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace</i> is digitally projected in four American theatres with mixed results Susan Sontag's "The Decay of Cinema" is published in the <i>New York Times</i>

2000	<i>Between Cinema and a Hard Place</i> , curated by Frances Morris; Tate Modern, London		Compaq introduces the MP1400. Weighing just over 4 pounds, it is one of the first lightweight data projectors Raymond Bellour publishes "D'un autre cinéma" in <i>Trafic</i> in response to the 1999 Venice Biennial
2001	Harald Szeemann, curator of the 49 th Venice Biennale, lobbies for cinema to play a larger role, invites filmmakers to create installations <i>Hitchcock et l'art: coïncidences fatales</i> , curated by Dominique Païni and Guy Cogeval; Centre Pompidou, Paris. <i>Image Stream</i> , curated by Helen Molesworth; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH <i>Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977</i> , curated by Chrissie Iles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York	Angela Bulloch, <i>Z-Point</i> Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, <i>The Paradise Institute</i> Tacita Dean, <i>Fernsehturm; The Green Ray</i> Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij, <i>Untitled</i> Stan Douglas, <i>Journey Into Fear</i> Kevin and Jennifer McCoy, <i>Leaning from Las Vegas</i>	
2002	<i>Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film</i> , curated by Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel; ZKM, Karlsruhe	Matthew Barney concludes <i>The Cremaster Cycle</i> Tacita Dean, <i>Section Cinéma</i>	George Lucas' <i>Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones</i> is the first movie to be shot completely on a high definition digital 24-frame system and the first secure encrypted digital cinema feature <i>October</i> round table on "Obsolescence and American Avant-Garde Cinema"
2003		Candice Breitz, <i>Becoming</i> Omer Fast, <i>Spielberg's List</i> Rodney Graham, <i>Rheinmetall/Victoria 8</i> Isaac Julien, <i>Baltimore</i> William Kentridge, <i>Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès</i>	Audiovisual file sharing site The Pirate Bay is launched, billing itself as "the world's largest BitTorrent tracker"

2004	<i>Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video</i>, curated by Stefano Basilico; Milwaukee Museum of Art, Milwaukee <i>Time Zones: Recent Film and Video</i>, curated by Jessica Morgan and Gregor Muir; Tate Modern, London	Tacita Dean, <i>Palast</i> Christoph Draeger, <i>Schizo (Redux)</i> Amar Kanwar begins <i>The Torn First Pages</i>	
2005		Kutlug Ataman, <i>Küba</i> Candice Breitz, <i>Mother; Father</i> Stan Douglas, <i>Inconsolable Memories</i> Johan Grimonprez, <i>Looking for Alfred</i> Radical Software Group, <i>RSG-BLACK-1</i> Francesco Vezzoli, <i>Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's "Caligula"</i>	Kodak discontinues Kodachrome Super 8 film amidst protests from filmmakers Three former PayPal employees launch www.youtube.com with the tagline "Broadcast Yourself" Video playback possible on the fifth-generation release of Apple's iPod
2006	<i>Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection</i>; curated by Stan Douglas, Christopher Eamon, Joachim Jager, and Gabriele Knapstein; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin <i>The Artists Cinema</i>, co-ordinated by Ian White; Frieze Art Fair, London <i>Kino wie noch nie</i>, curated by Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki; Generali Foundation, Vienna <i>Le Mouvement des images</i>, curated by Philippe-Alain Michaud; Centre Pompidou, Paris Whitney Biennial is titled <i>Day for Night</i>, curated by Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York	Cory Arcangel, <i>Colors</i> Bernadette Corporation, <i>Pedestrian Cinema</i> Tacita Dean, <i>Kodak</i> Jean-Luc Godard, <i>Voyage(s) en utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: à la recherche d'un théorème perdu</i> Sharon Lockhart, <i>Pine Flat</i> Chris Moukarbel, <i>World Trade Center 2006</i> Francesco Vezzoli, <i>Marlene Redux: A True Hollywood Story!</i>	<i>Cahiers du cinéma</i> special issue, no. 611: "Cinéma au musée" <i>Cinema Journal</i> dossier, "The Death of 16mm?" Kodak discontinues Kodachrome 16mm film and all Kodachrome film processing Museum of Modern Art, New York, creates the Department of Media as distinct from the Department of Film and Video, appoints Klaus Biesenbach as its head curator <i>October</i> roundtable, "The Projected Image in Contemporary Art" Google buys www.youtube.com for 1.65 billion Release of the first Blu-Ray Disc titles <i>Time</i> magazine proclaims "You" the person of the

