"INVENTORIES OF LIMBO": POST-MINIMAL AESTHETICS IN CINEMA FROM
THE READYMADE TO INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

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Abstract

This dissertation charts the philosophical premises of post-minimalism in the practices of experimental filmmakers and video artists, exploring specific reorientations of cinematic works since the late 1960s. Post-minimalism refers to a myriad of aesthetic transformations initiated by the conceptual art movement, interrogating the ontology of art from a perspective outside its historical bonds to medium, style, and Kantian aesthetic judgment. I examine three strategies in the progression of post-minimal aesthetic practice: the readymade, institutional critique, and seriality.

A central goal of this research is to remap entrenched language and ideas in the spheres of the arts and cinema to point to a profound reciprocity between cinematic technology and post-minimal aesthetic intelligence, perception, and judgment. This research moves away from the problems raised by artificially constructed movements and prescriptive categories which inevitably produce important sites of exception, and look instead to the aesthetic engines of post-minimal artmaking offering opportunities for constant renewal, evolution, and refinement. I follow these aesthetic engines like a knight's tour in chess, jumping through history, appearing in unexpected places and at unexpected times to draw continuities in the approach to the heretical breaks from modernism found in post-minimal aesthetic intelligence.

I will primarily focus on four objects: William E. Jones' *Tearoom*, Robert Smithson's *Underground Cinema*, Lis Rhodes' collaborative intervention into the *Film as Film* exhibition, and Christian Marclay's *The Clock*. Examining the use of Marcel Duchamp's concept of the readymade, and its profound assault on both medium specificity and authorship, I illustrate radical new ethical imperatives in the presentation

of found footage filmmaking. My two core chapters grapple with ontological and locative explorations of cinematic architectures and sites. The two projects discussed engage with institutional critique, a philosophical model of artmaking which directly engages the sites, economic infrastructures, administrative imperatives, and power dynamics of the cinema, museum, and gallery. Finally, I examine a case study in contemporary post-minimal practice through Christian Marclay's 24-hour installation *The Clock*, and will explore its relationship to archival projects engaging in the collection, ordering, and hermeneutic approach to 20th century media. I will explore this installation as symptomatic of both a technologically determined grammar of collection for the now immense digital archive, and an archeological inclination for artists to thematize film history.

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I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Michael Zryd, who has guided me at every turn through both my Masters Degree and PhD at York University. His invaluable advice and intelligence has pushed me to become a more rigorous and attentive scholar, to become absorbed in local and global film communities, and to pursue goals in and outside of the university. His generosity and help with professional development has led to innumerable opportunities during my time in Toronto. As a teacher for whom I have watched as both a student and a teaching assistant, his superlative pedagogy is a profound example of the highest excellence and commitment to the discipline of cinema and media studies.

Numerous conversations and exchanges with Marc Couroux over the course of my PhD have guided my thinking, research objects, and interests in ways I that cannot be overstated. As one of the most adept thinkers on conceptual art, video, appropriation, and the direction of contemporary aesthetic practices, that I have ever encountered, Marc has exposed me to numerous artists, theorists, texts and works which have become pivotal in my writing and the direction of my doctoral dissertation. Had I not met Marc during the culmination of my Masters Thesis, this dissertation would not exist.

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Chapter One – Introduction: Post-Minimal Art and Cinematic Practices

Overview: Post-Minimal Aesthetic Intelligence and the Cinematic Arts

In the 1960s, artists began interrogating the ontology of art from a perspective outside its historical bonds to medium, style, and Kantian aesthetic judgment. Emerging from this inquiry was new thinking about art's objecthood, authorship, the institutional parameters of its exhibition and economic circulation, as well as the very epistemological limits of "art" itself. While the umbrella term "conceptual art" was often used to describe the diverse practices of these artists, I supplant it with the broader and more inclusive category "post-minimal art," which assimilates numerous movements and practices with shared intelligences, values, and political aspirations.[1] This dissertation examines the legacy of post-minimal art practices in the domain of cinema, both as an intellectual program taken up by traditional filmmakers, and as a space for artists to examine qualities of the cinematic,[2] without being limited to film and video media, and gesturing towards the broader social spaces of film exhibition.

This dissertation attends to key features of post-minimal art practice through the parallax view of cinema. I will argue that the mechanical operations and functions of recording technologies, particularly film and video, became blueprints for heretical breaks from formalist art in post-minimal philosophy. Specifically, I contend that the

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[1] I use this term, coined by Robert Pincus-Witten, to address a period after minimalism which cannot be neatly demarcated into agreed upon movements or modes of artmaking. Resistance by many artists to be packaged into a movement, and outright hostility to the nature and defining characteristics of these monikers at the time has made using such a broad term a useful way to circumvent these problems. See Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1978).

[2] I use the term "cinema" to describe both the aggregate condition of the filmic apparatus in all of its constitutive parts including the projector, screen, exhibition architecture, and institutional policies, but also to phenomenological essences of the cinematic experience such as time, light, sound, and frontality.

aesthetic prerogatives leading to the textual/linguistic, photographic, serial, tautological, documental, and site-specific imperatives that came to characterize this period of art, regroup with cinematic technologies in important and defining ways. Conversely, this research outlines the idiosyncratic approach of post-minimal artists and thinkers to the temporal, sculptural, and architectonic qualities of film, video, and cinema-space through dramatic reorientations of the film apparatus; challenges to the pictorial film frame, medium specificity, and the aesthetic sensibilities of the formalist avant-garde; as well as destabilizations of the institutional and architectural features of the cinema itself.

In its eschewal of conventional media such as painting or sculpture, post-minimal art did not adhere to a familiar historical trajectory of stylistic shifts. Instead, this period is marked by attempts to examine art from new vantage points with unfamiliar practices, which foregrounded textuality, process, context, information and phenomenological relations between the spectator and the art object. This movement might be understood as a concatenation of Marcel Duchamp's attempts to reroute the site of an art object's reception from the visual to the conceptual regime,[3] and in the radical project of Soviet constructivist artists to repudiate art's autonomy. Similarly, the works discussed in this dissertation belong to a genus of cinematic art provoking challenges to orthodoxies of authorship and exhibition, in addition to categorical breaks from the epistemological understanding of what might constitute "cinema" in the first place. This introduction will outline the parameters of this dissertation by highlighting existing scholarship on the subjects of post-minimal art, structural filmmaking and its relationship to these art practices, and the broader category of "cinematic" art, itself a rather abstract and

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[3] The "ideatic" or conceptual regime Duchamp argues for, was not concerned with art objects that are understood through rigorous visual analysis, but instead presented ontological problems which the viewer had to resolve in other ways.

amorphous concept increasingly interrogated in the field of aesthetic production. I will define the term post-minimal art and expand upon the aesthetic strategies contributing to its importance in twentieth century aesthetic production. First, I will outline the increasing importance and interest in inter-disciplinary studies of cinematic art and the transformation of the art world itself by cinematic technologies.

My Intervention – The Rise of Post-Minimal Cinematic Intelligence

Since the 1990s, a number of important museum exhibitions have contributed to the rediscovery of artists and works from the 1960s and 1970s, amassing a more complex survey of the terrain of practices occurring during this time.[4] Furthermore, scholarly reassessments of this period have notably focused on film and video with a vigorous interdisciplinarity once absent from writing during the time.[5] This re-historicizing occurs in tandem with a broadening interdisciplinarity in the academy and entrenchment of avant-garde film study into the field of the visual arts following the broader confluence of these two "worlds" during the era of video. Still, in many of the paradigmatic texts I will address, there remains a need to cordon off traditions of artist film and video from the experimental / avant-garde tradition of cinema. What has become increasingly apparent to film and art historians of this time, is that the project to circumscribe these fields frequently collapses under the weight of significant cross-pollination and aesthetic and medial promiscuity observable from the present vantage point.

Two important bodies of research and history surrounding post-minimal art and

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[4] While there are too many to name, key exhibitions would include *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964 – 1977* (Curated by Chrissie Iles at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001) and *X-screen : Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s* (Curated by Matthias Michalka at MUMOK Vienna, 2003).
[5] For a contemporary example, see Eve Meltzer's thorough exploration of this period *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

cinema practices have shaped the departure points and boundaries of this dissertation. The first concerns Jonathan Walley's research into "paracinema," defined by him as "phenomena that are considered 'cinematic' but that are not embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined," which "…recognize essentially cinematic properties outside the standard film apparatus, and therefore reject the medium-specific premise that the art form of cinema is defined by the specific medium of film."[6]

Walley argues that cinema as a concept preceded film as a technology, positioning paracinematic artists in dialogue with their post-minimal counterparts, though with divergent perspectives towards the medium.[7] Both, however, share a drive towards examining the history and concepts behind the use of materials, as opposed to merely exploring the materials themselves.[8] Walley also argues that 'avant-garde film' and 'artists' film' constitute distinct 'modes of practice' from one another. By this, he is referring to the "simultaneously historical, institutional and discursive context constituted by the norms of production, distribution, exhibition and reception of film art….the concept of modes of film practice provides a general model for characterizing and differentiating between broad contexts in which cinematic media have been used, made into new forms, circulated, experience and interpreted."[9] Walley uses this methodology to create distinctions between a cinema by artists and a cinema by filmmakers. In some of these distinctions, the strange possibility of "cinema" becoming a privileged ground for the enactment of Conceptual approaches begins to appear—one which has only

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[6] Jonathan Walley, "Paracinema: Challenging Medium Specificity and Re-defining Cinema in Avant-garde Film" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005):12.
[7] Walley argues that paracinematic work must be considered within the tradition of Avant-garde film in its exploration of "cinema" as a broader form of artmaking rather than one limited to film and video. This differs from artists, he argues, who primarily view cinema as codified by specific media (Walley, "Paracinema," 27).
[8] Walley, "Paracinema," 55.
[9] Walley, "Paracinema," 185.

tentatively been mapped as a tertiary movement, that like Anthony McCall's characterization of art and film, dance around one another like a double helix.[10] It is in this space that my intervention takes place.

The second body of research concerns Eric de Bruyn's exhaustive account of the cinematic works of post-minimal artists Mel Bochner, Dan Graham, Robert Barry, Richard Serra, and Bruce Nauman. de Bruyn's research is a "medium-specific history in contrast to a history of a medium" which argues that the priorities of artists making films in the late 1960s shared no historical continuities with experimental film, and to the contrary, sought to divert the mechanisms of film from their "logical purpose."[11] While I consider these two bodies of research to be building blocks from which to further elucidate the reciprocal nature of post-minimal practices and cinema, I will also attempt to fill in some of the gaps in history and, at critical points, question both de Bruyn and Walley's entrenchment of their objects of study into discrete disciplines.

In her essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," Rosalind Krauss makes two important contributions to a post-modern theory of art. She at once describes minimalism as a culmination of the "modernist ontology of medium"- but had also devised a kind of methodology "by problematizing the set of oppositions between which the modernist category *sculpture* is suspended."[12] Eric de Bruyn argues that Krauss' landmark essay has important implications for the understanding of audiovisual art in this period, extending its reach to a similarly modernist ontology of the film medium, and in which the oppositions of a modernist practice (characterized by reductivist explorations of

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[10] Anthony McCall, "Line Describing a Cone and Related Films," October no. 103 (Winter 2003): 48.

[11] de Bruyn, "The filmic anomaly: Moments in post-minimalism (1966--1970)" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2002: 71)

[12] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44: 38.

medium specificity in the category "structural film") and the expansion of the visual field of cinema (defined as "expanded cinema," which involved developing new architectures and multiplying the screen) are problematized by the presence of inassimilable practices which sought, as structural film demystified the celluloid image, to demystify the architectural, mechanical, spectatorial, and economic apparatus of cinema.

The understanding of "cinema" in the proverbial "expanded field" has become the subject of a number of important reconsiderations of 1960s and 1970s audiovisual practices which: engaged in systematic removals of parts of the film apparatus; included liveness or performance into the cinematic space; undermined the frontality, stasis of the spectator, and architectural coordinates of the cinema; violated the surceasing duration of film through looping, the "profligacy of footage"[13] or other forms of extended duration; and leveraged other challenges to what could fit into the category "cinema." These reconsiderations have timely resonance today, amidst an increasing primacy of cinema installation in the museum and gallery, the attendant spectacularization of audiovisual art and a selective reconciliation with these radical approaches to making the apparatus a visible and intrinsic structural feature of the artwork. What this also conveys is a deeply embedded connective tissue between post-minimal aesthetic practices and cinema, which has never been fully accounted for and historicized.

Methodology and the Limitations of the Present Study

My methodology for approaching such a broad subject requires examining a number of parallel histories simultaneously to tease out reciprocal lines of influence. Insofar as I approach two traditions (one in the visual arts, the other in cinema) while

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[13] P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde (1943 – 2000)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 349.

examining two distinct conceptions of cinema (one concerned with the medium, the other conceptualizing a broader phenomena of the cinematic) a number of challenges arise in recording a traditional historical chronology. Instead, I am using *topology* as a model, which usefully aids in mapping philosophical connectivity between disciplines. A topological model would provide a history of shared ideas and their distinctions, rather than a chronological history of film and art objects and philosophies. This methodological way of thinking and mapping history grants me a freedom to examine ideas inside and outside the disciplines of art and cinema. This dissertation will not contribute an extensive history of artists and their works, but provide an intellectual history of approaches and strategies in the arts.

A series of obstacles have made a topological approach to my dissertation a fitting alternative to more traditional forms of chronological approach to aesthetic practices and their development. These obstacles concern the present research around film and art, and the emphasis of existing studies on establishing the differences between the traditions, institutions, and economic infrastructures of the "art world" and the "film world." In an effort to more firmly grasp distinctions and shape the contours of a landscape in which artists and filmmakers were forced to choose, or select personal allegiances to which group they belonged to while working with cinematic technologies and ideas, scholars were tasked with identifying these bifurcations. But in the pluralistic landscape of the arts, these dividing lines have, in hindsight, not only become more elusive, but have acted as hindrances to locating the parallel projects of post-minimal practices in the cinematic arts. In these cases, the formation of discrete categories breaks down, and it becomes apparent that once these entrenched camps are set-aside, if just for a moment, a profound

continuity and dialogue emerges.

The problem with discrete categories is that they are both wholly necessary to understanding the relationships between disciplines, and at the same time these categories can steamroll over the specificities and individuality of artists, practices, and art-objects. Foucault dealt with the paradoxical problem of categories, writing "They suppress anarchic difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification with respect to individual beings." Here lies the great conflict: no sooner do we wish to be freed from categories, than we confront what Foucault called "the magma of stupidity and risk being surrounded not by a marvelous multiplicity of differences but by equivalences, ambiguities, the 'it all comes down to the same thing,' a leveling uniformity, and the thermodynamism of every miscarried effort."[14] If we see these categories as both the contours shaping a tradition ("experimental film" or "artist's cinema") and movements (conceptual art, structural film, expanded cinema), what is one to do in such a situation?

One means of thinking outside of this is topology. Topology is a mathematical field devoted to the study of shapes and spaces. As it has been addressed in a number of important texts seeking alternative methodologies of studying art history, it is defined as a means of examining "relationships of juxtaposition, proximity, and envelopment, but also on the possible ways of traversing the edges or moving between points within the complex spatial figures of grids and networks."[15] Imagined in a planar fashion if visualized, topologies often focus on mapping the reticulations forming the connectivity

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[14] Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philisophicum," *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, James Hurley ed., (New York: The New Press, 1998):359.
[15] Eric de Bruyn. Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism. (*Grey Room* 25, Fall 2006, pp. 32–63).

and continuity of concepts. The Möbius-strip is an object par-excellence in mathematical topology, as it is a one-sided object with only one boundary, which presents multiple geometries while remaining homeomorphic (that is, an object which through stretching or bending may find new discrete shapes). In an effort to re-orient or jettison the purportedly distinct traditions of the film world and art world in regards to cinema, I will address post-minimalism as a topological space to outline these relationships.

George Kubler frequently articulated the problems of classification in the arts, and relied himself on a topological model. In his analysis of art as evolutionarily linked to human development, Kubler argues that "History has no periodic table of elements, and no classification of types or species; it has only solar time and a few old ways of grouping events, but no theory of temporal structure. If any principle of classing events be preferred to the impossible conception that every event is unique and unclassable, then it must follow that classed events will cluster during a given portion of time in an order varying between dense and sparse array."[16] This clustering famously occurred between the late 1960s and early 1970s in the arts, and while much ink has already been spilled in characterizing this rich period, I would like to examine these clusters from outside their prescribed traditions. This period of time is characterized by the comingling presence of many ideas I will examine, but my dissertation begins and ends with works that proceed and follow. Appropriately then, each chapter of this dissertation deals in some way with the elusive nature of art historical categories.

The topology I imagine attempts to redress two distinct traditions by following a number of *aesthetic engines*. These interrogative strategies are the nodal points forming

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[16] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962): 96.

the connective hinges between the experimental film and art traditions I address. These post-minimalist art strategies and ideas are: the readymade, institutional critique, and seriality. I approach these aesthetic engines as they cross over from the traditional field of visual arts to the cinematic arts. I will think of my topological approach as a kind of teleportation device, allowing me to chart concepts appearing in different times and places through history. History ceases to be the entry point: it becomes a conduit for the transformation and reticulation of ideas. The goal is for the ideas to become time machines which one rides through history, rather than viewing history as a framework from which to cull the many differences (as previously stated in the social spheres and traditions) between "artists" and "filmmakers."

Unlike an art or film historical movement, an aesthetic engine describes procedural, formal, and conceptual affinities—though often reflects aberrant materials, political objectives, and socio-historical contexts. So while appropriation is an aesthetic engine, its use by artists associated with Dada or the Metro Pictures Gallery would more concisely represent a set of values and ideological resemblances in a historically and sociologically situated context. It was here that I had the idea to follow certain "aesthetic engines" and chart their transformation from the visual arts into cinema. Realizing the persistent failures of circumscribed categories and artificially constructed movements, I decided to return to these aesthetic engines of artmaking as a solution to the glaring problems of simply mapping movements like minimalism or conceptualism onto cinema, which accounts for why I've steered clear of attempting to justify a category like "post-minimal cinema."

Strictly speaking, topology is not a well-defined methodological approach in the humanities. While its relationship to the mathematical field is purely theoretical (if not somewhat sycophantic), it does provide a way of thinking that usefully adapts to difference, in contrast to ways of thinking which separate, isolate, and ultimately categorize these concepts—neutralizing important sites of difference as well as similitude along the way.

While researching post-minimal art, remarkable adjacencies, or what I call a shared "aesthetic intelligence" appeared in the works of filmmakers beginning with the structural film movement. I use the term "aesthetic intelligence" in this case to describe certain widespread attitudes and generally agreed upon aesthetic problems native to formalism and late modernism acknowledged by artists and filmmakers. These intersections of shared "aesthetic intelligence" would give rise to a series of competing solutions shared across media. As Richard Vinograd notes of topological approaches to art history, "These kinds of art histories might emphasize contact and continuity rather than distance: relationships of molding and modeling, impress and inhabitation, in place of depiction and description."[17]

Concisely stated, I want to remap some of the entrenched language and ideas in the spheres of the arts and cinema to point to a profound reciprocity between cinematic technology and post-minimal aesthetic intelligence, perception, and judgment. To do this, I remap important terms from post-minimal art onto cinematic art, and re-examine the relationship between these terms and the character of the cinematic medium itself. The first step would be to momentarily dissolve these traditions to instead investigate the concepts like a knight's tour in chess, jumping through history, appearing in unexpected

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[17] Richard Vinograd, "Art Historical Topologies," Art Bulletin LXXVI/4 (Winter, 1994): 595.

places and at unexpected times. The title of this dissertation borrows from a key text from Robert Smithson titled "A Cinematic Atopia" which broadly explores imbricating approaches to filmmaking by artists and filmmakers. This essay, which I elaborate upon in Chapter Three, parallels my own interest in complicating the existing borders between art and filmmaking traditions. In addition to its religious meanings, limbo, from the Greek word *limbus* describes a margin or border site. "Inventories of limbo," implies a taking stock of how we currently define and accept these demarcations.

While I engage with discourse analysis, historical scholarship, interviews, documents, curatorial and artists' statements, and textual analysis, it might be said that I am more succinctly adapting a form of genealogy, which has benefited from topological models as a way of thinking through aesthetic practices from a trans-disciplinary perspective. Topological models have tended to be raised when a complex network of objects, practices, institutional frameworks, artists, disciplines, and historical specificities are absorbed in a single study.

This dissertation is both circumscribed by and in dialogue with the important research of Walley and de Bruyn. In the work of Walley, my research is informed by his radical ontology of what constitutes "film-making" by returning to the birthplace of post-minimal aesthetic practice and linking this to cinema. Taking up the provocative research of de Bruyn, I will expand upon his work on institutional critique in relation to the cinematic apparatus, and in an inversion of his medium specific history of post-minimal art, supply a history, which offers a more substantively entangled intellectual exchange between artists and filmmakers. I have elected to focus on four objects to address what I believe are deeply significant "clues" to understanding how post-minimal aesthetic

intelligence has permeated cinematic production. These chapters each take up one of these cinematic objects or sites, contextualizing them through examinations of artists/filmmakers and their works engaging these aesthetic strategies. While each chapter thematizes an object, ultimately I focus on an aesthetic strategy underlying these works conjoining the fields of art & cinema.

In the two key studies I approach, these traditions are framed within certain ideological frameworks, circumscribed by the authors' disciplinary affiliation. For example, Jonathan Walley's research into "paracinema" painstakingly elaborates upon its historical continuity with the concerns of avant-garde filmmakers. While these assertions may be leveraged by some obvious affiliations (no one contests that Ken Jacobs works within the avant-garde film tradition), other artists (Tony Conrad and Anthony McCall) who have worked distinctly within art contexts are less easily positioned in this way. Regardless, Walley has written specifically on how one might parse these distinctions in his essay "Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde." While this essay makes strident efforts to demarcate what many have struggled to put into words about these distinctions (for many it is akin to judge Potter Stewart's declarations on pornography: "I know it when I see it"), Walley's distinctions raise some complex questions about how categories are circumscribed.

Both Erika Balsom and Maeve Connolly have sought to challenge or refine these distinctions through elaborations upon certain difficult sites of exception. Balsom argues that Walley's assertions that avant-garde cinema is personal and artisanal, while artists cinema is collaborative, have numerous sites of exception.[18] His arguments that artists

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[18] Interestingly, Eric de Bruyn agrees with this statement, but only in a period of artists filmmaking which he refers to as a "second phase of post-minimal film." These would include

traditionally work with film in addition to other media, could be inverted, with major filmmakers like Bruce Conner, Morgan Fischer, and Michael Snow (with many others that could be mentioned) as examples of "filmmakers" who work in other media such as sculpture and installation. Having stated this, some in the art world might primarily see Conner and Snow as artists, rather than filmmakers. Balsom additionally posits that the institutional distinctions are currently in a state of breaking down, with many historical instances of cross-pollination that make these arguments traces of a dominant trend, rather than a historically concise mapping.

Maeve Connolly suggests "the term 'artists' cinema' does not signify a unified or coherent historical formation. Instead, it refers to a series of competing claims made for and by artists and art practices in relation to cinema and the wider context of moving image culture. Some of these claims are overtly 'genealogical', seeking to frame artists' cinema as an extension of another form of art practice, such as experimental film, post-minimalist installation, video art or performance."[19] She argues "Walley is also specifically interested in paracinema as a *transitional* response to the shifts towards a 'post-medium age' ushered in by Minimalism and Conceptual art. In particular, he suggests that by embracing *cinema* as their 'medium', filmmakers such as McCall could explore the conceptual dimensions of cinema without being limited to the medium of film, so that they did not need to 'reiterate the materials of film again and again.'"[20]

From another vantage point, Eric de Bruyn argues in his writings on post-minimal

films by Robert Smithson, Lawrence Weiner, Yvonne Rainer, David Lamelas, and Marcel Broodthaers. As such, it would not include those whose works were not characterized by these forms of collaboration by his subjects of inquiry. (de Bruyn, "The Filmic Anomaly: Moments in Post-minimalism, 24).

[19] Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site, and Screen* (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2009): 19.

[20] Ibid. 21

film practices among artists that their work does find historical continuity with "experimental film" principally because of a lack of a display of "technical skill or expertise that is pursued in the post-minimalist artist film…"[21] Certainly *technique* remained a stalwart feature of formalist film, but de Bruyn's characterization also fails to account for those on the experimental filmmaking side who purposefully deskilled their practices and turned away from technical mastery, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

The complexity of supplying coherent and circumscribed categories precisely announces the reasons a topology is necessary in the first place. The arguments above convey the frustrating remainders, exceptions, and asterisks required to justify the distinct contours of the category "experimental film" and "artists' film." As Balsom notes, there exists enormous heuristic and sociological value to articulating how these distinct categories operate, and yet we confront the troubling states of exception complicating the discursive contexts and disciplinary affiliations of those approaching them. Many of these distinctions have played out on a complex social and political scholarly stage historically invested in one tradition laying claim to a certain body of work—one which I will argue, cannot be clearly separated from another. My intervention is not to argue for plurality, multiplicity, or other buzzwords from the post-modern arsenal of critical theory. Instead, I argue that these distinctions have somehow constituted a significant portion of how these traditions are historicized, and that while these arguments have produced an extremely valuable body of scholarship, they have also contributed to fomenting divides that deemphasize important aesthetic continuities. Whether scholars or artists have felt the need to articulate a distinction, is irrelevant. Post-minimal aesthetic practices themselves define many of these traditions of cinematic artmaking. What I hope to show

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[21] de Bruyn, *The Filmic Anomaly*, 34.

through a topological method, is that locating the minutia of differences pales in importance to the shared objectives and remarkable aesthetic engines uniting the art and film worlds. This way of thinking moves away from the problems raised by artificially constructed movements and prescriptive categories, and a return to the aesthetic engines of artmaking, which offer opportunities for constant renewal, evolution, and refinement.

Andrew V. Uroskie offers a succinct historical summary for why a historical disjunction between artists and filmmakers occurred:

> Within the academy, medium-specificity dictated that a body of practice called experimental film be made the exclusive province of a new discipline of film studies – partitioning off an aesthetic and conceptual domain whose practitioners had rarely understood themselves as far removed from the other arts. It dictated an autonomous study of the history, theory, and practice of film, rather than pursuit of its intersections with adjacent domains, such as photography, video, or performance. The effects of expanded cinema's displacement by the traditional medium-specific aspirations of structural film and video art meant that when those medium-specific aspirations became untenable – as they quickly would – a large and diverse range of artists were left without critical support. Historians, theorists, and practitioners of experimental film within the academy were thus isolated and ill-equipped to contest the disciplines inexorable shift toward the study of popular culture. For if the modernist conception of medium – specificity was the only model for artistic specificity on offer, then these works can only be seen as *un*popular forms of cultural production—lacking even the socially diagnostic power of which the rising field of cultural studies would make use.[22]

This characterization suggests that a historical drive to invent the film studies discipline and enunciate its individuality, specificity, and the need for disciplinary cohesion also produced a turning away from critical intersections with other disciplines. In an effort to develop a distinct language and disciplinary field, we see the beginnings of a fissure between film by artists and by filmmakers. It is from this vantage point that I embark on this dissertation to erase some of the borders, trouble the categories, and build bridges between disciplines and practices. The objective of this intervention then is to take the

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[22] Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 234.

important body of scholarship around experimental film and artists' cinema, and draws decisive through-lines and connectivity in the aesthetic engines shared between movements and schools of filmmaking that have been previously divided into quarrelling categories.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two – Perfect Films & Videos: The Moving Image as Readymade

The readymades of Marcel Duchamp, industrially produced utilitarian objects nominated as art, have long been understood as a paradigm shift in conventional understandings of medium specificity and offered an important ontological challenge to the art object. While Duchamp's readymades are identified as a threshold for post-minimal art practices, they are only absorbed into film by the mid 1980s. Chapter one sets out to concretize the relationship between Duchamp's readymades and introduce a framework for how procedures of nomination, inscription, and transformative functionality work in concert and are strategically featured in two exemplary readymade films: Ken Jacobs' *Perfect Film* (1985) and William E. Jones' *Tearoom* (2008). While the readymade is one of the first features of post-minimal practice, it is also one of the last to be absorbed into the domain of cinema.

In 1985, filmmaker Ken Jacobs purchased a metal film reel from a sidewalk vendor on Manhattan's Canal Street. Unbeknownst to him were 22 minutes of 16mm film footage attached to his object of purchase containing the accumulated outtakes of a 1965 newscast on the assassination of Malcolm X. After performing the most minimal of modifications, namely boosting the volume in the second half of the footage, he released

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it the same year under the title *Perfect Film*; declaring it to be a work of art in its unmodified state.

Over twenty years later, William E. Jones tracked down the raw footage of an infamous two-week surveillance operation in a park restroom in Mansfield, Ohio. The operation resulted in the prosecution and conviction of 38 men for sodomy—a crime punished by a mandatory minimum one-year prison sentence with many sent on to state mental institutions for as long as 9 years. The operation took place when surveillance was done manually, recorded by a cameraman shooting on 16mm behind a two-way mirror overlooking the restroom. After subjecting the footage to montage Jones found his reworked version to be unconvincing and contrived. He settled on a rendering containing only one minor alteration, the placement of the final reel that introduces the set-up of the sting operation at the beginning. He inscribed it "*Tearoom*"—gay slang denoting a restroom used for anonymous public sex.

This chapter works to establish important parallels between conceptual artists and filmmakers and shared moves towards deskilling and rerouting the site of authorial intervention in the work of art. *Tearoom* and *Perfect Film* uniquely present a fusion of both the ontological investigation into the peripheries of what might constitute cinematic art, while engaging with the repressed and repressive political functionality of film's documentary characteristics.

While the readymade is often described as completely abstracting the subjective agency of the artist, I will instead argue that these films represent an artist exercising subjectivity in ways often closed off to the auteurist model of cinema making. Both films reroute the site of artistic labour in found footage from montage into new, largely

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invisible conceptual spaces of authorial transformation. This research seeks to concretize the relationship between these two films and Duchamp's readymades while attending to disparities arising from the dramatic medial shift from object to moving image. Finally, this chapter seeks to ground readymade cinema into documentary traditions and ethical imperatives towards the unabridged and complete transmission of documentary material without the intervention of an editor.

Chapter Three – "Inventories of Limbo": Institutional Critique and the Cinematic Apparatus

Both Chapters three and four springboard from a shift in scholarly emphasis on the classic Bazinian ontological question of "what is cinema" and move towards lines of research opened up in the last two decades characterized by questions of "where is cinema?"[23] Emerging from the political upheavals of the late 1960s, institutional critique was a staple of the New Left's attempts to reconcile the purported public service function of cultural and political institutions and their status as regulatory, homogenizing bureaucratic structures. Art historians Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson describe the rise of the art institution in the terms of Enlightenment philosophy's promise "of a public exchange, of a public sphere, of a public subject."[24] Art would become a means of fostering, enriching, and articulating social collectivity and connectivity among a newly constructed bourgeois subject, who viewed arts education as a marker of bourgeois identity and social identification. This framing of art in the museum indeed made implicit

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[23] This characterization appears diversely in Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Post-War Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 12, Chris Dercon, "Gleaning the Future—From the Gallery Floor," Vertigo 2, no. 2 (2002): 3–5, Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013): 30, and Francesco Casetti, "The Filmic Experience," Available at https://francescocasetti.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/filmicexperience1.pdf (Accessed 2-9-2014).
[24] Alberro, Alexander. "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique" in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009: 3).

guarantees of a public's collective ownership and right to access art as a cultural, national, and historical heritage. Institutional critique set out to test this implicit promise and reconcile the mission of the art institution with "its actual practice of operation."[25] The 20th Century museum and gallery, far from being accepted as a neutral space, became a cipher for power structures, both political and economic, as well as a hotbed of divisive public sentiment fostered by activists of all political persuasions.

At first glance, the social imaginary of the cinema is couched in very different terms *vis-à-vis* the art museum's implicit promise of being a publically accessible cultural repository. The cinema is most often configured as a private enterprise with a transparent profit motive, though a number of institutions such as the MoMA in New York and the Cinémathèque Française in Paris, introduced paradigms of institutional preservation and exhibition. Following the Langlois Affair, an incident which had significant ramifications for the cinema-public's sense of collective control over the direction of film exhibition in France, the role of cinema as a catalytic agent of political and social reformation was cemented.[26]

It would follow then that film theory and practice would undergo a simultaneous exploration of the discursive and ideological features embedded in the apparatus of cinema—both in the aggregation of multiple technologies to produce the image, and as a spectatorial situation determined by an institutional setting. While the term "expanded cinema" is often used to characterize cinematic artworks that rethink cinematic architectures and exhibition vernaculars, I will take up Eric de Bruyn's important

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[25] Blake Stimson "What Was Institutional Critique?" in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009: 30).
[26] The Langlois affair concerned the temporary ouster of Henri Langlois as the head of the Cinémathèque Française by then French cultural minister André Malraux, which resulted in student protests. The incident is sometimes considered a dress rehearsal for the events of May 1968.

argument that the philosophical outlook of institutional critique more accurately frames the thinking of those artists and organizations I will discuss.

These interventions into cinema spaces represent highly idiosyncratic breaks from those associated with both the formalist avant-garde and the initial formulation of expanded cinema, which was born of the novelty of a profusion of images, the utopian promise of an audience "liberated" by physical and visual mobility, and a McLuhanist discourse arguing for media's capacity to perform a leveling of national difference in the framework of the "global village." Conversely, post-minimal artists sought to highlight and demystify the site of the cinema, scrutinizing the architectural and perceptual coordinates of the cinema as codifications of state and institutional power, which could be redressed through new spatio-temporal possibilities. It is important here to recognize that recent scholarship has sought to recover the notion of expanded cinema from its early articulation by Youngblood.

As A.L. Rees argues in his co-edited 2011 anthology *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*, the category is "an elastic name" which "embraces the most contradictory dimensions of film and video art, from the vividly spectacular, to the starkly materialist."[27] Rees' introduction to the anthology (which borrows from Annabel Nicolson) is a case study in mapping the minor differences between broad categories such as "artist filmmakers," and "artists who make films," and more succinct categories such as "structural film," and conceptual artists using the film medium. The anthology itself encompasses a cornucopia of artisanal film & videomaking practices, with significant representations of film performance, a profusion of screens, and interventions

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[27] A.L. Rees, "Expanded Cinema and Narrative: A Troubled History" in *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film*. A.L. Rees, Duncan White, Steven Ball and David Curtis Eds., (London: Tate Publishing, 2011): 12.

into the apparatus. Conversely, Andrew V. Uroskie recovers the concept of expanded

cinema in a more dynamic way, as a category which precedes the medium-specific

rhetoric attached to structural film and video. For Uroskie, "expanded cinema" becomes a

way of categorizing what was "out of place," *literally*, as films violating the

institutionally codified rules of film production, exhibition, and spectatorship. [28] The term

is useful in this context as a way of conveying certain conceptual drives of filmmakers to

attack institutional convention, as opposed to a movement with a coherent ideology. In

relation to my own research, *expanded cinema* does not offer the same usefulness, failing

to articulate the architectural and political motives of Smithson and Rhodes in their

respective projects.

Through an analysis of architectural models devised by Robert Smithson I examine

how site-specificity and radically divergent architectural models for exhibition

reconfigured the phenomenological experience of cinema for spectators. Smithson's

Underground Cinema models the cinema as a site specific destination, both transforming

the site/architecture as a mere conduit for moving images, and parodying "underground"

cinema's implicit claims to be a subterranean and subversive counter-cinema movement.

Further to this, Smithson's *Underground Cinema* enacts a poignant address of the cinema

space itself, screening only a single film in his cave-cinema monument: a documentary

record of the building of the cinema itself.

Chapter Four: "She Objected": Lis Rhodes and the Film as Film Exhibition

This chapter continues to investigate connections between institutional critique and

experimental film, focusing on the economic substructures and organizational policies

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[28] Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014): 237.

scrutinized by artists at the time. This chapter begins with a reconsideration of the 1969 American conceptual art show *Information* at MoMA, where Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow, and Ken Jacobs (who were all included in a "visual jukebox" of 16mm films looped during the exhibition) voiced outrage during the *Art Workers' Coalition Open Hearing* against MoMA's undeveloped film department and their abusive policies for compensating filmmakers. This might be considered a seminal intervention into the institutional economy of experimental film.

The focus of this chapter however returns to aesthetic production as a form of institutional protest through an examination of British filmmaker Lis Rhodes and her work at the *Film as Film* exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery in 1979. This event initiated the formation of *Circles*, a feminist film distribution group in London which took on some of the most radical political works of the 1980s, most notably work by the Liverpool Black Women's Media Project. The catalytic event concerned research by Lis Rhodes, Felicity Sparrow, and Annabel Nicolson on the history of formalist film by women to be included in a section of the exhibition, titled "Woman and the Formal Film."

After continually being undermined by the Arts Council committee overseeing the show, and upon realizing that their inclusion was little more than lip-service, Rhodes and her collaborators elected to leave their assigned gallery space empty, save for a letter explaining the voided room. What marks Rhodes inclusion at the Hayward gallery was her paradoxical transformation of absence into presence. Manifesting institutional critique's dynamics of negation and affirmation, Rhodes and her collaborators would withhold their research while maintaining a presence in the show. This letter was expanded in Rhodes catalogue essay "Whose History?" which sharply critiques, through

pure coincidence, the assertions made in Malcolm Le Grice's essay "The History We Need," questioning film historical categories such as formalist film which frame the inclusion or exclusion of women from film history.

Further to this, Rhodes contributed an early critique of the museum and gallery impulse to provide inclusivity for women artists in the cases of all women shows—an act in which the demarcated space of "feminist art" often becomes a kind of quarantine, secluded from the dominant conversation of contemporary art. The emptied space can be understood here not just as a refusal to participate in this ghettoization, but also as a symbolic liquidation or releasing of its constituents. To participate in the exhibition was in Rhodes' opinion, a reproduction of a fiction, an interesting dilemma – which asks at what stage does inclusion become something like containment? When does presence become a form of domestication? Examining the voided space of Rhodes' project, I look at critical precursors by Yves Klein, Daniel Buren, and Robert Barry, to argue that Rhodes enriches institutional critique by performing a mode of documentary and at the same time complex phenomenological exhibition practices.

Chapter Five: On *The Clock* and Christian Marclay's Instrumental Logic of Appropriation

This chapter offers a contemporary case study of one legacy of conceptual artmaking and thinking surrounding archival collection and seriality, specifically deployed in a typological and iconographic context. In 2010, renowned sound and video artist Christian Marclay unveiled *The Clock*, a monumental 24-hour video work assembling thousands of film clips thematizing time-keepers from across film history into a fully functional cinematic clock. In a continuation of Marclay's interest in organizing

archives through categorical and iconographic principles, *The Clock* continues a tradition

of archival art practices, on a remarkable scale of labour and temporality. *The Clock* is

also emblematic of several decades of a tendency in moving-image appropriation art to

categorize and serialize tropes, iconography, and narrative motifs. Film and video artists

that engage in this grammar of collection, including Matthias Müller, Aleesa Cohene,

Harun Farocki, Dara Birnbaum, Marlon Riggs and Volker Schreiner, typify a pivot in the

labour processes and attitudes towards film history native to found footage filmmaking.

Distinguished by the collection of video material according to a highly specific rubric

designed by the artist, these works frequently perform an exegesis of the

conventionalizing aspects of narrative cinema at the site of gesture, image and ideology.

  In an effort to make visible this urge towards iconographic-seriality[29] (a

descriptor borrowed from Christa Blümlinger referring to a patterned repetition of tropes)

driven by the digital archive, this essay reads *The Clock* through the prism of three major

art historical projects: Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne-Atlas* (1924-9), which ambitiously

forages through art history to produce a schematization of human psychology at the site

of gesture, movement and symbol; Marcel Broodthaers' *The Department of Eagles*

(1968-71) which culls thousands of art and quotidian objects from across media into a

fictive museum site devoted to the cultural representation of the eagle; and Annette

Messager's *The Voluntary Tortures* (1973), which serializes images of violent cosmetic

procedures from across women's magazines. In the world of the moving image, this work

also recalls Harun Farocki, Friedrich Kittler and Wolfgang Ernst's *Archive of Visual*

Concepts (1995), that seeks to design new data values for the archiving of moving image

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[29] Christa Blümlinger, "On Matthias Müller's Logic of Appropriation," in *Th e Memo Book,* ed. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2005), 81.

materials to help users access "sequences of images according to motifs, *topoi* and narrative statements."[30] This chapter argues *The Clock* is symptomatic of both a technologically determined grammar of collection for the now immense digital archive, and an archeological inclination for artists to thematize film history. That stated, *The Clock* also instrumentalizes an archival discourse and presents challenges to the historical and political imperatives characteristic of such artworks in the past.

Understanding Post-Minimal and Conceptual Art

Like avant-garde art movements preceding it, post-minimal art worked to locate the boundaries of art practices and work at the margins of what constituted previously unchallenged orthodoxies in artmaking. The resulting projects however, constitute the most aggressive deployment and deconstruction of modernist self-reflexivity[31] in the 20th century, to the extent that it sought to identify and evacuate every pursuant doxa in the creation and reception of art. Thus the formulary principle that holds true across post-minimal art might be described as: the transformation of *boundaries* into *worksites*[32] and strategically challenging pictorialism, medium specificity, aesthetic expression, the art object and its relationship to capitalist circulation and authorship. This renders the period less a movement (with the attendant implications of concluding) than a pivot in the

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30 Wolfgang Ernst and Harun Farocki, "Towards an Archive of Visual Concepts," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 265.