			year, with specific reference to YouTube
2007	<i>Berlin Alexanderplatz</i>, curated by Klaus Biesenbach; P.S.1, New York and Kunst-Werke, Berlin <i>Collateral: When Art Looks at Cinema</i>, curated by Adelina von Fürstenberg; Hangar Bicocca, Milan <i>Kinomuseum</i>, curated by Ian White; 53rd International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen <i>Second Lives: The Documenta XII Film Programme</i>, curated by Alexander Horwath; Documenta XII, Kassel	Doug Aitken, <i>Sleepwalkers</i> Fiona Banner, <i>THE NAM</i> Matthew Buckingham, <i>False Future</i> Omer Fast, <i>The Casting</i> Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, <i>Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait</i> Bernadette Corporation, <i>Eine Pinot Grigio, Bitte</i>	On 31 July, the Apple iTunes store reaches the milestone of 2 million feature-length films sold
2008	<i>The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image</i>, curated by Kerry Brougher, Anne Ellegood, Kelly Gordon, Kristen Hileman; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.	Cory Arcangel, <i>Personal Film</i> Pierre Bismuth, <i>Following the Right Hand Of...</i> Candice Breitz, <i>Him; Her</i> Kota Ezawa, <i>LYAM 3-D</i> Mark Lewis, <i>Cinema Museum</i>	Netflix offers its 7 million subscribers unlimited streaming video of over 6000 titles via its “Watch Instantly” feature <i>New York Times Magazine</i> changes its annual “Hollywood” issue to a “Screens” issue Steve McQueen’s <i>Hunger</i> is awarded the Caméra d’or at the Cannes Film Festival
2009	<i>Vorspannkino</i>, curated by Sussanne Pfeffer; Kunst-Werke, Berlin	Omer Fast, <i>Nostalgia</i> Johan Grimmonprez, <i>Double Take</i> Steve McQueen, <i>Giardini</i> Jane and Louise Wilson, <i>Unfolding the Aryan Papers</i>	Apple announces iTunes store customers can purchase and rent movies in high definition from their computers On April 2, Netflix announced its 2 billionth DVD delivery Publication of Maeve Connolly’s <i>The Place of Artists’ Cinema: Space, Site, and Screen</i>, the first book-length study on cinema in the gallery.

Appendix B. Images

Introduction: The Othered Cinema



FIGURE 1. Stan Douglas, installation view of *Overture* (1986).

I. Architectures of Exhibition



FIGURE 1. Robert Longo, *Noweverybody* (For R.W. Fassbinder) (1982-82).



FIGURE 2. Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Theatres* (Orinda Theatre Orinda) (1978).



FIGURE 2. Zubin Pastakia, *Projection Room, Dreamland Talkies, Mumbai* (2006).

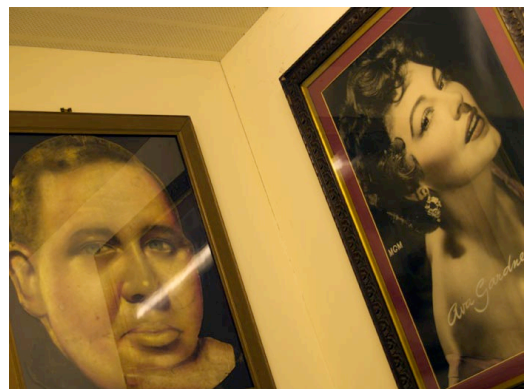
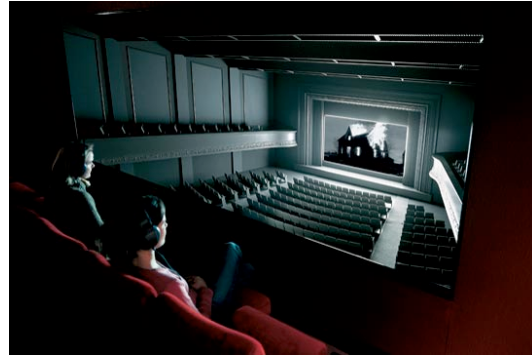


FIGURE 4. Mark Lewis, still from *Cinema Museum* (2008).



FIGURES 5-6. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001).



FIGURES 7-8. Rikrit Tiravanija and Douglas Gordon, *Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge* (1996-ongoing). Left: installation at Manifesta, Rotterdam (1996). Right: installation in *anyspacewhatever*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2008).



FIGURE 9. Installation view of the central *hinterhof* of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* at Kunst-Werke, Berlin (2007).



FIGURE 10. Dominique Gonzalez Foerster, *RWF* (1997)

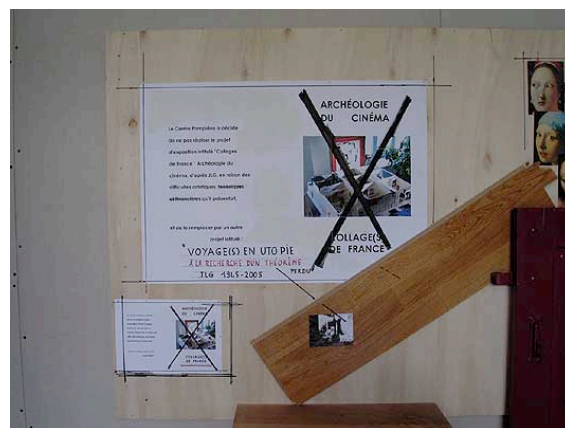


FIGURE 11. Jean-Luc Godard, installation view of *Voyage(s) en Utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (2006) at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



FIGURES 12-13. Jean-Luc Godard, installation view of *Voyage(s) en Utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (2006) at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

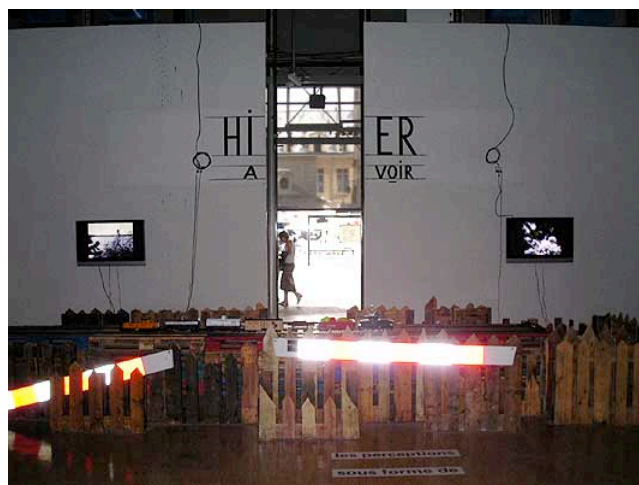


FIGURE 14. Jean-Luc Godard, installation view of *Voyage(s) en Utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (2006) at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



FIGURE 15. Kutlug Ataman, installation view of *Kuba* (2004) at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna in 2006.



FIGURE 16. Doug Aitken, installation view of *Sleepwalkers* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007).



FIGURE 17. Doug Aitken, installation view of *Sleepwalkers* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007).



FIGURE 18. Pipilotti Rist, installation view of *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)* (2008), Museum of Modern Art, New York



FIGURE 19. A yoga lesson inside Rist's *Pour Your Body Out*.

II. A Cinema in Ruins: Medium Specificity and the Rhetoric of Obsolescence



FIGURE 1: Tacita Dean, still from *The Green Ray* (2001).



FIGURE 2: Jeroen de Rijcke and Willem de Rooij, still from *Untitled* (2001).

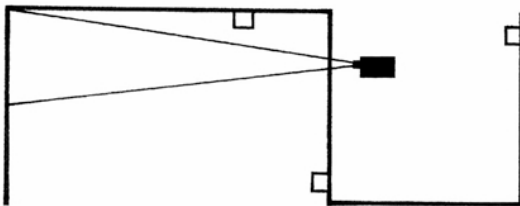


FIGURE 3: Matthew Buckingham, *Situation Leading to a Story* (1999) installation diagram.



FIGURES 4-5: Matthew Buckingham, stills from *Situation Leading to a Story* (1999).

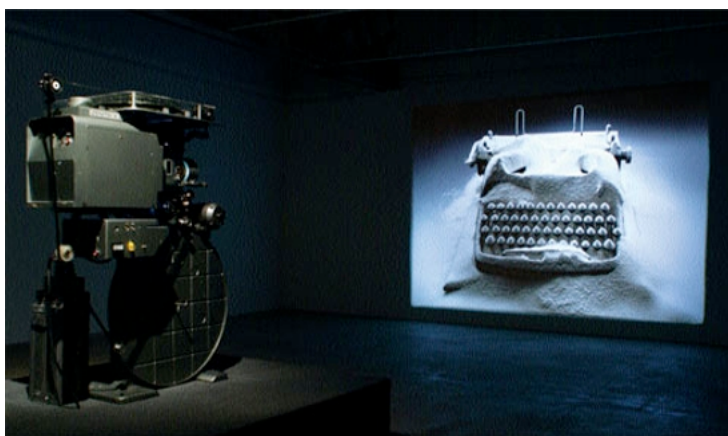


FIGURE 6: Rodney Graham, *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8* (2003)



FIGURE 7: Matthew Buckingham, still from *False Future* (2007).