31 This self-reflexivity transformed from a medium specific investigation to a self-critiquing model. Stephen Melville suggests that Benjamin Buchloh questions Kosuth's "pursuit of Modernist self-reflexivity" at the same time as he claims to assault Greenbergian formalism. See Frances Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art." *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, Practice*. Ed. Michael Corris. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 35)

32 Seth Kim-Cohen attempts to define Conceptual art as the condition of exodus of artistic imagination to the boundaries and, it is implied, turning those conditions taken for granted at the margins of existing art practice and sites of artistic intervention. See Seth Kim-Cohen, *In The Blink of an Ear: Towards a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), 245.

thinking and working of artists thenceforth.[33]

A number of specific framing mechanisms might be used to describe post-minimal art: as an intellectual program (practitioners shared interest in specific philosophical questions, thinkers and problems), as a historical culmination of aesthetic modernism (which occurred between 1963 and 1975), and as a series of practices (the qualities which constitute the invention, construction and execution of art-works).

As an intellectual program, post-minimal artmaking sought to: evacuate the primacy of the visual regime in aesthetic reception, complicate the objecthood of artworks, and explored new media outside of traditional morphologies of art (such as sculpture and painting). In her early appraisal of conceptual art, Ursula Meyer characterized the movement as intellectually synchronous with scientific inquiry insofar as "a new form of apperception" induced artists to "perceiv[e] phenomena that are abstract and/or invisible,"[34] moving away from the primacy of the visual[35] as the central

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[33] Robert Smithson and Victor Burgin both suggest that certain capacities to identify and locate boundaries became keenly visible during the time, once Minimalism had moved the art object *into* the space of the gallery and Pop Art had reconstituted a focus on mass media as a site of viable intervention. Smithson states: "...all legitimate art deals with limits. Fraudulent art feels it has no limits. See, the trick is to locate those elusive limits. You're always running against those limits, but somehow the limits never show themselves. So that's why I say that measure and dimension seem to break down at a certain point" (Robert Smithson interview in Recording Conceptual Art: 132). Burgin argues "Changes take place in art when its extant conceptual systems, the commonly assumed and thus largely unvoiced notions within whose context art is produced and discussed, become both 'visible' and unacceptable to some individuals. Although what was to be rejected in the post-Minimal period of the late 1960's was, to a great or lesser extent, held in common, what is to be done by way of revision is still in dispute." (Burgin, "Work and commentary." Situational Aesthetics: Selected Writings by Victor Burgin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009: 15).

[34] Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art*. (New York: Dutton, 1972): xvi

[35] To speak of what conceptual art *looks* like is to describe the features of Carbon Monoxide—colorless, tasteless, and odorless. Colorless, implying the interest in moving away from the visually spectacular and the role of fine art activities in proliferating the image, towards the idea; tasteless, in the sense that issues of personal taste and choice are rerouted by the use advanced determined processes and systems to elude choice; and odorless, in the sense that certain morphologies of art (like painting, which Duchamp famously referred to as an *olfactory* medium, due to the smell of the materials), are abandoned in a seemingly unlimited probing of alternative media. To describe the *look* of Conceptual art depends on a certain language of the invisible—of the anti-aesthetic, ascetic, stripped down, informational and literal (rather than symbolic). The

regime of perception in art and in proposing alternatives to traditional aesthetic forms of

judgment and critical appraisal. While no art maintains a total evacuation of attendant

visual data[36] this sentiment goes to the heart of sensual experience in art and its until then

etymologically static conceptualization as principally apprehended in visual form. Post-

minimalism might be understood as the radical re-imagining of art as existing outside of

the network of images constituting mass culture and its aesthetic precursors in Pop-Art.[37]

 All of these tenets would be deployed strategically to support the controversial

assessment that conceptual art was engaged in a "dematerialization" of the art object, in

part by denying its continuous, contained and orthodox visual features, or as Lippard and

John Chandler write in their 1968 essay, "The Dematerialization of Art": "Dematerialized

art is post-aesthetic only in its increasingly non-visual emphases."[38] Peter Osborne argues

that Conceptual art was not merely another attack on the genus of artmaking, but a refusal

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reasons for this are multifarious—among the most convincing historically situated explanations of the movement being, that visual art had to respond to the onslaught of a diverse proliferation of visual culture in advertising and entertainment (which borrowed indiscriminately from previous art movements) and thus began redefining the role of art in contemporary culture from a primary pictorial and image-based exploration of aesthetic beauty towards an exploration of art's utility and functionality. For lengthy discussions of the relationship between beauty or aesthetics and its relation to functionality, see Danto, Arthur C. *After the End of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997: 81-83 and Foster, Hal. *Design and Crime*. London: Verso, 2002.

[36] I make this statement because even radical or idiosyncratic works which might seek to do so only become charged with this lack in visual terms. Even developments in sound art, when exhibited reveal accompanying visual features.

[37] The rise in the skeptical reception of images in the post 1950s mass-cultural explosion of image production coincides with the emergence of a Gramscian notion of hegemony.

[38] Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art." Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology: 48. The most controversial characterization of Conceptual art emerged in its most immediate pronouncements in Lucy Lippard's 6 Years: or the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1973). Despite Lippard's remarkable absorption of the period, her introduction frames this chronology in the terms of "dematerialization," which, though supported by a myriad of artists, works and texts, extended the critical reassessment of art's objecthood too far, some say, by implying a lack of materiality to the work itself. While many of these arguments are semantic (focusing on the term itself, rather than the arguments she makes) they represent Conceptual artists' resistance to being theorized by a singular intellectual program.

of "the art object as the site of a look."[39] The term is of value in other unexpected ways. It implicitly connected the speed with which works could circulate internationally (often through unconventional methods, from the mail art of On Kawara to the magazine works of Dan Graham), which Seth Siegelaub points out occurs "by virtue of its portability,"[40] evinced in its primary existence as "idea" rather than image or object leading to the famous idea at the time, that "an entire exhibition could be carried around in a manila folder."[41] The backlash against the term, mounted by a variety of artists is best articulated by members of Art & Language, who wrote a letter to Lippard (and John Chandler) in response to their article included in her volume, convincingly cautioning against the use of the term for being overwrought and misleading.[42]

Conceptual artists like Joseph Kosuth critiqued Clement Greenberg's then dominant formalist poetics of medium specificity,[43] largely due to the equation of formalism to aesthetics (though Greenberg himself often made this assumption).[44] The formalist emphasis on medium specificity, as "the determining factor of [the] success or failure"[45] of art was abandoned in large part for a more open method of determining

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[39] Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy" *Rewriting Conceptual Art*. Michael Newman and Jon Bird eds. (London: Reaktion Books, 1999): 48.
[40] Seth Siegelaub interview with Ursula Meyer in Lippard, *6 years*, 132.
[41] Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: xl.
[42] Terry Atkinson writes: All the examples of art-works (ideas) you refer to in your article are, with few exceptions, art-objects. They may not be an art-object as we know it in its traditional matter-state, but they are nevertheless matter in one of its forms, either solid-state, gas-state, or liquid state. And it is on this question of matter-state that my caution with regard to the metaphorical usage of dematerialization is centred upon." Atkinson, Terry. "Concerning the Article "The Dematerialization of Art." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 53 also importantly quoted in Lippard, *6 Years*, 43
[43] The most acerbic encapsulation of this attitude might be found in John Latham's 1966 work in which he and his students chewed and regurgitated pages of the art critic's book Art and Culture into a dense liquid (a symbolic digestive refusal), bottled later and placed in a valise with a copy of the letter of dismissal from his teaching position (as the book belonged to the University library of the institution he worked in). See Osborne, Peter. *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements*. (London: Phaidon Press, 2005): 73
[44] Frances Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art," 28.
[45] Ibid: 31

medium based on how best to convey ideas. This eschewal of the notion of an artist

working within one medium is a primary contribution of post-minimal art, turning the

artist as an apprentice to a specific medium such as painting, into the artist as a

thinker/philosopher first, whose work may traverse any and all media.[46]   This shift is

visible in the transformation of Modernist self-criticality, rooted as it was in definitions of

medium[47] toward Conceptual self-reflexivity, described as "the loss of medium-

specificity, which would appear to eviscerate Greenbergian modernism and essentialist

theory."[48]

Mapping a genealogy of Conceptual art demands acknowledging multiple sources

of influence and a messy network of artists, movements, and tendencies before

congealing into a visibly distinct movement in 1967 (if we accept Lucy Lippard's

timeline). These networks of artists and practices appear, from latest to earliest, from

minimalism, fluxus, Dada, Russian Constructivism[49], Cubism, Raymond Roussel, and

includes the writer Stéphane Mallarmé. Despite the diversity of these genealogies pointed

to by artists and historians, the canonical narrative[50] positions Duchamp at the center of

influence, principally due to his innovations in the form of nominalism, the Saussurean

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[46] Peter Osborne argues that in Conceptual Art's "radical attempt to realign two hitherto
independent domains of the cultural field: artistic production and philosophical production,"
artists first had to evacuate "existing forms of art-critical discourse"; a transformation of the
genus of art itself. Osborne "Conceptual Art and/as philosophy," 50.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art," 35.
[49] Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt are described by Dan Graham as "guards in the great Russian
Experiment" show, suggesting that constructivism stood as a greater influence in their practice
than Duchamp. Buchloh also emphasizes the Camilla Gray book *The Great Russian Experiment:
Russian Art 1863-1922* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962) in "Conceptual Art 1967-69" as
being mentioned by a number of separate artists during the writing of the text.
[50] My description of this as "canonical" derives in part from the most circulated and best known
survey and articles on Conceptual Art available. Many others have challenged these assertions,
the most notable are mentioned below.

model of language in which "meaning is generated by structural relationships,"[51] and the treatment of the readymade in an institutional art context.[52]

Donna De Salvo draws the lineage of artists like LeWitt, Bochner, Lygia Clark, Helio Oiticica and others within the serial or systems tradition to Russian Constructivist art.[53] The attendant utopianism in such formulations could account for the various accusations of "positivism" associated with conceptual art—particularly as it pertained to designing systems and carrying out propositions through mathematical and scientific procedures of accretion, measurement, schematization, data visualization, or other calculations designed by the artist. In one sense the bifurcation might be simply stated as one between textual conceptualists like Kosuth, Art & Language and to a lesser extent Lawrence Weiner and those who deployed mathematical/serial techniques like LeWitt, Bochner, Hesse and Darboven. This bifurcation however doesn't take into account artists who skirted both tendencies, such as Hans Haacke, Les Levine, Martha Rosler, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler and many photo-conceptualists.

The artist/musician Henry Flynt, associated with Fluxus, wrote about, coined the term and even copyrighted "Concept art." Flynt's imagined artform was one in which "the material is 'concepts' as the material of ex. music is sound. Since 'concepts' are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is

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[51] Buchloh "Conceptual Art 1962-69," 115.

[52] Buren writes: "Duchamp realized that there was something false in art, but his limitation was that, rather than demystifying, he amplified it. By taking a manufactured object and placing it out of context, he quite simply symbolized art. His actions tended to "represent" and not "present" the object...as soon as he exhibited a bottle rack, a shovel, or a urinal, he was really stating that anything was art as soon as you pointed at it..."(Georges Boudaille: "Interview with Daniel Buren: Art is no Longer Justifiable or Setting the Record Straight." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1999): 66

[53] Donna De Salvo, "Where We Begin: Opening the System, c. 1970. *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970*. Ed. Donna De Salvo. (Tate Publishing: London, 2005): 15.

language,"[54] anticipating the works of Kosuth and Art & Language.

Foundational to the practice of conceptual art was a reconsideration of certain legacies of Russian constructivism in the early 20th century, specifically in the works of Theo Van Doesburg, Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian through the use of "objective systems such as mathematics and physics as ways of achieving compositional harmony and order in their work."[55] Ostensibly part of a utopian program to bring "reason…to a disordered and unjust world," this legacy would extend to the work of some of the earliest conceptual art, which would act as a bridge from Minimalism, where mathematical systems had invigorated the practices of Dan Flavin and Donald Judd.[56] Mark Godfrey and James Meyer[57] suggest the movement from objective systems toward serial systems occurs in part through Sol LeWitt's interpretation of the seminal proto-cinematic photography of Eadweard Muybridge, an intellectual artery for modernism and even avant-garde cinema.[58]

LeWitt writes, "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."[59] This preceding sentence from LeWitt's "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" officiates some of the major principles of how systems are incorporated into conceptual art, as pre-constructed programs determining the work's execution (while the system itself may be executed in a potentially infinite

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54 Henry Flynt, "Concept Art" *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, 820.
55 Donna De Salvo, "Where We Begin: Opening the System, c.1970." *Open Systems*: 15
56 Mark Godfrey, "From Box to Street and Back Again: An Inadequate Descriptive System for the Seventies." *Open Systems*. 25
57 James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties.* (London and New Haven, 2001): 200-8.
58 Bochner also cited Muybridge as a major influence on the notion of Seriality as "method": "The Serial Attitude" Alberro and Stimson. Conceptual Art: 23
59 LeWitt. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art": 12

number of ways).[60] Systems based works might use systems to generate projects, and/or use systems to foreground their operation. For example, Christine Kozlov's *Information: No Theory* installation utilizes a looped audio tape recording the gallery at two-minute intervals and persistently erasing its previous loop, exploring questions of probability, perceptibility (here expressed purely through sound) and erasure. Other works might instead highlight systems, such as Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube*, which highlights invisible physical systems of air, water, heat, and ice.[61]

Photography was deployed for unprecedented purposes at this time: as a readymade in the works of Ed Ruscha and Joseph Kosuth; as a means of documenting performance or social behavior in Richard Long, Adrian Piper, Vito Acconci and Eleanor Antin; and as an instrument of serial or archival indexation in Bernd and Hilla Becher and Douglas Huebler.[62] Still, the photographic image was meant by many artists to document an ephemeral and displaced artwork rather than become the art-object itself, an intention that was rapidly reified by the sale of the image. Martha Buskirk describes this dilemma: "What is the work, and what is the document?...the photograph may well play a double role, or it may slip between definitions."[63] One way that artists resisted this inevitability was to deploy "a deadpan, anonymous, amateurish approach to photographic form"[64] which collapsed and avoided the photograph as an authorial and controlled gaze engendered by the decisive click of the shutter. This usage of the photograph, a medium presenting certain indexical claims to reality would be deployed, again, for idiosyncratic

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[60] LeWitt. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 12
[61] For more on systems and visibility see Jack Burnham, "System Esthetics," *Artforum* (September, 1968) (http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/jevbratt/readings/burnham_se.html)
[62] While this configuration of photographers is my own, many examples were borrowed from Martha Buskirk's *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.
[63] Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* , 237.
[64] Buchloh, *Conceptual Art*, 122.

purposes rather than as merely scientific evidence.[65] Melanie Mariño suggests that it was the influence of Robert Frank, and the "privilege [he] accorded to seemingly casual execution, to the mistake and the error" which "allegorized a refusal of mastery that found its siblings in the Conceptualist de-skilling of the artist."[66]

The use of language in art, anticipated by Flynt's essay "Concept Art," is strongly linked in the movement to Robert Morris's reading of Duchamp's readymade as essentially linguistic and based on contextual features.[67] This departed from the dominant reading of Duchamp by Johns and marked a linguistic turn in the movement.[68] This reading did not so much concern the inaccurate characterization of Duchamp's work as merely naming an object as a work of art, but in using language itself in a mediumistic way, to reroute the perceptual understanding, functionality and epistemological categories of objects. This use of language however, stopped being, as Duchamp suggested, a way of adding "color" to an art-work (through inscription) but a medium unto itself, as evinced by the works of Lawrence Weiner, Lee Lozano, Christine Kozlov, Dan Graham, Cildo Meireles, and Joseph Kosuth.[69]

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[65] For more on this see Melanie Mariño. "Almost not photography." *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice*. Michael Corris Ed. In this essay, Mariño quotes Ruscha saying of his photographs in books: "...they are technical data like industrial photography. To me, they are nothing more than snapshots." (68)

[66] Ibid: 67

[67] Buchloh. ""Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions": 115

[68] Benjamin Buchloh characterizes Johns' reading of Duchamp as the first artistic interpretation or negotiation of his practices. This reading pertains to the "specific question of how traditional forms of mark-making can be displaced by an exclusively photographic or textual operation of recording and documentation" in "Round table: Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp," *October* 70 (Autumn, 1994), 126.

[69] Osborne writes about this shift: "Language was increasingly used as a theoretical model for the ontological status of artworks as special kinds of 'statement' or 'proposition.' The making of art in the form of written or printed texts might seem like a simple change of activity: from 'art' (and artefactuality) to 'literature', but this fails to grasp the peculiar function of texts in the institutional context of visual art. Texts acquire new, and inherently unstable, artistic and cultural functions by being placed in the spaces of art, and claimed as themselves artworks. It is these contextual factors...that distinguish the use of language in the conceptual art of the 1960s and

Like Serial/Systems works, which operated through the logic of mathematics, the use of language was deployed as a means of rerouting the focus from production to conception.[70] This has been called "the information paradigm," in which art begins to appropriate "information processing with its distinctions of quantifiable data, computational operations, program functions, and output devices independent of the means with which the data are input into a digital system."[71] This means, once again, that emphasis is placed on idea over its material execution and that representation could operate in a linguistic form rather than through imagistic representations. Drucker implies, thinking both of Kynaston McShine's suggestion that artists cannot compete with the visual spectacle of mass media[72] and of Pop Art's engagement and exhaustion of mass media elements, that this ascetic return to language and idea may have been a way to circumvent the overwhelming presence and total reification of the art image by the media landscape and contemporary consumer gaze.[73] Beyond just the art image however, many works dealt with the surfeit of information overload in terms beyond the image.[74]

The historicizing of Conceptual art has often resulted in the construction of a binary within the movement. This binary has significant import to the artists and filmmakers

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1970s from prior artistic occurrences, most notably in the work of Marcel Duchamp." (Osborne. *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements*: 27)

[70] See Johanna Drucker. "The Crux of Conceptualism: Conceptual Art, the Idea of Idea, and the Information Paradigm." *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice.* Michael Corris Ed: 251

[71] Ibid.

[72] See Kynaston McShine's "Introduction to *Information*." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 212- 214.

[73] Drucker writes: "By the mid-twentieth Century, the production of images and objects in mass-media culture fully and irrevocably outstripped the visibility of images and artifacts that had been the exclusive provenance of handcraft and fine art...The absorption of talent and resources into the commercial areas of advertising and entertainment in the latter half of the twentieth century combined with improved visual technology so that it became impossible for fine art to compete on the level of production values...Sheer quantity, if not quality, served to challenge fine art's once important status as the principal source for the visual imagination in Western culture...[fine art] ceased to dominate the broad landscape of visual culture in the public sphere." (Drucker. "The Crux of Conceptualism": 252.

[74] See Les Levine's "Systems Burnoff" pieces as discussed in Francis Halsall, "*Systems of Art: Art, History and Systems Theory*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 111.

selected in this dissertation. First, Barry, Huebler, Kosuth and Weiner worked within

conspicuously self-referential inter-art discursive activities that fought against the

incorporation of the transforming social contexts of American (and global) political

culture in the 1960s. Second, a later constellation of artists like Daniel Buren, Victor

Burgin, Martha Rosler, Lee Lozano, and Hans Haacke, began to offer objections to the

closed, tautological inter-art discourses of these artists and practices.[75] It is important to

note that the first recorded instances of the use of conceptualism for conspicuously

political and social[76] purposes was made visible once scholarship of global conceptualism

situated Latin American artists at the chronological inception of the movement emerging

independently in the early- mid 60s.[77] Feminist conceptual artists such as Martha Rosler,

Mary Kelly, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles sought to interject both feminist theoretical

and philosophical discourse into works (challenging binaries such as art/life and

public/private) as well as engaging with content ignored by male artists (such as

childbirth, women's labour, language and patriarchy, and the family unit).

    Later works sought to critique structural features of the art world, notably through

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[75] Newman suggests that artists like Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, and Bas Jan Ader, who focus largely on subjectivity saw an increase in interest due to their absconding with tautological and positivist notions of Conceptual Art. Newman, Michael. "Conceptual Art from the 1960s to the 1990s: An Unfinished Project?" in *Conceptual Art: Theories and Movements*: 288

[76] Deigning specific works of art "apolitical," especially when they so radically challenge ruling orthodoxies and an attendant conservative political approach, is dangerous. I have used the term "social" to refer more broadly to art works, attitudes and makers who have sought to interject ideas into or disrupt existing social networks outside of the art world.

[77] It is important to note here the work of artist Cildo Meireles, whose *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* devised a means of interjecting messages and disseminating them via existing capitalist commodity exchange networks. Using currency and commodities, Meireles stamped and silkscreened political messages on bills and Coca-cola bottles which he would then return to circulation (in much of Latin America, bottles require a deposit for purchase which are then returned for a refund). These strategies were in keeping with the Situationist art praxis of detournement.

institutional critique[78], attempts at labour organizing with the Art Workers Coalition[79], and attempts to interject works of art into unconventional streams of distribution such as magazines and other networks of communication like bus advertisements, billboards, advertisements in the backs of print material, public television, the harnessing of guerilla networks like stamps on currency and graffiti.[80] This fusion of radical political and social agency with post-minimal aesthetic intelligence defines the projects discussed in this dissertation.

The eschewal of medium and the engagement with the networks of mass communication (as opposed to its contents, in the case of Pop) was manifest in the magazine works of Dan Graham. "Magazines are boundaries (mediating) between the two areas…between gallery 'Art' and communications about 'Art,'"[81] which laid the

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[78] While Duchamp may have laid the groundwork for institutional critique in his exhibition of *Fountain* at the 1917 Society for Artists show, his investment in destabilizing (and making visible) the effects of contextuality in art were largely reified by the gallery, as Dan Graham convincingly argues (Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 420). Haacke, whose works had been confronted by institutional censorship was the most aggressive purveyor of institutional critique working to identify the sources of capital underwriting art institutions: "In order to gain some insight into the forces that elevate certain products to the level of "works of art" it is helpful…to look into the economic and political underpinnings of the institutions, individuals and groups who share in the control of cultural power." (Haacke, Hans. "All the 'Art' That's Fit to Show." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*. Stimson and Alberro Eds.: 302) Daniel Buren had earlier begun a journey towards many of the same conclusions, devised in part from his critique of Duchamp as never addressing (or even hiding) "the very institutional and discursive framing conditions that allowed the readymade to generate its shifts in the assignment of meaning and the experience of the object in the first place." In other words, Buren was interested in contexts, institutional and otherwise, that house and situate art-objects. His programmatic work, which relied almost exclusively on a striped, unstretched canvas or other parchment, was engaged in the "displacement of the traditional sites of artistic intervention" and exploring territories otherwise unused—such as billboards, gallery doors, bus stop benches, etc. (Buchloh. "Conceptual Art": 139)
[79] Smithson may have only been behaving as a contrarian provocateur when he declared allegiance to Richard Nixon, but he did take an unapologetic stance against the Art Workers coalition attacking their "brainless slogans" and linking them to productivism. Stimson, "Conceptual Work and Conceptual Waste." *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice*, 286.
[80] Like the Latin American interjection of art into existing capitalist distribution systems, Dan Graham's *Homes For America*, printed in *Arts Magazine* in 1966 constituted an artwork deploying a quasi-journalistic voice in the service of "a phenomenological model of perception" (Buchloh. "Conceptual Art 1962-69," 123.
[81] Benjamin Buchloh, "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 382.

foundation for certain erasure of coherent demarcations between the two. Deploying the

rhetoric of photojournalism, Graham sought to explore how a categorical shift might take

place through a juxtaposition of his work and the journalistic/critical entries in arts

magazines. Graham worked from the assumptions of minimalism and pop art (in regards

to expanding the frame *into* the gallery or by including content from media[82]) and entered

into a dialogue with the ancillary sites of the art world. Meanwhile, direct engagement

with institutions appeared in the work of Buren and Haacke, which occurred at the sites

of the museum and the capital supports for artworks.[83]

As someone who ran a gallery (which ultimately failed), Graham understood the

necessity of the media to legitimize artists, and sought to intercede in the channels which

orchestrate value and meaning in the art world.[84] While one might place Graham's

magazine pieces in a section on institutional critique, Graham was more precisely

invested in operating within the ephemeral timeliness of magazines and the respective

immediacy of distribution they offered.[85] Ed Ruscha's commercially produced books

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[82] Graham writes: "It was interesting then, that aesthetically (but not functionally) that is, in material, economic terms some of the Minimal Art seemed to refer to the gallery interior space as the ultimate frame or structural support/context and that some Pop Art referred to the surrounding media-world of cultural information as framework. But the frame (specific media-form or gallery/museum as economic entity concerned with value) was never made structurally apparent...Putting it in magazine pages meant that it also could "read" in juxtaposition to the usual second-hand art criticism, reviews, reproductions in the rest of the magazine and would form a critique of the functioning of the magazine (in relation to the gallery structure)." (Ibid, 382)
[83] Buchloh, "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham," 383.
[84] Graham writes: "Through the actual experience of running a gallery, I learned that if a work of art wasn't written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficulty attaining the status of "art." It seemed that in order to be defined as having value, that is as a "art," a work had only to be exhibited in a gallery and then to be written about and reproduced as a photograph in an art magazine. Then this record of the no longer extant installation, along with more accretions of information after the fact, became the basis for its frame, and to a large extent, its economic value." (Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'." Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology: 421)
[85] Graham describes his interest in magazines as such: "Magazines have issues which appear at regular time intervals; a magazine's contents continuously change to reflect present-time currency: magazines deal with current events. While gallery art is defined by its enclosure as

were more singularly preoccupied with confronting the status of the art object as only available to a privileged elite. Ruscha's *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Various Small Fires* (1965) were both photographic examinations of the readymade and examples of the book as a method for distribution.

Within a few decades after the culmination of post-minimal art movements, it became impossible to ignore a flood of theoretical and historical tracts declaring (with varying levels of glee, horror, or ambivalence) "the end of art." While conservative neo-Greenbergians described this as the result of deskilling and the loss of aesthetic sensibilities,[86] others declared the "end of art" to explain the regression to old tendencies and the persistent revival of existing schools of thought without a clearly ascendant philosophy of art since the 1970s. For example, Arthur C. Danto writes about the strange experience of watching the rise of neo-expressionism in 1981 as a moment which "was not supposed to happen next," or at least, not so soon after the demise of abstract expressionism in the early 1960s. Suddenly each new movement in contemporary art became a recapitulation of some antecedent practice. What Arthur Danto called the "Age of Manifestos," appeared to have ended.[87] In its wake were a myriad number of reinventions, which nearly always worked through the prism of conceptualism, rendering returns to artistic practices ignorant of the conceptual pivot appear to be over. Despite

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"timeless," magazines presuppose a notion of present-time (timeliness) which only has value as it is current, each successive issue defining "new" or "up-to-date" in terms of the representative moment. However, the notion of news is not merely dependent upon the internal institution, but equally upon the institutions which generate its news content and finance its existence through the purchasing of advertisements. For the art magazine, it is the art gallery whose definition of "Art" and whose advertisements uphold the existence of the art magazine." Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 422.

[86] See Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for one example of this sentiment.

[87] Danto writes "This is what I mean by the end of art. I mean the end of a certain narrative which has unfolded in art history over the centuries, and which has reached its end in a certain freedom from conflicts of the kind inescapable in the Age of Manifestos." (*After the End of Art*: 37).

this, what the term "conceptual" meant and discussions of the "failure" of conceptual art were hotly debated in the 1980s.

After Art & Language, Buchloh, Krauss (including their acolytes at *October*) and a transforming art market began to examine the outcome of post-minimal art in relation to contemporary artmaking. The idea of failure largely concerns the return to painting in the 1980s and a move away from central tenets of the movement.[88] Taking these facts into consideration, key conceptual art strategies such as the persistent investigation of new media, the transformation of boundaries into worksites, explorations of social spheres outside of the gallery and the critique of the art market persist in the works of contemporary artists.

The Role of Film in Conceptual Art and Thinking

Conceptual artists took to film as a useful and heretical instrument in further displacing the primacy of painting and sculpture, as an exploitable distribution network, and as a social phenomena or culture of spectacle worthy of critical exploration. One of the great contributions to the historicizing of conceptual art appears in the reconsideration of Latin American conceptualism spearheaded by Alexander Alberro and its relationship to harnessing the distribution networks provided through film and cinema culture more generally. In their 1966 manifesto, "A Media Art" by Argentinean artists Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, the propensity for the media to be exploited as a distribution network is proposed as a way of controlling the messages about artists and art events. Based on the belief that the "transmission of the work of art is more privileged than its production" the artists proposed constructing forgeries of art events to illustrate

the "ultimate characteristic of the media: the de-realization of objects." The interest here in the moving image, and media in a larger sense, is in the networks and access they offer—extending the reach of the artist by inserting messages into its extended tentacles.

Ursula Meyer suggested film, *as a medium*, held little interest for Conceptual artists, quoting Vito Acconci: "Most of us are not interested in film as film. I personally do not care for setting up scenes and editing." Instead, artists like Acconci embraced the notion of performance, and its capacity, through film, to make "artist and art-object merge." Performance, and specifically the artist's body, were central to early media art, which complicates the relationship between film as documentation of performance works and as an autonomous art object.

There are notable examples of conceptual artists reaching out to individuals more closely associated with the concurrent experimental film movement, such as LeWitt's commissioning of works from Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow (considered part of both movements) on the subject of Eadweard Muybridge. [89] Muybridge, as a photographer working towards a scientific study of human and animal movement and whose work was greatly admired by artist-photographers, could be considered a kind of spiritual ancestor to conceptual photography and of course, cinema itself.

For a number of conceptual artists, popular cinema culture was looked upon as a potential site of inspiration, perhaps seen most notably in the writings of Robert Smithson who preferred "low" genre cinema to art cinema because it was "too heavy on

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[89] This note from Lippard's Six Years book is not certain. While Snow's Leaping Woman and some of Frampton's photographs are clearly indebted to Muybridge, Snow has insisted that LeWitt never commissioned anything from him.

'values.'"[90] But just five years later Smithson railed against the inertness of the spectator in the movie-house. Though he gave credence to expanded cinema as a viable alternative, he would at the same time consider structural film the beginning of a true deconstruction of the rituals of viewing film. He also appeared to become bored by narrative film, describing it as "enough to put one into a permanent coma."[91]

Perhaps the most fruitful discussions of how experimental cinema and visual art intersected and contradicted one another takes place at the level of medium. Lucy Lippard writes "Visual art retains no 'purity of medium,' but an autonomy of viewpoint remains, and is best translated into film."[92] There is no doubt that while conceptual art was rigorously engaged in challenging a hierarchy of medium, experimental filmmakers were engaged in locating the limits and nature of the film medium. While there were overlapping artists and ideas, they were largely seen as two distinct worlds.

Structural Film

Few of the filmmakers discussed in this dissertation are characterized as "structural filmmakers." However, structural film remains the earliest and most significant importation of post-minimal aesthetic practice to cinema. Still, structural film reflected interests in both Greenbergian medium specificity and post-minimal practice, throwing a wrench in any scholarly appraisal that attempts to link cinema and visual art practices in a tidy narrative progression. Structural film is an unstable category of filmmaking coined by film scholar P. Adams Sitney in a controversial essay of the same name that sought to establish a continuity of ideas from disparate experimental filmmakers in the late 1960s

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[90] Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1996): 16.
[91] Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 138.
[92] Lucy Lippard, "Introduction to 557,087" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 179.

to mid 1970s. The category was widely critiqued, amended and transformed by

practitioners and critics until the late 1980s. In his 1969 essay, Sitney describes structural

film as foregrounding film's medium specific material substrates and technical features,

as well as the homogenizing social conditions of cinema, by seeking to map the

delimitations of cinematic duration with an emphasis on the structure or "shape" that

films might curtail or take. Situating structural films as a "cinema of the mind, rather than

the eye,"[93] emphasizing concerns with representation, anti-illusionism (or visual

skepticism[94]) and the break from Romantic traditions characterizing preceding

experimental film, his observations are thought to enumerate a pivot in avant-garde film

practice and identify key elements constitutive of the intellectual program of those

filmmakers who fell under its purview. In an apparently disjunctive coupling of discrete

art historical categories, Sitney would combine conceptual art's emphasis on "idea" and

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[93] Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-2000*, 348. Sitney specifically denoted aesthetic attributes to Structural films such as "… fixed camera position (fixed frame from the viewer's perspective), the flicker effect, loop printing, and rephotography off the screen" (Ibid. 343).

[94] Malcolm Turvey describes notable characterizations of this tendency from across disciplines: Rosalind Krauss calls it the "optical unconscious" in which there appears "a break in the field of vision" exemplified in Man Ray's readymades, by Martin Jay as anti-ocularcentrism ("a profound suspicion on vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era"), and Jonathan Crary, who describes "a shift from a valorization of sight's capacity to attain knowledge of reality to a more skeptical, antirealist conception of visual perception" at the end of the 19th century (Turvey, Malcolm. *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 99-100). Stuart Liebman posits a relationship between structural filmmaker Paul Sharits' "crisis of representation" and the ideas of philosopher Max Wertheimer, whose studies of apparent motion (i.e. the threshold by which motion is detected by human perception) sought to understand how the cinematic apparatus constructed the illusion of movement, which he taxonomized as partial (the threshold between movement and still imagery), phi (the perception of movement which prohibits the ability to make out discrete objects or forms) and beta motion (also known as optimal motion, which allows for distinctions between objects to be made) (Liebman, Stuart. "Apparent Motion and Film Structure: Paul Sharits' *Shutter Interface*." *Millennium Film Journal* (Spring 1978): 101-2. The assault on cinema as an illusionistic apparatus occurs, Liebman argues, once filmmakers begin to challenge beta motion in film—thus highlighting the illusionistic features of the apparatus. A number of films operate within this context: for example Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity* (1970) is said to blur the lines between phi and beta motion. Ultimately this is indicative of the need to explore film epistemologically and to challenge, as Peter Gidal puts it, the idea of "truth as cinematically hidden from perception" (Peter Gidal. *Materialist Film*. (New York: Routledge, 1989): 21.

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Greenbergian modernist notions of medium specificity.

The critical backlash[95] that followed focused variously on Sitney's critical agenda,

limited aesthetic context, incomplete genealogy and broad-strokes approach to conflating

disparate artists. Unlike those art-historical movements in the 20th century constituted by

claims of political, aesthetical and philosophical shifts from within an artistic community,

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[95] Numerous rebuttals and critiques of Sitney's essay appeared after publication. A list of some of the most significant follows. Frampton argued Sitney gave in to "that incorrigible tendency to label, to make movements" ("Hollis Frampton in San Francisco." *Cinemanews* 77-6 (1977), pp. 8-9.) regarding the essay as doomed from the start due to its taxonomic drive and Sitney's lack of an appropriate critical "tool kit" to understand the work (Federico Windhausen. "Words into Film: Toward a Genealogical Understanding of Hollis Frampton's Theory and Practice." *October* 109 (Summer, 2004): 76). George Maciunas suggests that Sitney's examples neglected artists, sources of origin and failed to provide adequate terminology; an allegation which has tried to account for Sitney's lack of context for contemporaneous art practices operating with similar aesthetic and philosophical positions as structural filmmakers, namely Fluxus artist Henry Flynt's notion of "concept art," minimalism and the conceptual art movement itself. Peter Kubelka also challenged Sitney's genealogy, placing himself at the inception of Structural film practices despite contentions from Tony Conrad and Paul Sharits that they had not seen *Arnulf Rainer* (which deploys flicker techniques) and *Schwechater* (which includes loop printing). Sitney argued Maciunas, a figurehead of the Fluxus art movement, and Kubelka "misread" his essay, writing "In these pages, I have tried to define and describe a prevalent tendency within the avant-garde cinema. In discussing its origins, I have moved *a posteriori* into the *immediate prehistory* of both the forms and sensibility under consideration" (*Film Culture Reader*. ed. P. Adams Sitney. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 329). Bruce Jenkins describes critical difficulty in assimilating Hollis Frampton's *Autumnal Equinox* with the philosophy of Structural film and concluding that not only does Sitney's formulation lack prescriptive coherence, but that the tendency was either inchoate and impossible to adequately surmise, or that its continued currency is only a testament to Sitney's being "first" to even articulate it. Jenkins' essay seeks to explore the problem of criticism rising to theory and then being reinflected as "history" (Jenkins, Bruce. "A Case Against *Structural Film*." *Journal of the University Film Association* Vol. 33 No. 2 (Spring 1981), 9-10). David James offers a more complete and inclusive retrospective categorization, which includes works otherwise ignored by Sitney. James characterizes a practice "determining reflexive concern with its own nature and its own signifying capabilities that also entails an implicit critique of illusionist narrative" (James, David. *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1988), 241), largely arguing the movement reflects a Modernist search for "purity" through medium specificity. Stuart Liebman laments that attempts to supplant Sitney's terminology with another, have failed to be effective (Liebman, 108, footnote 1). Sitney's sometimes prescriptive characterizations of dominant techniques visible in Structural Film were often the subject of critique. Some problems arose however, in cases of works, which either reflect these techniques but are not included (like Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer*) or with works included in the essay which do not. Regina Cornwell also dismantles Sitney's arguments as inconsistent and argues for a conflation of structural film with structuralism (the philosophical school) itself, and the ideas posited in Shartis' article "Words Per Page" *Film Culture*, No. 65-66 (1978), in which he "examines possible relationships between recent avant-garde film and information theory, communications theory, cybernetics and structuralism-or, as he put it, the then "current research methodologies" having to do with form, function and structure in general" (Regina Cornwall. "Structural Film: Ten Years Later." *The Drama Review*: TDR, Vol. 23, No. 3, Structuralist Performance Issue (Sep., 1979), 89.

structural film is a prescriptive category initially defined by a critic and only later used by

filmmakers, a fact which has perpetuated debate around the term. What follows are the

critical reappraisals of Sitney's characterization, attempts to situate structural film within

previous aesthetic movements (and the trajectory of "anti-illusionist" aesthetics in art),

and discussions of what I contend are the central concerns of structural film, namely:

medium specificity (and conversely, attempts to dismantle the accepted coordinates of the

cinematic apparatus); duration; film language; process; and structure (which encompasses

Sitney's original meaning of the term as well as its conflation with Structuralism,

principally by the British Structural-Materialist filmmakers).

The appearance of structural film denoted a clear break from the lyrical and graphic

film traditions preceding it, resituating avant-garde film and ending its exploration of

Romanticism.[96] Structural films deviate from the Romantic tradition's skepticism of

language, Freudian/Jungian concerns, and vernaculars of authorial entanglement, giving

way to new epistemological, linguistic and mathematical traditions in cinema that

rejected "the clichés of feeling and conventions of form associated with the psychology

model…".[97] Sitney, David James and Peter Wollen all express structural film as

essentially modernist in character, illustrated, they argue, by the exploration of medium

specificity, articulated as the pursuit of purity through the elimination of narrative codes

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[96] Language becomes privileged over the image. This reconfigures Romantic skepticism (focused on language and its failures) toward Modernism's skepticism of vision (which used the axiomatics of film to counter photographic "illusionism") and the impression of a photograph's reality. Brakhage's shared sensibility with this Romantic skepticism of language is visible when he writes "I am thru writing, thru writing. It is only as of use as useless" In Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-2000.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002),166. Still, it must be noted that Brakhage is implying language is impossible to fully escape, as he alludes to in his use of "thru" instead of "through." Windhausen points out that Frampton's public scrutiny of Sitney derived in part from a critique of the "Romantic tool kit" Sitney used, which "leaves him ill-equipped to treat the body of films he labels 'Structural'" (Windhausen, 2004: 78).
[97] Windhausen, 2004: 92

and attempts to axiomatically represent individuated features of the apparatus.[98] Tess

Takahashi argues that a broadening historical context and exploration of the interchanges

between film and other arts has challenged these characterizations and resituated

structural film as emblematic of a juncture between modernism (characterized by

"artistry, individuality, unity and medium specificity") and postmodernism ("associated

with video art, formlessness, and intermediality").[99]

Structural film's anti-illusionist features are often explained via the modernist

tendency to challenge both narrative and photographic representation by deploying what

James calls "quasi-scientific demonstration of the axiomatic conditions of each medium,

achieved by the elimination of its inessential conventions (typically entailing the

expulsion from the art object of mimetic or discursive reference)…"[100] But two

contemporaneous deconstructive tendencies in the art world would threaten the primacy

of this modernist articulation—one concerning the exploration of the limits of medium or

potentials of creating new media, the other through the investigation of a priori or serial

decision-making. These imply that structural film is an interstitial movement, refining,

rather than repeating tropes of modernism.

Sitney situates Warhol as the central progenitor of Structural Film's intellectual

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[98] See Sitney 1969, James 1989 and Wollen 1976. It is important to note that internal critiques exist among all. James and Wollen both level critiques at Sitney for deploying romantic ideas and language.

[99] Takahashi, Tess. *Impure Film: Medium Specificity and the North American Avant-Garde (1965-2000)* (PhD diss., Brown University, 2007), 5-6.

[100] James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 240. For example David James' "Pure Film" describes the "rejection of illusionist narrative for filmic constructions and the attempts to clarify the purely cinematic (evidenced by temporal extension and intension; loop printing; explicit reference to the processes of filming and editing, and to the filmstrip and apparatus; the non-photographic production of imagery; the use of specifically filmic devices to produce a film "language"; and the fracturing of the film frame) variously present in the work of Duchamp, Eggeling, Richter, Léger, Gance, Epstein, Kirsanov, and Seeber, as well as Vertov, ally this other tradition with the modernist critique of representation inaugurated by Cezanne and elaborated as a formal problem by the cubists and as an ideological one by Duchamp and Dada" (239).

program in North America, citing a major break from the persistence of *graphic* and

lyrical filmmaking dominant in avant-garde cinema during the 1960s. As previously

eluded to, critical re-appraisals have pointed variously to proto-structural works in

European films (distinguished as "formalist" by Sitney) from Peter Kubelka, Fluxus

films[101] which sought filmic reductions, and trajectories leading back to Russian

Formalism and Marcel Duchamp. Fluxus artist George Maciunas quickly critiqued the

essentializing features and historical blind-spots of Sitney's article, particularly insofar as

it failed to adequately map a genealogy to contemporaneous art movements and to Fluxus.

This is significant, since many of Warhol's pioneering structural films are, at best, partial

restagings of Fluxus works.[102]

    Warhol's works *Kiss* (1963), *Sleep* (1963), *Eat* (1964), *Blowjob* (1964), *Empire*

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[101] David James describes a number of Fluxus examples: "George Brecht's *Entry-Exit*, in which a plain white wall with the word "ENTRANCE" on it gradually darkens to black then lightens to pure white revealing the word "EXIT"; George Maciunas's *10 Feet*, the projection of ten feet of clear leader; James Riddle's *Nine Minutes*, in which crudely stenciled numbers interrupt the black background every minute; and Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film*. As this last reveals the continuous formication of the apparently empty white screen, it draws attention to the fact of light projection and to film as the arbiter of duration—only to jeopardize these absolutes simultaneously by the constant phenomenological exchange it produces. All these films are in their different ways varieties of 'first films' in which this or that single element in the total register of the codes of filmic signification has been isolated, set into lonely self-display" (James, 242). Clearly these explorations of single elements mirror reductions occurring in painting and sculpture in works by Frank Stella, examining line, and in the works of Robert Morris and other early minimalist artists.

[102] Warhol owed an enormous debt to Fluxus artists Jackson Mac Low, Dick Higgins and Nam June Paik who recorded virtually identical films prior to Warhol. This issue is first raised in Maciunas' rebuttal to Sitney under "Precursors and Origins" stating: Andy Warhol: *Sleep*, 1963-4, which to begin with is a restaging of Jackson Mac Low's *Tree Movie*, 1961, just as his *Eat*, 1964 is a version of Dick Higgins' *Invocation*...[*of Canyons and Boulders for Stan Brakhage*, 1963], or his *Empire*, 1964 a version of Nam June Paik's *Empire State Building*" (Maciunas, 37). This is, of course, ironic in that Fluxus eschewed authorship as a defining feature of a work of art by setting up textual "recipes" that might be copied by others (Takahashi 25-6). The "plan" for Jackson Mac Low's *Tree Movie* which also served as a textual "how-to" for other filmmakers, could be considered an intellectual blue-print for structural film techniques: "Tree* Movie: Select a tree*. Set up and focus a movie camera so that the tree* fills most of the picture. Turn on the camera and leave it on without moving it for any number of hours. If the camera is about to run out of film, substitute a camera with fresh film. The two cameras may be alternated in this way any number of times. Sound recording equipment may be turned on simultaneously with movie cameras. Beginning at any point in the film, any length of it may be projected at a showing.*) For the word "tree", one may substitute "mountain" , "sea", "flower", "lake", etc." (http://www.artnotart.com/fluxus/jmaclow-treemovie.html accessed 11/27/11)

(1964) and *Couch* (1964) were announced by critic Stephen Koch as benefiting from the legacy of Duchamp, influencing Sitney's argument that the works essentially "exploded the myth of compression and the myth of the film-maker"[103] in their absorption of (what appeared to be) unedited, quotidian, largely contingent[104] and often boring footage, all working to highlight a "conscious ontology of the viewing experience"[105] hostile to the modernist mythologies of authorship.

Paul Arthur's list of Warhol's delimiting emphases on film footage—"very schematically, holistic shape, duration as the real-time equivalent of projection time, the foregrounding of the material substrate (namely the frame, the continuous nature of the strip, its grain, and the flatness of the support)"—all amount to a search for a projection situation in which film stops carrying photographic metaphors for the "real" but focus instead on film as a real object via the material and the social conditions within which it operates.[106] Warhol's investment in locating the social parameters guiding film spectatorship and extending them into feats of unassailable attention through the "profligacy of film footage" (349) are "executed" based on preconceived programs set forth prior to the filming process—a procedure emphasizing "idea" and the conception of an art-object over its final manifestation—further situating the work in the context of

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[103] Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 349
[104] My use of the word contingent is meant to highlight the documentariness of these images—which work to focus on certain mechanical images that aren't "directed" by Warhol, such as the response to sexual stimulation in *Blow Job*, or the New York skyline in *Empire*.
[105] Ibid. 351. Somewhere beyond this intentionality is a competing narrative. According to Sitney, Warhol initiated his film *Sleep* (1964) as a parodic assailment of the "trance film or mythic dream," implying that Warhol's initiation of Structural practices purposely inverted the ruling psycho-dramatic program of avant-garde film—to the point of mockery. For a lengthy exploration of Warhol's parodic approach to artmaking see Kelly M. Cresap, *Pop Trickster Fool: Warhol Performs Naivete*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
[106] Paul Arthur suggests that escaping film's metaphoric expression of "the real" was achieved through "facture," defined as "Basically any non-mechanical post-photographic element operating in film structure: random dust motes and scratches can be transposed by facture by loop printing" (Arthur 1979, 7).

Henry Flynt's notion of "concept art" as argued by Maciunas.[107]

Stephen Koch has convincingly argued that Warhol reimagined the camera through Duchampian strategies.[108] In his work the camera becomes a static, detached, "dead machine" able to produce an uninterrupted gaze, not unlike what video would later be used to achieve.[109] This challenged the prevailing lyrical film's figuration of the camera as an extension of the filmmaker's eye[110] and introduced the idea of a one-to-one ratio

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[107] Gidal cites the "meanings" in Warhol's films to be "determined by production not consumption" Peter Gidal, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job*. (London: Afterall Books, 2008), 71). Flynt's idea of "concept art," an antecedent to conceptual art, suggested that "structure" and ideas were a feature determining content. George Maciunas points out connections between structural film and Flynt in his rebuttal to Sitney.

[108] Stephen Koch's 1973 study of Warhol's films situates his early practice within a Duchampian methodology of transformation (or alienation) in which objects are placed in contexts that 'efface function': achieved by extending duration to points where "visuality itself loses its vivacity and is touched by an autistic, unresonating stillness" (Koch, Stephen. *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films*. (New York: Praeger, 1973), 31). Duchamp's construction of a rendez-vous with vision interrogate art-works at the site of "the look," seeking to engage constitutively with an object so that its intellectual allure might outweigh its visual appeal. Like Duchamp, Warhol's works were received both as elaborate pranks (dismissively in such circumstances) and as phenomenologically rich redefinitions of "cognitive relations between spectator and image." (Arthur, Paul. "Structural Film: Revisions, new versions, and the artifact." *Millennium Film Journal*. (Spring 1978), 6). Sitney locates the prehistory of structural film in Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926), a work which transforms film's perceptive visual strategies into reading and forces the viewer outside of a fixed spectatorial situation—created by having to rotate one's head in order to read the rotating text. Duchamp's presence in post-Warholian structural film is most strongly felt in the works of Hollis Frampton, who referred to him (along with Joyce and Cage) as "heresiarchs" or heretics in chief, introducing paradigm shifts in their respective aesthetic fields (Zryd, Michael. "History and Ambivalence in Hollis Frampton's Magellan." *October* 109 (Summer, 2004), 120). Zryd points out that Duchamp's masterwork *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* inspired a sculptural project by Frampton which itself became part of the groundwork for Frampton's *Magellan* (Ibid. 140).

[109] Both Koch and Michelson highlight the removal of Warhol's authorial intervention, referring to the works as a "spectacle of acceptance" (Koch, *Stargazer*, 32) or a "stare" (Michelson, "Towards Snow." *Structural Film Anthology*. (London: BFI, 1976), 42).

[110] Annette Michelson describes this shift in "Towards Snow" principally through the shifting character of how film authorship is represented, and how the camera acts (either as "inward eye" of the filmmaker, or epistemological (albeit, also phenomenological) instrument: "Snow's work came at a time in the history of the American avant-garde when the assertive editing, super-imposition, the insistence on the presence of the film-maker behind the moving, hand-held instrument, the resulting disjunctive, gestural facture had conduced to destroy that spatio-temporal continuity which had sustained narrative convention" (41). Michelson also draws contrast with Brakhage's "hypnagogic images" which seek to resist or evacuate cognition, in contrast to Snow's emphatic exploration of visual cognition as consciousness (Michelson, "Towards Snow." *Structural Film Anthology*. (London: BFI, 1976).

between recorded and projected footage.[111] What resulted was a reimagination of

cinematic duration[112] into what had never before been imagined as an acceptable length

for a film. This gesture mimics Duchamp's self-reflexive investment in "looking at

looking," echoed in Gidal's characterization of Structural-Materialist works as forcing

the spectator to "watch yourself watching."[113] Still, in keeping with minimalism,

filmmakers like Paul Sharits, Ken Jacobs and Michael Snow characterized their work as a

way of producing new ways of experiencing film, rather than in explicitly formalist

terms.[114]

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[111] Gidal says that for LeGrice, "durational equivalence often seemed to be a primary ethic of filmmaking…" (Gidal, *Materialist Film*, 2) despite LeGrice's own contention that other filmmakers like Kurt Kren and Peter Kubelka pre-date Warhol in pursuit of anti-illusionistic cinematic practice. Still, LeGrice's reception did not take into account some of the features of Warhol's production process. Despite the appearance of being continuously reloaded roles of film, *Sleep* and other Warhol films from his "silent" period are not shot in a one-to-one recording to viewing ratio. *Sleep* for instance was filmed over several weeks. LeGrice's valorization of such an ethical approach may have been the result of a misapprehension of the chronicity of Warhol's films and their appearance as continuous. Still, the shooting of these works, despite loop printing, freezing of single frames and rephotography in post-production, were achieved by setting up a Bolex camera and "simply turning on a key lamp, starting the camera, and letting the magazine run out" (Koch, *Stargazer*, 36). Numerous other discrepancies also arise when considering that Warhol's films were to be projected at the traditionally "silent film" speed of 16 frames-per-second which would serve to further trouble any assertion of a one-to-one filming/viewing ratio. Gidal raises another fascinating point about the one-to-one shooting ratio as a form of performing truth. He writes: "Durational equivalence, however, is itself a turning back in cinema's history. It can function perfectly well, as the historical reception of the Lumière films around 1910 demonstrates, as a foundation of the supreme illusion of the real, the actual "before one's eyes," so that according to Stephen Heath, "much more is at stake in Structural/Materialist film in the films themselves" (Gidal, *Materialist Film*, 2). LeGrice critiqued Michael Snow's *Wavelength* along these grounds.

[112] Warhol's reconfiguration of cinematic time treated the screen as a kind of window and demystified spectatorial attention by encouraging audiences to leave and return at will in the case of films like *Empire*.

[113] See Gidal, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job*, 45-6. "Looking at looking," Duchamp's paradigmatic operating procedure, parallels the unbroken gaze central to Warhol's film practice in its evacuation of meaning through a kind of tautological repetition of visual information. Gidal calls this "anti-cathartic realism," a viewing situation in which "voyeuristic 'seeing' becomes its opposite: the invisible fourth wall (which should allow you to encroach on (and into) the scene – even to the point of identifying what is there and simultaneously identifying with it) is here the film screen, shutting you out. In so being shut out, your reflexivity as viewer functions apperceptively: you watch yourself watching…" (Gidal, *Andy Warhol: Blow Job*, 45-6).

[114] In Paul Sharits' "Notes on Films" he describes his work as exploring the "two dimensional strips; individual rectangular frames; the nature of sprockets and emulsion; projector operations; the three dimensional light beam; environmental illumination; the two dimensional reflective screen surface; the retinal screen; optic nerve and individual psycho-physical subjectivities of

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Contemporaneous art practices like Minimalism[115] and the reductive strategies present in Fluxus films became an aesthetic engine for North American structural film works in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many focus on the synechdoche, or some "a single element of film's ontology,"[116] "constructed to manifest each moment in an atomized model of the entire cinematic process."[117] This tendency is especially characteristic of early works by Michael Snow, Paul Sharits, Owen Land, Ernie Gehr and Tony Conrad, visualized through optical effects, the camera zoom, panning, 360-degree rotation, focus, framing, camera angle, film stock, reproduction, reprinting, film grain, sprocket holes, and the projector beam.[118] These works, Deke Dussinberre argues, betray a certain scientistic deconstructive tendency to explore film reflexively, axiomatically and tautologically.[119] Beyond reduction, developments in conceptual art such as "serial structuring," "the use of a priori systems," the reexamination of function, and the emphasis on intuition were inscribed into works by filmmakers who emerged from the art

consciousness" (Sharits, Paul. "Notes on Films" *Film Culture* #47 (Summer, 1969), 13); contrasting his materialist and neuro-visual interests with the abstracted language of phenomenology. The zoom in Snow's *Wavelengths* is described by Elizabethe Legge as working to create an "allegory of apperception, the process by which the mind brings experiences and memories to bear on our senses, unifying the flow of sensation, or of film itself as a succession of stills in which the perceptible adjustments of the lens stand for the imperceptible modification of successive film frames). Both Legge and famously Annette Michelson intuited Snow's interest not just in the zoom as a feature of the apparatus but in its capacity to induce an experience of space (or even an allegory of consciousness) on a phenomenological and embodied level.

[115] James characterizes the specific analogy to minimalism as: "minimal art's insistence on the work's own materiality and its search for a clarified rational shape for the whole work and for its relation to its parts, even as those priorities modulate into various conceptual activities that open up the patterns of disjunctions and identities between the work and the series of procedures that bring it into being and those that control its apprehension" (James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 240).

[116] Takahashi, *Impure Film*, 9.

[117] James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 243.

[118] All of these elements are situated in films and described by David James (242-3) in works by Tony Conrad, Michael Snow, Owen Land (George Landow), Barry Gerson, Larry Gottheim, J.J. Murphy, Ernie Gehr, Paul Sharits and Anthony McCall among others. Takahashi refers to other examples, like Snow, Frampton and Jacobs, who explore how narrative might be considered "in conjunction with [film's] materiality" (Takahashi, *Impure Film*, 10) beyond purely axiomatic and reductive works.

[119] Deke Dussinberre, *Structural Film Anthology*. (London: BFI, 1976), 111.

world.[120]

But attempts to characterize structural film as invested in achieving a "purity" of the film medium failed to assail the multi-media practices of Structural filmmakers[121], the concern with intermedial junctures in the arts[122] and what Paul Arthur calls the "promiscuous nature" of structural film, evidenced heavily in the ancillary works of "paracinematic" art.

Jonathan Walley reintroduced the term "paracinema," first described by Ken Jacobs: "Paracinema identifies an array of practices that reject the medium-specific essentialism most often identified with Structural film and Greenbergian Modernism. Paracinema refers to phenomena that are considered "cinematic" but that are not embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined. That is, the works I am addressing recognize essentially cinematic properties outside the standard film apparatus, and therefore reject the medium-specific premise that the art form of cinema is defined by the specific medium of film."[123] While structural film and paracinema have considerable divergences, I am interested in recuperating these two "modes" into a project which share

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[120] Paul Sharits argues for all of these practices as a productive means for "art research" and sought to defend conceptual practices from allegations that they were "sterile," "mechanical" and "nonemotional." Sharits writes: "a priori decisions regarding ordering or nonordering have heuristic value in that surprising forms may emerge from their use which could never be preconceived or developed intuitively. Along with these phenomenological means, new ontological approaches have been highly developed" (Sharits "Words Per Page").

[121] Takahashi points out "Some of the best-known structural filmmakers like Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow, and Joyce Wieland, worked in and across a variety of media including photography, holography, collage, sculpture, video xerography, quilting and early computer programming at various points throughout the 1960s and 1970s" (Takahashi, 28).

[122] One notable example of intermedia working here is Anthony McCall, whose works explore projection as a sculptural and special medium which "reminds many viewers today not...of structuralism (or materialism) in film, but of minimalism and post-minimalism in the visual arts..."(Christopher Eamon "Introduction" in *Anthony McCall: The Solid Light Films and Related Works*. Ed. Christopher Eamon. (San Francisco: Northwestern University Press, 2005):11, Tony Conrad's pickled films, *Yellow Movies* and performances sometimes replaced parts of the apparatus altogether, and could only be understood as conceptual cinema.

[123] Walley, *Paracinema: Challenging Medium-Specificity and Re-defining Cinema in Avant-garde Film* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005): 12.

ideological pursuits—namely the exploration of cinematic limits, definitions and the prospect of deconstructing the apparatuses involved in filmmaking into discrete units. Jonathan Walley's dissertation argues for a revaluation of the term "cinema" as a broad concept. While the term "art" exists outside of medium-specific terms, "film" would be considered a particular morphology of "cinema," just as, for example painting is a particular form of art. Part of this formulation hinges on his argument that the concept of cinema itself predates the technological invention of the film apparatus. Artists who address cinema broadly in non-medium specific terms move past those technologies of "film" and into the aporias of cinema. Paracinema helps to further distinguish those differences between "art" and its material supports.[124] By the early 1970s Paul Sharits, Anthony McCall and Tony Conrad were removing parts of the apparatus of cinema once considered constitutive of its very definition, in effort to relocate "the cinematic" in thenceforth-unknown contexts. Paul Sharits, once an architect of reductive (and highly medium specific) modes of structural filmmaking, began to see working within the parameters of the apparatus as "limiting."[125]

Dismantling features of the apparatus and reconsiderations of duration helped feed an interest in reconsidering the cinematic spaces and fixed screen frontality that had remained largely untested in avant-garde screenings. While Anthology Film Archives was realizing Peter Kubelka's "Invisible Cinema" (an attempt to "make the screen [the viewer's] whole world, by eliminating all aural and visual impressions extraneous to

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[124] Walley, *Paracinema*, 12 and 78.
[125] Sharits writes: "It may be that by 'limiting' oneself to a passionate definition of an elemental, primary cinema, one may find it necessary to construct systems involving no projector at all or more than one projector and more than one flat screen, and more than one volumetric space between them. A focused film frame is not a "limit" ("Words Per Page" *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1987), 263.

film"[126]), plans to deconscript the fixed frontality, individuated cinematic experience, and conventions of duration through installation were prominent by the early 1970s. Paul Sharits, Anthony McCall and Anthony Scott had become leading proponents of inserting film into galleries, where by 1972, video had some presence in gallery space, especially from artists associated with the London Filmmakers Coop.[127] Already the character of structural film as "ascetic, puritanical and denying" was being reasserted as "perceptual and sensuous."[128]

The simultaneity of conflicting aesthetic registers in structural filmmaking owes itself in part to a passage from works of highly reductivist medium specific explorations of film towards the adoption of moves to explode the prevailing Greenbergian paradigms of medium specificity, and to focus on processes, social conditions, ideas and language as a mediumistic feature of artmaking (characterized by conceptual art[129]), rather than the technical mastery of the medium. Despite having an idiosyncratic definition of the term, Frampton used the word "postmodernism" to describe "an internal critique of modernism"[130] which itself has implications for a broad spectrum of structural works

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[126] Anthology Committee. "Anthology Film Archives," *Filmmakers Newsletter*, (February 1971) from Sitney, Sky. "The Search for the Invisible Cinema." *Grey Room* 19 (Spring 2005), 103. Kubleka wrote "I gave this concept of cinema the name "Invisible Cinema" to underline the fact that an ideal cinema should not be at all felt, should not lead its own life; it should practically not be there" (Sitney, "Invisible Cinema," 106).

[127] For a lengthy discussion of moving image installation in London see Rees, A.L. "Projecting Back: UK Film and Video Installation in the 1970s." *Millenium Film Journal* 52 (Winter 2009): 56-21

[128] Cornwall, "Structural Film," 90.

[129] This assertion could both broadly reflect those artistic movements which fed the intellectual arsenal of conceptual art (including but not limited to Fluxus, happenings and minimalism) and also find great synchrony with conceptual art's investigation of language, text, the "anti-aesthetic," the conditions which frame an artwork's reception and broadly the impulses behind institutional critique. For a contemporaneous account of conceptual practices and their influence on structural film, see Paul Sharits, "Words Per Page."

[130] Zryd, *"History and Ambivalence in Hollis Frampton's Magellan."* 120,

seeking to reconfigure elements of modernist orthodoxy.[131] The refinement of ideas and

critique of modernism is coupled with a film-historical focus for filmmakers like

Frampton, who developed a metahistorical approach to his filmmaking practice,[132] and

Jacobs who appropriates and closely investigates early cinema and proto-cinematic

technologies to self-reflexively map film's historicity as art research for future cinema. In

the works of Snow for example, we see a co-presence of "epistemological inquiry and

cinematic experience"[133] evinced in the character of a work like *Wavelength* (1968), a

film articulating itself at different moments as both sculptural and pictorial, intermedial

and medium specific.

   The supposed evacuation of social content in structural films fed accusations of

political quietism[134] by critics who described the movement as inherently neo-formalist.

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[131] For example, situating Frampton within modernist traditions seemed natural given the figures he championed (Pound, Weston, and Brakhage) and the epic scope and self-contained system of his Magellan project, but these were ultimately "intellectual fathers" he would outgrow (Zryd, *History and Ambivalence*, 135). Frampton even exhibits some hostility to these figures, and the weight of their practice imposed on later generations of artists.

[132] Frampton explains the metahistorian of film as someone "occupied with inventing a tradition... a coherent wieldy set of discrete monuments, meant to inseminate resonant consistency into the growing body of his art. Such works may not exist, and then it is his duty to make them. Or they may exist already, somewhere outside the intentional precincts of the art (for instance, in the prehistory of cinematic art, before 1943). And then he must remake them" (Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses." *Circles of Confusion*: 113.

[133] Michelson, "Towards Snow," 38.

[134] Wollen famously sets the cinema of Jean Luc-Godard against that of the North American avant-garde. Wollen argues that this split is emblematic of an earlier split in the 1920s between the "cubist cinema" associated with Man Ray, Moholy-Nagy among others and the Soviet political cinema of Eisenstein, Vertov and Dovzhenko (Wollen, Peter. "The Two Avant-Gardes." In *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1982), 93-4). Wollen suggests that "the impact of avant-garde ideas from the world of visual arts has ended up pushing film-makers into a position of extreme "purism" or "essentialism." Ironically, anti-illusionist, anti-realist film has ended up sharing many preoccupations in common with its worst enemies," (97) referring specifically to the "coop" movement associated with Gidal and LeGrice. Still, Wollen has sympathies with projects of the visual arts, but laments what he perceives as Structural film's "displacement of concerns from the art world to the film world rather than an extension" (97). Wollen privileges instead the decidedly politically relevant works of Godard, Gorin, and Straub for investigating a "whole process of signification out of which a world-view or an ideology is constructed" (100) done by finding what he calls "alternative routes" between contentism and formalism. This formulation continues to insist on the hermeticism and social irrelevance of structural film.

But this accusation failed to account for how removing "illusionist" narrative was meant to undermine the hegemonic narrative "language" of film.[135] The influence of media gurus like Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, and Norbert Weiner, who considered "the subject's relation to the larger social and technological landscape through the idea of 'communication,'"[136] fueled a search for alternatives to dominant language in media itself. As David James points out, this problem was catapulted into public consciousness during the Vietnam War.[137] The role of media in covering the war was compounded, he argues, by decades of conjecture and skepticism over increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques, producing a hostile and cynical public increasingly wary of claims made by the media.

While the idea of structure and shape (never enumerated beyond these two vague terms by Sitney) is initially tied to the static, durational and holistic approach of Warhol, Sitney's invocation of structure in his definition of new practices became the subject of some etymological confusion. Sitney's intention, to point to a new primacy of shape over content,[138] highlighted the reconfiguration of cinematic language in editing and

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[135] The introduction of the terms of language into film is a byproduct of Structuralist film theorist Christian Metz' linguistic pursuits in film theory most notably in *Film Language* (1971) and *Language and Cinema* (1974). The idea of film language, grammar and narrative illusion as a site for intervention was a central feature in works of 1970s film theorists Laura Mulvey, Jean-François Lyotard, Peter Wollen, Noel Burch and Stephen Heath (who owes the linguistic conflation with film to Christian Metz). The avant-garde is importantly situated as a means of developing a new language "that could undermine the rigid syntax of the classical Hollywood narrative film" (Takahashi, *Impure Film*, 14).

[136] Takahashi, *Impure Film*, 11.

[137] James suggests that during the Vietnam war "interior psychic tensions were projected as public issues. Following two decades of debate about the advertising industry that accompanied the postwar growth of the consumer society, liberal-pluralist theories of the mass media rapidly lost ground in the face of anxiety so extreme that official statements about the war coming from Washington could be considered as much a symptom of the national illness as the war itself. The war was language" (276).

[138] Sitney described structural film as "a cinema of structure in which the shape of the whole film is predetermined and simplified, and it is that shape which is the primal impression of the film. The structural film insists on its shape, and what content it has is minimal and subsidiary to the outline" (Sitney, *Visionary Film,* 348). It is important to note that while this essay is updated in

experimentations with seriality and order (exemplified for instance in Frampton's

exploration of "mathematical, calendrical, and encyclopedic models"[139] of ordering), is

misread or intentionally reconfigured within the philosophical school of structuralism.[140]

But these "misreadings" had significant productive value.

By 1970, filmmaker Paul Sharits was already calling for new research

methodologies that included integrating Structuralist philosophy, though it was the

British Structural-Materialists that would most comprehensively attend to such an

amalgamation. The structural/materialist philosophy allied with the London Filmmakers

Coop (LFMC) and its most vocal theorist-historian Peter Gidal, promoted a branch of

structural works fully assimilating contemporary art practices—emphasizing process

(specifically a priori structures) collectivity (evinced by the socialist coop model), the

import of spectatorial relations to the film object, and his interest in "the inscription of

social and economic difference in the mode of production."[141] Gidal's writings on

structural filmmaking shift between his *Structural Film Anthology* and *Materialist Film*.

While the former emphasizes freeing film from codified narrative and photographic

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Visionary Film it is taken *nearly* verbatim from Sitney's original essay (see Sitney, "Structural Film," *Film Culture Reader,* 327).

[139] Zryd, *"*History and Ambivalence in Hollis Frampton's Magellan," 121.

[140] For a lengthy discussion of the various interpretations of the term, see Regina Cornwall. "Structural Film: Ten Years Later." *The Drama Review*: TDR, Vol. 23, No. 3, Structuralist Performance Issue (Sep., 1979),pp. 77-92. Cornwall writes: "Over the past decade within the film avant-garde in North America and for slightly less time in Europe, especially England, the term "structural film" has had its currency or rather currencies-suggesting everything from its simple etymology of building and the process of building to Saussure and Levi-Strauss and the layers of Lacanian analysis and terminology…" (Cornwall, "Structural Film," 84). Sharits writes: "I would like to suggest that current research methodologies such as general systems, information and communication theory, structuralism, cybernetics, and others which are more involved with "form/function" than with "content/substance" are not isolated nonhumanistic fads. Because they are increasingly significant in anthropology, linguistics, sociology, economics, natural sciences, community planning, communication and transportation systems, engineering, medicine, psychology, and so forth, they are defining our environment and, as such, they must have some significant implications for culturally relevant art (Sharits, "Words Per Page" *Film Culture* (no. 656-66, 1978, pp. 29-43).

[141] Arthur, "Structural Film Revisions Part 2," 132.

illusionism (itself a kind of culmination of existing structural film concerns), the later

constructs an encyclopedia of the rudiments of film, reinvigorating the field with

ideological concerns surrounding photographic representation with developments in

contemporary film theory and philosophy focused on the subject and the address of

identity in a patriarchal society. The UK based articulation of structural works attacked

the formalist origins of the movement by re-examining the social meanings of politics

and ideology, emphasizing duration and process, while reflecting concerns in the visual

arts and continental philosophy.[142] Despite continued development, as a movement it

essentially imploded under the weight of its continued recession of viable modes of

politically progressive representation, while going on to inspire certain strategies of

film/video artists who chose not to reside under its umbrella.

Nature, Consciousness, Automaticity and the Hand of the Artist

Throughout the history of moving image photography, artists and theorists have

sought to confer the technology with corporeality and consciousness: Siegfried Kracauer

called it an umbilical cord attaching a spectator to the "flow of life."[143] Hugo

Munsterberg described it as an objectification of mental functions.[144] Sergei Eisenstein

saw in it the ability to replicate the flow of thought itself through dialectical montage.[145]

In this sense, there is an underlying persistence of two basic ideas: first, the replication of

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[142] Rees, A.L. "Projecting Back: UK Film and Video Installation" *Millennium Film Journal*, no.52. (2009).
[143] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997), 71.
[144] Hugo Munsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 41.
[145] Sergei Eisenstein, "The Dramaturgy of Film Form," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace Publishing, 1949).

human consciousness[146] and second, the pursuit of such a replication, as Bazin puts it, "unburdened by the freedom of interpretation of the artist or the irreversibility of time."[147]

The automaticity of the film camera initiates the first bifurcation of thought around what constitutes "the cinematic." The question of the "raw material" of film is the first Dudley Andrew grapples with in his survey of *The Major Film Theories*, setting up primary questions "about the medium, such as those which seek its relation to reality, photography, and illusion, or those which follow out its use of time and space, or even those which aim at such processes as color, sound, and the make up of the movie theater. Anything which is seen to exist as a given state of affairs with which the cinematic process begins belongs to the category of raw material."[148] But in grappling with the automaticity of the cinematic apparatus and photography, formative film theories sought to justify filmic technologies as *art* through arguments about artistic intervention into raw cinematic materials. Andrew argues some early theorists are less concerned with "what is cinematic" than "what is cinema" as an art.[149] Richard Abel states that French film theory until the early 1920s was almost exclusively interested in "delineating the raw material of the film medium and the methods or techniques that most contributed to its

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[146] See my Structural Film comprehensive field essay and its discussion of Annette Michelson's essay "Towards Snow." In it she writes about the cinematic propensity towards creating "analogues of consciousness in its constitutive and reflexive modes," (Michelson, Towards Snow, 38).

[147] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkley, University of California Press, 2005), 21.

[148] Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 7.

[149] "It is precisely this process of the transformation of empirical reality into abstraction that in the eyes of traditional film aesthetics constitutes the art of the cinema. Munsterberg, Eisenstein, Arnheim and Malraux are all on record as having condemned cinema's crude appeal to actuality. All of them claimed that cinema became an art when man began intelligently to shape this mute material, to transform it. Eisenstein and Arnheim went furthest in this direction, the latter seeing in silent cinema a symbol system as conventional as, but more evocative than, verbal language." (Andrew, *Major Film Theories*: 143)

transformation into art."[150] The "raw materials" of film are understood by early theorists like Arnheim, Malevich, Munsterberg, Eisenstein, Delluc, Vuillermoz and Malraux, as incomplete and only the first part of a chain of transformative artistic production.[151] Perhaps in an effort to dispel existing beliefs about photography and dismiss those who disqualify its categorical inclusion with art,[152] the cinematic is first and foremost conceived of as the manipulation of raw film material.[153]

Thus, if the cinema is an artistic intervention into technologies capturing 'the flow of life, thought and other mental functions,' the cinematic could merely be the presence of a mediation (of varying technological origins) that highlights an auditory-visual experience of those previous functions. Other attempts to break-open the category (often through forms of essentialism) and what might constitute the cinematic are visible in the "transmedium essences" of "light, space and time" described in Jonathan Walley's readings of Moholy-Nagy. Walley defines "Transmedium" as "an essence that transcends individual media like painting and film. Positioning such an essence permits lateral movement across media, as when Moholy-Nagy incorporates photography and film into

[150] *French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939*, Ed. Richard Abel, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988: 206.

[151] Andrew 1976, 143 and in Abel 1988, 97.

[152] One famous example comes from James Joyce's 1904 Paris Notebooks. Joyce writes: "Question: Can a photograph be a work of art? Answer: A photograph is a disposition of sensible matter and may be so disposed for an aesthetic end, but it is not a human disposition of sensible matter. Therefore it is not a work of art" (James Joyce, Paris Notebooks 1904, in Roger Scruton, *Photography and Representation" Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature.* Ed. Scott Walden, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 160.

[153] A number of examples of this sentiment appear. For example *Cahiers* critics believe that desire the fact that cinema must pursue "reality", it is not something that can be chocked up to the visible. (Andrew 1976, 133) In their final state, raw materials referred to as "actualities" or as "natural views" by Georges Méliès, are regarded as primitive and artless (Georges Méliès, "Cinematographic Views," *French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1939,* Ed. Richard Abel, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988: 35.)

painting on the assumption that they share the same essential purpose."[154] Walley's work towards disentangling the cinematic from a technological determinism native to medium specificity, is supported by a number of avant-garde filmmakers' summations about cinematic pre-histories. Frampton for instance sought to use an essentialist conception of cinema to locate its origins in sound.[155] Furthermore, Walley sees in Bazin's "Myth of Total Cinema" an argument that "cinema was a fantasy fully developed in the cultural imagination before the invention of even the most rudimentary motion toys like the phenakistoscope. Cinema preexisted the invention and combination of the technological machines and chemical and optical processes that constituted the film medium, and a history of cinema that does not acknowledge this is faulty…"[156]

The Cinematic, Conceptualism, and Film Theory

My accounting for the term "the cinematic" considers formative and classical film theories attending to a category of the "cinematic" in non-technologically deterministic ways. While discussions of the cinematic are nearly always situated in the technological specificities of the era of cinematic development from which they derive, scholars have implied that cinematic experiences might have existed prior to or outside of the apparatus as it has come to be known: a cinematic that exists before the cinema is "invented."

In Andre Bazin's "The Myth of Total Cinema," the idea of the cinematic is said to

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[154] Jonathan Walley, "Paracinema: Challenging Medium Specificity and Re-defining Cinema in Avant-Garde Film." (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 46.
[155] At a lecture delivered a Millennium film workshop, Frampton observed, "We feel that the visual cinema came first and sound was added to it with *The Virginian* or *The Jazz Singer*. What I'm about to suggest is the aural cinema came first and then later pictures were added to it. By which I mean definitely to imply that there's a cinema of the ear. That cinema is a whole universe of sound ordered to aesthetic ends which subsumed music, among many other things. And music, of course, has a considerable history. If you are willing to entertain that conceit, then of course, cinema is not the youngest of arts, but the oldest" Hollis Frampton, "Hollis Frampton: Three Talks at Millennium," *Millennium Film Journal* 16/17/18 (Fall-Winter, 1986-7), 277.
[156] Walley, 2005, 38.

predate its technological realization: "Any account of the cinema that was drawn merely from the technical inventions that made it possible would be a poor one indeed."[157] Eisenstein endowed montage, which he considers the elemental feature of cinematography, with something that predates cinema itself, culturally linked to the Japanese ideogram and rooted in Japanese culture.[158] Arguments such as this, Jonathan Walley points out, reveal an impulse to disentangle cinematic technologies from the idea of the cinematic. Walley writes, "The idea of cinema, then, is not a function of the materials of film, but the other way around—the materials of film are a function of the idea of cinema."[159] To disentangle the cinematic from a medium like film or video opens up avenues for the investigation of the cinematic in non-cinematic media, but more importantly anticipates an engagement with the concepts, underwritten beliefs and unexplored peripheries of the artform as it could be practiced in relation to all the works that constitute the corpus of cinema. This dissertation concerns itself with many facets of this corpus: the assumptions that underwrite the concept of making cinema, its invisible peripheries and sites, and the historical archive of cinematic objects that populate our contemporary imagination.

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[157] André Bazin, "The Myth of Total Cinema," *What is Cinema?* (Berkley, University of California Press, 2005), 18.

[158] Eisenstein suggests montage "is not in the least a circumstance peculiar to the cinema, but is a phenomenon invariably met with in all cases where we have to deal with juxtaposition of two facts, of two phenomena, two objects." Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Sense: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1949): 28.

[159] Jonathan Walley, "Paracinema: Challenging Medium Specificity and Re-defining Cinema in Avant-Garde Film." (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 37.

Chapter Two: The Passage of the Readymade from Object to Moving Image

"I wish more stuff was available in its raw state, as primary source material for anyone to consider, and to leave for others in just that way, the evidence uncontaminated by compulsive proprietary misapplied artistry, "editing," the purposeful "pointing things out" that cuts a road straight and narrow through the cine-jungle; we barrel through thinking we're going somewhere and miss it all. Better to just be pointed to the territory, to put in time exploring, roughing it, on our own. For the straight scoop we need the whole scoop, or no less than the clues entire and without rearrangement."[160] – Ken Jacobs

"How little can I do to the material to make it into something that provokes people, gives occasion for thought or gives pleasure?"[161] – William E. Jones

A Machine to Make the Art Work

During a lecture at the Millenium Film Workshop in 1977, Stan Brakhage, doyen of

personal and lyrical American experimental film, made a number of characteristically

disparaging remarks about the film *La Région Centrale* by Michael Snow. A film

executed in Northern Quebec in late 1970, Snow commissioned a designer to build an

apparatus (named "De La") which would act as a "camera operating machine" able to

rotate a camera 360° at shifting speeds via a remote control. Lamenting the fact that the

film lacks any sense of authorial intervention once the machine is set into motion,

Brakhage describes it as "an excruciatingly lazy person's way to proceed in making..."[162]

His statement would facilitate a number of objections[163], one of which, from Ken Jacobs,

deserves lengthy quotation:

I think a justification that could be given for a machine work as "programmed"

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[160] Jacobs, Ken. "Perfect Film." <u>Films that Tell Time</u>. David Schwartz (ed). New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1989: 19.

[161] Schwärzler, Dietmar, "More Than One Way to Watch a Movie!" in Smell It! (Vienna: Kunsthalle Exnergasse, 2009) pp. 74-79. <http://www.williamejones.com/collections/about/11> Accessed 3/23/10.

[162] "Gift Has to be a Surprise: Stan Brakhage at Millennium, June 15th, 1975. Selected Film Talks - 1970's" *Millennium Film Journal* (Fall 2007): 67.

[163] Jonas Mekas argued that Brakhage was inadvertently implicating Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* in this statement, while Annette Michelson argues that his "intuitive editing" style precluded other modes of aesthetic production. Ibid.

more or less is to get away from one's own programming, one's own conventional way of seeing, for instance. I feel in this last film that you were very very alive and flexible to each unique moment that you met with the camera. […] One of the ways of beating this is to make something, you might say, blind—to make a machine go out and do it, and just bring back something that the machine, however mindlessly, will evolve by itself. And you discover that, you bring a scheme to what the machine might bring back. You know, use the camera in a bathysphere or periscope or in a rocket to the moon. Maybe it's not a work of art but it might be a revelation in seeing and hearing.[164]

While Brakhage finds some agreement with the above, he underlines his caveat that such mechanistic modes of production should not automatically be accepted as art.

This exchange is emblematic of the rupture of sensibilities in aesthetic practice during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. We find the excoriation of and resistance towards post-minimal aesthetic practices and at the same time a fulsome defense of the aesthetic potentials these might unlock. By this point in time, the art world had already thoroughly digested "modernism's nervous breakdown,"[165] in the form of consecutive and overlapping movements such as minimalism, conceptual art, land art, and happenings. But raging in the film world was a tension between what Paul Arthur called "subjectivist reflexivity" characterized by Brakhage's lyrical films, and anti-subjectivist reflexivity, characterized in "structural film's rationalist ethos."[166]

Many scholars took note of the connections between post-minimal practice and evolving film practices.[167] In the same conversation Annette Michelson situates structural film in the tradition of minimalism, and an eschewal of constant intervention from the hand of the artist. In a later appraisal, David Tomas links Snow's mechanically determined film to Sol LeWitt's automation of ideas defined prior to the execution of the

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[164] Ibid. 71.

[165] Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (London: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011).

[166] Paul Arthur "The Last of the Last Machine," in *A Line of Sight*: 74.

[167] See Paul Arthur "Structural Film: Revisions, New Versions, and the Artifact." *Millennium Film Journal* 1, no.2 (Spring 1978): 5–13, and Annette Michelson, "Towards Snow," in *Structural Film Anthology*. Ed. Peter Gidal and British Film Institute (London: British Film Institute, 1976).

artwork itself.[168] By circling back to the threshold of conceptual practices, the readymade,

this chapter challenges the scholarly narrative that structural film is the cinematic

counterpart to traditions of post-minimal aesthetic practice. In the milieu of cinema, the

readymade takes on such distinct qualities from its sculptural counterpart, that the

designation readymade is itself highly problematic.[169]

On the Relationship between Marcel Duchamp and Conceptualism

Benjamin Buchloh's claim that conceptual art confronted "the full range of the

implications of Duchamp's legacy for the first time"[170] seeks to attribute the major

developments in artmaking strategies in the 1960s and 70s to territories previously

explored in works by Duchamp. The list of such strategies is long: textuality ("The Green

Box" and the readymades); nomination or calling an object a work of art (also found in

the readymades); site-specificity and installation ("One Mile of String" and "Given: 1.