FIGURE 8: Matthew Buckingham, installation view of *False Future* (2007) at Murray Guy Gallery, New York City.



FIGURE 9: Tacita Dean, still of *Bubble House* (1999)

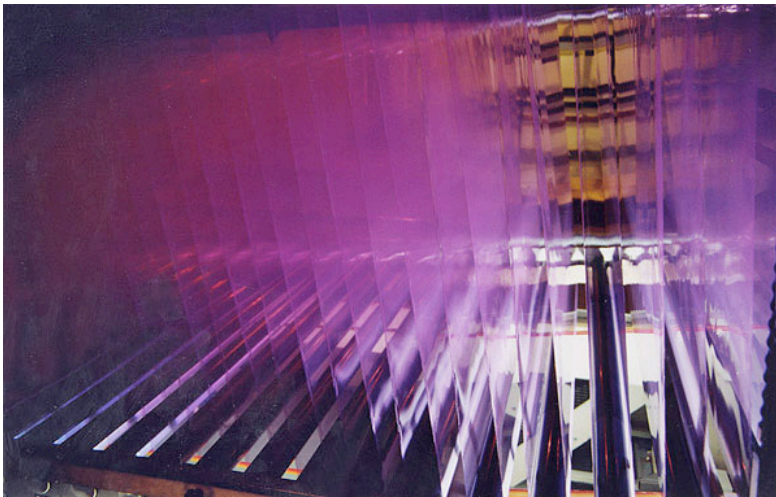


FIGURE 10: Tacita Dean, still of *Kodak* (2006).



FIGURES 11-12: Tacita Dean, stills of *Palast* (2004).



FIGURE 13: Tacita Dean, still of *Fernsehturm* (2001).



FIGURE 14: Cory Arcangel, still of *Personal Film* (2008).



FIGURE 15: Cory Arcangel, installation view of *Personal Film* (2008) at Team Gallery, New York City.

III. The Remake: Old Movies, New Narratives



FIGURE 1: Chris Moukarbel, still from *World Trade Center 2006* (2006).



FIGURE 2. Kota Ezawa, still from *LYAM 3D* (2008).



FIGURE 3. Stan Douglas, still from *Inconsolable Memories* (2005).

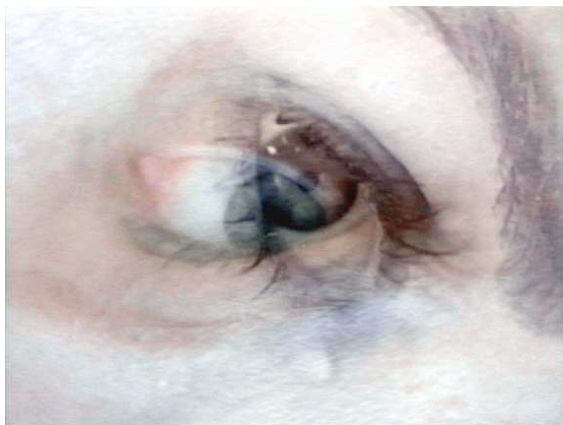


FIGURE 4. Christoph Draeger, still of *Schizo (Redux)* (2004).



FIGURE 5. Brice Dellsperger, still of *Body Double #1* (1995).



FIGURES 6-7. Stan Douglas, stills from *Subject to a Film: Marnie* (1989).



FIGURE 8. Omer Fast, still from *Spielberg's List* (2003).