The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas"); institutional critique[171] (namely events

surrounding the introduction of "Fountain" into the Society for Independent Artists show

in 1917): all foresee major movements and approaches in conceptual art. In this chapter, I

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[168] See David Tomas, *Vertov, Snow, Farocki: Machine Vision and the Post-Human.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2013: 87-88.

[169] This chapter was presented in contexts where two scholars came to very different conclusions about my use of the term. In 2010, after a presentation of my research to the Duchamp scholar Thierry de Duve, I followed the above line of inquiry to discern his sense of the appropriateness of reviving the term "readymade" in such a context. De Duve was adamant that Duchamp's readymade was a forever evolving concept and an unstable category from its inception. For him, the intentions and operations of the filmmakers were clearly readymades. In 2011, at the annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, this research was met with objections from Tom Gunning, who was concerned with the premise that a film can ever be a readymade, based on certain fundamental ways that readymades eschew the medium. It would appear that both conclusions are completely valid, and depend wholly on what one identifies as the key features of the readymade itself.

[170] Buchloh, Benjamin. "Conceptual Art: 1962-1969": 107

[171] In *the Eagle from the Oligocene to Today,* Marcel Broodthaers argues that "the contextual definition and syntagmatic construction of the work of art has obviously been initiated by Duchamp's readymade model first of all. " Quoted in Buchloh Conceptual Art 1967-69.

will address how the three central tenets of Duchamp's artistic psyche, namely

nominalism, deskilling, and inscription, operate in the realm of cinema.

Robert Morris constructed a reading of Duchamp beyond nominalism, reaching

towards an understanding of the linguistic dimensions of the artist, through what Buchloh

suggests was a Saussurean model of language in which "meaning is generated by

structural relationships."[172] Three separate readings of Duchamp occurred around this

period, first in Johns and Rauschenberg,[173] followed by Judd and Morris[174] and finally

into a more ambiguous third period, which conversely included Kosuth/Art & Language

and an interjection of the socio-political contexts of the readymade.[175] Smithson

convincingly asserts that Duchamp was centrally concerned with the alchemical

properties of objects (through naming) and was engaged in a kind of mechanical art

making process that influenced the work of LeWitt (essentially through the notion of

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[172] Buchloh "Conceptual Art 1962-69": 115

[173] This could be characterized as a redeployment of readymade aesthetics in Johns' "Flag pieces" and Rauschenberg's use of the speech act in "This is a Portrait of Iris Clert if I say so"). (Buchloh: Conceptual Art: 126, "Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp" and Joselit: *Feedback*).

[174] This reading is understood through Donald Judd's approach to the readymade as sculptural (like a cohesive object, also called monochromy, visible in his monolithic sculptural works) and Robert Morris' entry point into Duchamp via the linguistic importance of the work and the use of language as a mediumistic feature beyond nominalism's "naming" of an object as art. Another interesting issue to ponder is Minimalism's use of industrial processes that were merely appropriated by Duchamp rather than carried out by him. Of some importance here is Morris' use of a proposition from Duchamp's *The Green Box* to create *The Mirrored Cube*, described by Buchloh as an "interface between sculptural object and architectural container where neither element can acquire a position of priority or dominance in the triad between spectator, sculptural object, and architectural space." (Conceptual Art: 134). This use of industrial processes by the artist (and not appropriated as Duchamp did) is also visible in Warhol's *Brillo Box* pieces which were *not* as sometimes described, merely appropriations of the detergent boxes, but built from wood and silkscreened with the corporate trademark rendering them a kind of built readymade: a very paradoxical situation.

[175] The third emerging period is possibly frustrated by Kosuth's reading of the readymade as "a proposition" rather than laden with anti-art connotations, but as a proposal for what "could be" considered art. The social-political element might be found in Buren (though he presents a critique of Duchamp as well) and in the Latin American artist Cildo Miereles, whose *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* deploy assisted readymades back into capitalist networks of circulation.

mechanicity[176]) and discloses some of Carl Andre's Marxist/materialist ideas in relation to Duchamp.[177] Joseph Kosuth's reading of the readymade was as a "threshold condition of conceptual art" symbolically performed by the artist."[178] Kosuth's claim was that "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually."[179]

The readymades of Marcel Duchamp, industrially produced utilitarian objects rendered art through the nomination of the artist, have long been understood as a paradigm shift in conventional understandings of medium specificity. When readymades are discussed in the context of medium, they are most often described as oppositional to the concept. As Rosalind Krauss has written, "[t]he readymade thumbs its nose at the medium and its guarantee of the 'purity' of the work that stays within the limits of the medium's logic."[180] However, the conceptual parameters of the readymade have extended beyond the object-based unassisted readymades Duchamp initially conceived of, revived in a number of surprising contexts, including film and video.

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[176] Smithson proposes that LeWitt reflects some of the mechanical elements of Duchamp's art making procedures, though he says the connection is not pure. He writes: "Conceptual art too is to a certain extent somewhat mechanistic though the whole conceptual situation seems rather lightweight compared to Duchamp. Sol LeWitt coined the term "conceptual" and Sol LeWitt says ideas are machines. So this mechanistic view permeates everything. And it seems that it is just reducing itself down to a kind of atrophied state. A lot of it just evolves into what Mel Bochner might call joke art; playing little jokes like the Dadaists." (Smithson, Robert. Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings. Jack Flam ed. London: University of California Press, 1996: 311).

[177] Smithson says in an interview: "...there is no viable dialectic in Duchamp because he is only trading on the alienated object and bestowing on this object a kind of mystification.... Duchamp offers a sanctification for alienated objects, so you get a generation of manufactured goods. It is a complete denial of the work process and it is very mechanical too." (Smithson, Robert. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. Jack Flam ed. London: University of California Press, 1996: 310). He explains that Andre's perspective is more Marxist and that it is primarily "involved in exchange and not use value" (Ibid: 312).

[178] Krauss refers to this as "I intend X as a work of art." (312)

[179] Kosuth, Joseph. "Art after Philosophy." *Art After Philosophy After Art*: 18.

[180] Krauss, Rosalind E. "The Guarantee of the Medium." *Writing in Context: French Literature, Theory and the Avant-Gardes*. Kaitaro & Kai Mikkonen (eds). Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2009: 139 <*www.helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/volume.../005_09_Krauss.pdf*> Accessed 6/7/10

In what follows, I will examine the idiosyncratic way the readymade operates in a de-objectified moving image state. My interest here is in qualifying the term readymade when used in conjunction with film and video as well as in articulating how these media accommodate (or transform) the strategies and objectives of Duchamp. More specifically, I will introduce a framework for how Duchamp's procedures of nomination, inscription, and function work in concert and become sites of transformation in two exemplary readymade films: Ken Jacobs' *Perfect Film* (1985) and William E. Jones' *Tearoom* (2008). The readymade strategies deployed in these two works present a dramatic shift in the techniques and sources that have come to define the corpus of found footage film. In the section "Against Montage", I detail the imperatives of presenting the totality of footage, unabridged and unmodified, and how this tendency represents an eschewal of montage as a process that obfuscates and is even arbitrary.[181] In the section "The Problem of Mimesis and Indifference", I introduce the major discrepancies between Duchamp's readymade objects and their filmic counterparts. By raising these issues it is not my intent to suggest that films cannot be readymades, but rather to account for how the strategy itself may privilege other media in some respects, while simultaneously introducing important new features to the concept of the readymade. In the de-objectification of the readymade through mediation, a constitutive feature of moving

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[181] My use of the term "arbitrary" should be clarified by Duchamp's assertions that pictorial art is guided by retinal principles of aesthetics asserted by the artist subjectively. Duchamp's interest in the "ideatic," which would later be replaced with the "conceptual" in art, asserts that ideas could replace the aesthetic choices made by the artist. By removing these aesthetic choices, the choices governing the execution of techniques which constitute art cease to be arbitrary. While the obvious counter-argument here is that the selection process itself is motivated by the artist, Duchamp's notions of removing taste from the selection of the readymade is the best solution (though itself problematic and contested by some critics). I discuss this further in the section "The Problem of Mimesis and Indifference."

images, I introduce discrepancies with Duchamp's earliest ideas on the unassisted

readymade[182] while introducing important new issues raised by the filmic readymade.
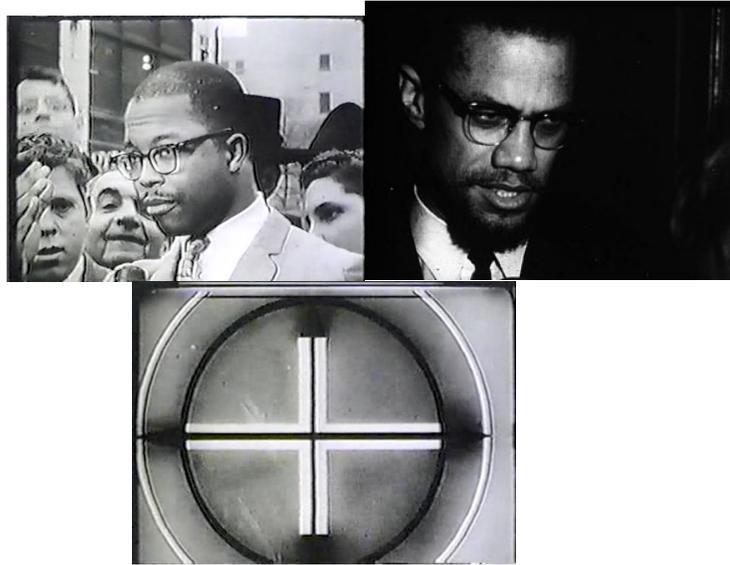
(Figure 1,2,3: Stills from *Perfect Film* (1985). From left to right: An eye-witness describes the assassination in front of a crowd of onlookers, Malcolm X describes recent threats to his life, a countdown target materializing immediately after footage of Malcolm X.)

Perfect Film*: A Framework for the Readymade as a Moving Image*

In 1985, Ken Jacobs purchased a 16mm film reel from a side-walk vendor on

Canal street. Upon returning home, Jacobs discovered 22 minutes of second hand film

footage spooled around it, finding the unused scraps of a 1965 newscast on the

assassination of Malcolm X. After boosting the volume in the second half of the footage,

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[182] Unassisted readymades, in contrast with other types of readymades, show almost no artistic intervention into their presentation. Famous examples include *Bottle Rack* (1915), *In advance of the Broken Arm* (also known as "snow-shovel" from 1915) and *Trébuchet* (or coat-rack from 1917, described at length in this essay). To be clear, these works were all transformed in their presentation or with an inscription written onto them by Duchamp. These works are the most frequently discussed readymades, though Duchamp did produce assisted readymades (such as the famous *Bicycle Wheel* from 1917 in which Duchamp installed the wheel onto a stool) and reciprocal readymades (the most famous being Duchamp's unexecuted idea of a Rembrandt painting turned into an ironing board).

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he released it the same year under the title *Perfect Film*, declaring it to be a work of art in its unmodified state. Though hardly the first film to be called a readymade, *Perfect Film* has become a paradigmatic example of Marcel Duchamp's destabilizing and revolutionary gesture transposed to the film medium.

If *Perfect Film* is paradigmatic, its affinities with the readymade are complex and sometimes contradictory. The application of the term has frequently been clumsy and indicative of a superficial understanding of Duchamp's procedure. The most pervasive error is that a readymade film is simply un-manipulated found footage. Bringing the multifarious features of Duchamp's readymade process into the moving image context elucidates the complex procedures and the intellectual labor involved in this vital and under-examined facet of appropriation in film. Readymades are not simply found materials that remain unaltered, but exhibitions of raw material guided by nearly invisible authorial imperatives which nonetheless transform the meaning of footage.

While it is important to recover the moving image readymade from reductive descriptions that fail to account for the imperatives guiding Duchamp, any attempt to create a definitive set of guidelines for what may properly be called a readymade are themselves antithetical to Duchamp's own interest in the process. Duchamp offers no strict or complete criterion for the readymade primarily because he was interested in challenging prevailing and fundamental orthodoxies in the artmaking process—notably executed by introducing art-objects with no precedent in their use of medium. It is only fitting, then, that after exploding these definitions of art, Duchamp would seek to explode definitions of the readymade. Over the course of his career, the original imperatives of the unassisted readymade were reworked and redefined into other types of readymades.

In one particularly perplexing move, Duchamp even sought to argue that all paintings were readymades, due to the fact that artists rely on industrially produced tubes of paint.[183]

At the hands of Duchamp and his successors, the parameters of the readymade went through incalculable transformations, as it was re-invented and perverted to points where it no longer resembled its inception. The abstract, conceptual, and metamorphic nature of the terminology at the hands of Duchamp, has allowed his successors, namely Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Nam June Paik, Allan Kaprow, Joseph Kosuth, and Sherrie Levine, among others, to re-invent the process. This renders critical attempts to formulate concrete parameters both tricky and even more frustratingly, inconsistent with the term itself. In such a situation, where the etymological stability of a term is questionable, my framework for how these readymade procedures take place in film should be considered as just one way of identifying Duchamp's strategies rather than as a concretized framework accounting for all understandings of the term.

Duchamp was interested in moving away from the privileging of visual forms of art making, working instead towards a conceptual form of art in which skill was subservient to the intellect. Once art becomes primarily an intellectual activity, it advances an alternative criterion to traditional modes of aesthetic judgment. His principal means of doing this was through readymades—industrial products nominated as art, destabilized through inscription, and transformed functionally. When combined, these features produce an epistemological shift in our capacity to differentiate between art and

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[183] Thierry de Duve devotes a lengthy discussion to these declarations in *Pictorial Nominalism* (168-170) and *Kant After Duchamp* (163). Duchamp is quoted here saying "Since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and ready-made products, we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are 'readymades aided' and also works of assemblage" (*Pictorial Nominalism,* 170).

everyday objects, initiating a major theme of twentieth century art—what Peter Bürger

describes as the attempt to "reintegrate art into the praxis of life."[184]

Nomination and Deskilling

Nomination refers to the process of electing an object or text as art, thereby

removing the hand of the artist from the labor of creation and challenging one of the

fundamental orthodoxies of artmaking—that art must be made from the hands of the

artist. Duchamp located the etymological origins of the term art to mean, "to make," a

definition which contributes, Thierry de Duve argues, to the assertion that art may refer to

"everything that is made with the hands."[185] However de Duve accounts for Duchamp's

move towards a nominalist strategy through the understanding that guiding this manual

labor are the choices made by the artist—whether it be what colors, media, or techniques

to deploy in the creation of a work. It follows that Duchamp's interest may have been in

returning to what underwrites all traditional conceptions of artmaking, those choices

made by the artist, and redeploying choice without intervention from the hand of the

artist. In this operation, the manual labour of creation is replaced with the intellectual

labour of nomination.

In one sense, nomination can be understood as the initiating moment in the

"creation" of a readymade—whereby choice transforms object into art. John Roberts

describes this feature of the readymade as a form of "copying without copying" in which

an object is not actually replicated but made to "exist as other to itself."[186] This shifting

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[184] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): 22

[185] Thierry de Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 168

[186] John Roberts*, Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*. (London: Verso, 2007): 54.

of categories occurs in *Perfect Film* through Jacobs' nomination of crude, industrially produced news footage, a directive that treats the remnants of an incomplete procedure as a fully realized product.

One indelible link between Duchamp and Jacobs is manifest in their mutual interest in moving away from the technical skill of the artist's hand towards the conceptual and intellectual designs of the artist. In a 1989 interview with Tom Gunning and David Schwartz, Jacobs remarked "One of the reasons…that I don't film as much as I used to, is that I began to recognize my filming…I felt like I needed a concept that would break me free of skill…what's called skill, which is just a habit, or a pattern…." [187] In *Perfect Film* these patterns, habits and skills are re-routed into a form of selection native to nomination and inscription.

Inscription

In that same interview, David Schwartz remarked to Jacobs that the title of his film confers an active role to the spectator and forces the question "what's perfect about this?" [188] The inscription of a readymade provides a linguistic frame from which an artist may present a transformative meaning to an audience. Duchamp called it "a way of adding to a painting a color which had not come out of the tube." [189] The process of naming is also the enunciative feature that publicly declares an object as art. Nomination

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[187] "An Interview with Ken Jacobs." David Schwartz, Tom Gunning and Flo Jacobs. Aug 10-11, 1989. *Films that Tell Time*. David Schwartz (ed). (New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1989): 40.
[188] Ibid. 35.
[189] Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996): 160.

is intellectual; its physical manifestation appears through inscription, a feature David Joselit argues, "replaces the logic of creation, with the logic of naming."[190]

For example, Duchamp had been tripping for weeks on a coat-rack left on the floor of his studio before he rendered it functionally redundant by nailing it to the ground and inscribing it a readymade under the title "Trébuchet" or Trap—a term phonetically identical to a chess strategy meaning "to stumble over" in which pawns are used to prevent the movement of an opponent's pieces.[191] The French word for coat-rack, *porte-manteau*, also refers to the contraction of multiple words to produce new meaning. Duchamp's nomination has multiple levels of meaning; the coat-rack is visually emblematic of something that can carry other objects the same way a word may carry another meaning when coupled with another word. By calling a porte-manteau a *Trébuchet* he has transformed a coat-rack into a kind of stumbling machine; in other words, by naming something, you can transform its function.

Fig. 4 - *Trébuchet,* Marcel Duchamp, 1917.

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[190] David Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp, 1910-1941.* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998): 86

[191] Dalia Judovitz. *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 95.

Jacobs' inscription works to linguistically break-down the audience's taste-distinctions between the raw footage of a newscast and an aesthetically rich and meaningful piece of filmmaking or "perfect film." Dalia Judovitz points out that Duchamp's inscriptions were rooted in the observation that words are "not merely…bearers but also…producers of meaning."[192] But this gesture is not a playful linguistic game—it strikes at the very root of Duchamp's critical gesture towards art as a primarily discursive activity.[193] In this sense, the linguistic facet of the readymade is based on the notion that all of the material entities occupying the world acquire meaning based on how they are designated in language. By claiming authorial ownership of an object (nomination) and renaming it (inscription), its meaning or function may be liberated from its existing paradigm of meaning.

The Transformation of Function

What would be received by most as the discarded footage of news interviews in *Perfect Film* becomes, through its inscription, both an expression of how historical events are eventually narrativized and in this raw, untouched state, a shockingly candid, organic, and revelatory series of interviews, pick-up shots, awkward moments, and accidents. While the spectator's appraisal may not agree with the authorial inscription "perfect film", the title places the viewer in a state of alert investigation searching for the film's meanings. The effect of creating a heightened experience of reception alters the function of the film from one that might be seen (if one could imagine a context where the film would be shown without Jacobs's authorial intervention) as unfinished discards of a newscast to one replete with meanings and messages, clues and evidence.

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[192] Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*, 92.
[193] Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp, 1910-1941*, 95.

Duchamp's inscriptions provoke a rapid and usually humorous reconceptualization of function, as is the case with the hypertheorized 1917 readymade *Fountain*. While Duchamp never offered a definitive meaning for the title and despite many exhaustive speculative readings, my own appraisal of the work highlights its play with the circulation of water in the human body. The act of turning the porcelain urinal onto its head also likens it structurally to a water fountain for consuming water. The "flipping" upside down is also a commentary on the transformative function Duchamp has conferred through the title. The circulation of water in the body might begin with the fountain and end (in a gendered case) in the urinal. Perhaps he noticed the similarities between the upside-down urinal and the water fountain and their inverse delivery and receivership of fluids. Speculation aside, the mere flipping of an object to invert its function indicates that Duchamp may have been interested in pointing to the multivocality of objects when a simple change in context occurs.

The radical re-assignment of function tends to provide the most fertile ground for the intellectual labor of the artist during the creation of a readymade object. David Joselit characterizes Duchamp's readymades as based on the "unlinking of signifier and signified"[194] usually in the service of transforming a "noun into a verb."[195] The transformative function of a readymade does not return the object back to its industrial realm, but rather provides an imagined intellectual space of functionality. *Trébuchet*, for example, is not put into the service of tripping its audience, though it is understood to have been conferred with this function.

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[194] Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp, 1910-1941*, 63.
[195] Ibid: 57

After its nomination and inscription, *Perfect Film* destabilizes the vantage point of the spectator primarily by changing how we understand the footage should be received. Once brought into the film medium, an added layer of spectatorial expectation colors the readymade, which I will discuss more in the section "Against Montage." My argument here simply suggests that spectators are usually given cues of the genre status of a film, video or television program, which colors their experience of the work. If a work's genre becomes destabilized through inscription, the function of the work may become destabilized in its reception.

Again, the transposition of the readymade from an industrially produced utilitarian object to film raises a significant question: How can one talk about the function of a piece of footage in the same way as the function of a urinal, snow shovel or coat-rack? Though the answer is not so simple, looking at the purpose conferred by the maker of the footage would be a good place to start. *Perfect Film* derives from a highly industrialized process of television news production, which intends to inform the public of daily events. But television news is an exceedingly ephemeral form of media, which is not usually re-broadcast, especially in the pre-Internet era. To discover the process of this industrial production, unassembled and unedited, and then to bestow a new inscription which confers major aesthetic value ("Perfect Film") introduces a new function to the footage.

Jacobs peels away the layers of authorial intervention, not only by refusing to edit the footage, but also in his nomination of raw material replete with the historically symptomatic meanings of the recorded footage. We become aware, as spectators, that we are seeing things that will be obfuscated in their movement towards a televised product

and that reflect the unanticipated documentary reality faced by the news-crew at the time of recording. This preservation allows the spectator to see the fragmentary, repetitive, and often incoherent logic of the raw footage. While the reel fulfills certain expectations of the newscast— eyewitness testimonial, a police report, shots of the Audubon Ballroom in Washington Heights, Manhattan where Malcolm X was speaking—the footage also includes elements which are not immediately comprehensible or which directly conflict with our comprehension of the historical moment.

In one of the first segments of *Perfect Film*, reporters interview an eyewitness to the assassination who happens to be a journalist. The account is orated in great detail and delivered by the witness with the seriousness and care of someone aware of the greater implications of the assassination. However, the gravity of the situation is lost to the surrounding crowd, who seem to be more interested in being filmed than in the dramatic testimony of the man present. A great huddle of onlookers (all of whom are white and mostly male) surround the black eyewitness. One man is seen jumping up sporadically over the heads of other onlookers so that he may be seen by the camera; another man standing next to the eye-witness simply stares into the camera blankly; an old man appears to be completely oblivious to the event and grins ear-to-ear with glee at the presence of the news team. These incongruous realities starkly contrast the sober testimony of the witness, so much so that it is difficult to imagine that some of this footage was deemed acceptable for broadcast at all.

In an example of how the accidents and incidental features of the footage contribute to its meaning, Jacobs has pointed out that immediately following the archival footage of Malcolm X describing recent threats to his life, for no apparent reason, a

countdown target materializes in the footage, almost prophesying his death. Jacobs'

inscription provides a decisiveness and motivation to these incidents—transforming the

"errors" and of production into another facet of its meaning. What were accidents (par for

the course in on-the-fly journalism), are transformed into intentional creative decisions

via nomination.

(Fig. 5, 6, 7: Stills from *Tearoom* (William E. Jones, 2008). From left to right: Outside the restroom under surveillance; the closet hiding the cameraman; a man engaged in oral sex.)

Tearoom

While researching legal cases prosecuting sodomy in the 1960s, William E. Jones

was given nearly one hour of restroom surveillance footage via a Mansfield, Ohio police

chief who had stored it in his garage for over 40 years. Originally recorded over three weeks in Mansfield in 1962, the footage came from a sting operation resulting in the conviction of 38 men for sodomy—a crime punished by a mandatory one-year prison sentence. This was at a time when homosexuality was still designated as a mental disorder by The American Psychiatric Association, and often resulted, after criminal internment, in the mandatory committal of the convicted to psychiatric facilities to undergo electro-shock therapy (who often became human lab-rats for dangerous experimental drugs).[196]

The operation took place when surveillance was done manually, recorded by a cameraman shooting on 16mm with no sound, behind a two-way mirror overlooking a public restroom. Due to the expense of film, the surveillance is an intermittent series of shots occurring, presumably, whenever the cameraman believed an individual might be engaging in sexual activity. Many shots appear to have no purpose and depict men simply using the restroom; others show strange but non-sexual behavior; while others linger at great length on men engaged in (sometimes mutual) masturbation, oral and anal sex. After subjecting the footage to montage, Jones found his reworked version to be unconvincing and contrived. He settled on a version containing only one minor alteration: Jones places the final reel that introduces the set-up of the sting operation at the beginning of his film.

The inscription *Tearoom* is integral to transforming the function of the footage. Jones describes the transformative feature of his readymade footage as moving away from surveillance as an instrument of social domination towards a work directed at the

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[196] Jim Supanick, "Last Year at Mansfield: William E. Jones's *Tearoom*," *Film International*, Issue 37, pp. 12-15. < http://www.williamejones.com/collections/about/11> Accessed 3/23/10

subjects themselves, beyond their socially constructed status as sexual deviants.[197] The

inscription "*Tearoom,*" a gay euphemism for spaces designated as cruising zones for sex,

redefines the vantage point of the footage by transforming the address of the spectator.

By using a term specific to gay communities, Jones directs the address of the footage to a

gay audience, rerouting the vantage point from the authoritarian police surveillance of

criminal activity to a more ethnographic, though still self-aware stance, refiguring the

footage as a document of oppression. Jones has said, "*Tearoom* may be the truest

documentary of public sex before the gay liberation movement." The irony is that this

powerful documentation of queer sex spaces in the early 1960s is realized by the very

forces seeking their eradication. *Tearoom*, like *Perfect Film*, is a document focused as

much on the events captured in the footage as it is about the circumstances and process of

its production. In his decision to leave the materials nearly untouched, Jones performs a

radical act of nomination, recuperating evidence used for the prosecution of men,

transforming it functionally into, amongst other things, a powerful piece of queer history.

One of the constant features of the readymade is the destabilization or decoding of

signs from signifiers. Through inscription and its subsequent transformation of function,

the original meaning of the footage is disengaged, shedding its original identity only to be

cloaked in another. For instance, while the footage was used both in court to prosecute 38

men[198] and in part for a police classroom film on surveillance, in the new context

provided by Jones, one cannot help but pay attention to the motivation of the two

cameramen. Part of the humor and tragedy of *Tearoom* can be found in who and what the

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[197] Dietmar Schwärzler, "More Than One Way to Watch a Movie!" in *Smell It!* (Vienna: Kunsthalle Exnergasse, 2009) pp. 74-79. <http://www.williamejones.com/collections/about/11> Accessed 3/23/10.

cameramen focus on. When an attractive young man enters the restroom the camera records his every move—immediately after his entrance to his exit—but nothing out of the ordinary happens. However the camera frantically begins filming when a clean-cut middle-aged overweight white man begins fellating a black youth.[199] Because the surveillance is not constant (as is now standard in video surveillance), the elective recording of the cameramen betray their expectations and possibly even their interests. Added to this is the potent metaphor of the cameramen intently watching gay sex from the inside of a closet.

It is this double articulation of the observer and the observed that has made for both widespread critical praise of *Tearoom*, showing at the 2008 Whitney Biennial, and virulent condemnation, decried for further violating the privacy of these captured men by perpetuating images of their oppression. Jones specifically recounts an instance at a screening in Los Angeles erupting into a shouting match and the accusation that he may be participating in an invasion of the privacy of the men involved.[200] This ethical conundrum is fundamental to how we understand the readymade features of *Tearoom*. It is ostensibly a document of oppression, and yet the multivocality of the footage reveals much more than was originally intended. The one hour film contains fleeting moments of great humor, mystery, eroticism and sadness which all blend into one another through the prerogatives of the cameramen filming. While clearly Jones has allowed for a certain ambiguity to rest over the images, he has also devoted himself to a thorough investigation

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[199] Perhaps the greatest shock is that just 8 years after the desegregation of restrooms in Ohio and 2 years *before* the first landmark American Civil Rights Act of 1964, so many black and white men were engaging in public sex.

[200] Schwärzler, Dietmar, "More Than One Way to Watch a Movie!" in Smell It! (Vienna: Kunsthalle Exnergasse, 2009) pp. 74-79. <http://www.williamejones.com/collections/about/11> Accessed 3/23/10: 74

of the events surrounding the film as well as the culture of policing and punishing

homosexuality in the U.S. in a book documenting the making of the footage.[201]

The most thorough and complicated exploration of the ethical issues raised by

Tearoom appears in Jaimie Baron's innovative study *The Archive Effect: Found Footage*

and the Audiovisual Experience of History (2014). In this text, Baron articulates three

ways of approaching the footage. First, she suggests that Jones situates the footage as

both deeply ironic and romantic. The use of official state-sanctioned surveillance used to

prosecute these men rendered an object of both queer history and erotic fascination for a

contemporary audience belies this conclusion. The reversal then, is a form of

detournement, a functional transformation or slippage of signification. Second, Baron

suggests the footage may be read without irony and possibly without attention to its

historical specificities to supply it the gravitas of an important document. One could

reasonably conclude then, Baron suggests, that this footage only further humiliates and

stigmatizes the men involved—a response from some audience members at the Los

Angeles Filmforum. It is her last reading that articulates the radical multivocality of the

footage. Baron writes:

> However, there is also a third stance, in which the film remains on the line
> between document and documentary, historical and contemporary, art and
> surveillance. Indeed, in this view, Tearoom is riddled with ironies of the inclusive
> kind, in which meaning and identity remain indeterminate, radically disruptive to
> the regime of meaning in which a text has only one meaning. This irony may not
> be intended by the filmmaker, but because Jones does not draw the clear line
> between "our" context "here" and "now" and "their" context "there" and "then"
> offered by many appropriation films that deploy the trope of irony – a more
> clearly antiphrastic, satiric, judgmental form of irony – it is impossible for us to
> decide once and for all what Tearoom's footage "means." By minimizing his
> intervention, limiting it to one edit, a title, and a byline, Jones (perhaps
> unintentionally) invites viewers to receive his film in multiple, contradictory ways.

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[201] A monograph written by Jones includes research done around his film. See *Tearoom*, (Los
Angeles: 2nd Cannons Publications, 2009).

Despite Jones' efforts to control the meaning of the film after the fact during the Filmforum question and answer session, the film cannot be reduced to a single meaning or a clear-cut critique.[202]

Here Baron gestures towards some of the ethical features of readymade films as providing radically aberrant means of decoding significance and determining meanings. While she underlines Jones' own readings of the footage, I think it is also part of Jones' imperative to relinquish authorial control over how this meaning is decoded. This emerges from his own experience initially attempting to subject the footage to montage.

Against Montage: The Specificities of Readymade Films

An ethics of both historical and documentary properties has pervaded the discourse of found footage practice since its inception in 1898.[203] These ethical dimensions have been connected to various redistributions of power to the editor, including; the production of a false sense of continuity[204]; the ability to correct historical misrepresentations[205]; and the metaphoric and ironic transformation of the image.[206] The

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[202] Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. (New York, Routledge, 2014): 44.

[203] The use of appropriated footage in Soviet films has been traced back to a French worker from the Lumière factory, Francis Doublier who toured the Jewish districts of Southern Russia in 1898, showing films from his company's cinematographe. During his tour, Doublier overheard complaints about the lack of images of the Dreyfus case, in its height at the time, and came up with a way of forging images by coupling various film clips of marching soldiers, ships in port and a scene of the Delta of the Nile. See Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*. 3rd Edition (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1983): 23.

[204] Dziga Vertov describes a kind of puppetry that the editor is capable of through re-editing footage to produce false continuity. He writes, "You are walking down a Chicago street today in 1923, but I make you greet Comrade Volodarsky, walking down a Petrograd street in 1918, and he returns your greeting." Vertov, Dziga. *Kino Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Ed. Annette Michelson (University of California Press: London, 1984): 16-17

[205] Sharon Sandusky refers to traumatic images as a "toxic film artifact" and the ability for an editor to "correct" traumatic images. See Sandusky, "The Archeology of Redemption: Towards Archival Films," *Millennium Film Journal* V. 26, 2-25. Catherine Russell has targeted this concept and argued for the idea of revision, but one that does not "correct" the archive, but rather "promotes a schizophrenic dispersal of discourses of mastery, authenticity, and authority through fragmentation, cutting up, and interruption." See Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*. (Duke University Press: Durham, 1999): 243.

[206] Hans Richter describes this metaphoric principle in the following anecdote. "I had to film the subject of the functioning of a stock-exchange. For this an exact record in chronological sequence

ethical features of the readymade films described above represent a marked break from the bulk of found footage film traditions. While most of these works are characterized by the montage of footage from a variety of sources for the purposes of transforming the meaning of images and sounds, readymades are engaged in a multivocal re-presentation of footage through the nearly invisible authorial imperatives of nomination, inscription, and transformation of function. To be clear, I am not suggesting that *Tearoom* and *Perfect Film* do not contain montage, simply that their appropriation reflects a desire to (overwhelmingly) preserve the state in which they were found. This choice derives from ethical and artistic dilemmas described by both Ken Jacobs and William E. Jones.

The first dilemma described by Jacobs relates to the found footage filmmaker's transformation of footage through montage for the purposes of creating meanings and arguments. Though the practices of found footage filmmakers are by no means monolithic, the techniques and strategies most often deployed are ironically engaged in attempts to release repressed meanings in footage. Ken Jacobs elucidates the problems with this form of filmmaking while expressing the virtues of readymade practices:

> I wish more stuff was available in its raw state, as primary source material for anyone to consider, and to leave for others in just that way, the evidence uncontaminated by compulsive proprietary misapplied artistry, "editing", the purposeful "pointing things out" that cuts a road straight and narrow through the cine-jungle; we barrel through thinking we're going somewhere and miss it all. Better to just be pointed to the territory, to put in time exploring, roughing it, on our own. For the straight scoop we need the whole scoop, or no less than the clues entire and without rearrangement. O, for a Museum of Found Footage, or cable

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of all stages of its functioning, no matter how well observed, is not sufficient...The task given this sort of documentary film is to portray a concept. Even what is invisible must be made visible...In this effort to give body to the invisible world of imagination, thought and ideas, the essay film can employ an incomparably greater reservoir of expressive means than can the pure documentary film." See Leyda, Jay. *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film.* (Hill and Wang: New York, 1964): 31

channel, library, a shit-museum of telling discards accessible to all talented viewers/auditors. A wilderness haven salvaged from Entertainment.[207]

Jacobs likens the imperatives of excision and exclusion that have guided found footage filmmakers to the colonization or domestication of footage. The ethical dimensions that direct his decision to preserve rather than manipulate footage are tied to his eschewal of the mind controlling montage of Eisenstein, which he has described as creating a "Pavlovian response" in spectators. He explains his ambivalent feelings towards the Soviet pioneer: "I want bumbling. I want the world. I don't want skillful design applied to my psyche."[208] Raw footage is expressed conversely as a wilderness haven offering a wide swath of meaning and agency to the spectator, circumventing the dangers of suppression or myopia in the editing process. The favoring of the unabridged over the manipulated, the incomplete process over the finished product, is a gesture that pushes the radical authorship of found footage to its most dramatic endgame.

Jacobs's lack of intervention allows the role of the spectator to change from decoding strategies based on artistically motivated montage (often related to a dialectical relationship between images) to a territory closer to the experience of seeing documentary evidence. When watching Jacobs's authorial nomination and inscription of *Perfect Film*, we are no longer watching the lost shards of a newsreel, we are watching Jacobs's finger pointing to that newsreel and the second look that he provides to the spectator. This is a way of destabilizing the position of the spectator by complicating the generic categories from which to approach the material—it is neither documentary nor found footage in its conventional sense. Instead we are left in open territory: the wild west of filmic authorship.

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[207] Jacobs: 19
[208] Gunning, Schwartz, Jacobs: 36

William E. Jones stumbled onto the idea of the readymade in the same way Jacobs stumbled upon the footage for *Perfect Film*. Jones' discovery of the footage was more deliberate and related to research he was engaged in on sodomy laws in the Midwest. He describes the decision to leave the materials intact as a response to the arbitrary aesthetic decisions that motivated their obfuscation and ordering through montage. Explaining that he attempted to "put the footage into some form that looked like art," but in the process of doing so discovered the final work to be unconvincing and arbitrary. [209] It was not until Jones left the footage as is, with the exception of moving the last reel establishing the surveillance set-up to the beginning, that he believed the work to be finished.

Jones echoes Jacobs's characterization of montage as a form of "mind control" working to rhetorically shape the meaning of footage without the benefits offered to the spectator by raw footage. Furthermore, Jones argues that showing the footage in its entirety, without the "misapplied artistry" of "pointing things out" also works against the way this surveillance footage was initially used by authorities in Ohio—interpreted for juries by prosecuting lawyers engaged in the conviction of the men involved:

> …[P]eople bring assumptions to the footage. One of the reasons the footage is presented in its entirety and silent is that people can in some small way empty their minds of their assumptions. You know, the footage had previously been presented in public: in court and in a movie that was used to instruct police forces. In these contexts the audience was told at every moment what to think of the footage. A prosecutor or a narrator told them who these people were and what acts they engaged in. I thought it would be really interesting to see how the footage worked without any commentary. In screenings I provide minimal context and then answer questions afterwards. I do not impose a reading upon the material in advance. That in itself is potentially liberating. Conceptually or philosophically this is an interesting position. How little can I do to the material to make it into something that provokes people, gives occasion for thought or gives pleasure.[210]

[209] Schwärzler, "More Than One Way to Watch a Movie!" 78.
[210] Ibid.

Jones articulates one of the fundamental distinctions of readymade films—that they work, not to disseminate a singular, rhetorically decisive perspective to the spectator, but rather to display an ambiguity that spectators must negotiate themselves. The readymade films discussed here move away from the notion of a film as an aesthetic rendering of an artist's subjectivity and towards another feature of found footage: what Hito Steyerl calls the "documentality"[211] of footage as historically emblematic of its own production. Documentality is an important facet of how the two readymade films described here complicate and reveal the "politics of truth" issued forth from journalistic (*Perfect Film*) and juridical (*Tearoom*) vantage points. Despite the ideological vantage points that have produced these works (especially in *Tearoom*), meanings extending beyond the intentions of the original producers may be presented through the footage itself.

Tearoom does not merely record sex in bathrooms, it is a document of the surveillance process itself. It reveals the subjectivity of the cameraman (whose prejudices are betrayed by who and what they decide to focus on), the authoritarianism of the police (which elected to surveil the private activities of queers), the homophobia of the judicial system (which works to prosecute men for homosexual activity), and the complicity of a public, which acts as an accomplice to these individuals and institutions. In this way, readymades turn films into documentaries of the systems that underwrite the production process itself, rather than being expressly concerned with the images recorded. In this

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[211] Hito Steyerl writes: "Documentality describes the permeation of a specific documentary politics of truth with superordinated political, social and epistemological formations. Documentality is the pivotal point, where forms of documentary truth production turn into government – or vice versa. It describes the complicity with dominant forms of a politics of truth, just as it can describe a critical stance with regard to these forms. Here scientific, journalistic, juridical or authentistic power/knowledge formations conjoin with documentary articulations..." Steyerl, Hito. "Documentarism as a Politics of Truth." (http://eipcp.net/transversal/1003/steyerl2/en) Accessed April 11th, 2008

way readymade films produce a form of self-reflexive documentary, where the spectator can reflect on those elements integral to the production process, rather than the messages and imperatives of the original authors.

Susan Sontag has described the camera as having "twin capacities" or "two ways essential to the workings of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers)."[212] Jones has managed to "flip" these central functions—so that they move into one another seamlessly like a möbius strip. To be clear, I am not arguing that *Tearoom* advances these images as entertainment—rather, that Jones has destabilized the spectator's capacity to classify images into clear categories. My own experience watching the film was a kind of intermittent amnesia, where at times I became enraptured in the voyeuristic pleasure of watching, only to be reminded of the ugly fate that awaits the men involved. In turns responding to its incredible documentary portrait of cruising cultures in the mid-century US, I do receive *Tearoom* as a document of oppression, an official record that demands to be seen for its confrontation with the state apparatus used to persecute queers in America. While I take seriously claims that showing this footage today has some potential to further victimize these men, it seems incredibly doubtful. Further to this, I am suspicious of the belief that should these men indeed all be deceased, that the use of this footage is then magically redeemed of its use of the likeness of these men. If this footage is a violation of privacy, does their death absolve them of this right?

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[212] Sontag, Susan. On Photography. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1973: 178

Conclusion: Can a Film be a Readymade?

As part of his mission to explode the ruling orthodoxies of painting, Duchamp concocted the moniker "readymade" and constantly re-defined it—thereby limiting it from becoming an orthodoxy. For example, a number of critics have described the seminal readymade *Fountain* as a form of institutional critique constructed to test the freedoms supposedly offered by the Society of Independent Artists in New York. This spirit of testing the limits of institutionally acceptable forms of artmaking must now be reconciled with a situation in which the readymade has been fully embraced by art institutions—thereby becoming, if not completely orthodox, at least generic.

While filmic articulations of readymade strategies raise important new issues in their departure from Duchamp's object-based readymades, these works also lose some important features when deployed in the context of film and video. In the act of introducing "life media"[213] into the context of art and in destabilizing notions of art and the everyday, Duchamp constructed a complex critique of representation by replacing the virtues of mimesis in representation with an actuality. Put simply, prior to the readymade, an art object depicting a snow-shovel, comb, or coat-rack would utilize some plastic media put into the service of creating a reasonable representation of that object. By replacing a representation with an actuality, Duchamp creates what John Roberts has called a "mimetic short circuit"[214] or what Dalia Judovitz describes as a "dramatic leap over the figurative into the literal",[215] in which an object stands in for its representation.

This powerful destabilization, which devastates the capacity to differentiate between art and everyday life, has been central to the widespread influence of the

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[213] Higgins, Dick. "Intermedia." *Leonardo*. 34.1 (2001): 49
[214] Roberts, *Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade,* 49.
[215] Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*, 99.

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readymade. John Cage remarked, "At a Dada exhibition in Dusseldorf, I was impressed that though Schwitters and Picabia and the others had all become artists with the passing of time, Duchamp's works remained unacceptable as art. And, in fact, as you look from Duchamp to the light fixture the first thought you have is, 'Well, that's a Duchamp'."[216] This startling moment described by Cage, in which Duchamp collapses the gaps between art and life by interjecting an object that embodies itself into an exhibition space, does not have an analogous procedure in film and video. Film does not have the luxury of being unmediated—it can never posses the striking power of a self-representative object, unless the material of the film itself were to be exhibited without a projection apparatus. The moment the film is projected, its status as object is reconfigured as a mediated image.

In his challenge to the retinal dimensions of art, Duchamp sought also to undermine its aesthetic qualities. Unlike some articulations of the found object, readymades perform decisive operations (e.g., nomination, inscription, and function) and do not seek to simply elevate an object from the everyday into the discourse of art because of its superior aesthetic qualities. While Surrealists like Andre Breton and Joseph Cornell were engaged in just such a practice, Duchamp repeatedly conveyed the desire to move beyond the aesthetic lure of non-art objects and frequently describes readymades as a rendez-vous between himself and an object set at a specific date and time. In other words, Duchamp created conceptual guidelines to select an object around him at a specific point in time so that his aesthetic judgment would not enter into the process of nomination. When asked in an interview to explain his selection process, Duchamp replied:

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[216] Ibid.

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It chooses you, so to speak. If your choice enters into it, then, taste is involved, bad taste, good taste, uninteresting taste. Taste is the enemy of art, A-R-T. The idea was to find an object that had no attraction whatsoever from an aesthetic angle. This was not the act of an artist, but of a non-artist, an artisan if you will. I wanted to change the status of the artist or at least to change the norms used for defining an artist. Again to de-deify him. The Greeks and the sixteenth, seventh and eighteenth centuries thought of him as a worker, an artisan.[217]

This modus operandi, which Duchamp describes as the "indifference" of the nomination process and the eschewal of taste as a motivation for selection, has been a subject of great contestation in scholarship surrounding Duchamp. Many critics and scholars have pointed out aesthetic qualities surrounding unassisted readymades, most famously in the case of William Camfield's elaborate exploration of Duchamp's *Fountain* as an image of the virgin and child.[218] Though it is not my intention to debate the possibility of total indifference in the nomination of an object, this imperative is not present in either *Tearoom* or *Perfect Film*, for which the central footage was decisively selected in part for its rich aesthetic qualities.

Readymade strategies operate by producing new ways of seeing objects or images that might otherwise be considered quotidian, obsolescent, or even boring by re-inflecting them with a new functionality through the process of nomination and inscription. While Duchamp conceived of readymade strategies in part to mock the medium specific and pictorial strategies of painting, the readymade has largely been discussed in the context of objects. Though filmic readymades present a marked break from some of the mimetic qualities and strategies of indifference present in Duchamp's work, the movement of the

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[217] Ibid: 109
[218] See Camfield, William. "Marcel Duchamp's Fountain: Aesthetic Object, Icon, or Anti-Art?" *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*. Thierry de Duve (ed). (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991): 133-186.

readymade from object to film or video fundamentally conforms to the imperatives outlines by Duchamp.

Once readymade strategies are introduced into film and video, they present remarkable new paradigms for appropriation in the works of found footage filmmakers. Just as Duchamp worked to break from the fundamental orthodoxies of painting and pictorial art in his initial conception of the unassisted readymade, Ken Jacobs and William E. Jones violate an orthodoxy of found footage film—that source material should be culled from a wide variety of sources and/or ordered into some aesthetic or rhetorical framework through montage. In their eschewal of montage, both artists produce films offering a newfound agency to the spectator in their appraisal and understanding of the production of the moving image.

Chapter Three – "Inventories of Limbo": Institutional Critique and the Architecture of Cinema

> "There is no neutral surface, no neutral discourse, no neutral theme, no neutral form."[219] - Susan Sontag

> "(The morality of vernacular is our new snobbism)"[220] - Brian O'Doherty

One of the unexpected byproducts of the ascetic visual character of post-minimal art was a newfound foregrounding of the site of exhibition. After evacuating the rich visual character of abstract expressionism, the taste codes associated with modernist art, and the dominance of painting and sculpture, the walls of the gallery were far more visible than ever before. The infra-sensorium engendered by these changes brought the exhibition space itself into focus, making the context of the gallery impossible to ignore. Suddenly, the twentieth century art exhibition had become a cipher for power structures, both political and economic, as well as a hotbed of divisive public sentiment fostered by activists of all political persuasions.[221] The gallery and museum are revealed as a system, and at one more remove, a component of an even larger system.

Like a hand pulling back a curtain, once the scattered pictorial squares on the walls either mutated *into* the gallery or could no longer sufficiently hide their contours, the frames, plinths, housing, and economic networks were all revealed. As Donald Judd notes in the first lines of his influential essay from 1965, "Specific Objects," the best art

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[219] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence" in *Styles of Radical Will.* (New York: Picador, 2002): 9-10.

[220] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 67.

[221] While institutional critique is configured as principally leftist, one could expand its contours to include conservative organizations such as the American Family Association, which boycotted and called for an end to public funding of the arts in the wake of the National Endowment for the Art's funding of Robert Mapplethorpe's 1989 exhibition *The Public Moment*. Miwon Kwon characterizes this skepticism as one tied to a challenge to the "'innocence' of space and the accompanying presumption of a universal viewing subject," that characterized Modernism. Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October*, Vol. 80 (Spring, 1997), 87.

of this time was neither sculpture nor painting, as artists encroached into the spaces occupied by viewers, and into corners not meant to be looked upon.[222] The skin of the gallery itself could no longer be ignored. The following two chapters will examine how these spaces were measured, bisected, extracted, displaced, voided, and finally reconstructed by artists.

Robert Smithson presciently anticipated that the growing issue of 1970s art would be "the investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded through."[223] It is not incidental that his analogy for the gallery as an apparatus uses the metaphor of a film projector, with the artist figured as a filmstrip being wound through the machine. In its language of distributed power, Smithson was surely using the aggregate components of the cinematic dispositif as a model for the dispersed economic networks, material and immaterial labour, cultural capital and speculation, exhibition vernaculars, frames, and policies of the gallery and museum, all of which constitute the reticulations we refer to as "the art world." This model of dispersal, distribution, network, and aggregation cannily mirrored shifting philosophical intelligence on power, governance, and control in the post-World War II West. Embedded in once invisible art contexts lay a new content for investigation.

Institutional Critique and Chapter Synopsis

Emerging from the political upheavals of the late 1960s, institutional critique was a staple of the New Left's attempts to reconcile the purported public service function of cultural and political institutions and their status as regulatory, homogenizing bureaucratic structures. Encompassing far more than art institutions, institutional critique

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[222] See Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1999.
[223] Robert Smithson. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 263.

emerged from a broad swath of skeptical inquiries into governance and public policy during the Cold War. Key global events, including the civil rights movement, Vietnam War protests and the student movement in North America, as well as the general strike initiated by the students of the Sorbonne in May 1968 in Paris, the occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels months later, the political repression experienced after Argentina's military coup in 1966, among many other public crises at the time, color the period as one famously in flux.

This chapter and the next address institutional critique and cinema through two evolutionary moments as the process of exhibition contexts was foregrounded by artists and filmmakers. The goal of these chapters is not to provide a study in the development of site-specific strategies, economic investigations, nor theories of the apparatus of exhibition in the cinematic arts—this would require its own discrete project. Instead, I want to express the twin priorities of artists and filmmakers and their dynamic engagement with cinematic exhibition spaces in ways that trouble the by now familiar black box/white cube binary.

Both chapters examine projects literalizing these two paradigmatic appellations to absurd lengths—one where the black box is subsumed into black holes of time, and one in which the white cube is emptied through an intervention into the museum's institutionalization of film history. This chapter reflects on the architecture of cinema space and its production of affect inflecting the spectator's experience in relation to measurement, spatiality, and temporality. First, I will examine the initial development of the art institution and the projects that attempted to reveal and reconfigure the structural features of its display. Second, I offer parallel histories of the interrogation of the

museum and the cinema, while considering how cinema itself emerges as an institution.

While cinemas have never embodied or been held accountable to the same cultural

responsibility to a public as inherited by museums, other forms of institutional

responsibility have importantly emerged. Third, I will detail attempts to map both gallery

and cinema space and draw attention to its vernaculars of display. Finally, I will offer an

extensive case study of Robert Smithson's *Underground Cinema*, a project that

speculatively repositions the cinema's temporal ties to modernity by re-embedding it into

an ancient geological time-scale. Chapter 3 deals with the architectural, structural, and

vernacular features of museum and gallery exhibition contexts, while Chapter 4 focuses

almost exclusively on the socio-political dynamics of institutional critique.

What is the Art Institution?

Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson describe the rise of the art institution in the

terms of Enlightenment philosophy's promise "of a public exchange, of a public sphere,

of a public subject."[224] The foundation of museums in the Enlightenment era was tied to a

newly constructed bourgeois subject, for whom arts education was a marker of bourgeois

identity and social identification. The rise of art institutions can be tied to the rise of a

liberal social imaginary that conceived of art as a means of fostering, enriching, and

articulating social collectivity and connectivity. This framing of art in the museum made

implicit guarantees of a public's collective ownership and right to access art as a cultural,

national, and historical heritage.

Once this illusion is shattered by the increasing politicization of museum spaces

in the 1960s, and once the same hierarchies visible in government became apparent in the

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[224] Alexander Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writing*. (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 2009): 3

museum, institutional critique emerges as a form of discourse reconciling the mission of the art institution with "its actual practice of operation."[225] Institutional critique then, set out to test the premises of the Enlightenment era museum, both by testing the limits of the gallery physically, and the socio-economic substructures underpinning them.

As a philosophical and aesthetic engine for the making of art, institutional critique is concerned with the economic networks underpinning the art world, the framing mechanisms of the museum and gallery,[226] and the role of the museum in the interpolation of artist and audience. Many of these goals were rooted in drives to create non-repressive, "counter-hegemonic institutional forms"[227] to fight the patrician rules and regulations governing the social interface of the museum. At its heart, institutional critique synthesizes, on the one hand, a deep-seated self-abstracting skepticism about capitalism, the art-market, and the control and complicity of the art-worker, and on the other, classic Modernist negation in the utopian pursuit of remaking institutions. Institutional critique emerged from questions surrounding artistic autonomy at a time when the importance of art as a pillar of social transformation was thrown into question. The philosophy was particularly interested in the notion of "inside" and "outside" exhibition spaces, particularly insofar as they lacked distinction given the prevalence of suspicious persons and organizations that populated the art world itself. In this way, institutional critique had some of the characteristics of a purge, as the everyday life of the art world was scrutinized.

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[225] Blake Stimson, "What Was Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writing*. (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 2009): 30.
[226] Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," 5. Alberro continues: "a frame that overdetermines what it encompasses, a frame that is inherently ideological and made of a myriad of cultural, social and political elements."
[227] Stimson, "What Was Institutional Critique," 20.

Benjamin Buchloh argues Conceptual art represented "the most consequential assault on the status of that object: its visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution."[228] In this light, institutional critique was a natural progression for artists to take inventory of the spaces that ultimately provided the exhibition and cultural legitimization of such objects. Or perhaps, as entertained previously, it was the increasing infra-sensorium of art's reception that suddenly pushed the frames of the gallery into focus, making them impossible to ignore. Still, many early pioneering figures of institutional critique maintained an ambivalent if not hostile relationship to conceptualism.[229] Further to this, the appellation "institutional critique" did not come into currency until the mid 1980s, being described initially as "situational aesthetics" and "outlaw art." [230]

The Institution of the Cinema

At first glance, the social imaginary of the cinema is couched in very different terms *vis-a-vis* the art museum's implicit promise of a publically accessible cultural repository. Cinemas are most often configured as a private enterprise with a transparent profit motive that has little to no dependence on grants and other forms of public subsidy. This might situate cinema firmly outside of the public contract implicitly struck by the

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[228] Buchloh, Benjamin. "Conceptual Art from an Aesthetics of Administration to a Critique of Institutions. *October*, Vol. 55 (Winter, 1990): 107.

[229] Andrea Fraser argues that Daniel Buren and Michael Asher had deeper ties to minimalism, while Hans Haacke developed from his analysis of environmental systems. "Art Must Hang: An Interview with Andrea Fraser" with Stuart Comer in *Afterthought: New Writing on Conceptual Art*. Ed Mike Sperlinger. (London: Rachmanifnoff's, 2005): 31.

[230] Andrea Fraser suggests she may have inadvertently invented the term in 1985 in her essay "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009): 409. Gregory Battcock made reference to institutional critique as outlaw art in 1969 in a text called "Anti-Art and Outlaw Art" http://text.no-art.info/en/battcock_anti-art.html (Accessed 2-9-2013).

museum. Nonetheless, important historical precedents offer exception to this configuration, and challenge the appearance of existential differences.

Haidee Wasson's exhaustive study of the New York Museum of Modern Art's formation of a Film Library in 1935 illustrates the pivotal role of museums in establishing cinema as worthy of sustained and serious study, as well as in the preservation of films within the archival purview of the museum. Wasson summarizes MOMA's elevation of cinema into art through the re-mapping of certain vernacular and exhibition features common to art back onto cinema:

> In establishing The Film Library as a museum department, MoMA instrumentalized several basic ideals: first, that the otherwise amorphous phenomena called cinema should also be understood as a collection of individual films, as *an assemblage of objects that endured through time*; second, that these selected films *should be seen, requiring a form of distribution and exhibition of film outside of commercial movie theaters*; and third, that viewing such films should be augmented by informed research materials, placing film in pertinent sociological, historical, political, and aesthetic dialogue. The last assertion had implications both for the manner of watching that MoMA sought to instill in its audience, and for the production and circulation of film scholarship itself.[231]

Wasson illustrates how the objecthood, socio-political context, exhibition, and scholarship production come to be formed by the museum with film collections. One can begin to see how what Wasson elsewhere calls an "ideological infrastructure" is embedded into the "low-art" of cinema, and how institutionality is critical in proffering scholarly legitimacy to the film arts. Insofar as the MOMA absorbs film into its holdings, the cinema itself is conferred with the same public service function as the museum.

The events in France of February 1968 surrounding the Cinémathèque Française in what has come to be known as the Langlois Affair, illustrate a landmark moment in the establishment of public intervention and political upheaval in film culture. Due to a

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[231] Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 2005: 122-3. Original emphasis.

change in the management of the *Cinémathèque*, a large-scale public protest broke out

after the Minister of Culture André Malraux (and his bureaucratic proxy Pierre Moinot)

dismissed the beloved co-founder of the organization, Henri Langlois.[232] In what would

famously play out like a rehearsal for the events of May 1968 across Europe, the decision

to fire Langlois was tied to Malraux and the government's attempts to transform the

Cinémathèque and Langlois's impressive film collection into a national institution. The

protests over the removal of Langlois were tied to fears that the organization would not

only lose the public face of its curatorial project, but also become ensnared in a newly

minted, government-overseen, bureaucratic institutional structure. French actor Jean-

Pierre Kalfon conveyed as much when he publicly declared, "Using bureaucratic pretexts,

the worst enemies of culture have recaptured this bastion of liberty. Don't stand there and

let them get away with it. Freedom is taken, not received."[233] Many of the public

proclamations and subsequent texts surrounding the Langlois affair are couched in

precisely this rhetoric of struggle against the bureaucratization and institutionalization of

cultural heritage.[234]

These events represent critical precursors to the public characterization of cinema

as institution, and towards a recalibration of the architectures of cinema production,

exhibition, and distribution. While the history charted in this chapter occurs in parallel to

expanded cinema and paracinematic art practices, which will be addressed shortly, it is

my goal both to trouble these categories and to assimilate institutional critique into them.

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[232] Louis Menand "After the Revolution" *New Yorker Magazine* (October 20th, 2003).
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/10/20/031020crat_atlarge?currentPage=all .
Accessed 5-12-13.
[233] Robert Patrick Kinsman, *Radical Form, Political Intent: Delineating Countercinemas Beyond Godard*, (dissertation, University of Indiana, 2007): 101.
[234] See Georges Patrick Langlois, *Henri Langlois: First Citizen of Cinema* (New York: Twayne, 1995), and Allan Larson Williams, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*, (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1992).

An historical accounting of some critical projects in the field of institutional critique will ground my attempt to draw parallels between cinema and art worlds.

A critical component of institutional critique is the concept of sitedness. Collapsing the matrix of museum/gallery/cinema, understood as abstract concepts within ideological networks, into actual physically traversable spaces renders the early investigations of institutional critique artists pivotal to the development of an interrogative and interruptive practice. The concept of the "site-specific" would itself challenge the language of modernist universalisms by focusing on the particularities of space. Miwon Kwon conceives of this challenge as nothing less than an establishment of art as presence:

> The space of art was no longer perceived as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, but a real place. The art object or event in this context was to be singularly experienced in the here-and-now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensorial immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration (what Michael Fried derisively characterized as theatricality), rather than instantaneously "perceived" in a visual epiphany by a disembodied eye.[235]

Kwon's emphasis on the embodied spectatorship found in this art importantly highlights how both artist and audience are reminded of the immanence of place and space around them, and not transported somewhere else. Presence here underlines a notion of alertness and attentiveness to one's surroundings, which subverts the gallery's aspirations towards neutrality.

Institutional Critique and Cinema

There is no straightforward analogy for a practice of institutional critique in cinema, largely because of its divergent principles and practices of exhibition, distribution and reception. However, the re-thinking of cinema space in the rise of

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[235] Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October*, Vol. 80 (Spring, 1997): 86.

apparatus theory via Louis Althusser, Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Louis Comolli & Jean

Narboni, and its reconsiderations of the spectatorial constraints of the long codified

"movie theater" environment was nothing short of a critique of the institutionalization of

film spectatorship.

The development of film co-op models contemporaneous to institutional critique

in the arts reflected a desire to reshape the labour hierarchies of filmmaking and to invent

more egalitarian models for distribution, including a collectivist ownership of the means

of production. At play here are not only a critical assailment of the apparatus of film

exhibition and its ideological substructures, but also a propensity for the invention of new

cooperative models and institutions.

Filmmaker Birgit Hein suggests that, after a mode of structural film focused on

the "whole reproduction-process underpinning the medium, including the film material,

and the optical, chemical, and perceptual process," a decisive shift occurred. She writes:

> Work in film is no longer restricted to photographic representation on a single
> screen, but includes projections of light, shadow-play, actions in front of the
> screen, the extension of projection into the whole space and even installations
> within that space where there is no film at all. The medium, in short, is being
> explored as a visual system.[236]

Hein's reflection on what she called the medium of film's "aggregate condition" and

"composite character" was symptomatic of the developing trend of theorists and artists to

affix the term apparatus to the system of interconnected technologies comprising the

circuitry of cinematic exhibition. After the exploration of essences constituting medium

specificity, the next step was to think about boundaries. The apparatus then could be the

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[236] Liz Kotz, "Disciplining Expanded Cinema," in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the
1960s and 1970s*. ed. Matthias Michalka (Köln: Walther König, 2004), 44-5.

subject of demystification, present in structural film's clarification of film material, to unmask the ideological, economic and architectural character of the cinema.

The question of institutionality and mapping the character of cinema space appears in Baudry's notion of the *dispositif*, frequently translated as *apparatus*. It is important to register Baudry's focus on this apparatus as limited to the technologies directly concerned with the production of images on the screen. But the concept of the apparatus would take on significantly broader meaning, both as a result of Michel Foucault's emerging writings on governmentality, and due to the increasing currency of the term institutional critique itself in the late 1980s. A synthesis of apparatus theory in cinema studies and the broader analysis of dispersed power found in the concept of governmentality appears in research by Eric de Bruyn, who describes cinema's very nature as one that structurally mimics the assemblage used to describe the broad notion of apparatus. De Bruyn writes:

> Cinema is nothing but an *assemblage* of technical devices (e.g. camera projector, filters, lenses, etc.), materials (e.g. sprocket film, photo-sensitive chemicals, etc.), institutional structures (e.g. auditoriums, film studios, production companies, marketing departments, etc.), forms of knowledge (e.g. various notions of cinematic 'truth'), and even psychic topographies (e.g. the specular relation of the spectator to the projected image). That is to say, cinema is not a positive identity – any given thing or medium – but a network of relations or, in other words, an *apparatus*, which can be articulated in various fashions and according to different hierarchical schemes.[237]

Like Smithson before him, de Bruyn does not merely acknowledge the importance of institutional critique for cinema, he underlines the fact that these are two organisms that share a brain, or at very least, the dynamics of aggregation. More recently, in a 2013 text on the museum and gallery exhibition of cinema, Erika Balsom forsakes the concept of the apparatus most familiar to film studies for Foucault's notion of dispositif. In so doing,

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[237] de Bruyn, "The Filmic Anomaly," 8. Original emphasis.

she gestures towards "everything from the celluloid print to the projector, the theater, ticketing policies, audience protocol, distribution practices, advertising methods, and more."[238] Similarly Kaira M. Cabañas, takes up a more expansive analysis of a body of filmworks which move far beyond the material substrates of celluloid. Cabañas "addresses aspects of cinema as an institution a specific form of governmentality…"[239] and looks at the "conduct of conduct" through the works of Lettrist artists like Isidore Isou. What immediately becomes clear in such formulations is the contemporary impetus to absorb the project of institutional critique as a model for understanding cinema in an expansive context and through works directed to territories beyond the screen. The cinematic apparatus expands in its gallery environment, absorbing that environment's own internal consciousness and discourses of itself. In the case of the Lettrists who privileged sound, the acoustic features of their works directed itself towards the larger cinema space.

This chapter synthesizes the cinematic projects of this period with the practices associated with art-world institutional critique in an attempt to further a discussion around questions posed by de Bruyn, who asks: "to what extent does the terrain of expanded cinema overlap with an avant-garde project of institutional critique?"[240] A number of contradictions are immediately raised in such a question. First, what is termed "expanded cinema" is most often articulated along a very different axis and should first be differentiated from forms of institutional critique, though exactly how one defines expanded cinema has much to do with how its relationship to institutional critique

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[238] Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art,* 16.
[239] Kaira M. Cabañas, *Off-Screen Cinema: Isidore Isou and the Lettrist Avant-Garde*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2014): 18.
[240] de Bruyn, Eric. "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*. Matthias Michalka ed. Köln : Walther König, 2004: 170

emerges. Second, Jonathan Walley uses a different term, *paracinema,* to assert that artists directed their attentions to reframe the codified institutional coordinates of the cinema's architectures and the apparatus for cinematic projection itself. I will here briefly explain the objects of study of these two scholars.

Eric de Bruyn's research into films by Mel Bochner, Robert Barry, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Dan Graham is framed under the auspices of the term *post-minimal film*. This demarcation is meant to refer back to the term "post-minimal art" coined by Robert Pincus-Witten, to address a period after minimalism that cannot be neatly demarcated into agreed upon movements or modes of artmaking. Resistance by many artists to being packaged into a movement, and outright hostility to the nature and defining characteristics of these monikers at the time, has made using such a broad term a useful way to circumvent these problems. Eric de Bruyn has referred to use of this term as a way of "avoiding the problem" rather than resolving it.[241] For de Bruyn, the post-minimal period and its "filmic anomaly" are best characterized as attempts to work through "a series of problems that were endemic to the period, such as the dialectic of autonomy versus publicity, spatiality versus temporality, absorption versus performativity."[242] Many of the issues at play in these binaries emphasize transformations occurring in the world of cinema, with a burgeoning political cinema, challenging new models for filmic duration, and the increasing emphasis on Brechtian techniques to disrupt narrative absorption. De Bruyn's research is a "medium-specific history in contrast to a history of a medium," which argues that the priorities of artists making films in the late 1960s shared limited historical continuities with experimental film, and to the

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[241] de Bruyn, "The Filmic Anomaly," 6, note 6.
[242] Ibid. 7.

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contrary, sought to divert the mechanisms of film from their "logical purpose."[243]

I will returning once more to Jonathan Walley's research on paracinema which he defines as "phenomena that are considered 'cinematic' but that are not embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined," which "…recognize essentially cinematic properties outside the standard film apparatus, and therefore reject the medium-specific premise that the art form of cinema is defined by the specific medium of film."[244] Walley argues that cinema as a concept preceded film as a technology, positioning paracinematic artists in dialogue with their post-minimal counterparts, though with divergent perspectives towards the medium.[245] Both Walley and de Bruyn share a drive towards examining the history and concepts behind the use of materials, as opposed to merely exploring the materials themselves.[246]

It is useful to synthesize these two bodies of research, to more thoroughly understand the role of the cinematic architectures housing the filmic apparatus, and more broadly the institutionality of cinema. In de Bruyn's essay, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," he assembles ample evidence for parallel practices of institutional critique in the milieu of both filmmaking and film exhibition. Seeking to complicate the dominant formalist reading of avant-garde film in the 1960s and 70s, de Bruyn asserts as a "fundamental aspect of the avant-garde project,

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[243] Ibid. 71.

[244] Jonathan Walley, "Paracinema: Challenging Medium Specificity and Re-defining Cinema in Avant-garde Film" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005):12.

[245] Walley argues that paracinematic work must be considered within the tradition of avant-garde film in its exploration of "cinema" as a broader form of art making rather than one limited to film and video. This differs from artists, he argues, who primarily view cinema as codified by specific media" (Walley, "Paracinema," 27).

[246] Walley, "Paracinema," 55.

that is, the development of a highly *concrete* mode of institutional critique."[247] By this,

he suggests that these artists were explicitly engaging with the institutionality of cinema,

and by extension to the larger project of institutional critique in other parts of their art

practice. These occurred, interestingly, at the very moment that film exhibition begins to

appear with some frequency in gallery and museum situations, and by extension, with a

certain drive to reinforce the aesthetic merit of artist's cinema.

In 1970, Peter Kubelka realized his "modernist sanctuary"[248] known as the

Invisible Cinema, built at Anthology Film Archives in New York. The invisible cinema

was characterized by a series of small cubicle like enclosures, including a hood to go over

the head of the spectator, blocking each member of the audience from others. This

architecture materialized the drive to simultaneously eliminate the perceptibility of

cinema space, hide the projection apparatus and fully contain and position the spectator's

gaze. This important act of denial and control occurs in a moment of paradigm shifts in

the architectural organization of experimental cinema audiences. Describing his

architectural design as enacting the visual features of a camera itself, Kubelka's cinema-

machine *cum* penal-colony might represent the final anxious cry against an increasingly

de-territorialized and dispersed concept of appropriate cinematic space, tendencies that

render the apparatus visible and attempt to trouble the social mores of appropriate

spectatorial behaviors.[249] Kubelka's cinema hides the apparatus, a kind of reversal of

Johannes Duiker's *Handelsblad Cineac*, built in Amsterdam in 1934, a movie theater

offering pedestrians a glimpse into the heart of its mechanism. Gregor Stemrich describes

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[247] De Bruyn, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," 154. Original emphasis.

[248] Giuliana Bruno. *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007): 47.

[249] The Materiality of Film: Peter Kubelka - George Korrosi Interview with Peter Kubelka: http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/materiality-film-peter-kubelka: Accessed 5-15-2015.

it as "a cinema building located on a street corner that offers the observer on the street a glimpse of the cinema's functioning mechanism: Duiker makes the projection booth visible from the outside around the cinema entrance. The *Handelsblad Cineac* clearly corresponds to Baudry's ideal apparatus, undertaking its own demystification by displaying its technological means."[250]

Often a mode of cinematic performance, expanded cinema featured a profusion of imagery. This profusion was meant variously to replicate the "montage" of modern experience, facilitate mobility in cinematic space, introduce a perceptual "collage" (allowing for the invention of multiple meanings through what Liz Kotz calls "imageflow,")[251] and harness a multitude of media (film projectors, slide projections, various other light and sound sources). Many projects manifested the drive to re-imagine the architectural space of the movie-house to produce versions of what was variously called "active" spectatorship through various forms of audience mobility. The centered frontal screen was often eschewed and the invisible projector hidden from view became an almost sculptural feature of screenings.

"Expanded cinema" as it was articulated by its most prolific critical voice at the time, Gene Youngblood, was less an act of deconstructing spectatorship than of multiplying its visual field and inventing a spectatorial situation that was proportionate to the spread of screens in modern culture. For Youngblood, expanded cinema emerged from a confluence of media theorist Marshall McLuhan, techno-spiritualism, conceptions of merging art and life, and from the works of Charles and Ray Eames, Stan VanDerBeek, Jordan Belson, Buckminster Fuller, and Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. A

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[250] Johannes Duiker's Cineac. n.a. *Media Art Net*. http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/handelsblad-cineac/images/2/ (Accessed 5-21-2014)
[251] Kotz, "Disciplining Expanded Cinema," 54.

driving idea behind many of these projects can be located in rhetorics of audience

mobility and agency, fighting against a dominant theory that cinema's ideological power

ensured audience passivity. Many of these expanded cinema projects were born of the

novelty of a profusion of images and an ultimately naïve promise of an audience

"liberated," principally through physical and visual mobility.[252] These "technophiliac

extravaganzas,"[253] in Tanya Leighton's words, distilled the utopian discourses of media's

capacity to perform a leveling of national difference and famously a contraction of space

in the framework of McLuhan's "global village."[254]

      In contrast to this characterization of expanded cinema was a model that similarly

fought against the static architecture of the cinema, but in a very different way. While

many of these projects were additive, multiple, profuse, and frequently hid the apparatus,

this new incarnation was deconstructive, rendering the apparatus transparently visible,

even situating its audience in such a way so as to make its functionality as, or more

important than, the projection of any image. De Bruyn calls this "post-minimal film,"

attributed to artists whose work with film "did not grow, as it were, out of previous forms

of painting and sculpture; rather it surfaced onto a fully formed field of discursive

practices."[255] His characterization of a *discursive field* bridges the often amorphous and

arbitrarily demarcated fields of avant-garde cinema and artist's cinema at this time and

the characterization of two "modes of practice": avant-garde cinema and "artist's film."

But as he states, "This notion of a *discursive field* is not to be confused with the merely

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[252] Kotz, "Disciplining Expanded Cinema," 48-9

[253] Tanya Leighton, "Introduction," in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London, Tate Publishing, 2008): 33.

[254] This idea is espoused by Stan VanDerBeek in his writings on the *Moviedrome* in his manifesto *CULTURE: Intercom and Expanded Cinema* (*Film Culture* 40, Spring 1966, pp. 15-18).

[255] de Bruyn, "The Filmic Anomaly," 10.

empirical fact of a specific historical community who shared a particular set of texts or theories."[256]

The appellation "artist's film," while used by both de Bruyn and Walley, is defined and deployed cautiously, but with some necessity in locating an appropriate way to categorize a distinct "mode of practice," that is "the cluster of historically bound institutions, practices and concepts that form a context within which cinematic media are used."[257] This term is used by Jonathan Walley to specifically address differences in the distribution, exhibition, institutional settings and frames cast upon film. Walley outlines several key issues that demonstrate a bifurcation between avant-garde cinema and artist's film. First, avant-garde film is often not collaborative, while artist's cinema is often collaborative. Second, avant-garde film is not financially profitable as filmmakers do not sell prints of their work. Third, he notes avant-garde cinema's obsession with the materiality of film and all things "filmic."[258] While Eric de Bruyn's use of the term "artist's cinema," is like Walley, cautious in its description on a tenuous category, he also makes efforts to distance those artists he addresses from experimental film. While he at times echoes Walley, referring specifically to questions about the skill and mastery of the filmic apparatus that often separates the *artist* from the *filmmaker*, he acknowledges the imbrications between both spheres and the impossibility of articulating autonomy among them. But while autonomous categories are impossible for de Bruyn, they are a necessary evil needed to group "intransigent objects" that are named solely for the "purposes of

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[256] Ibid.
[257] Walley, "Modes of Practice", 184. This concept is borrowed from David Bordwell and Kristin Thomas, which is articulated in the following way: "A mode of film practice, then, consists of a set of widely held stylistic norms sustained by and sustaining an integral mode of film production."
[258] Walley, "Modes of Practice," 186-90.

argumentation."[259] The anxiety reflected in the writings of both scholars, reflects the elemental problem of categories; both the need to create them, and their intrinsic failures to adequately reflect internal difference.

Both Walley and de Bruyn highlight the increasing import of institutional context in the cinematic arts beginning in the 1960s. For example, Walley highlights the case of Tony Conrad, an artist/filmmaker who traversed the divide, and whose work was intimately tied to "how and why works of art are legible or illegible," and "what this reveals about the institutional structures of the art world, and what changes need to be made in order that the work can be seen and understood."[260] While expanded cinema invented new architectural paradigms for the cinema (planetarium and geodesic dome, among others), Eric de Bruyn argues that "post-minimal film" sought refuge in the gallery itself to institute new audience orientations, and perhaps, to offer some new semblance of artistic legitimacy. Activities such as measurement, site specificity, performance, and later a use of various mechanisms for looping, became integral sites for the erasure of the codified elements of typical cinema exhibition. These form what he refers to above as the "discursive field" of strategies associated with post-minimal art practices. Thus, insofar as the site of the gallery is the contested space of artist/public interchange, it is configured as the *alternative* to the apparatus of the cinema.

Jonathan Walley's description of paracinema and its relationship to the critique of the standardized film apparatus sets-up some of the paradigmatic features of institutional critique. As Anthony McCall, one famous purveyor of this mode of cinema stated, the divides between film and art at this time were like a "double Helix spiraling closely

[259] de Bruyn, "The Filmic Anomaly," 15.
[260] Walley, *Paracinema*, 263)

around one another without ever quite meeting."[261] While McCall may be correctly

characterizing the social dynamics of the moment, points of explicit intersection are

nevertheless difficult to ignore. One important feature of the works of these two scholars

is the need to ally their objects of study with distinct traditions—though both rely in

different ways on both art and film historical disciplines to adequately account for this

period of cinema.

In the following explication of the works of Tony Conrad, Walley highlights an

explicit imperative to examine the institutional apparatus of cinema.

> For Conrad, informed by the Conceptual art milieu and the theoretical
> commitments of British structural-materialist film and expanded cinema,
> paracinema forced an acknowledgment of the institutional situation of avant-
> garde filmmakers and viewers that the reigning doctrine of medium-specific
> formalism did not, and could not, address […] Conrad's [film and performance]
> brought to the viewers' attention the ways their perception (visual and cognitive)
> of a film was shaped by the institutional contexts in which both filmmaker and
> viewer operated, and suggested ways in which the structures of those contexts
> were problematic for each.[262]

Thus for Walley, paracinematic works thematize institutionality, both in the realm of the

exhibition site and in the disruption of the codified features of the apparatus. This

thematization is in part a function of elucidating and addressing the limiting features of

institutional setting, one of the many discourses that mark all investigations of site

specificity.

Through a close reading of David Lamelas' film *A Study of the Relationships*

Between Inner and Outer Space (1969), a work which explicitly engages cinema to

address institutionality, art, and the public sphere, Eric de Bruyn argues that *ambivalence*

remains the critical, constant feature of bonafide institutional critique. Institutional

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[261] Anthony McCall, "Line Describing a Cone and Related Films," *October* no. 103 (Winter 2003): 48.
[262] Walley, *Paracinema*, 272.

critique, while transgressive, can never exist wholly outside the systems engaged in critical discourse. In other words, it can "never come to an end."[263] It must continuously locate new problems to address, and remains an affirmation of the continuous study, instead of an outright rejection, of art institutions. While it is important to recognize attempts to permanently circumvent the art institution (an issue dealt with in the following chapter), for the purposes of this chapter, we will look at how projects engaged in institutional critique are also themselves re-affirmations of art and cinematic institutionality.

In light of my mapping of the ways Marcel Duchamp's readymades were redeployed by filmmakers in Chapter Two, it follows that the entire Richard Mutt case operates in the milieu of institutional critique, though it was most effective in identifying rather than actually subverting the institutional power of museum space. If Duchamp laid the groundwork for institutional critique, his investment in destabilizing (and making visible) the effects of contextuality in art were largely reified by the gallery, as Dan Graham convincingly argues.[264] Daniel Buren similarly suggests that while Duchamp may have made strides in examining the parameters of the art object and its cultural

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263 De Bruyn, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," 167.
264 Graham's critique of Duchamp's model for institutional critique: "In his 'readymades,' Duchamp brought objects which were not considered as art when placed outside the gallery, into the gallery to prove dialectically that it is in fact the gallery which gives the object its value and meaning. Instead of reducing gallery objects to the common level of the everyday object, this ironic gesture simply extended the reach of the gallery's exhibition territory. In bringing the "non-art" object into the gallery, Duchamp wished to harness the conventional function of the gallery to designate certain objects as "art" and to exclude others in apparent contradiction. Essentially Duchamp attempted to question the aristocratic function art and the art gallery as an institution. Because this question was only presented on a logical abstract level, his critique was itself immediately integrated back into the institutional system of gallery or museum art, becoming a kind of 'idea' art. A further problem with Duchamp's analysis is the resolution of the contradiction between gallery art and art in relation to its social value based on an historical concept; the condition of art is seen as neither social or as subject to external social change." (Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'." Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology: 420)

episteme, he could not see past the guarantee of an art object's "artness" as intimately connected to the forces of cultural legitimacy imparted by the gallery.

Benjamin Buchloh characterizes Buren's critique as one principally concerned with Duchamp's singular focus on reception. "The fallacy," Buchloh writes, "of Duchamp's readymade was to obscure the very institutional and discursive framing conditions that allowed the readymade to generate its shifts in the assignment of meaning and the experience of the object in the first place."[265] Moving forward, Buren sought to construct an institutional critique dedicated to the social function of art and its lack of autonomy—not to the "aristocratic" function of art Duchamp had successfully made visible. Once Duchamp discovers that an object may violate the essential tenets of what constitutes art merely by being given institutional legitimacy, the power structures proffering this legitimacy would themselves become subject to scrutiny. This scrutiny would occur from a number of distinct vantage points.

The first architectural interventions into gallery space were focused on spatial and temporal components existing in the physical and phenomenological art exhibition space, and in constructing new parameters for how audiences might see, hear, and move through an art exhibition. [266] These were, in part, extensions of the minimalist topology of the gallery, which literalized the information paradigms of conceptual art through forms of measurement and mapping. These forms arose both through literal and more abstract social measurement (such as in Hans Haacke's MoMA Poll, which I will expand upon in chapter four).

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[265] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art From an Aesthetics of Administration to a Critique of Institutions," 138.
[266] It's worth mentioning that Duchamp also has some precedence here with his 100 miles of string exhibition in which string meant to simulate spider's cobwebs makes the viewing of artworks extraordinarily difficult. In addition to this Duchamp had "hired" children to play throughout the gallery.

Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, and most notably Robert Morris were catalytic to challenging the primacy of the hanging square in the gallery and in allowing the artwork to move into the center of the gallery space through the Minimalist period. Douglas Huebler's interest in Minimalist art derived from "where it was located in relationship to the viewer […] being off the pedestal,"[267] suggesting that the spectator is situated in a demystified context. These concepts of space would become the seeds out of which would grow the gallery mappings and spatial destabilizations of Michael Asher's installations, Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art* (1966) and his room measurement pieces. Here, I will look at a number of these architectural gallery mapping projects, to acknowledge the reciprocity of this tendency in cinema.

You Are Here: Measurement, Frame, Inside/Outside

While many projects engaged with the contours of museum and gallery space, two offer special resonance for this chapter and typify the commingling preoccupation of transforming contexts *into* contents. Both involve mathematics and their function to coordinate human location, movement, and operation. Just as cartography blueprinted the discovery of the Earth-sphere, mapping was also a threshold for penetrating the museum's ecology. If the readymade was a way for an artist to at once point at an object and make the declarative and performative statement, "this is art," the mapping of the gallery space was an attempt to demystify the spaces of that object by pointing at its housing. Site-specificity has an important and very modern relationship to geolocation, where at the entrance to malls, amusement parks, university campuses, and urban parks,

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[267] Interview with Douglas Huebler by Patricia Norvell, in *Recording Conceptual Art*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2001): 136.

we are usually confronted with a map in a hanging vitrine, often with the helpful

assistance of an arrow or a manicula telling us, "You Are Here." Where is this here, in

the system of the museum? As Kwon argues, the appearance of the gallery as tangible

space required considerations of "its identity composed of a unique combination of

constitutive physical elements: length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and

rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings, or parks; existing conditions of lighting,

ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features." [268] Tellingly, this early

exploration relied on architectural and spatial metaphors.