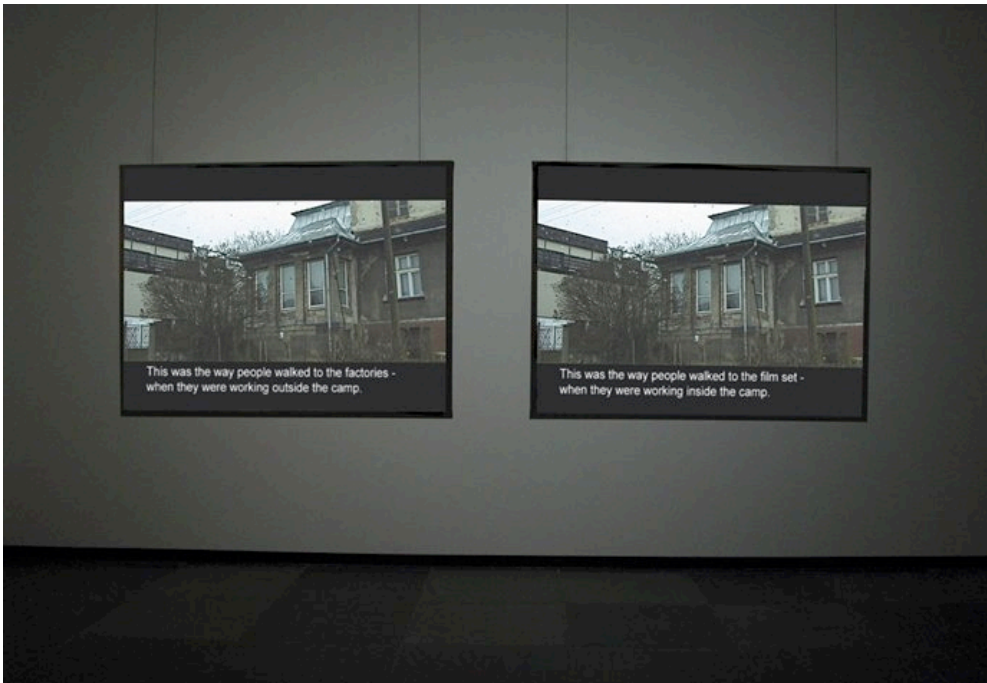


FIGURE 9: Omer Fast, installation view of *Spielberg's List* (2003).

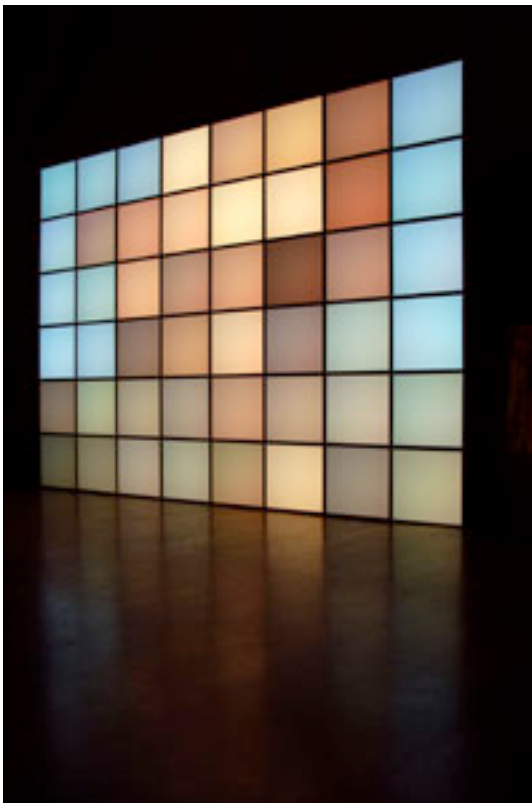


FIGURE 10: Angela Bulloch, *Z-Point* (2001).



FIGURE 13: Pierre Bismuth, *Following the Right Hand of Louise Brooks in Beauty Contest* (2008)

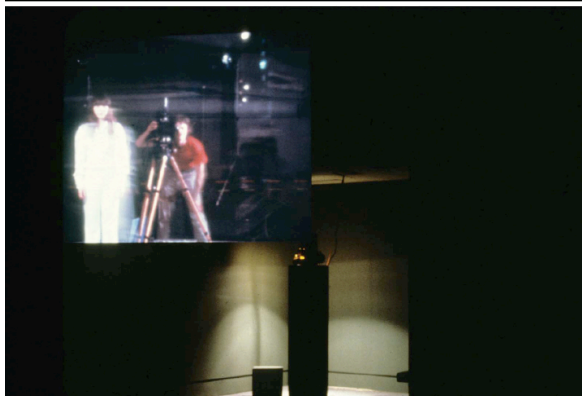
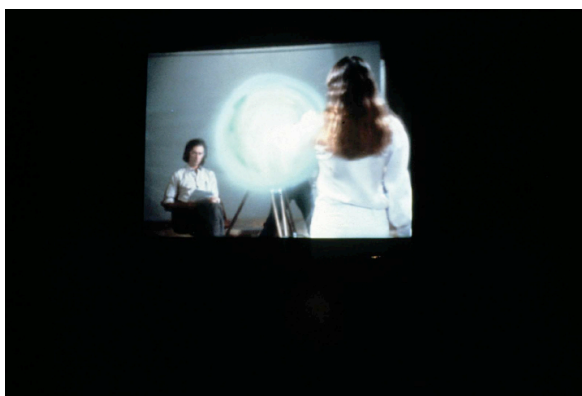


FIGURE 14: Michael Snow, recto and verso stills from *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974).