Mel Bochner's art typified a turn towards locative techniques geared towards the

architectural features of the gallery. His *Measurement Room* (1969) is exemplary of the

new emphasis on space in the gallery. As the story goes, Bochner had taped two pieces of

paper onto his studio wall, measured the distance between them (25 inches) and inscribed

the measurement on a piece of tape. He then removed the paper, only to find the

remaining measurement left behind—a premise with some fascinating implications to

Bochner. He observed that what was left was a "signifier with nothing to signify."[269] Like

some of his contemporaries, Bochner was redeploying the language of mathematics into

art, interested, he writes, in their "clarity and rigor."[270] Unlike many of his

contemporaries, however, Bochner lent no positivist credibility to the mathematical units

he scribbled. Instead, the measurements were considered symbolic of a human need to

translate the world into that which can be understood empirically.

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[268] Kwon, One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity, 85.
[269] *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970*: 33.
[270] Bochner writes, "Mathematical thinking is generally considered the antithesis of artistic thinking, but it is not. The two aspects of mathematical thinking that interest me are its clarity and rigor. These are also the characteristic of the best art." Mel Bochner, "ICA Lecture, 1971" in Mel Bochner, *Solar Systems and Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews, 1965-2007*, 91.

William Raban's 1973 film performance *Take Measure* similarly maps the

dimensions of the film exhibition space, focusing on the distance between the projector

and the screen. However, unlike Bochner's interest in the absurd and arbitrary nature of

measurement, Raban and most of the structural-materialist filmmakers from the London

Filmmakers Cooperative found a more profound meaning and value in the nature of

measurement. Raban's performance forensically counts the space between projector and

screen, a space that is implicitly the site of social reception. Jonathan Walley details *Take*

Measure in the following way:

> In *Take Measure*, the film is loaded into the projector in the usual way, but once it
> is loaded, the feed reel is removed from the forward arm of the projector and
> carefully unspooled toward the screen along the axis of the projector lens. Once
> the person unspooling the reel reaches the screen, he or she cuts the film along the
> frame line that is closest to the exact point where the film reaches the surface of
> the screen and holds the end of the film so that it is taut as it runs from the screen
> all the way back to the projector. The projector is then turned on, revealing that
> the film's sole image is a close-up of 16mm film running through a synchronizer,
> a device used provide an exact footage count when synchronizing an image and
> sound track in post-production. The film was pulled through the synchronizer at
> the exact same rate as the film now moving through the projector, so that the pro-
> filmic strip and the real strip are moving at the same speed: 24 frames per second
> or one foot (40 frames) every 1.6 seconds. Thus, as the real film strip drops to the
> floor and slides back toward the projector, the synchronizer on the screen counts
> off the number of feet the strip is traveling. When the real film strip reaches the
> projector and is about to pass through the gate, the projector is turned off. The
> audience is aware, based on the last number they could see on the synchronizer
> before the screen went dark, of the length of the space they occupy between
> screen and projector.[271]

In this mathematical accounting of space, Raban literalizes the distance between screen

and projector, an important part of the "strange space" of cinema, one normally designed

to envelop the spectator into the filmic illusion.[272] To demarcate that distance through

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[271] Walley diss, 323.
[272] Mark Webber, "Interview with William Raban," *Shoot Shoot Shoot: The First Decade of the London Filmmakers' Cooperative and British Avant-Garde Film, 1966-76*. ed. Mark Webber. London: Lux, 2002: 1.

measurement, and to map the actual dimensions of the cinema space, become important facets of its demystification. *Measurement Room* (1969) and *Take Measure* (1973) map the dimensions of exhibition space to redirect focus from the art-object to the framing devices that dictate the perceptual parameters of aesthetic reception—a threshold for more pointed investigations of the gallery and museum as spaces of cultural confinement.

Robert Smithson's Underground Cinema Cavern

> "We live in frameworks and are surrounded by frames of reference, yet nature dismantles them and returns them to a state where they no longer have integrity." - Robert Smithson, "Art Through the Camera's Eye"

Smithson's characterization of the 1970s as engaging in an "investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded through," strikes a significant resonance with his body of work. For one, it speaks to Smithson's ongoing interests in cinema: he collaborated with partner and artist Nancy Holt and filmmaker Bob Fiore on a number of films, and discussions of cinema are peppered liberally throughout his writing. However, Smithson may have also been gesturing towards the way in which institutionality was increasingly becoming the subject of cinema practices. The spaces of cinema were taken up in Smithson's writings and art works with some frequency. His references to cinema ranged from the importance of schlocky genre cinema to artists like Andy Warhol and Peter Hutchinson, and from what he saw as the technocratic-triumphalism of expanded cinema to experimental screening situations he proposed for his own films. He maintained close friendships with filmmakers (coincidentally serving in the same army unit as John Cassavetes), voraciously read film criticism, and frequented Anthology Film Archives screenings. When assembled together, his many references to cinema point to the moviehouse as a site of aberrant and inventive interpretation, with both deep cynicism

directed towards the art-house cinema and the avant-garde, as well as optimism about radical possibilities for transformation. For example, Smithson extols the virtues of b-movies of the horror and sci-fi variety as potential aesthetic and philosophical engines for artists, in this passage from his essay "Entropy and the New Monuments":

> Some artists see an infinite number of movies. [Peter] Hutchinson, for instance, instead of going to the country to study nature, will go to see a movie on 42nd Street, like "Horror at Party Beach" two or three times and contemplate it for weeks on end. The movies give a ritual pattern to the lives of many artists, and this induces a kind of "low-budget" mysticism, which keeps them in a perpetual trance. The "blood and guts" of horror movies provides for their "organic needs," while the "cold steel" of Sci-fic movies provides for their "inorganic needs." Serious movies are too heavy on "values," and so are dismissed by the more perceptive artists. Such artists have X-ray eyes, and can see through all of that cloddish substance that passes for "the deep and profound" these days.[273]

Film, film culture, and science fiction as a genre would hold a unique and unexpected place in Smithson's art, and may have been responsible for the characterization of land art at the time as "Earthworks." A sci-fi book by Brian W. Aldiss from 1965, if we are to believe Smithson, inspired his monumental urban exploration text "Monuments of Passaic." The origins of the term, Colby Chamberlain points out, may have secreted into Smithson's mind from Manny Farber, who about eight years prior, in his landmark essay "Underground Films," writes that director George Stevens was "working skillfully within the earthworks" of the 1956 film *Giant*.[274]

In 1972, in lieu of sending an art object to the Documenta 5 exhibition, Robert Smithson wrote an essay for the catalogue titled "Cultural Confinement," likening museums to asylums or jails, curators to wardens and art itself as a recursive cultural

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[273] Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 16.

[274] See Colby Chamberlain, "The Moviegoer as Spelunker," (*Cabinet Magazine*, Summer Issue 30, 2008): http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/30/chamberlain.php Accessed 7-14-13.

institution promoting "aesthetic convalescence."[275] Despite sharing the rhetorical

missives of peers seeking to reject the museum altogether, Smithson's attitude was

always one of ambivalence, rather than outright condemnation. Art was about limits, and

the gallery, he thought, could be harnessed through a sleight-of-mind manifested in his

site/non-site dialectic. Smithson would not run from the museum and gallery as some

Earthworkers sought to do.[276] Smithson would stare at it through the corner of his eye at

times, and at others, look at its interiors as if through a telescope, purposefully warping

its spatiality and temporality. Film and photography were integral tools for approaching

the inherent problems of creating remotely located works of art.

Smithson's legacy in the art world of creating earthworks is tied to the concept of

the non-site, a dialectical model for artmaking that traverses both the inside and the

outside of the gallery. If conceptual art was partly thought of by some practitioners and

art historians as dealing with the problem of the art object, of so-called "dematerialization"

and its evisceration of conventional objecthood, then Smithson was also playing with this

process through dialectical principles he would routinely employ. Instead of eviscerating

the notion of the object, he would multiply it, placing in limbo the site of the specific

object through his concept of site and non-site. The site of the art works were often

remotely located physical spaces that had the character of oceanic vastness and boundless

space.[277] For example, the Dia Art foundation, which has preserved *The Spiral Jetty*,

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[275] Smithson, Robert. "Cultural Confinement." *Documenta 5 Exhibition Catalogue.* Kassel, 1972 found in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* 281.
[276] For example, land artists such as Michael Heizer and Dennis Oppenheim often attempted to avoid galleries in the early parts of their careers. Other artists such as Jan Dibbets, Richard Long, Walter de Maria, and Hans Haacke were les circumspect about showing in gallery and museum contexts.
[277] Smithson describes the sense of the uncontainable nature of the site in the interview "Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheimer, Smithson," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings,* 249.

offers visitors a complex set of directions to visit the locale, 2.5 hours from Salt Lake City and located far from gas stations and outside cell phone reception. The non-site, a concept frequently mischaracterized as a form of documentation, is rather a means of multiplying the art object's material form through modes of reproduction, as well as through allegorical cartographic structures that appear like models or maps.

The site-specificity of Smithson's earthworks and the difficulty in reaching the distant and isolated sites of their construction made forms of photographic reproduction necessary for several reasons. First, Smithson's needed some form of proof of the existence of these interventions in a purely pragmatic sense. Otherwise, he would not be making "art" but something closer to outsider architecture. Second, Smithson sought a means to translate site-specific works back into the art gallery and by extension, an art market.[278] Smithson's use of photography could import elements of the site, but were thought of as only part of a larger collection of materials, often including evidence of the geological character of the locale (such as rocks and earth). Photographs were "two-dimensional analogies," while other logical maps were needed to understand the complexities of the site. The non-site in its entirety comprised a "three-dimensional logical picture" of the site, which while abstract, was highly representative.[279]

The 35-minute film made about *The Spiral Jetty* should not be seen as a document of the sculptural work. Instead, the site *The Spiral Jetty* should be seen as a project which, Smithson explained, was "interwoven with the planning for the film, or rather

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[278] See Gary Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and art after Babel.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 56 for discussion of "escaping" markets and that this is more like a dialectical notion than a total escape perceived by Smithson.
[279] All quoted terms here from Smithson's text "A Provisional Theory of Non-Site," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 364.

how they built upon each other and developed in conjunction."[280] More important, however, was Smithson's use of film as an extension of his theory of the non-site. Just as photographs were part of the non-site mappings, Smithson's film practice could offer a more advanced means of representing the history, geology, and spatiality of the site. Just as the non-sites were continuations of the site through different forms of media, film deeply enriched the way a site could be represented, containing the delicious paradox of simulating immanent presence whilst maintaining total absence at the same time. Smithson's stated interest in showing how pre-history is coextensive with our current world could be realized through film's capacity to produce multiple temporalities.[281] He would explain that "Consciousness of the distant past absorbed the time that went into the making of the movie," further emphasizing the notion that film is a time-machine.[282]

But while his sites and non-sites were similarly ambitious in scale, his interrogation of cinema architectures was never fully realized, remaining the domain of footnotes, asides, and models. The clues we have live in a few drawings from Smithson's archives, where we find a taped photograph, two hand drawn diagrams, and the heading "Towards the Development of a Cinema Cavern, or the movie goer as spelunker" Robert Smithson, 1971." Nonetheless, these fragments point to an important intervention in the relation between post-minimal art and cinema.

[280] *Robert Smithson: The Invention of Landscape, Broken Circle/Spiral Hill & Film*, (Koln: Snoeck, 2012): 117.
[281] See Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 151.
[282] Ibid.
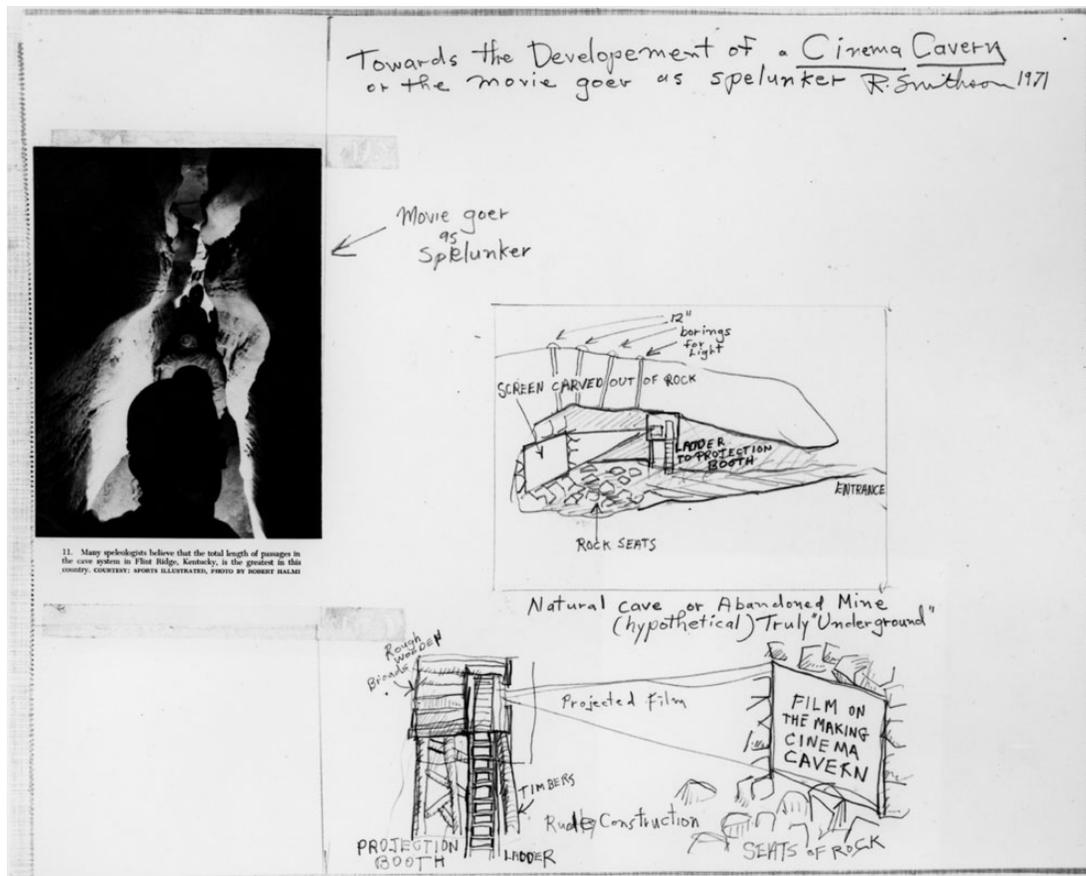
Fig. 8 - Towards the Development of a Cinema Cavern or the Movie Goer as Spelunker (Robert Smithson, 1971).

Smithson elaborated on this project in his essay "A Cinematic Atopia,":

> What I would like to do is build a cinema in a cave or an abandoned mine, and film the process of its construction. That film would be the only film shown in the cave. The projection booth would be made out of crude timbers, the screen carved out of a rock wall and painted white, the seats could be boulders. It would be a truly "underground" cinema. [283]

At first glance, Smithson's cinemagoer as spelunker can read as a petty joke—a dig at the avant-garde's linguistic insistence of its own marginality, a literal underground. But, as Gary Shapiro points out, Smithson "takes jokes very seriously and he transforms what

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[283] Robert Smithson, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. ed. Jack Flam. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 142. This essay originally appeared in *Artforum* in September 1971 alongside essays by Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow, which underlines Smithson's connection to experimental filmmakers during this time.

others take seriously into jokes."[284] We can agree, that this "truly" underground cinema operates in part through the punning polysemic domain of Marcel Duchamp. But I want to look more closely at this project as a crystallization of a number of important assertions about cinema, modernity, and the institutionalization of avant-garde film at the time.

Another important clue to understanding the reasons behind this project lie in an often quoted, and only rarely unpacked statement in the same essay. In the following quotation, which represents the cryptic and coded language Smithson was so fond of using, references to the "expansion" and technological overdrive of some avant-garde practices, as well as the reductivism of structural film are condensed and synthesized into a notion of limbo. Smithson writes:

> It's not hard to consider cinema expanding into a deafening pale abstraction controlled by computers. At the fringes of this expanse one might discover the deteriorated images of Hollis Frampton's *Maxwell's Demon*? After the "structural film" there is the sprawl of entropy. The monad of cinematic limits spills out into a state of stupefaction. We are faced with inventories of limbo.[285]

Smithson underlines an interesting binary in filmmaking during this time, anticipating the historic difficulty in understanding the immense diversity in approaches in experimental film. Working in cinema at a moment characterized both by profound expansion and minimalist reduction, Smithson, in typical fashion, would engineer a wormhole to escape from the reigning aesthetic engines of the moment. While this passage is embedded with a few jokes (specifically in relation to *Maxwell's Demon* and its relation to entropy), Smithson's gesture towards "the sprawl of entropy" importantly frames the cinema cavern between deep time and the avant-garde, which he endowed with its own

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[284] Gary Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and art after Babel.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 182.
[285] Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia," in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 139.

recalcitrant conception of temporality. But it is the "inventories of limbo" that activates the cinema cavern as a project seeking to transform the context of the cinema into a medium. In addition to its religious meanings, limbo, from the Greek word *limbus* describes a margin or border site. This border site is precisely what Smithson will transform from a context into the contents of his cinema model. In the same way that Land artists sought to escape the gallery, a significant contingent of filmmakers working in expanded cinema *and* structural film sought escape from the traditional movie theater (either by transforming the apparatus within it, or by, ironically, moving into the gallery). Just as Smithson heretically embraced the gallery, he would embrace dominant features of the movie-house, albeit in very unusual ways.

Smithson's cavern collapses radically aberrant eras into a single space, emerging as a site where the logics and drives of expanded cinema, as understood through Gene Youngblood, are suspended over an abyss. In literally situating the cinema in a hole in the ground, Smithson will seek to jettison its modernity back to the primal scene of Western art history—the cave. To place a cinema, which at this time was undergoing a love affair with cybernetics, technophilic utopian architectures, and the logic of expansion, within a Paleolithic epoch replete with primitive structural materials like rough-hewn wood, seats made of boulders, and a rock screen, was to collapse the resolute modernity of cinematic technology into the prehistoric. This collapse is achieved by materializing a warped notion of perspective—one superimposing prehistory with modernity, all the while splaying the logics of expansion and reduction that characterized the avant-garde paradigms of cinema at the time. Of critical importance here, and an issue I will elaborate upon over the course of this chapter, is the anthropocentric linkage of

time with progress. Pamela Lee points out that Smithson's essay "Quasi-infinities and the Waning of Space," configures time as principally entropic, as opposed to progressive.[286] As with many of the works I will examine, Smithson's foundational concerns are with pointing to the destructive, collapsing, and apocalyptic traits native to deep time, as opposed to the progressive myths of modernity.

The "inventories of limbo" that follow are more than a taking stock of existing structures. Smithson wanted to solve dilemmas posed by cinema space by circumventing the logics that justify them. In this new fractal logic, the appearance of proximity to an epoch gives way to a sense of profound telescopic distance. Just as so much of Smithson's artworks imagined a desolate, entropied future, he sought to produce a concept of cinema that appeared in present-day as ancient as it would thousands of years from now. Just as he sought to transform the spatial frames of art so that they might reflect a richer concept of time and the entropic destiny of matter, the cinema cavern does the same for the movie-house. These inventions of institutions and exhibition spaces were important facets of Smithson's interest in building "ruins in reverse," or "monuments to entropy."[287]

The cave, then, represents a defiance of the temporal logic of modernism and post-modernism, enacted by positing a paleo-cinematic art. If read through his works and writings, the cinema cavern should be understood as a critique of the institutionalization of experimental film and of the techno-fetishism of expanded cinema, as well as a dialectic engaging multiple epochs of art history. This impulse reiterates Smithson's

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[286] See Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s.* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2004).
[287] Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 72.

Documenta essay, which argued that contemporary art suffered from a convalescence of innovative art practices due to the institutional stasis of the sites they are exhibited within.

Tempos of the Avant-garde

Robert Smithson's cave seeks to retard expanded cinema, but more broadly to attack the avant-garde project as one devoted to the notion of progress. In contrast to this concept, Smithson did not regard art historical developments as linked to an evolutionary process. In one of his most famous labyrinthine collage-research texts, "Quasi-Infinities and the Waning of Space," he writes:

> Most notions of time (progress, evolution, avant-garde) are put in terms of biology. Analogies are drawn between organic biology and technology; the nervous system is extended into electronics, and the muscular system is extended into mechanics. The workings of biology and technology belong not in the domain of art, but to the "useful" time of organic active duration, which is unconscious and mortal.[288]

This passage underlines the persistent linkage between biological notions of evolution and inorganic technologies and conceptualizations of art. The intrinsic issue in so much of Smithson's critiques lay in the anthropocentricity of thinking about time, and the limitations this imposed on every sector of organized social life. As Simon Dell remarks, many of Smithson's themes "are those of a human scale and a human temporality undone. Undone, but not dismissed. Smithson would always remain concerned with what he termed 'actual scale problems.'"[289] It seems appropriate here to turn to Vladimir Nabokov's characterization of the future as "the obsolete in reverse," a perverse formulation that could also be mapped onto museums as a space for the storage of that

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[288] Smithson, *Collected Writings*, 34-5.
[289] Simon Dell, "The Dialectic of Place: The Non-Site and the Limits of Modernism," in *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and his Contemporaries*. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008): 28.

which no longer has use value.

In an excellent characterization of Smithson's art practice, iconologist W.J.T. Mitchell offers a term to describe the collapsing temporality and scale present in so much of his work. Through his discussion of what he calls Paleoart, Mitchell neatly articulates the critique of anthropocentric conceptions of time:

> Paleoart…is an art that engages the present and future of advanced industrial societies and reframes them in the temporal perspective of paleontology and geology. It articulates the past-present contrast central to modernity in its most extreme form, fusing remote scenes of "deep time" with the immediate present. Far from evoking nostalgia for a primitive past, paleoart is engaged with technology, environmental devastation, and questions of entropy, catastrophe, and extinction. It is characterized by a corrosive, mordant irony about pretensions to human greatness.[290]

The delectable irony of Smithson's artificial dating of contemporary institutional forms, is that they only gesture towards the deep past to reinvigorate a focus on the future. Smithson's collapsing of past and present into a single space would manifest a critique of the avant-gardist position. For Smithson, vanguard movements, with their drive for novelty and the prerogatives of the shock-of-the-new, mirrored the very bourgeois institutions they sought to overthrow.[291] The avant-garde had produced a twinning of the priorities of art and capitalism: an imperative to instrumentalize reinvention.

Progress in the avant-garde conception of art had a distinct biological and technological temporality. In Smithson's avant-garde nativity scene, artists inherit the traits of a simultaneous industrial and technological logic of progress:

> At the turn of the century a group of colorful French artists banded together in order to get the jump on the bourgeois notion of progress. This bohemian brand of progress gradually developed into what is sometimes called the avant-garde. Both these notions of duration are no longer absolute modes of "time" for artists. The

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[290] W.J.T. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur Book*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1998), 273
[291] Robert Smithson, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. ed. Jack Flam. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 37.

avant-garde, like progress, is based on an ideological consciousness of time. Time as ideology has produced many uncertain "art histories" with the help of the mass-media. Art histories may be measured in time by books (years), by magazines (months), by newspapers (weeks and days), by radio and TV (days and hours). And at the gallery proper—*instants*! Time is brought to a condition that breaks down into "abstract-objects." The isolated time of the avant-garde has produced its own unavailable history or entropy (35).

Situating the cinema underground would work to constellate a number of competing sensibilities Smithson sought to confer to cinema space, technology and the avant-garde pursuit of novelty and progress he sought to retard (or at very least, confront with his sense of time). In its finality, the teleological character of the cinema as constantly refining its final form, is spun on its head.

The Problem of Museum Space

In dialogue with Robert Smithson, Allan Kaprow, famously a proponent of integrating art and everyday life, reiterates his perspective that museums have alienated audiences, existing primarily to reinforce art's "dead histories." But for Smithson, the dead, penumbral zone of art in the gallery could be harnessed. While he presciently anticipates the incipient development of the museum as a space for "specialized entertainments" that take on "more and more the aspects of a discotheque and less and less the aspects of art,"[292] he observes that the absences and neutral zones are themselves generative forces, facts that must be confronted, rather than cast aside. No totally coherent synthesis of Smithson's attitudes toward the structural housing of art exists because of the volume of contradictory perspectives he offered. The closest available to us may live in Gary Shapiro's characterization of this ambivalence as "strategic rather than principled." In the following quote, Shapiro argues Smithson's engagement with

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[292] Smithson, "What is a museum: A dialogue" (1967) in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 44.

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these institutional forms confronted these sites as the inescapable platforms of art under

capitalism. Unlike many artists who sought escape from the gallery only to inevitably

return, Smithson instead strategically worked within it.

> Smithson's comments on the museum and, even more, his production of nonsites, earthworks, films, and other displacements ought to be seen as oblique or lateral interventions rather than as attempts at creating "new" institutions that could be reabsorbed into the museul culture. In this sense all of Smithson's activity is strategic rather than principled. That is, he is aware that there is no easy way out of the museum (which he often compares to a labyrinth) … for to claim that one is "outside" or "beyond" in these cases is to accept the horizon established by that from which one flees. To insist that one is outside is to be limited by the inside/outside parameters that reinforce the established discourses and institutions for which alternative are sought."[293]

Smithson steadfastly adhered to the principle that art is about limits, and the museum and

gallery provided a matrix for those limits to be circumscribed.[294] In what follows, I will

examine the two principal interventions into museum architecture by Smithson, which

tackle its spatiality and temporality.

Smithson's interventions into the museum had, at a number of junctures, involved

ideas and proposals for various forms of Chthonic architectures—that is, buried

architectures specifically related to ceremonial entombment. For example, Smithson

wanted to play with the museum's mimicry of tomb furniture, its dual status as

"discarding old things all the while retaining them."[295] If the museum and gallery were to

become the site of art's mummification, he sought to suture it further, recapitulating

architect Philip Johnson's decision to bury a museum underground. For example,

Smithson planned for a museum adjacent to *The Spiral Jetty*, and plotted in his text

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[293] Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel*, 49.
[294] Smithson, *Collected Writings*, 244.
[295] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1970): 78. Cited in Smithson, "Some Void Thoughts on Museums" in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 41.

"Museum of the Void," to establish *paramuseums* "dedicated to various forms of absence."[296] In his sketches of invented museums and existing galleries included below, Ann Reynolds says that Smithson is mimicking the "architectures of death"[297] through various forms of burial and entombment. Nowhere is this more visible than in his drawing, "The Gallery Interior as a Tragic Site," (Fig. 11) in which the floor plans of four New York galleries illustrate a mindless homogeneity, their corridors labeled by Smithson with terms Egyptologists use to label pyramids, with chambers and ante-chambers. But these drawings and models should not be understood as plots for annihilation; they were both acknowledgements of, and collaborations with entropy.[298] The mere mapping of the museum in the vernacular of the pyramid is nearly identical to burying the cinema in a cave—and reiterates the heuristic device he so often uses, of remapping the contemporary onto the ancient as a way of understanding our present in relation to our future.

[296] Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel*, 42.
[297] Ann Reynolds, *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 43.
[298] Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 256.
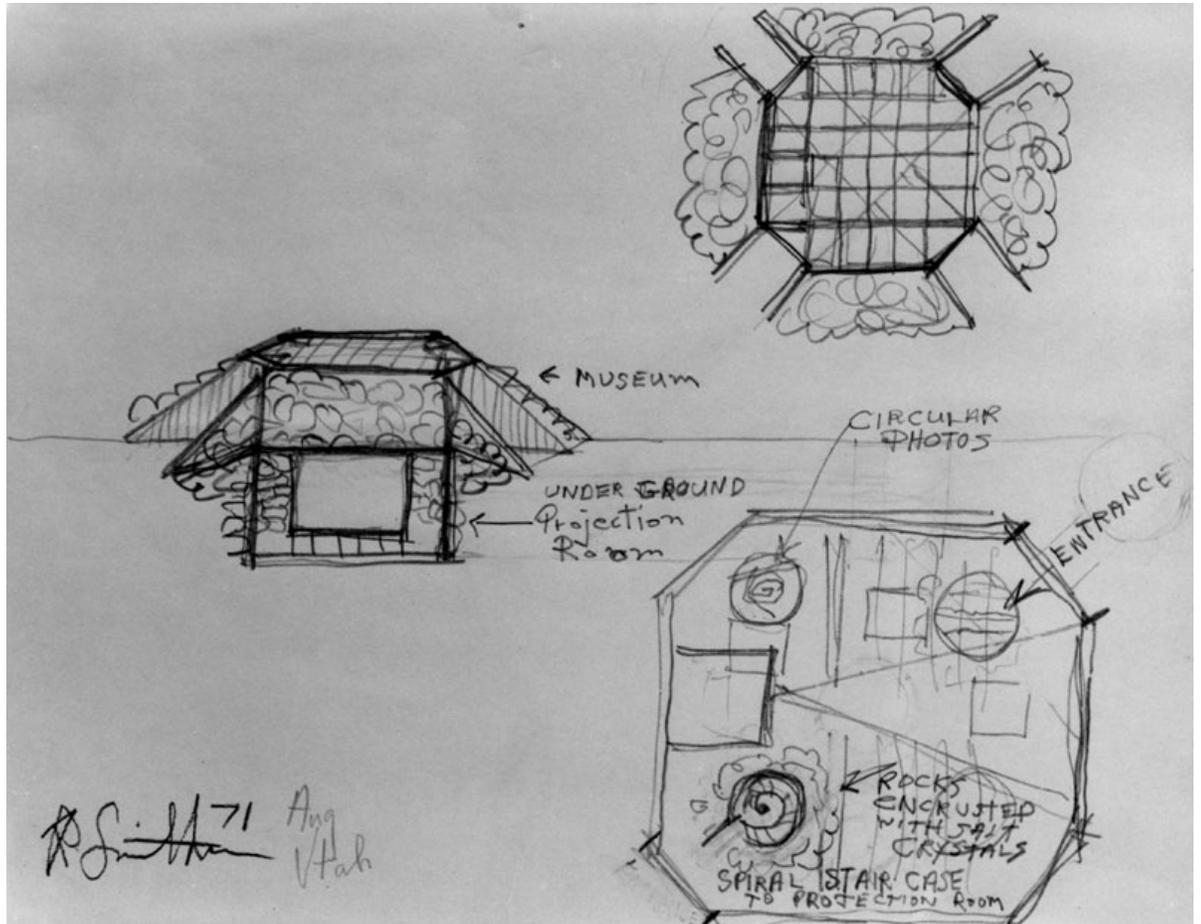
Fig. 9 - *Underground Projection Room*, sometimes referred to as *Plan for a Museum Concerning Spiral Jetty* (Robert Smithson, 1971).

Fig. 10 - *Museum of the Void*, (Robert Smithson 1966-68).
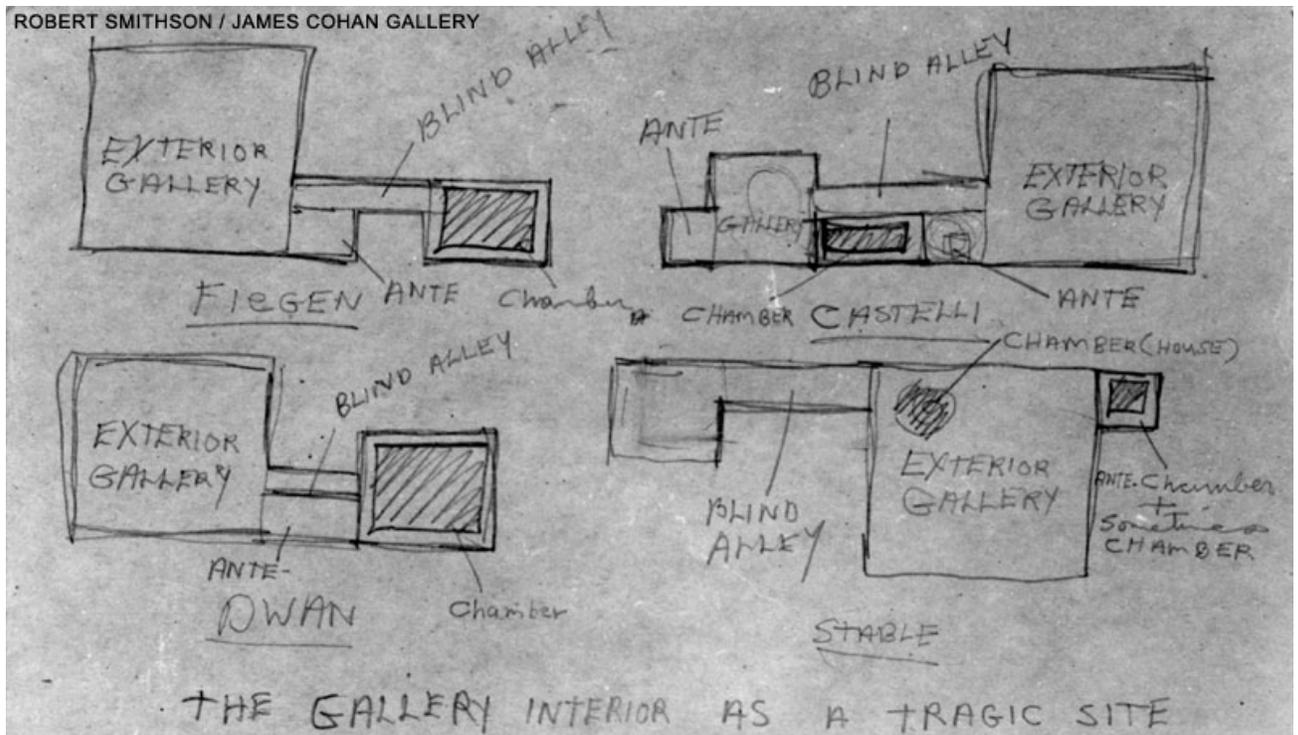
Fig. 11 - *The Gallery Interior as a Tragic Site*, (Robert Smithson n.d.).

In addition to his critique of the museum as presenting an anthropocentric notion of time as progressive rather than entropic, Smithson equally emphasized a failure of the museum to look forward to the future. This blind spot critically announces the museum's limited understanding of time as rooted in only past and present. Gary Shapiro writes:

> A walk through a museum becomes a radically abbreviated form of mankind's march through history […] The museum […] pays its respect to the time stream while wanting to bring it to an end. For to confine, enclose, and arrange in the museum is to suppose that a final vantage point has been attained from which we can survey the sense of the past.[299]

The synthesis of Smithson's dialectical artmaking practice might be understood as a form of estranging us from our contemporary condition by suturing the present in the deep past. The result of this is to help us further imagine the "now" from another vantage point—the deep future. The political implications of this notion are more relevant now than ever

[299] Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel*, 48.

given our current environmental crisis. This idea also links Smithson to many significant

critiques of capitalism as producing a psychology of perpetual present-ness, of forgetting

the past, and ignoring the implications for the future.[300]The radically abbreviated history

of the museum is likely a byproduct of its 19th century origins. This period had yet to

locate either the deep prehistory of the dinosaur, or to begin imagining a highly

industrialized future.[301] Insofar as he felt art history would reinforce an impoverished and

anthropocentric notion of time, Smithson looks to play with this terminal perspective, by

inventing anachronistic freefall. Sven Lutticken notes, "For Smithson an art history that

does not have dinosaurs stalking in between the sculptures is pointless, and art-historical

teleologies open up not onto the MoMA but onto entropic-apocalyptic wastelands."[302] If

the museum creates the illusion of stabilizing the morass of time, all that is left to do is

subsume it. Through buried architecture, Smithson will literally entrench the museum

into the geological time-scale.

Many contemporaneous critics situate the museum outside of time. Brian

O'Doherty refers to the gallery as both "a protomuseum with a direct link to the timeless"

and "a place deprived of location."[303] In his formulation, the modernist white cube sought

to "bleach out the past and at the same time control the future by appealing to supposedly

transcendental modes of presence and power."[304] Kwon describes this power as an

attempt at dissociation between the gallery and the world, where this abstract space could

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[300] The most famed proposal of this idea comes from Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), but has been reconfigured importantly in Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Hants: O Books, 2009).
[301] Smithson, "A Museum in the Vicinity of Language," *Collected Writings*: 85.
[302] Sven Lutticken, with Eric de Bruyn, "In the Vicinity of...A Dialogue on Broken Circle/Spiral Hill and/as Cinema," in *Robert Smithson: Art in Continual Movement*, eds. Ingrid Commandeur and Truy van Riemsdijk-Zandee, (Amsterdam: Alauda Publications, 2012), 119.
[303] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 80.
[304] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 11.

further "the institution's idealist imperative of rendering itself and its hierarchization of values 'objective,' 'disinterested,' and 'true.'"[305] Douglas Crimp argues that time has only a recursive function in the museum, where "art was made to appear autonomous, alienated, something apart, referring only to its own internal history and dynamics."[306] In synthesizing some of these ideas of the timelessness and spacelessness of the gallery, Erika Balsom concludes, "This erasure of historical contingency in favor of the appearance of essence and eternity has a name: myth."[307] Smithson's project then, reproduces this myth in a preposterous superimposition of the contemporary art and film world, into the ritualized architecture of ancient Egypt and the prehistoric domiciles of cave dwellers, respectively.

Ironically The Museum of Natural History in New York gave Smithson and his compatriot Mel Bochner one of the temporal antidotes they sought. Located there, in a single room, was the phenomenal coupling of caveman and spaceman[308] in a single exhibit on the history of humanity. The Hayden planetarium in the same museum would similarly provide profoundly aberrant notions of scale. In their collaborative visual essay, "The Domain of the Great Bear," Bochner and Smithson highlight a sign hanging above an exit that reads: "Solar System & Rest Rooms" with a manicula pointing the way.[309] Smithson must have been tickled pink by how this banal signage could be read as a cosmological map.

305 Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 88.
306 Douglas Crimp, On the Museum's Ruins. (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1993): 13.
307 Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema*, 39.
308 Smithson, *Collected Writings*, 15
309 Robert Smithson and Mel Bochner, "The Domain of the Great Bear" in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 27.
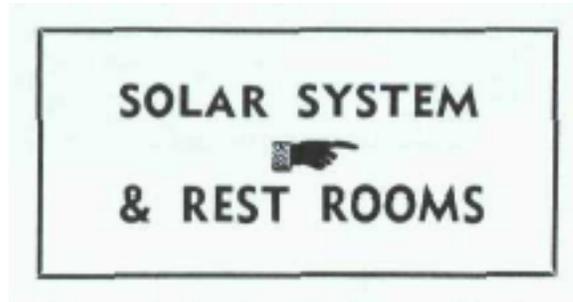
Fig. 12 - Image from "The Domain of the Great Bear" (Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson, 1966).

Important psychic operations come into play here. Smithson is not engaged in a side-by-side juxtaposition, but rather in superimposing two ideas onto one another. This warping of scale telescopes through space and between times or eras. The juxtaposition of Spaceman and Caveman, Solar System and Rest Room, produce vertigos of scale which throw perspective headlong into the morass of the infinite and the miniscule, the deep past and unfathomable future, so that no decisive point of origin may be found. Smithson makes numerous references to deploying inversions of scale (linguistic and otherwise) as a strategic perspectival approach to reinvigorate or penetrate concepts.[310]

Film held, for Smithson, the phenomenological key to scalar and temporal transformations. Having the incredible capacity to condense radically aberrant periods of time, and to traverse space later presented in a single locale, the medium uniquely offered a means to enact elements of his philosophical outlook.

Carlton Evans has synthesized a number of critical moments in which Smithson articulates this connection:

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[310] Two quotes stick out here. Smithson writes that There is no reason why one shouldn't look at art through a telescope. (Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings,* 117). In a discussion of broken circle/spiral hill, he writes, "This island might appear big, but in fact it's very tiny, so that you have this telescoping back and forth from both ends of the telescope; you can conceive of it as a very large work, like one particle on the island might be conceived as being a gigantic tumulus. . . . The particle on the island takes on an enormity. Whereas the island itself is just a dot" (Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings,* 203).

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Smithson was able to draw connections between cinema and his earthworks through their mutual manipulation of scale. He noted that with earthworks and film, scale changes with shifting visual perspectives, calling into question the point from which an object ought to be viewed. Smithson even conflated earthworks and cinema in discussing *Broken Circle*, a work built in Emmen, Holland in 1971, remarking that "I don't see it as an object. What you have there are really different scale changes. Speaking in terms of cinema, you have close, medium and long views. Scale becomes a matter of interchangeable distances." Elsewhere Smithson noted that in films "scale inflates or deflates into uneasy dimensions," causing the spectator to "wander between the towering and the bottomless."[311]

Here again, Smithson gestures towards film as a means of achieving multiple perspectives and vantage points, to collapse scale and temporality. A key to dissecting Smithson's at times shocking writing style as well as his singularity as an artist, lay in his interest in subverting prescribed spatial scale (with Earthworks that could dwarf monuments) and temporal vantage point (in eviscerating the logic of the avant-gardes).

The Ancient Art of Cinema

For Smithson, cinema was at once a tragic profanation and a munificent time-machine. Insofar as film returns us to the chaos of temporal and spatial displacement, the architecture of the cinema is one in which time is eclipsed. Smithson says as much when he condemns the institutional settings of film, its textures and architectures as a form of sensory-deprivation which excises life-experience in the following passage:

> Even more of a mental conditioner than the movies, is the actual movie house. Especially the "moderne" interior architecture of the new "art-houses" like Cinema I and II, 57th St. Lincoln Art Theatre, the Coronet, Cinema Rendezvous, the Cinema Village, the Baronet, the Festival, and the Murray Hill. Instead of the crummy baroque and rococo of the 42nd Street theaters, we get the "padded cell" look, the "stripped down" look, or the "good-taste" look. The physical confinement of the dark box-like room indirectly conditions the mind. Even the place where you buy your ticket is called a "box-office." The lobbies are usually full of box-type fixtures like the soda-machine, the candy counter, and telephone

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[311] Carlton Evans. "Sight/Non-site: Robert Smithson's Dialectics of Vision." Dissertation, Stanford University, 2005.

booths. Time is compressed or stopped inside the movie house, and this in turn provides the viewer with an entropic condition. To spend time in a movie house is to make a "hole" in one's life. [312]

Smithson refers here to two spatial problems—one is the box and the other is a hole. But while the box is specifically configured as spatial, the hole is temporal. Carlton Evans remarks that the "atopia" referred to in Smithson's essay of the same name point to a "directionless, timeless environment, without clear or reliable markers."[313] Like the museum and gallery, cinema space is constructed as existing outside of time, and lacking in sitedness. Prior to inventing the cinema cavern model, Smithson proposed a number of radical screening situations that would synthesize new architectural possibilities in order to grant a sitedness to the cinematic exhibition experience. First appearing to ponder this question in an interview after finishing *The Spiral Jetty*, Smithson speculates on screening the film on the Staten Island Ferry: "I am also interested in projection sites. Where and how movies are shown strikes me as important. Actually, I would like to show my film *Spiral Jetty* on the Staten Island Ferry. The ferryboat could sail out to the middle of the harbor, than sail back to the port in a spiraling voyage—while the film was showing."[314] Smithson also proposed an underground museum at the site of the Spiral Jetty, accessed by spiral staircase in a way not unlike his model for an underground cinema.

A short digression is worthwhile here, to acknowledge Smithson's paranoid, if not wholly apocalyptic, linking of cinema to a simulacral notion of reality. In one essay, Smithson writes,

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[312] Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 17.
[313] Carlton Evans, *Sight/Non-Site: Robert Smithson's Dialectics of Vision*, (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005): 177.
[314] Smithson, *Robert Smithson:* Collected Writings: 261

It seems that "the war babies,' those born after 1937-8 were 'Born Dead'—to use a motto favored by the Hell's Angels. The philosophism of 'reality' ended some time after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ovens cooled down. Cinematic 'appearance' took over completely sometime in the late 50s. 'Nature' falls into an *infinite series* of movie 'stills'—we get what Marshall McLuhan calls 'The Reel World.'[315]

This quotation suggests Smithson's view of technological progress as a harbinger of doom, and as a veil over reality itself. In this way, we might see his persistent gesturing towards the future as marching towards entropy not merely through the laws of physics, but as an inevitable feature of human industry, invention, and destruction.

While Smithson plans to bury the museum, to import it into deep time and advance its entropic return, he will place the cinema in the cave to address cinematic technologies specifically. To situate the cinema, that emblem of modernity, in the birthplace of Western art, the cave, performs the double operation of primitivizing cinema, and forcing a future perspective where what, from a present vantage point, is inextricably tied to modernity, will eventually itself become ancient history. In his *Artforum* essay on *The Spiral Jetty*, Smithson remarks:

Everything about movies and moviemaking is archaic and crude. One is transported by this Archeozoic medium into the earliest known geological eras. The movieola becomes a "time machine" that transforms trucks into dinosaurs. Fiore [Smithson's cameraman] pulled lengths of film out of the movieola with the grace of a Neanderthal pulling intestines from a slaughtered mammoth."[316]

This passage typifies the collapsing incurred in the cave-cinema, with its primitive structural materials and anachronistic melding of technologies. In other words, he looks forward by looking back, embedding the Archeozoic in the Paleolithic. He would also superimpose the work of the film editor onto that of the paleontologist engaged in

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[315] Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 26. Emphasis in original.
[316] Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 150.

excavation. In this sense, Smithson's time-warpings are strikingly similar to a fabulation Hollis Frampton would later make in his essay, "A Stipulation of Terms from Maternal Hopi." This short text hypothesizes the archeological findings of a proto-cinematic technology near Oaxaca and Tehuantepec. In it, an ancient society, utilizing flattened dog intestines, carve pictograms and glyphs which are back-lit by the sun through a complex matrix of interconnected mirrors to cast images onto cave walls. Interestingly, this is but one of a number of speculations on cinema and time between Smithson and Frampton that appear markedly similar.[317]

Both of these speculative scenarios use anachronistic ancient contexts to think about cinema. Both work towards an escape from the teleological conception of art associated with avant-gardes, and the potential conflation of the drive towards progress with technological development. Both of these speculative interjections of cinematic technology into anachronistic ancient contexts provide strategic advantages in thinking about cinema. For one, these ideas imagine an escape from the teleological conception of art associated with avant-gardes, and the potential conflation of the drive towards progress with technological development. As Smithson writes of his Spiral Jetty, "I needed a map that would show the prehistoric world as coextensive with the world I existed in."[318] This co-temporal collapse is precisely what is visible in the cinema cavern.

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[317] Smithson wrote: "The ultimate film goer would be a captive of sloth. Sitting constantly in a movie house, among the flickering shadows, his perception would take on a kind of sluggishness. He would be the hermit dwelling among the elsewheres, foregoing the salvation of reality." (Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia." In *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, This is markedly similar to Frampton's "A Pentagram for Conjuring Narrative" which imagines two subjects, one whose life is rigorously recorded, and another confined to a movie theater to watch the surveilled life of the other.

[318] Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 151.

The History, Topology, and Temporality of the Cave

"The perspectivism of my esthetic has caved-in. . . . The continuous dimensions of space with all its certainties and rationalisms have broken through my consciousness into the discontinuous dimensions of time where certainties and rationalisms have little value. The calamitous regions of time are far from the comforts of space."[319] – Robert Smithson

Assembled together, Smithson's writings on film paint a picture of cinema space as a coma inducing, temporally voiding, and mentally conditioning apparatus. Why then, would he construct a cinema bearing such resemblance to Plato's Allegory of the Cave? There are a number of interesting possibilities. Thomas McEvilley has argued that the transcendental space of the modernist museum represents another world rather than our own. This is a thoroughly Platonic concept, especially as it implies a "hidden controlling structure behind modernist aesthetics" derived from a "higher metaphysical realm where form, shining attenuated and abstract like mathematics, is utterly disconnected from the life of human experience."[320] Insofar as the gallery strives for a comprehensively constructed and highly disparate experience divorced from the spatio-temporal reality of everyday life, Smithson may be gesturing towards Plato's chained subjects, who are both oblivious to their imprisonment and seduced by the apparatus before them. This Platonic subject is one of the catalytic concepts in the New Left philosophy contemporaneous to Smithson's generation of artist, as espoused in texts such as *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1964), *Eclipse of Reason* (Horkheimer, 1947), and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944). These writings gesture towards an oblivious, child-like subject mindlessly seeking stimulation in a totally administered control society. Smithson had historically worked as an artist to more deeply embed the problematic nature of

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[319] Smithson, "The Shape of the Future and Memory," *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, 332–333.*
[320] Thomas McEvilley, "Introduction" in Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 11.

exhibition into his critiques. Transforming the museum into a tomb is an exemplary

gesture of this strategy. To fully embed the cinema into the dream-space and simulation

of Plato's cave further solidifies this concept, though Smithson never once mentions

Plato's allegory as a reference point. There are, however, other resonances that are

difficult to ignore.

For example, a side-by-side analysis of the cavern's diagram and any of the many

diagrams offered by philosophers of Plato's cave show profound visual similitude.
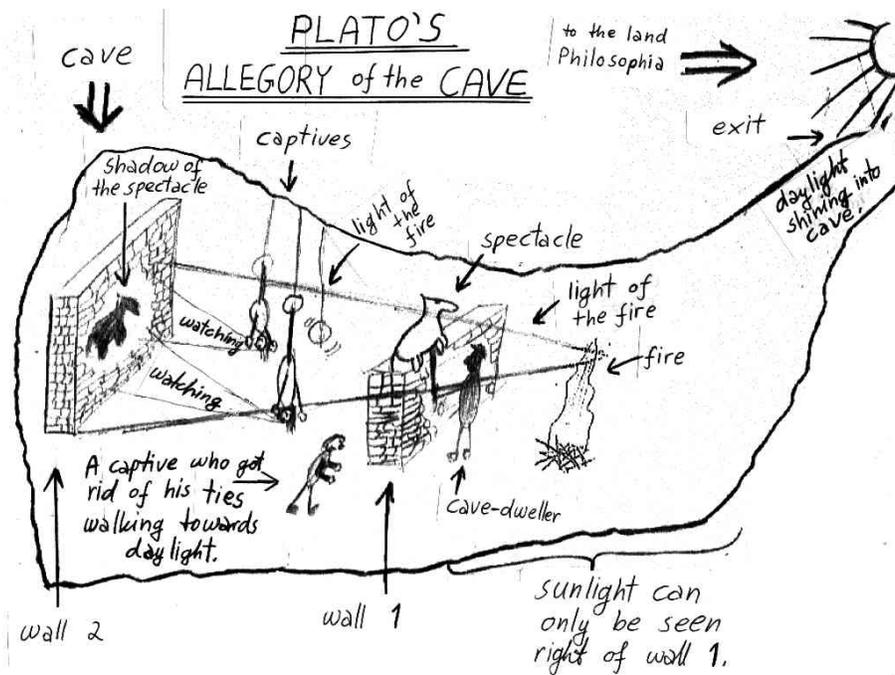

Fig. 13 – Diagram of Plato's Allegory of the Cave (Author Unknown, n.d.)[321]

While Smithson's plan occurs nearly five years prior to its publication, Jean-Louis

Baudry's essay, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of

Reality in Cinema" (1975), characterizes viewing cinema as a dream-screen comparable

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[321] http://dm.ncl.ac.uk/5mg3/2009/12/ accessed 2-21-14.

to that of Plato's cave allegory and Smithson's description of the "coma inducing" nature of narrative cinema. Baudry's famous essay, which configures the spectator as a kind of prisoner tied to the architectural vernaculars and social orthodoxies prescribed by the cinema, relies on Plato's cave allegory to further its premises. The cave as a site for a cinema appears to be bound up in Smithson's overdetermined dialectical thinking in its many levels of meaning. Beyond his interest in the ancient temporality of caves, Smithson extolled their spatial virtues in terms that are decidedly topological, eschewing architectonic notions of space. Lars Spuybroek provides an excellent distinction between the two concepts, writing: "Architecture thinks tectonically, simply meaning that if something is a wall it is not a floor. In other words, tectonics distinguish among elements. Conversely, topological systems are based on gradations, distortions, and space as opposed to objects."[322]

With the 1960s model of institutional critique so deeply embedded in questions of how artists function "inside" and "outside" institutions, the cave would be an attractive refusal of such a binary. Buried spaces that occur with or without human intervention often blur the distinction of inside and outside. Smithson was interested in mines, for example, because of their lack of architectonic and cleanly bifurcated zones. He writes:

> Even if there was the notion of the inside and the outside; in a sense it's the containment within the containment of the room. Another reason I'm going into the mines is that there are no ideal walls or floors; it's essentially crumbling. All the walls, and all the floors are in a state of crumble—the rectilinearity of the square of the work in contrast to the disruption of the interior of the mine. If you take a pure gallery space that's like an ideal space, now you can extend crumbling material throughout the gallery that is still contained by the gallery. With the

[322] Lars Spuybroek. "The Topological Interstitial Field" in *Terratorial Investigations*. Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager Eds. Lier en Boog, Series of Philossopy of Art and Art Theory, Volume 14. Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam: 1999: (pp. 139-144): 140.

nonsite the experience goes beyond, outside the gallery. It doesn't really go beyond it, because you are thrown back into that space.[323]

This site of crumbling echoes an idea Smithson would employ called dedifferentiation—an idea that dialectical thinking produces overlaps. Whereas Euclidean geometry, like architectonics, is concerned with finite shapes, distinct borders, walls that behave as walls, and floors that behave as floors, the cave produces a distinctly topological spatial environment—one where the precise points defining ceiling, floor, wall, threshold, door, are thrown into turmoil.

Like the vertigos of scale previously described, Smithson superimposes inside and outside through a use of topological space, refusing the architectural space of the gallery. Richard Vinograd's description of caves in relation to topology and temporality is useful as it highlights the overlapping functionality and blurring of limits present in topological architectures:

> Topologically, the cave or cavern is an invaginated surface, continuous with its exterior, so that objects within it are in one sense in contact with those outside. This prefigures the curious multiplicity of the archaeological object, which simultaneously inhabits a continuum of ancient, intermediate, and recent historical times and stages… objects in the cave are pre-historical, historical, and post-historical if not at once, then in close succession, and in both the conventional and procedural senses.[324]

We can read Smithson's use of the cave in many ways, as a Niagara of temporality foisted upon modern technology, but also as a means of mapping deep time all in the efforts of subverting anthropocentric concepts of temporality.

While I have made much of Smithson's long view of time, the cinema cavern clearly has more immediate designs as well. To historicize the present might aid in seeing

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[323] Smithson, Four Conversations between Dennis Wheeler and Robert Smithson," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings,* 204.

[324] Richard Vinograd, "Art Historical Topologies," Art Bulletin LXXVI/4 (Winter, 1994): 594.

through the fog and illegibility of the contemporary. It allows for more than just critical distance; it reroutes art history altogether producing all manner of speculative possibilities. This occurs at the site of the art object's housing—its "site" and production of "sight." While institutional critique was often couched in the shifting political contexts of the present, Smithson's moves are more oblique. Instead, the now is subsumed by a flood of implied temporality, and embedded deep within the strata of prehistory. These are spatializations of time that directly counter the temporal vacuums of the museum. It would appear that in some sense, the cavern's very existence might be an aesthetic engine for rethinking cinematic practices. As a mode of institutional critique, Smithson's model is unusual, not due to its radicality, but because it would propose an alternative to existing institutional forms.

Chapter Four – "She Objected": Lis Rhodes and the *Film as Film* Exhibition

"Who were the Guggenheims? The Fricks? The Whitneys? Why should artists mouth these names daily?[325]   – Rudolf Baranik

"As to tactics, the first objective should be to find out exactly who controls, behind the scenes, the policies of the museums and other art institutions."[326]
                                                                                    ‒ Jean Toche

In 1969, Hollis Frampton, Ken Jacobs, and Michael Snow co-signed a letter read at the Open Hearing Committee for the Art Workers' Coalition, in preparation for an imminent artists' strike at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The letter makes explicit demands surrounding the museum's public responsibilities and suggests: "In view of its tax-exempt status as a nonprofit organization, the Museum is, like churches, quite obviously supported by the public. Therefore, like churches, it should limit its admission charge to a voluntary donation."[327] The text goes on to make several demands, which issue clarifications and distinctions between the exhibition, archiving, and purchasing of films in the museum's permanent collection, and its activities with other media. Among these very specific interventions into the MoMA's treatment of filmmakers and demands for change in its film department,[328] the text concludes with a remarkable call for artist's to take up cooperative institutional frameworks that filmmakers had already established:

> Finally, we wish to state, both as reminder to the Museum, and as encouragement to those working in other arts and now anxiously considering alternatives to the Museum-and-gallery hierarchy, that film-makers long ago abandoned all hope of

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[325] *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and his Contemporaries*. ed. Simon Dell. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008): 136.

[326] Art Workers Coalition, *First Open Hearing Transcript*, Section 10, p.1. Available at http://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf Accessed 4-12-13.

[327] Art Workers Coalition, *First Open Hearing Transcript*, Section 10, p.2

[328] The letter demands the museum offer free admission, a more explicit engagement with its public supporters, and an autonomous film department, specifically outlining a pay scale for the purchasing of artist's films, archival practices, and exhibition requirements.

using the established commercial channels for distribution and exhibition. We have our own cooperative distributors, our own theaters, our own publications and lecture bureau, -- but above all, our own free and uncoerced judgment of what may be done with our work, by whom, how and when. We feel that we best serve our own needs, and, ultimately, those of the community as a whole, by these means. […] What we do not have is a Museum, an impersonal public repository where our most permanent work will be maintained in trust for the whole people, to teach, to move, and to delight them.[329]

Notable for being an early record of antagonism between experimental filmmakers and the museums that exhibited their work, it is also remarkable for underlining contradictions and clashes between the culture of exhibiting cinema and the museum's historical relationship with other forms of art. The letter conveys fundamental differences in the culture of how filmmakers are compensated and collected, and how their work is exhibited. This would come to be a decisive moment in the overlapping history of institutional critique and the exhibition of cinema.

While the architectural projects in Chapter Three grappled with the gallery's essences, vernaculars, and spatial dynamics, they did little to threaten the gallery's autonomy over the artist and the exhibition of their work. The most vehemently aggressive and threatening form of institutional critique operated as investigations of the social, political, and economic frameworks of the art world itself, as a historical nexus for power extending beyond art activities and into the larger *dispositif* of socio-political life. The Vietnam War helped crystallize beyond any doubt the similitude between the patron class, museum boards of trustees, donors, and sponsors of art institutions with the many tentacles of the military industrial complex, foreign policymaking, and political and economic power. Carl Andre remarked at the time that the board members running the

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[329] Art Workers Coalition, *First Open Hearing Transcript*, Section 10, p.2

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largest American museums were also "exactly the same people who devised American foreign policy over the last 25 years. Man for man they are the same."[330]

Economic interventions looked towards the financial apparatus undergirding the museum, which by the mid 20th century had become the province of an emerging corporate philanthropy replacing the patron model. Intervening or upsetting this system involved the most risk for artists, with the potential to alienate those funding the museum, the museum board and curatorial department, and ultimately the artist's own buyers. This is characterized as institutional critique's imperatives towards, as Blake Stimson describes it, "shoot[ing] yourself in the foot."[331] At its best, the artists here were not merely a conduit for a finger-wagging critical reproach of the museum, but rather identifying themselves as part of a network of exploitation, seeking to ask those questions which might help further to understand this nexus of power, and how one operates within its networks. The critical shift at this moment, was the emergence of a new paradigm for artisanal practices – wherein the language and structural features of labour are imported into the field of art making.

The self-identification of artists as labourers, insofar as they acknowledge themselves as manual/wage labourers, and that they expect payment, benefits, and protections for their subsistence, begins in earnest in the late 1960s.[332] Still, there can be no overstating the important precedents set by Soviet Constructivists and Productivists, first in solidifying the shared traits of labour and art production, and second operating as

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[330] Siegel, Jeanne. "Carl Andre: Artworker," Studio International, (Vol. 180, No. 927 November 1970), 177.

[331] Stimson, "What Was Institutional Critique?" in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2009): 25.

[332] For an exhaustive and enlightening look at this history, see John G. Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (New York : Verso, 2007).

models for organizations like The Art Workers Coalition. In their activities, we find some of the most consequential attempts by visual artists to organize themselves as a coherent labour force with specific demands for legal and economic protections and concerted efforts to diversify art institutions.

In this chapter, I extend discussions of institutional critique into an often ignored milieu, into sites of tangible antagonism between the artist and institution as opposed to projects aimed at demystification alone. Examining strategies of artists to literalize struggles with the museum through removal and withdrawal (voluntarily or otherwise), this chapter looks at a constellation of documentary practice, institutional critique, feminism, and cinema. First, I will briefly examine the relatively small number of texts explicitly relating cinematic practices to institutional critique. Second, I attempt to more succinctly define and demystify institutional critique itself by clarifying its antagonisms as part of a symbiotic relationship between artist and institution. Third, I chart the move from architectural interventions towards larger socio-political projects by detailing a history of one tendency in the spatial politics of institutional critique characterized by the voiding, emptying, and closing of exhibition space over the course of two decades of work. Finally, I offer a case-study of Lis Rhodes and her collaborators' intervention at the Hayward Gallery in London, at the 1979 exhibition "Film as Film."[333] Of central import to this case study is the application of feminist artmaking philosophies and practices to inform a politics of institutional critique that emerged organically from the exhibition itself. In the Rhodes collaboration, we see reflexive documentary practice paired with a

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[333] Her collaborators include Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy, and Susan Stein. I have focused on Lis Rhodes due to the text she wrote contributing to the exhibition catalogue.

feminist reorientation of the art audience towards both historical canons of filmmaking and the apparatus of the gallery.

In the 1968 exhibition Acción del Encierro (Confinement Action), Graciela Carnevale waited until her gallery opening in Rosario, Argentina was full, and promptly left, locking the door behind her. Slowly her visitors became aware that all exits had been locked and that even the front gallery window had been covered, further isolating them inside. An hour passed before the public had finally been incited to the "exemplary violence"[334] Carnevale had hoped for, and broke through the glass window of the gallery—into the street. [335] This literalized captivity and subsequent emancipation illustrates the contemporary impetus to render the gallery space a contested site of exchange between artist and public, and should more specifically be contextualized within the repressive political realities of Argentina during its military dictatorship. Here the gallery space is not merely a stockade molding artist and audience. The gallery is the arterial threshold between audience and artist, which is both a site of access for the audience and alienation for the artist, and sometimes the reverse. Carnevale's action is a critical moment for a genus of institutional critique wherein the contested nature of gallery space is thematized and/or literalized by the artist.

The concept of the "inside" and "outside" were emblematic of a number of

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[334] Grant Kester, "The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part I: Spontaneity and Consciousness in Revolutionary Theory" http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-sound-of-breaking-glass-part-i-spontaneity-and-consciousness-in-revolutionary-theory/ (Accessed 4-18-12)

[335] Lippard, *6 Years*, 49. Carnevale has elsewhere written on the subject of this action: "On a daily basis we passively submit, through fear, connivance and complicity, to all the degrees of violence, from the most subtle and degrading violence that coerces our thinking via communications media broadcasting false contents provided by their owners, to the most provocative and scandalous violence exerted on a student's life." (Graciela Carnevale, catalogue text, "Cico de Arte Experimental," in Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, Del Di Tella a "Tucuman Arde" (Buenos Aires, El Cielo Por Asalto, 2000), p. 22. Found in Brian Holmes, Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2008).

imperatives in 1950s and 1960s art which had culminated in what would later be called "institutional critique."[336] Historical avant-gardes have, as Peter Burger argues in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, suffused the 'praxis of life' with art and took aim at the development of the art institution. However, it is not until the writing and workings of Allan Kaprow that this concept is bonded with open hostility towards the museum/gallery institution. In a dialogue with Robert Smithson, Allan Kaprow conveys his deep suspicion of the museum as a "penumbral zone" where art goes to die,[337] and advocates for the liquidation of museum holdings, even going so far as to argue for the transformation of the Guggenheim building into a sculpture. But while Kaprow articulates a desire to escape from the gallery altogether, Smithson instead expresses a desire (in this exchange and elsewhere) to collaborate with the museum/gallery space and its nullifying force. If, as put forth in Chapter Three, Smithson had engineered a number of models for how this might be realized, I will examine at length how these were put into practice by Yves Klein, Daniel Buren, Robert Barry, and finally Lis Rhodes.

Being Framed: On Institutional Critique's Myth of the Heroic Artist

"Every time we speak of the 'institution' as other than 'us,' we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions."[338] – Andrea Fraser

"There is nothing, not even the lint on your sweater, that's not touched by the market. Get over it."[339] – Barbara Kruger

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[336] The term is widely attributed to Andrea Fraser who published the turn-of-phrase in her essay on Louise Lawler titled "In and Out of Place." *Art in America* (June 1985): 124.

[337] See *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, "What is a Museum: A Dialogue with Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson." : p. 44 Kaprow is quoted stating "The romance of the studio, like that of the gallery and museum, will probably disappear in time. But meanwhile the rest of the world has become endlessly available." Godfrey, Tony. *Conceptual Art*. (London: Phaidon 1998): 88.

[338] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*: 416.

[339] Hal Foster quoting Barbara Kruger. Christopher Bollen, "Interview with Hal Foster," http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/hal-foster-the-insiders#_. Accessed 1/12/15.

On its face, the history of institutional critique emerging in the late 1960s has a heroic tenor, pitting a principled artist against institutions invested only in self-preservation and reinforcing a status quo. Indeed, such a mythology has benefited many artworks and critical texts, but the actual careers and institutional affiliations of these artists reflect a very different history, marked by a persistent return to the gallery and museum system. Furthermore, some superficial readings of institutional critique sketch a heroic posture for the artist as 'biting the hand that feeds them.' In stark contrast to this, the body of writings forming the unofficial canon on the subject, are steeped in an understanding that the artist must operate from within the apparatus of the art world – one from which they are not excluded and cannot reasonably be extricated. This expanded conceptualization of "the institution" was tied in part to Foucault's concept of governmentality and Althusser's apparatus theory adapted in the art world to refer to, according to Andrea Fraser, "the entire field of art as a social universe" which includes "lookers, buyers, dealers, and makers" as well as the academy, and all manner of publicity, scholarship, criticism, and reception.[340]

First, I'd like to briefly elucidate how the rebellious qualities of institutional critique may have been both overblown and fully sanctioned by an art market eager for novel subversions. One of the more cynical calibrations of this relationship comes from a remark by Brian O'Doherty on the expectations of the artist to "speak out of turn," and the cultural capital this displaces onto collectors. One merely needs to substitute "collector" for "museum director" in the following passage to see how these subversive actions translate into cultural cachet. O'Doherty writes:

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[340] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists'* Writings, 412.

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One negative exchange is basic: the artist tries to sell the collector on his obtuseness and crassness—easily projected on anyone material enough to want something—and the collector encourages the artist to exhibit his irresponsibility. Once the artist is assigned the marginal role of the self-destructive child, he can be alienated from the art he produces. His radical notions are interpreted as the bad manners expected from superior tradesmen. The militarized zone between artist and collector is busy with guerillas, envoys, double-agents, runners, and both major parties in a variety of disguises as they mediate between principle and money.[341]

This authorized insubordination can translate institutional critique into a controlled and safe form of self-reflexivity, and just another weapon in the arsenal of cool and rebellious art tactics. In its application to the superficial readings of institutional critique I previously made reference to, here the artist is pitted against the institution as though it were possible for the two to be dispossessed of one-another, rather than as a symbiotic organism, which while severely disproportionate, works only in cooperative concert.

Miwon Kwon remarks on the characterization of institutional critique as an "us vs. them" venture, and the self-congratulatory rhetoric embedded within such a short-sighted reading, one which results in an inevitable return of the repressed, realized when the artist inevitably returns to the museum or gallery. Institutional critique has, she writes:

> …a history that is currently riddled with a profound misconception wherein a "spanking" by a museum is seen as a direct measure of a work's "criticality." The more intense the expression of an institution's irritation or discomfort, the more pleased are these "critical" artists and their supportive interpreters who actively cultivate, then relish, the chastisement of the institution as a mark of their difference from it. Outright censorship is regarded as the ultimate prize in this context, excommunication becomes a token of highest success. (Never suspecting in the meanwhile the possibility that the loud objections may in fact be exclamations of institutional *pleasure*!).[342]

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[341] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 74.
[342] Kwon, Miwon. "In Appreciation of Invisible Work: Mierle Laderman Ukeles and the Maintenance of the 'White Cube,'" in *Documents* 10 (Fall 1997), 35.

Kwon's skepticism is of course justified by the historical cycle of antagonism and reconciliation between key figures in the world of institutional critique and art institutions. But more important is her attack on the heroic reception of such works.

While antagonism lives at the heart of all institutional critique, it is one born of affirmative expectation and hope for institutional improvement. In this way, the most successful projects, measured by their ability to actually mobilize change in institutions, are those operating more in a spirit of conviviality than in pure negation. Eric de Bruyn extrapolates upon this concept noting:

> …institutional critique is not performed by an act of negation, but rather consists of a "study of the relationships between inner and outer space,"… Institutional critique appears to operate on both sides of the divide at the same time, but never places itself wholly external to it. It also follows that such a transgressive mode of critique can never come to an end, but must evolve with the historical changes in the social function of institutions and their technological means of operation.[343]

In this formulation, institutional investigations were seen more as a refining and demystification of the art world done with varying degrees of cooperation from the institution itself. If we read between the lines of this formulation of institutional critique, wherein the artist is not just poisoning the well of the institution, but identifying and situating oneself in the apparatus of the art world, invariably a discourse of the institutionalization of institutional critique would emerge. In other words, institutional critique, critics suggested, can become an alibi, impotent enough to be celebrated by the same institutions it purports to embarrass. The mere acknowledgment of a cooperation between artist and museum/gallery would itself raise eyebrows and contribute to a polar opposite reading from the heroic narratives previously discussed.

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[343] de Bruyn, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*, 167.

Andrea Fraser offers an important rebuttal to this attack in her clarification and

historicization of institutional critique in the essay "From the Critique of Institutions to an

Institution of Critique." Fraser argues that institutional critique never positioned itself as

wholly outside or antagonistic to the institution, emerging, necessarily, within the

structures of the art world. For Fraser, the important contribution of institutional critique

lay in its recognition, unlike other avant-garde art movements, of the failures to supersede

the institution, and its aim instead towards moving "beyond the traditional boundaries of

specifically artistic objects and aesthetic criteria."[344] Fraser points out that one could only

surmise that institutional critique had *become* institutionalized if one subscribed to the

original heroic myth that it had ever *not* been. Her conclusion in this essay adeptly

articulates the way a considered future of the practice would necessarily position itself in

relation to the institution.

> It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various
> organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a
> question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of
> what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what
> forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to.[345]

Taken together, these appraisals all contribute to a reading of institutional critique as

rooted both in the sanctioned interests and cooperation of the museum/gallery, and as a

cooperative form of self-reflexive interrogation of the museum/gallery dispositif.

***"Where do we draw the line?": A Discourse Analysis of Art as a Documentary Practice
in the Gallery***

Hans Haacke is interested, not in the properties of the work of art, but in the work

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[344] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," *Institutional
Critique: An Anthology of Artists Writings*, 414.
[345] Ibid. 416.

of art as property.[346] – Craig Owens

…there is a common denominator to the multiplicity of practices: a critical sensibility, which acknowledges the urgency to represent specific realities at the same time as it confesses to an awareness of the ideologies and apparatuses governing them.[347] – Hito Steyerl and Maria Lind

Jan Verwoert argues institutional critique "has now turned into an immanent component of documentary practice, due to a widespread sensitivity of artistic producers towards the political quality of forms of representation, a practice in which assertions, images, displays, and cartographies relating to reality are methodically questioned while being produced."[348] While there is no vast distance between the cinematic genus of documentary and the production of documentation by artists, which undergirded conceptual art's administrative, secretarial, and at times dilettante science, the two are only rarely situated within the same dominion. The reasons are obvious: the filmic documentary of the 1960s was a humanist endeavor,[349] while much of the document making of early conceptualists appeared to be positivist by nature, either replicating or coyly parodying empiricist objectivity. By the late 1960s, however, a number of important art projects deployed photo-journalistic strategies, focused explicitly on political concerns of the day, and began to mirror documentary modes associated more with film documentary, and news/photo-journalism.

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[346] Craig Owens, "From Work to Frame, or Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author,'" *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): 131.

[347] Hito Steyerl and Maria Lind, "Introduction: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art," Green Room, 24)

[348] Jan Verwoert, "The Expanded Working Field of Documentary Production," in *The Need to Document*, Vít Havránek, Sabine Schaschl-Cooper, Bettina Steinbrügge, eds. (Zürich: JRP Ringier, 2005): 81.

[349] A cursory look at the landmark documentaries of this time conveys a focus on characters (Bob Dylan in *Don't Look Back* (1967), John F. Kennedy in Primary (1960) and human behavior in extreme situations (the inmates of a mental institution in *Titicut Follies* (1967), the residents of the French city Clermont-Ferrand during Nazi occupation in *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969), and an imagined nuclear attack on England in the speculative documentary *The War Game* (1965).

Interestingly, Walter Grasskamp points out that Hans Haacke's work as a guard at the Documenta 2 exhibition in Kassel in 1959, which gave him the opportunity to witness both the mounting of the exhibition and its reception, may have birthed his documentary sensibility. Taking numerous photographs of the event, Haacke initially did not think of these photographs as artworks (though they were mounted as such in 1988 in the Stations of Modernism show at Berlinishe Galerie); they are characterized by Grasskamp as "a revealing glimpse of his future development…," allowing him to observe "for the first time the enormous effort required to isolate a work of art from the everyday world and shift it into the context of an art exhibition from which it draws much of its aura."[350]

In many of the following projects, established cultural institutions are configured as the reifying arms of official culture, an assembly line that absorbs, streamlines, and standardizes the artist, excising any aberrations which threaten or transform its operating mission. This much was literalized to absurd lengths when Hans Haacke's solo show at the Guggenheim was cancelled because his political investigations were not recognized as art at all, with Guggenheim director Thomas Messer stating "an alien substance" had entered the "museum organism." Haacke, whose works had been confronted by institutional censorship, was the most aggressive purveyor of institutional critique working to identify the sources of capital underwriting art institutions: "In order to gain some insight into the forces that elevate certain products to the level of 'works of art' it is helpful…to look into the economic and political underpinnings of the institutions, individuals and groups who share in the control of cultural power."[351] Haacke's development from an interest in systems analysis (from Jack Burnham) diverted from

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[350] Walter Grasskamp, "Survey," *Hans Haacke* (London; New York : Phaidon, 2004): 30.
[351] Haacke, Hans. "All the 'Art' That's Fit to Show." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 302.

minimalist characterization of systems (described by Haacke as "perceptual titillation") through his concerns with "change" as a principal feature, rather than the inert algorithms of his predecessors. This change would become the social and political prerogative that gave teeth to institutional critique against the art-world.

When the Director of the Guggenheim, Thomas M. Messer, cancelled Hans Haacke's solo show at the venerated institution, he declared *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System* to have "posed a direct threat to the museum's functioning within its stated and accepted premises"[352] and that it violated the Guggenheim trustees declaration that the museum should "not engage in extra-artistic activities or sponsor social or political causes…"[353] This particular case, which I will now examine in more detail, offers important historical clarifications for how we understand the perceived threat of institutional critique felt by large institutions and the means this threat is articulated. Of critical import here, is the discourse of institutions in relation to the documentary nature of art during this time—especially as it moved towards socio-political questions of life outside the gallery. While many critics and art historians have explicitly or implicitly suggested that the institutional censorship of Haacke's Shapolsky[354] project was related to those on the museum's board having some connection to the landlord[355], I will pursue another line of logic which figures heavily in Thomas Messer's defense of the show's cancellation, specifically pertaining to Haacke's importation of documentary practice into art. For all practical purposes, the spectre of

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[352] Thomas M. Messer, "Guest Editorial," Arts Magazine 45 (Summer 1971), 4.
[353] *Open Systems*, 35.
[354] For a lengthy description of the work see Lippard, *Six Years*, 229.
[355] For example, in Juli Carson's essay, she suggests that Haacke's censorship played a role in "psychically connecting" Shapolsky to the museum's board. Still, while many have incorrectly suggested that this project directly implicated board members, this is an untrue observation. Carson, *Dematerialisms – The Non Dialectic of Yves Klein." Yves Klein: Air Architecture*. Eds. Peter Noever and Francois Perrin. (Ostfildern : Hatje Cantz, 2004): 123.

documentary here is one deeply tied to political speech directed to life outside of the museum, something Messer argued was hardwired into the mission statement of the museum when he stated, "We have held consistently that under our Charter we are pursing esthetic and educational objectives that are self-sufficient and without ulterior motive."[356]

On March 19th, 1971, Thomas M. Messer mailed a letter to Hans Haacke regarding his upcoming exhibition to open on April 30th. In it, Messer outlines what he perceived as a potential libel case emerging from Haacke's "muckraking venture."[357] The legal issues outlined in the letter were that Haacke was publically naming and embarrassing the landlords and holding companies owning properties he had photographed, implying they were operating dangerous tenement buildings, and were party to "social malpractice."[358] Messer remarked that the "information culled from public records" could generate "legal action and we foresaw procedural complications of many kinds if the museum were to be propelled into extra-artistic situations beyond its natural scope."[359] However important issues beyond legal concerns began to emerge in public statements by Messer.

The subsequent controversy and public outcry included a signed statement in Arts Magazine by a who's who of contemporary artists vowing to boycott the Guggenheim until its "policy of art censorship"[360] was changed. Despite these presumed legal issues, larger questions arise from Messer's language of institutional parameters and

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[356] "Gurgles around the Guggenheim," *Studio International*, 248.
[357] Editors, "Gurgles around the Guggenheim," *Studio International* (June, 1971): 248.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Thomas M. Messer, "Guest Editorial," Arts Magazine 45 (Summer 1971), 4.
[360] Arts Magazine 45 (Summer 1971), 5. Undersigned artists included Carl Andre, John Baldessari, Lynda Bengalis, Mel Bochner, Louise Bourgeois, Donald Burgy, Agnes Denes, Phillip Glass, Leon Golub, Douglas Huebler, Sol Lewitt, Gordon Matta Clarke, Ursula Meter, Robert Morris, Brian O'Doherty, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Smithson, Frank Stella, and Tsai.

responsibilities. It is worthwhile to briefly reflect here on this language through a discourse analysis of Messer's objections, published in various magazines at the time. I will quote liberally from Messer, to draw out the language of the public face of the Guggenheim as it articulates institutional positions and power dynamics in relation to art practices that have explicitly documentary qualities.

In an unusual move, the ordinarily scheduled editorial contribution of Joseph James Akston to Arts Magazine was relinquished by the editor in June 1971 and given to Thomas Messer, on the grounds that the controversy ignited by the Haacke cancellation reflected a "disagreement between artists and…cultural institutions in regard to what is the function of art in society."[361] In addition to the legal objections previously outlined, Messer wrote of Haacke's "intentions and his proposed action," as "incompatible with the purpose of an art museum…"[362] At the heart of this was a notion of the "museum's functions as we currently understand it."

Central to this debate were a variety of issues that circumscribed accepted features of art—specifically as they pertain to journalistic and documentary features of art. The implications of *Shapolsky et al.* awakened concerns from Messer of a new vista of possibly dangerous practices by artists, largely articulated through a slippery slope argument. He writes, "What would, for instance, prevent another artist from launching, again via a work of art, a pictorial documentation of police corruption in a particular precinct. What would stand in the way of a museum-sponsored artist attack upon a particular cigarette brand which the documentation assembled for this purpose would show to be a national health risk?" Such practices violated the accepted premises of the

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[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.

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museum—which could instead be transformed into a "forum for causes." It was not the materials that Haacke had used—Messer smartly acknowledges the shifting appearance of art[363]—but rather the movement towards what he called an "inappropriateness…due to an aesthetic weakness which interacted with a forcing of art boundaries."[364] This anxiety was addressed shortly thereafter by Lucy Lippard in her epilogue to *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object 1966-1973*, when she situates informational and documentary art as a means of escaping the dominant concerns of form.[365] This is not to say, however, that Haacke's documentary idiom was not rigorously subject to formal construction.

We can understand this forcing of boundaries to strike at the heart of fears of aesthetic erasure and deep suspicions around authorship in documentary practice. As Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl note, "documentary practices express the desire to get rid of the author or creator."[366] This is an uncontroversial premise in the post-Duchamp era. But unlike Duchamp, who sought to designate and nominate an object as art through the institutional power of the museum, Haacke's interests are not concerned with an authorial gesture. Instead, he suggests the artist takes on an interdisciplinarity that simply doesn't look like art—instead appearing like documentary, like advocacy journalism, or like political action. In this language, Haacke, recipient of the honor of a solo show at the age of 34, at one of the most venerable art institutions in America, figures as a Janus-faced

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363 Messer remarks on a litany of artists who have transformed the appearance of art objects from Schwitters and Duchamp to Rauschenberg and Pop art. Ibid. 5
364 Ibid.
365 Lippard writes, "the aesthetic contributions of an 'idea art' have been considerable. An informational, documentary idiom has provided a vehicle for art ideas that were encumbered and obscured by formal considerations" (postface in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966 to 1972*. Reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* 248).
366 Hito Steyerl and Maria Lind. "Introduction," in *Green Room: Reconsidered the Documentary and Contemporary Art.* (Annandale-on-Hudson: Sternberg Press, 2008), 25.

political agent, a juvenile provocateur messing with accepted definitions and barriers upheld by the guardians of high culture.

"Where do we draw the line?" Messer writes, in reference to the photographs of tenements. What had occurred, he suggests, was a "reduction of the work of art from its potential metaphoric level to a form of photo journalism concerned with topical statements rather than with symbolic expressions."[367] Messer reveals an important state of exception to what constitutes "art": documentary practice and its social and political aspirations, have no place in the museum. This was, in his words, both "painful," and an "urgently needed clarification."[368]

This clarification was one that would continue to have deep relevance for Haacke and for artists in this period. Haacke's project on the landlord Sol Goldman literalized some of Messer's concerns. After investigating the landlord's holdings, New York Police Deparment officials borrowed and copied Haacke's research to aid in an investigation of Goldman's partner and connections with organized crime.[369] But Haacke was not the first to deploy a journalistic discourse into his work, and face allegations of eviscerating any real aesthetic character.

Dan Graham's "Homes For America," printed in *Arts Magazine* in 1966, constituted an artwork deploying a quasi-journalistic voice in the service of "a phenomenological model of perception."[370] The eschewal of medium and the engagement with the networks of mass communication (as opposed to their contents, as Pop interceded in) was manifest in the magazine works of Dan Graham. "Magazines are

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[367] Thoman Messer, "Guest Editorial," Arts Magazine 45 (Summer 1971), 5.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Interview with Hans Haacke, April 21st, 2007 in Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 204.
[370] Buchloh. "Conceptual Art 1962-69: From the Aesthetics of Administration to a Critique of Institutions," *October,* Vol. 55 (Winter, 1990): 123.

boundaries mediating between the two areas…between gallery 'Art' and communications about 'Art,'"[371] which laid the foundation for certain erasure of coherent demarcations between the two.