FIGURE 15: Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans* (1981).



FIGURE 16: Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #54*



FIGURE 17: Top, Alfred Hitchcock, still from *Rear Window* (1954).
Bottom, Pierre Huyghe, still from *Remake* (1995).



FIGURE 18: Pierre Huyghe, installation view of *Dubbing* (1996).



FIGURE 19: Pierre Huyghe, installation view of *The Third Memory* (1999).



FIGURE 20: Pierre Huyghe, still from *Blanche Neige Lucie* (1997).



FIGURE 21: Candice Breitz, recto and verso stills from *Becoming* (2003).



FIGURE 22: Candice Breitz, installation view of *Her* (1978-2008).



FIGURE 23: Candice Breitz, installation view of *Father* (2005).

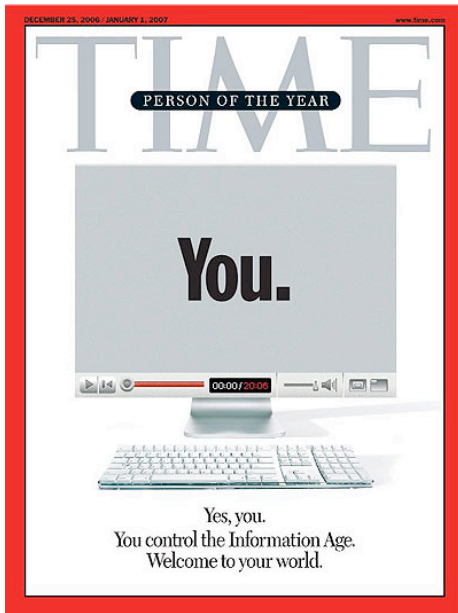


FIGURE 24, *Time* magazine cover, 25 December 2006.

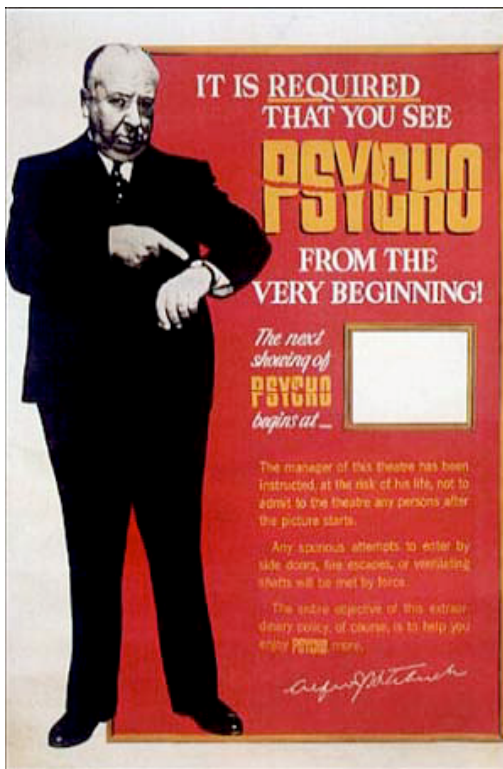


FIGURE 25. Release poster for *Psycho*.

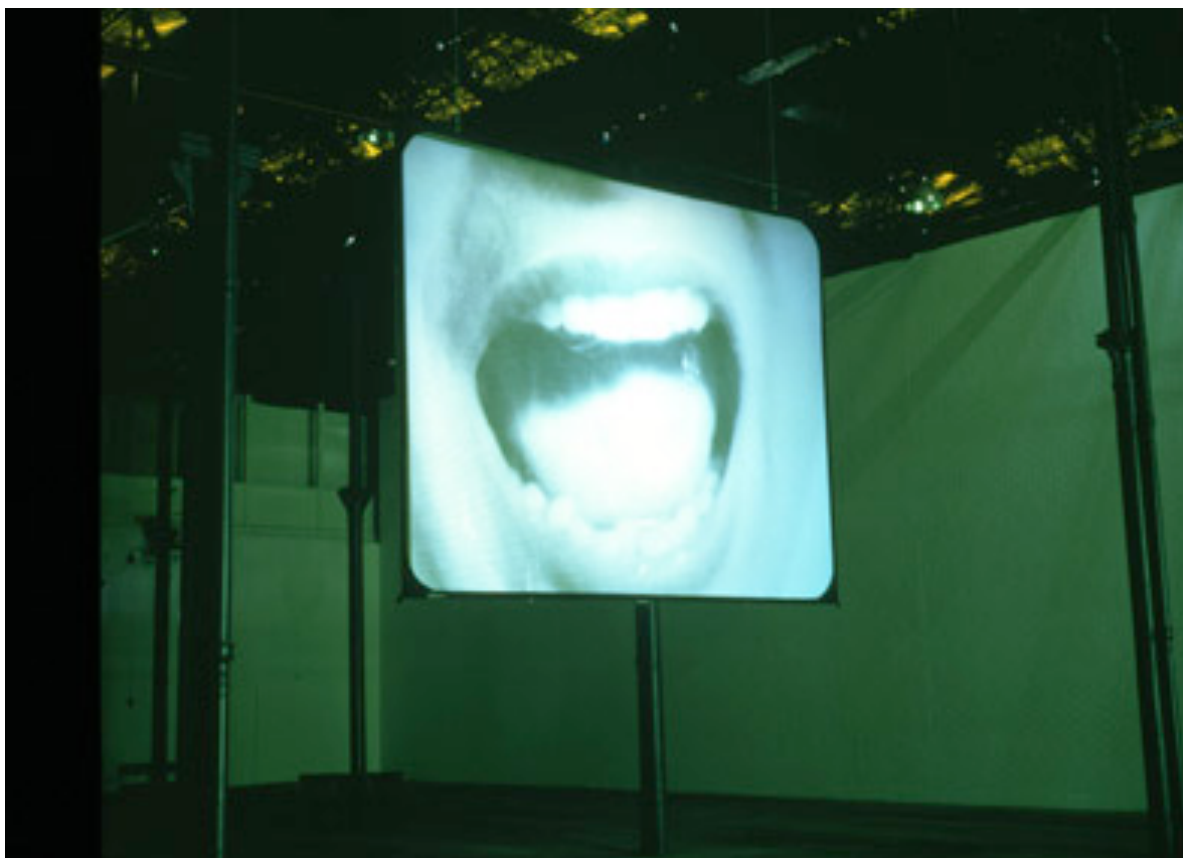
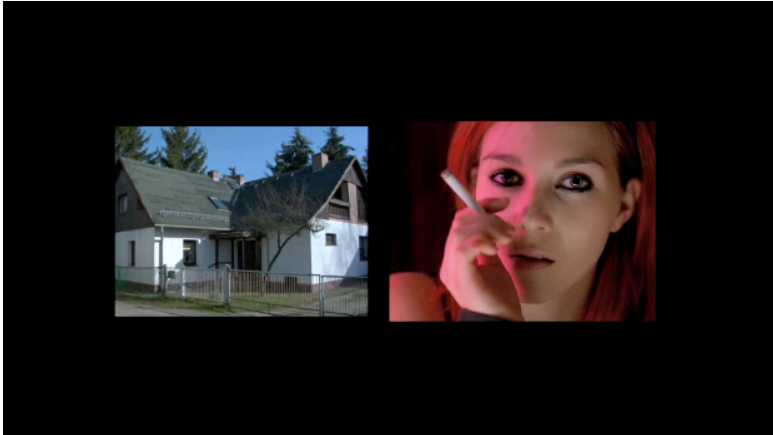


FIGURE 26. Douglas Gordon, installation view of *24 Hour Psycho* (1993).

IV. *The Truth of Fiction and the Fiction of Truth*



FIGURES 1-2: Omer Fast, stills from front projections of *The Casting* (2007)

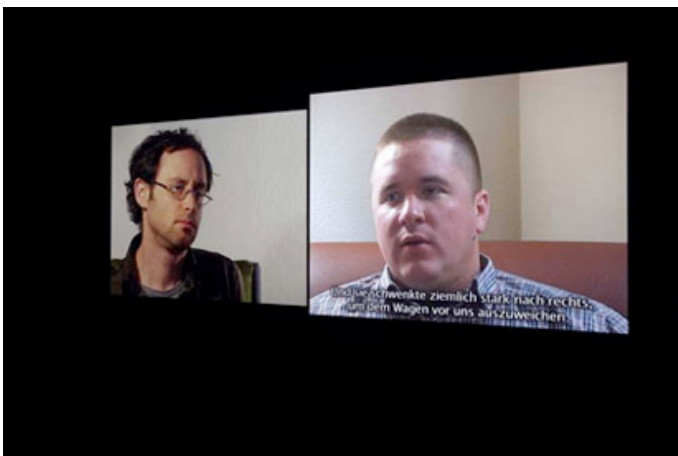


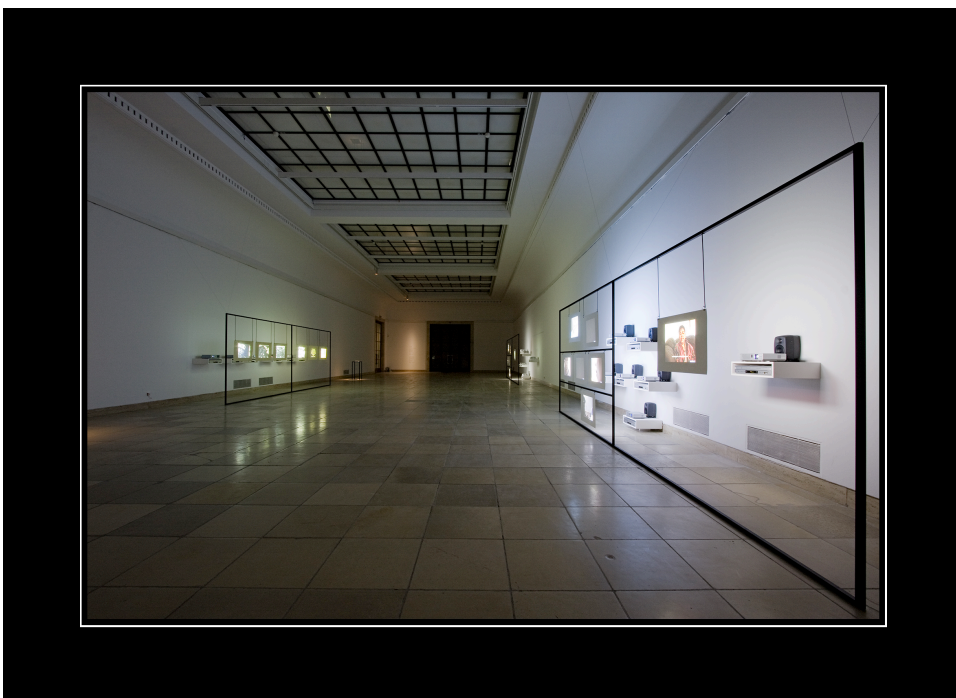
FIGURE 3: Omer Fast, installation view of *The Casting* (2007), rear projections.



FIGURE 4. Kutlug Ataman, installation view of *Women Who Wear Wigs* (1999).



FIGURES 5-6. Eijla-Liisa Ahtila, stills from *If 6 Was 9* (1995)



FIGURES 7-8. Amar Kanwar, installation views of *The Torn First Pages* (2004-2008)



FIGURE 9. Steve McQueen, installation view of *Giardini* (2009).



FIGURE 10. Omer Fast, production still from *Nostalgia III* (2009)



FIGURE 11. Omer Fast, still from *Nostalgia I* (2009)



FIGURE 12. Omer Fast, still from one screen of *Nostalgia II* (2009)

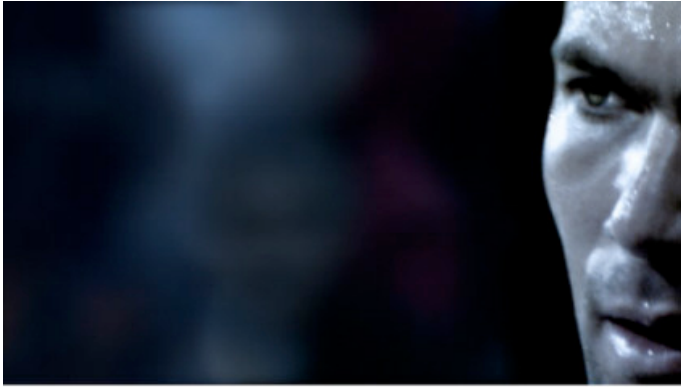


FIGURE 13. Omer Fast, still from *Nostalgia III* (2009)

Conclusion: "Cinema and..."



FIGURES 10-13. Matthew Barney, production stills from *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002)



FIGURES 1-2. Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, stills from *Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait* (2006)

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