Deploying the rhetoric of photojournalism, Graham sought to explore how a categorical shift might take place through a juxtaposition of his work and the journalistic/critical entries in Arts magazines. Graham worked from the assumptions of minimalism and pop art (in regards to expanding the frame into the gallery or by including content from media[372]) and entered into a dialogue with the ancillary sites of the art world—whereas the institutional engagements of Buren and Haacke took place at the sites of the museum and the capital supports for art work.[373] As someone who ran a gallery (which ultimately failed) Graham understood the necessity of the media in legitimizing artists, and sought to intercede in the channels which served to orchestrate and structure value and meaning in the art world.[374] Graham was invested in operating within both the ephemeral timeliness of magazines and the respective immediacy of

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[371] Benjamin Buchloh, "Moments of History in the work of Dan Graham." in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 382.

[372] Graham writes: "It was interesting then, that aesthetically (but not functionally) that is, in material, economic terms some of the Minimal Art seemed to refer to the gallery interior space as the ultimate frame or structural support/context and that some Pop Art referred to the surrounding media-world of cultural information as framework. But the frame (specific media-form or gallery/museum as economic entity concerned with value) was never made structurally apparent…Putting it in magazine pages meant that it also could be "read" in juxtaposition to the usual second-hand art criticism, reviews, reproductions in the rest of the magazine and would form a critique of the functioning of the magazine (in relation to the gallery structure)." (Ibid: 382)

[373] Ibid: 383

[374] Graham writes: "Through the actual experience of running a gallery, I learned that if a work of art wasn't written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficulty attaining the status of "art." It seemed that in order to be defined as having value, that is as an "art," a work had only to be exhibited in a gallery and then to be written about and reproduced as a photograph in an art magazine. Then this record of the no longer extant installation, along with more accretions of information after the fact, became the basis for its frame, and to a large extent, its economic value." (Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 421).

distribution which it offered, which he understood as part and parcel of its institutional framework.[375]

Haacke had also imported other forms of journalism into gallery space, such as his use of teletype machines from international news agencies which pumped out headlines for the perusal of patrons. Still the most famous image associated with the Art Workers' Coalition was a simple piece of text framing an image of the My Lai massacre in 1969 titled *Q: And Babies? A: And Babies*, a reference to a television interview with a soldier involved in the atrocity. These were resonant with a host of projects by radical Latin American artists such as David Lamelas and Robert Jacoby (who specifically used teletypes), and larger projects such as *Tucuman Arde* (which translates to "Tucuman Burns") which utilized modes of journalistic discourse, specifically photo-journalism, newsprint, and graphs to refer to government abuse and the media's negligence during the violent military dictatorship in Argentina. The project, featuring wall-to-wall images and information, was designed to counter-act the dictatorship's insistence that the Tucuman province in Argentina was still economically viable, despite the closure of numerous sugar refineries. Despite devastating economic impact, the government used its media apparatus to claim the exact opposite was occurring. The artists provided information to clearly subvert the obvious propaganda circulating. Shortly after visiting

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[375] Graham describes his interest in magazines as such: "Magazines have issues which appear at regular time intervals; a magazine's contents continuously change to reflect present-time currency: magazines deal with current events. While gallery art is defined by its enclosure as "timeless," magazines presuppose a notion of present-time (timeliness) which only has value as it is current, each successive issue defining "new" or "up-to-date" in terms of the representative moment. However, the notion of news is not merely dependent upon the internal institution, but equally upon the institutions which generate its news content and finance its existence through the purchasing of advertisements. For the art magazine, it is the art gallery whose definition of "Art" and whose advertisements uphold the existence of the art magazine." (Dan Graham. "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'." *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*: 422)

Argentina, an event which politicized Lippard, she remarked at a lecture in 1969 that "The dispersion of information about art and information that is art…[is] connected to radical political goals; these parallels are so obvious that they don't have to be pointed out."[376] This, combined with a rise in a documentary idiom characteristic of the documentation native to conceptual art made for a sense of radical possibility and even a sense of danger to prevailing power structures inherent in these art practices.

David Lamelas is of special importance here, as one of the first artists to utilize moving images in his follow up to his *Office of Information about the Vietnam War at Three Levels: The Visual Image, Text, and Audio* (1968), itself a critical precursor to Haacke's teletype exhibitions. In *Analysis of the Elements by which the Massive Consumption of Information Takes Place* (1968), Lamelas would use radio, newspaper and a film of a commercial.[377] Lamelas was particularly engaged in what Eric de Bruyn calls "the evolving dialectic between gallery and cinema, which reached its apex in his documentary film *A Study of the Relationships Between Inner and Outer Space* (1969) which he suggests:

> …casts an ironic look at the then contemporary rhetoric of 'expansion.' Lamelas' film leads the spectator out of the inner confines of the gallery to the far reaches of space exploration. …film analyzes the activities within the periphery of the enclosed space of the gallery…and within the urban boundaries of the city of London. In deadpan style, the camera records various architectural characteristics of the gallery (physical size, lighting, features, acoustics), daily activities (opening doors, switching off of lights, cleaning, walking, sitting, etc.), and the tasks of the staff members.[378]

[376] Lippard, "Towards a Dematerialized or Non Object Art," typewritten transcript of lecture given at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Nobember 29, 1969, Lucy Lippard Papers, AAA. in Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 137.

[377] de Bruyn, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*. Matthias Michalka ed. (Köln: Walther König, 2004): 166.

[378] de Bruyn, "The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square," in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*, 167.

Perhaps the missing link between a fully formed model of institutional critique and cinematic production, Lamelas' film was not importing the philosophy of institutional critique into the domain of cinema, but rather using cinematic technology to leverage a form of institutional critique.

Another important iteration of the use of information and documentary models of institutional critique are visible in a drawing collected by curator and Art Workers' Coalition organizer Lucy Lippard, called "Sketch for museum featuring announcement that it 'takes the following stance against the war.'" Despite never being created, it is a notable part of the moment's cultural imaginary – as it depicts a museum where only newscasts of the Vietnam War and filmed images of protest are present.[379] Julia Bryan-Wilson writes:

> Tellingly, the sketch of the museum as information center shows no static artworks at all, only moving images, and the museum has become a hotline to mass-media information. Perhaps granting immediacy and urgency to film and television rather than art was a response to the feeling that the mediatization of culture was fast eclipsing artistic interventions.[380]

What all of these projects have in common is the importation of raw "information" into gallery spaces. Conceived of by the artist as highly mediated by other institutional structures, this information is not formed as documentary fact in and of itself, but as shaped and structured, both as narrativized and raw content. This mode of presentation at times casts a critical or ironic gaze on the highly constructed nature of how information is gathered, shaped, and presented.

The reception of such works by museums as, in Messer's words, "an alien substance" that is not native to the gallery, also provocatively conveys aesthetic

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[379] Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, 195.
[380] Ibid. 198.

boundaries operating during this time. Haacke's brand of "factography"[381] reiterates the documentary nature of all works engaging institutional critique, as art moves from documenting the world, systems and structures, networks of mass communication and popular cultural forms, into a documentary practice focused on the gallery itself. Haacke's projects following the cancelled Guggenheim show would look at the board of trustees themselves and their links to corporations. Most notable and embarrassing were the business connections of three trustees (Frank R. Milliken, Peter O. Lawson-Johnston, and Albert E. Thiele) to Kennecott Copper Company, which had worked through political channels to aid the overthrow of democratically elected Chilean president Salvador Allende, later replaced by the brutal regime of Augusto Pinochet. There is little doubt that the Guggenheim cancellation propelled Haacke to look more closely at those threatened by his work. The Art Workers' Coalition had similarly spotlighted museum board connections to the military industrial complex in their "Do You Trust These Trustees?" campaign aimed at the MoMA.

While Haacke's projects resonate with the aims of Mel Bochner and artists mentioned in Chapter Three towards a demystification of gallery space through mapping, Haacke was instead displacing social, economic and political mappings and importing them into the gallery. Inevitably these power diagrams would refer back to the gallery space by way of ideological parallels. The transgression committed by Haacke may not have been that he attacked a landholder with connections to the Guggenheim trustees (a

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[381] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," in *Neo-avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art 1955-1975*. (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 2000): 211.

sometimes reiterated misunderstanding), but that, as Bryan-Wilson suggests, that he attacked the same "ruling class ideology."[382]

The Guggenheim had prohibited art reflecting an "active engagement toward social and political ends." While acknowledging "art cannot be arbitrarily confined," the organization instead emphasized that its "institutional role is limited."[383] The discourse here is familiar. It suggests that the institution's autonomy, as a space existing outside of territorial or temporal specificity, should not house the vulgar politics of the real. This discourse never dies. It was recently revived by the organizers of Manifesta 10, Kasper König and Mikhail Piotrovsky, when facing public outcry from artists over the venue of the Winter Palace in Russia in light of the country's recent anti-gay propaganda laws, and invasion and subsequent annexation of Crimea. In light of petitions and withdrawals from artists, Piotrovsky remarked: "We operate in the territory of art, which has its own rules… We have to show that there are things that are more important than politics."[384] The central conflict with Haacke, is astutely sketched by Frederic Jameson as a question of "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" elements to the gallery space. Jameson suggests that Haacke's central activities are "to transform the "extrinsic determinants of art into the "intrinsic" content of a new artistic text…"[385], an issue central to questions of the autonomy of art.

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[382] Julia Bryan-Wilson, Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 204. Bryan-Wilson quotes from Frederic Jameson, "Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism," 46.

[383] Editors, "Gurgles around the Guggenheim," *Studio International* (June, 1971): 249.

[384] Coline Milliard, "Controversial Manifesta 10 Organizers Condemn Artists Boycotts" last updated Wednesday, April 30, 2014. http://news.artnet.com/art-world/controversial-manifesta-10-organizers-condemn-artists-boycotts-13011.

[385] Frederic Jameson, "Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism" in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*. ed. Brian Wallis. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press and New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986): 48.

Included in Haacke's unmounted solo show at the Guggenheim was an often ignored reiteration of his previous polling practice—an effort articulated in different forms by Haacke to interrogate the class, education, geography, and political affiliations of those who attend museums and galleries. This demographic statistical analysis strikes at the claim that institutional critique is always working in concert with the institutions it purports to expose. A case in point would be Haacke's previously mounted MoMA Poll which asked, "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November." The poll, which was voted on by placing a strip of colored paper[386] into a transparent box marked "yes" or "no," was the subject of objections from Governor Rockefeller, a high profile member of the museum's board of trustees. The MoMA director, John Hightower, whose public savvy and experience with recent protests from the AWC are of primary interest here, was able to convince Rockefeller that the removal of the poll would bring more negative attention and that it was "not inconsistent with the role of provocateur that artists enjoy."[387] Bryan-Wilson suggests that Rockefeller's reluctant acceptance of the poll reflected what Marcuse called "repressive tolerance," or "the notation that to 'tolerate' subversive dissent effectively renders such subversion ineffective."[388]

Messer himself would attack the poll as outside of acceptable aesthetic purview and as a breach of privacy for "a public that by and large comes for other purposes than to divulge its income, its political convictions and its attitude toward extra-artistic

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[386] Papers were colored based on the "fee status" of the visitor. "Full-fare visitors, members, guest-pass holders, and those who came on the museum's free day were clearly visible." Julia Bryan-Wilson, Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 190.
[387] Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*: 192
[388] Ibid. Bryan-Wilson refers here to Marcuse's text "Repressive Tolerance," in A Critique of Pure Tolerance, ed. Robert Paul Wolff, Barington Moore Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 95-137.

issues."[389] Haacke had so radically violated the tenets of acceptable practice to Messer, that he wonders aloud, "If any artist proposes by art such immunity from the judgments and the criteria of life, what is there to prevent an artist-sponsored murder and subsequent insistence upon the irrelevance of ordinary justice?"[390] To this one can only say that Messer seemed to have completely slid off the slippery slope.

Voiding, Lis Rhodes, and the Feminisms of Institutional Critique

I end this chapter with a consideration of a decisive moment in institutional critique and cinema, one which incorporates the documentary turn in art, which leads directly to articulating institutional prejudices (disguised as constraints) outlined in this chapter, as well as a continued interest in how the museum and gallery flatten, fabricate, and bowdlerize art history. A gesture that has permeated institutional critique, and may be a germinal part of its contemporary understanding harkening back to 1958, is the voiding and closing of exhibition spaces. While this gesture variously served high modernism and Conceptual art negationism and nihilism, I will argue its most articulate manifestation appears in Lis Rhodes' contribution (or more appropriately, lack thereof) to the *Film as Film* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, which mounts an important intervention into film history.

The events at the Hayward Gallery led straight to the inception of Circles, a feminist film distribution group in London in the late 1970s, which exhibited and featured some of the most radical political works of the 1980s. Circles formed from a splinter group of the London Filmmakers Co-op (LFMC) after events at the Film as Film exhibition incited many women from the Co-op to leave. The catalytic event concerned

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[389] Editors, "Gurgles around the Guggenheim," *Studio International* (June, 1971): 249.
[390] Ibid 248.

the inclusion of research by Lis Rhodes, Felicity Sparrow, and Annabel Nicholson on the history of formalist film in a section of the exhibition.

After continually being undermined by the Arts Council committee overseeing the show, and upon realizing that their inclusion was little more than lip-service, Rhodes and her collaborators elected to leave their assigned gallery space empty and to publish a letter addressing these issues in the exhibition catalogue. This was read as a public protestation of the exhibition's priorities, as a larger representation of the expunging of women from film history, and as a refusal to be ghettoized into a single space. While there lives a long history of voiding gallery spaces, of emptying them of art or even closing galleries during exhibitions, the scandal incurred by Rhodes and her collaborators was not born of wit or novelty, but rather of a necessary antagonism specific to the exhibition itself, one which refused to collude in film histories circumscribed by the gallery's political and administrative imperatives.

Through an examination of three critical precursors, Yves Klein's *The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility,* also known simply as *The Void* (1958), Daniel Buren's *Closed Show* (1968), and Robert Barry's *Closed Gallery Piece* (1969), I will contextualize the Hayward Gallery show as a decisive moment in a lineage of closures, voidings, and erasures of the gallery space which importantly features the documentary practice of foregrounding the institutional conflicts which gave rise to Rhodes' decision.

Voided Spaces – The Gallery as a Gesture

On April 18th, 1958, Yves Klein opened his show *The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility* at Iris Clert gallery in Paris. Juli Carson offers a succinct description of the exhibition:

> Outside, the windows were painted his signatory blue, and blue drapery was hung around the doorway as the show's grand entrance, at either side of which Klein positioned two Republican Guards in full uniform. In advance, 3,500 cards had been sent out, 3,000 in Paris alone. With the invitation, the addressee received an invitation pass, without which the viewer would be charged 1,500 francs.[391]

With a large number of attendees invited, a queue formed around the corner of the gallery, which Klein had painted entirely white and emptied, but for a single cabinet, itself a reference to the earliest apparatus for the exhibition of art. The exhibition had hundreds of visitors in the following two weeks, with celebrity endorsement from Albert Camus and sensational newspaper coverage, all over an emptied gallery. But unlike the projects that follow, Klein's motives for this voiding were also to impregnate the gallery with his own auratic presence. As such, Klein fancied himself an apparition who haunts the emptied space with his artistic genius.

Benjamin Buchloh argues that Klein plays with the anti-visual language of neo-avant-garde art, utilizing an arsenal of recognizable techniques from this tradition, while at the same time inscribing the Iris Clert gallery with a mythic, spiritual dimension that posits artistic genius as an invisible yet irrevocably present feature of the show. Buchloh suggests that despite *The Void*'s stripping of the gallery of its object of institutional display, he ultimately produces a spectacularization of the experience of space.[392] In

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[391] Juli Carson, "Dematerialisms: The Non-Dialectics of Yves Klein," in, *Air Architecture*, Francois Perrin ed., (Los Angeles: MAK Center, 2004): 117.
[392] Buchloh, "Plenty or Nothing: Yves Klein's The Void and Arman's Le Plein," in *Neo Avant-garde and Culture Industry*, 268.

effect he states, "the culture of spectacle took over the spaces of the avant-garde." [393] For

evidence of how Klein remythologizes the gallery amidst what on its face is a total

evacuation of its primary material, one need only look at his own words:

> My active presence in the given space will create the climate and the pictorial
> radiant ambience that normally dwells in the studio of every artist gifted with real
> power. A palpable, abstract, but real, density can exist and survive by itself and
> for itself, solely in the empty spaces of appearance.[394]

The carefully outlined paradox for Buchloh derives from the drives of the artist Klein in

relation to what could have been a radically pure political project of interrogative

disavowal of the gallery and its circumscription of the art object. Instead, he suggests that

Klein is merely performing the "specialized entertainments" of the neo-avant-garde. The

paradox succinctly stated is that, in Buchloh's words, "By making his work manifestly

dependent on a set of previously hidden dispositifs… he would become the first postwar

European artist to initiate not only an aesthetic of total institutional and discursive

contingency, but also one of total submission to spectacle."[395] Clearly this project is

pregnant with the potential to offer the same model of mapping and demystification of

the gallery we observe in Chapter Three. Klein may transform the gallery into a medium

(literally a container for his own aura), but makes no gestures towards how the gallery

itself interpolates the artist. Ultimately, it is seen as a project tainted by the conservative

fear of French secularism, and Klein's own unwieldy egotism, only to ultimately be

dismissed as a late modernist genuflection.

Brian O'Doherty examines the emptying of gallery space of art as an aesthetic

gesture moving in two directions: one commenting on art within the gallery, and another

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[393] Ibid.
[394] Klein, Yves. "Sorbonne lecture, June 3, 1959" in Juli Carson, "Dematerialisms: The Non-Dialecticsof Yves Klein." 118.
[395] Buchloh, Ibid., 269.

pointing the audience outside the gallery to the street. O'Doherty describes Klein's gesture as blundering, but one which was highly successful at the time, offering a "transcendent gesture."[396]   Ultimately, his title reflects the failure of the project: "The isolation of sensibility in a state of primary matter stabilized by pictorial sensibility." In other words, Klein was operating in a manner by which the emptied space is rendered pictorial, and serves to "reciprocally replace the missing art with itself."[397]

Daniel Buren

In October 1969, Buren sealed the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan with his trademark stripes preventing any entrance. A markedly antipodean approach to Klein's voiding, Buren's sealed doors reflect that second iteration of "the gallery as a gesture" described by Brian O'Doherty as sending us back to the street. But it's important to make a distinction here, that unlike Graciella Carnevale who locks an audience in the gallery so that they might flee, Buren leaves us with no vantage point to an inside space. This sealing conveys a sense of quarantine, not unlike a fumigator's coverings that traps vermin inside and protect the civil society outside.

Born of the ashes of Klein's void were more concerted efforts to present "contexts as contents." If, as Juli Carson declares, Klein's void reflects a lack of dialectical thinking, Daniel Buren's voiding is firmly grounded in a dialectics of the art work's ontology outside of legitimizing institutional forces. It is in the historical reception of Daniel Buren, she writes, that the forms outlined by Klein are given political reflexivity.[398] Buren was

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[396] This idea connects to O'Doherty's astute observation that avant-garde gestures "have two audiences: one which was there and one – most of us – which wasn't." O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 88-89.
[397] Ibid.
[398] For a lengthy discussion see Juli Carson, "The Non-Dialectics of Yves Klein," 120.

interested in contexts, institutional and otherwise, that house and situate art-objects and justify their categorical inclusion. His programmatic work, which relied almost exclusively on striped, unstretched canvas or other parchment, was engaged in the "displacement of the traditional sites of artistic intervention"[399] and exploring territories otherwise unused—such as billboards, gallery doors, bus stop benches, and even sandwich boards worn by paid workers. Buren, who contributed the most lucid critiques of Duchamp's nominative gesture, took aim at the museum and gallery as thresholds for cultural legitimacy. His work can be received as a key moment in this synthesis between Klein and Guy Debord and in underlining the ontology of art from outside avenues of publicity and institutionality. Buren's statement that "the location…where a work is seen is its frame (its boundary)"[400] in his essay "Beware!" would become a defining feature of deterritorializing art practices.

Fig. 14 - Sealed Gallery at Galleria Apollinaire (Daniel Buren, 1969).

[399] Buchloh. "Conceptual Art 1967-1969: From Aesthetics of Administration to Critique of Institutions": 139.
[400] Daniel Buren, "Beware!" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 155.

If the numerous critical perspectives on Klein agree on one thing, it is that he approached the gallery with a transcendent and mythical eye, which enunciates the greatest variant from Buren's own squarely materialist political deactivation of gallery space. I will return for a moment to Buren's essay "The Function of the Museum," where he writes of the museum as a "privileged place with a triple role," the final of which is:

> Mystical - The Museum/Gallery instantly promotes to "Art" status whatever it exhibits with conviction, i.e., habitat, thus diverting in advance any attempt to question the foundations of art without taking into consideration the place from which the question is put. The Museum (the Gallery) constitutes the mystical body of Art.[401]

Perhaps the closure of the gallery here synthesizes voiding with an impulse towards deflecting attention from the gallery back towards the street. Operating from the dialectical polemics Buren was so astute at deploying vis-à-vis Marcel Duchamp, one might note that such a gesture could easily fall into the trap of mythologizing the street as a public space privileged for the making of art, but a closer look at Buren's project reveals no such mistake. Buren's sealing is the principal site of invention, and not an artwork situated publically. [402] The answer found by Buren, O'Doherty writes, was found in works characterized as "site-specific, temporary, nonpurchaseable, outside the museum, directed toward a non-art audience, retreating from object to body to idea – even to invisibility," though he adds the caveat that Buren's work was not "impervious to the gallery's assimilative appetite."[403]

Craig Owens argues that through many of his works, Buren calls attention to the

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[401] Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Museum," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings,*
[402] Daniel Buren's "wildcat postings" placed around Paris in 1968 in which he used 200 striped posters to cover over advertisements and billboards throughout the city testify to this fact. See Louis J. Cummins, "Undermining the Museum: The Rhetorics of Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Louise Lawler" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2002): 167.
[403] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: Ideology of the Gallery* Space, 95.

frame of the museum by allowing the work of art to actually contain the institution, as in his *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973) at the John Webber Gallery, where banners strung on a rope move from inside the gallery, out its windows, and across West Broadway.[404] This project resonates with the closed gallery piece, rendering the gallery impenetrable with the art itself as the central barrier. Here Buren's art is an aneurism or blockage, separating those two actors necessary for the arterial flow of art commerce: buyer and dealer.

The aesthetic problem that bridges the projects of Klein and Buren is that of visual skepticism, and an interest in challenging visibility as the uncontested vestibule through which all artists must walk. Horror vacui, a principle of aesthetic theory which inspired the filling of empty spaces is spun on its head, giving way to an embrace of the emptied and invisible in the art of this period. I have extrapolated on this issue at length already, but it must be emphasized just how disparate such undertakings can be. For Klein, the emptied gallery is an aesthetic experience, however unusual and idiosyncratic, aimed at forcing a confrontation of the spectator with emptiness itself. His aims are enmeshed in the discourse of authorship (it is not a void, but Klein's void), and reinforce the ingenuity of the author by reaffirming avant-gardist tricks. For Buren, a most politically savvy detractor of Duchamp, the closed gallery is aimed at transposing the sites of aesthetic experience into the world by cordoning off official sites of cultural reception.

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[404] See Craig Owens, "From Work to Frame," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture*, 131.

Lis Rhodes and the Film as Film Exhibition

she was seen and she saw
she was seen as object
she saw as subject
but what she saw as subject
was modified
by how she was seen as object
she objected. [405]

                -Lis Rhodes

While the withdrawal from the Film as Film exhibition is both a product of removal and voiding, I argue that Rhodes and her colleagues synthesize the documentary impulse that runs parallel to practices of institutional critique (as discussed in relation to Hans Haacke) as well as instantiating a space for collective imagination. The removal of their research, a negative act, enunciates a political protest against the UK Arts Council, while the voiding here can be read, ironically, as a positive gesturing towards a historical imaginary, possibility, and like Klein's void, presents an emptiness pregnant with meaning and aura. Rhodes performs a major synthesis of institutional critique's imperative towards the documentary through her voiding, which is importantly marked by the absence of work and research and the presence of a statement of disengagement and non-participation.

In an interview with Shay Solomyn, Rhodes describes the events leading to the withdrawal from the exhibition and the formation of Circles:

> …the Arts council was preparing an exhibition of 'experimental' film work. I was invited – as the token woman – to be on the selection committee. It very quickly became apparent that this was to be yet another history without women – somehow their work was defined outside the parameters of the exhibition. It either didn't fit or did not apparently exist. So feeling very isolated, I turned to Annabel Nicholson for support. We insisted that she also be appointed to the committee. Other women joined us in support – The result was that we found

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[405] Extracts from voice over script for 'Light Reading', 16mm 28 min B&W, Lis Rhodes, 1978. Transcribed by Rhodes herself.

ourselves part of a women's group. We made a substantial entry in the catalogue, wrote a statement which was exhibited in the gallery, and withdrew from the exhibition. The other focusing point was that several of us were finding that our work was being screened and categorised in contexts that were becoming increasingly alienating. We knew that a different space must be made if women's work was to develop.[406]

The lone object placed in the emptied gallery space of those rooms allocated to Rhodes and her collaborators was a typed statement describing the causes for the withdrawal from the exhibition. The statement reads:

> The gesture of withholding our work and the presentation in its stead of a statement of opposition is the only form of intervention open to us. It was impossible to allow the Arts Council to present our work as if there had been no struggle, as if it had been nurtured in the spirit of public patronage. Informed by a feminist perspective it was our intention to begin a re-examination of the historicized past by introducing (welcoming) Alice Guy and re-presenting Germaine Dulac and Maya Deren.[407]

First and foremost, this statement importantly echoes Brian O'Doherty's extensive discussion of voided gallery spaces as transforming the gallery itself into a gestural component of the exhibition. Unlike the premeditated voidings of Klein, Buren, and Barry, Rhodes and her collaborators reacted to the conditions of the exhibition with a spontaneous ingenuity, which withdraws from and yet defiantly remains present in the gallery. Still, it is a critical feature of the work that this withholding is itself described as a gesture rather than merely a response. While invisibility bridges the aesthetic aspirations of Klein, Buren, and Barry, it is not replicated by Rhodes and her collaborators as an aesthetic imperative, but as a political reality which must be represented. The emptied space is a space of imagining what could have been, and what could never be in the history of film by women. If read through in its totality, the

[406] Lis Rhodes, Jeanette Iljohn, Shay Salomyn, "Interview: Film & Video: Circles," *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (June 87), pp. 22-23.
[407] Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Lis Rhodes, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy, Susan Stein. "Woman and the Formal Film" statement in *Film as Film*, 118.

withdrawal is both a protest and literalizing of the invisibility of women from the historical discourse of filmmaking and the exhibition itself.

(Art) History and the Problem of Categories

"The homogeneity of a category necessitates exclusion and inclusion. Categories compress the choreography of intentions."[408] – Lis Rhodes

At the conclusion of the *Film as Film* exhibition catalogue are two provocative essays in a collection of aesthetically informed histories of formal film. Both essays withdraw from the act of writing of history itself to examine, on a methodological level, how histories ideologically shape film practice and how film history might be reimagined. Their titles, through pure coincidence, function like a call and response—"The History We Need" by Malcolm Le Grice sounds off with the force of a manifesto, while "Whose History?" by Lis Rhodes interrogates many of his essay's prevailing assumptions. If read without explicitly knowing the two essays were written independently, Rhodes' text appears to be a dialectical response to Le Grice, offering a specific attention to the question of how those who write history often reproduce patriarchal value judgments and categories.

Current practice, Malcolm Le Grice argues in his essay "The History We Need," is determined by its historical relationship to past practices. But, this historical relationship is not neutral, and this history is one invariably laden with exclusion and repression. In an effort to activate current cinema practice, he suggests that artists cannot become chained to calcified histories. While Le Grice's essay importantly engages in an auto-critique of the Film as Film exhibition, offering a caveat that the exhibition emerges from a German context mediated by Birgit Hein and Wulf Herzogenrath, it is also

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[408] Lis Rhodes "Unfolding a Tale: On the Impossibility of Recovering the Original Meanings." Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film. ed. A.L. Rees (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2011): 222.

situated in the discourse of formalist medium specificity and by extension the language of Ad Reinhardt's "art as art," itself grounded in the language of artistic autonomy. Le Grice was neither ignorant nor unsuspicious of this fact, writing "the underlying assumption that a practice would seek autonomy is problematic. This assumption implicit in 'Film as Film', inevitably draws all those arguments which can be brought against modernism."[409] Ostensibly a rejection of narrative cinema and the institutionalized hierarchies of commercial cinema, a critique foundational for the British Structural-Materialist movement, the essay is notable for its discussion of how histories are circumscribed and invariably reproduce repression and exclusion.

While Le Grice acknowledges that the "we" in his title may merely be a disguise for an "I", he suggests that a "neutral and inclusive history is broadly impossible."[410] Even while offering space for the "involved practitioner" to "polemicize inclusions or exclusions," the conclusion reached by Le Grice suggests that this is ultimately without purpose, and that "historical enterprise should be aimed at aiding the development of contemporary practice."[411] Thus it becomes a conduit for the formal imperatives that can define a contemporary art. History in such a construction is instrumentalized, its specificities and revisions becoming but a bedrock for future practice. But it is what Le Grice both acknowledges and dismisses that is of interest here.

"The History We Need" questions the formalist paradigm framing the *Film as Film* exhibition, implying a need to examine the institutionality of cinema, whilst simultaneously calling for film histories to become a staging ground for activating contemporary practice. In his concluding statement, Le Grice offers both a brilliant and

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[409] Malcolm Le Grice, "The History We Need," in Film as Film exhibition catalogue: 116.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.

prescient political provocation to encourage a displacement of emphasis from formalist medium specificity, towards examining important questions around the institutional frameworks of exhibition:

> So the 'history we need' is more a question of the manner and function of the enterprise than a polemical assertion of its constituents. To function as it should towards the critical development of current practice it needs to begin from a more limited theoretical definition of the problems and be designed as an operation to elucidate them rather than as an exhibition to present a particular construction. Neither the current institution surrounding cinema nor that related to the presentation of the plastic arts has forms which suit such a concept of presentation.[412]

Putting aside for a moment the novel challenge offered here, it might appear odd that the specter haunting film history for Le Grice is explicitly related to "a polemical assertion" of film history's "constituents."[413] While it may seem, in the grand scheme of this essay, that homing in on this particular feature of history that Le Grice rejects is making a mountain from a molehill, its appearance in 1979, a moment colored by newly minted imperatives to recognize the lack of racial and gender diversity in experimental film histories, is no coincidence.

These alternative histories rejected by Le Grice in his essay are superfluous to the superior work of using history as a generator for making work. In this sense, "The History We Need," supplies an alibi—one which acknowledges that the failures of inclusion that factor into all histories renders writing histories based on exclusions secondary. Conveniently, this formulation emphasizes histories as a means to establish forms and practices, and suggests that the political and ideological exclusions, however important to overcome, can never fully account for history. This begs the question: does Le Grice imply that returns to excluded histories are unnecessary?

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[412] Ibid. 117.
[413] Ibid.

In response to this essay, Rhodes throws the categories used to frame the exhibition into question, and specifically raises two problems in her curatorial project: "the 'problem' of researching women who apparently don't exist; the 'problem' of whether to present material in an overtly alienating context."[414] Art historical categories, as a patriarchal framework by which women are included or excluded, permeate Rhodes' writings. These categories are identified as the central culprit for how curatorial thematics alienate women artists. Rhodes writes in "Whose History?" that "Women filmmakers may or may not have made 'formalist' films, but is the term itself valid as a means of reconstructing history? Is there a commonly accepted and understood approach?"[415] In an interview with Shay Solomyn, Rhodes describes how the response to the exhibition would shape the formation of Circles:

> We were starting to talk about categories: avantgarde, modernism, structuralism, and I was suggesting that those categories were irrelevant to women's work. A film I made nine years ago is often thought of as 'structuralist,' and in a sense I could say yes, it was talking about how language is used, how it structures thinking, and therefore structures subjectivity. But what I am really trying to say is that although there are elements in my work that can be seen as structuralist, one is coming from such totally different viewpoints to draw such a totally different meaning.[416]

While the withdrawal from the exhibition may be rooted in a poverty of institutional support, Rhodes more broadly attacks how the parameters of what is and is not included may have estranged women from its historical purview. While it is certainly a bold claim to suggest that art historical categories are themselves a patriarchal function of art historical ordering, one cannot help but note the dearth of women in other parts of the exhibition, itself a kind of affirmation of this argument. Of the 71 artists represented

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[414] Rhodes, "Whose History?" 119.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid. 22.

whose work was made after 1940, just ten, or 14% of these are women. In those films

represented prior to 1940 the numbers are far more dismal, with just two women among

41 filmmakers, less than five percent of included artists. Rhodes also extrapolates on how

the inclusion of her project may have been doomed from the start insofar as her history

would be circumscribed by systems of exhibition which invariably produce limitations:

> For us it was primarily the omission from histories – written, seen or heard -
> of women's work. The most known works were selected to be the most
> known in the economy of gallery exhibition. The most known were not by
> women as they were not in the cycles of repetition that wrote the histories.
> These cycles represent rules and criteria on which histories were and are still
> constructed. The 'vernacular of gallery exhibition' through curating,
> description and explanation defines ways of seeing and thinking historically.
> Hence the persistent question of who is recognised by whom and for what
> reason. Doesn't the omission of facts imply a fiction inside history? [417]

This strikes at the heart of how art historical categories may not only alienate female

artists, but that since the 1970s, the category "feminist art" has itself provided a space to

ghettoize women. The agit-prop artists The Guerilla Girls succinctly describe this

phenomena in the satirical 1988 poster "The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist." The

second point, "Not having to be in shows with men," conveys how often attempts at

producing inclusivity for female artists comes with the caveat of separation, where the

exhibition of feminist art, or more broadly art by women, is emphasized at the cost of

suggesting continuities with other art practices. Helen Molesworth keenly observes how

the demarcated space of "feminist art" often becomes a kind of quarantine, secluded from

the dominant (read relevant) conversation of contemporary art:

> As a separate category, feminist art is stripped of its power. Rendered separate
> and distinct, and hence easier to marginalize, it is unable to modify, and possibly
> transform, our definitions of other artistic categories. This bitter division has
> disallowed articulations of the connective tissue between these works and the

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[417] Personal email correspondence with Lis Rhodes, May 27th, 2014.

putatively 'dominant' conversations being conducted simultaneously in the art world.[418]

This familiar problem, a feature of contemporary curation, in which women find themselves represented only when the entire imperative of the exhibition is to represent women, extended on a microcosmic level to the *Film as Film* exhibition as well. Interestingly, in the context of *Film as Film*, we see the production of both an art historical context, which may exclude women, *and* a further separation of women into a separate context in the "Woman and the Formalist Film" section of the exhibition.

The question of how and why Rhodes and her collaborators might produce a history of women's formalist film would seem untenable in the face of institutional negligence, curatorial framings, marginalization, and the failure of the exhibition to produce inclusive categories. As Rhodes writes:

> We were still faced with a problem: was there any sense in trying to intervene in the context of 'Film as Film'? Would any representation of women's work be seen as merely token in a predominantly masculine exhibition, a ghetto in a male environment? However, had no intervention been made then the 'Film as Film' exhibition would publicly confirm the apparent lack of women filmmakers and the authority of a particular history.[419]

The emptied space can be understood here not just as a refusal to participate in this ghettoization of women filmmakers, but also as a symbolic liquidation or releasing of its constituents. To participate in the exhibition was in Rhodes formulation a 'reproduction of a fiction'. The dilemma was – at what stage does inclusion become something like containment? When does presence become a form of domestication?

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[418] Helen Molesworth, "Cleaning Up the 1970s: The Work of Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly and Mierle Laderman Ukeles," in *Rewritting Conceptual Art*. Michael Newman and Jon Bird eds., London: Reaktion Books, 1999: 112
[419] Lis Rhodes, The History We Need, 120.

Dialectics of Visibility, Invisibility, and Transparency

Helen Molesworth addresses an often repeated feature of feminist art discourse, positing two paradigms of feminist art in the 1970s and 1980s. One is described as putting forth an essentialist or universalized concept of womanhood, stressing the female body and its biology, the daily life of women, eroticism, and engendering positive representations of femininity. The other is most associated with work influenced by post-structuralism and psychoanalysis, and focused on difference as a principle character of identity which is ruptured into smaller discrete categories of race, class, and sexuality. The two paradigmatic works of this dialectical formulation are Judy Chicago's canonical *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979) and Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1973-79).

Taking umbrage with this deeply entrenched dichotomy of feminist art, Molesworth argues that Mierle Laderman Ukeles's paradigm shifting *Maintenance Art Performances* might help to trouble this shibboleth in feminist discourse, and provide a way of interfacing a larger feminist aesthetic into the sphere of institutional critique. Molesworth suggests, rather than replicating the "seemingly uncrossable chasm of essentialism versus theory,"[420] it may be more useful to observe that this calcified debate has itself ignored how all three projects are engaged in aesthetically activating the idiomatic "personal is political" by quite literally importing the private sphere into the public spaces of the museum. Chicago's intimate dinner party and Kelly's dense and almost exclusively textual account of the first five years of her son's life, both publically exhibit the private spaces of female anatomy, entertaining friends, and childcare.

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[420] Helen Molesworth, "Cleaning Up the 1970s: The Work of Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly and Mierle Laderman Ukeles," 114.

In Ukeles's early deployment of a politics of institutional critique, the artist's examination of "maintenance" (which Molesworth defines as "cooking, cleaning, shopping, child-rearing" as activities associated with women in the domestic sphere) as an undervalued paradigm of human labour, provides a stark contrast to what Ukeles called "development," which is associated with (male) innovation and production. Importing the hidden and invisible labour associated with women and custodial low-age labour, placing it in the forefront of the museum (literally in one performance where Ukeles washed the front steps of the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut), Ukeles prioritizes the collapsing of these two spheres. Here the notions of transparency, and visibility exist in a framework far beyond the formalist discourse of visual skepticism and the anxiety of the representational image present in so much conceptual art. Miwon Kwon elucidates this dialectic of the visible in relation to what the museum represses in the following passage:

> Certainly, in step with other practices of the period that directed their attention to the institutional framework of art, Ukeles' cleaning frenzy exposes the museum's appearance of neutrality and purity as artifice—an artifice that requires the repression of (the signs of) bodies and time. But in Ukeles case, this repression is given a more complex articulation than that of a faceless institutional interdiction. The appearance of timelessness and eternal stasis, or simply orderliness, in fact, requires work. It requires work that not only erases the marks of bodies and time, such as dirt, dust, and decay, but work that continuously erases the marks of its own labor (including the body of the laborer). It's the kind of work that renders itself invisible, and is rendered invisible, in order to make other things ("real" works) possible.[421]

Returning to the mythologies of the gallery space elaborated upon in Chapter Three, Kwon highlights the impossible presence of the ordinarily invisible in Ukeles's maintenance performances. It is in this very concept, of how the parameters of the

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[421] Miwon Kwon, "In Appreciation of Invisible Work: Mierle Laderman Ukeles and the Maintenance of the 'White Cube'", Documents, 10 (Fall 1997).

gallery's visual, historical, and political regimes are defined by repressed and invisible labor, that Rhodes' invisible presence finds continuity with this project. Ultimately, the language of visibility and invisibility gives way to a notion of transparency, where the ordinarily "private" sphere of the museum becomes co-existent with its "public" face.

If Ukeles has, through her examination of maintenance, placed the labour of both women and the invisible working class custodial labour of museum janitors at the forefront of the museum space, she has also underlined the veiled and private spheres within the museum itself. Molesworth notes, "It is the very publicness of art, art's traditional reliance upon a public sphere for its legibility and value, that makes art such a rich terrain for feminist critique." [422] Gerald Raunig would echo the notion that institutional critique was uniquely steeped in feminist philosophy, whereby artists such as Faith Wilding, Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, Valie EXPORT, Erika Mis, Carolee Schneemann, Mary Kelly, Laura Mulvey, Martha Rosler, Suzanne Lacy, Laurie Anderson, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, Marina Abramovic, Chantal Akerman, and Yvonne Rainer engaged with art-institutional sexism. [423] This is only a short leap away from the project of Rhodes and her collaborators to create a porous and co-existent space for the polished and presentational exhibition to reflect the secretive negotiations, and in this case, sullied waters of institutional control. In so doing, the political apparatus of the museum is allowed to surface, if only partially, to transform the gallery from a window to the world into a documentary mirror of its own sub rosa operations.

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[422] Molesworth, "Cleaning Up the 1970s: The Work of Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly and Mierle Laderman Ukeles," 117.

[423] Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism Long Twentieth Century*. Trans Aileen Derieg. (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2007): 204-5.

Rhodes explicitly articulates a policy of 'standing-your-ground' in the exhibition space. While she appeared to be uninterested in the phenomenological character of a largely emptied gallery space, voided of all but a statement, she does importantly describe the rooms allocated for her research at the Hayward Gallery as transforming absence into presence:

> The space in the gallery was not actually 'empty'. The 'Statement' as reproduced in the 'Film as Film' catalogue was present in the Gallery to be read. An artist remarked at the time that she considered the catalogue was more significant than the exhibition. The exhibition can no longer be seen but the catalogue could be read as it was written at the time. They absented us and we absented ourselves. Absence became presence. [424]

Even if Rhodes expresses a lack of interest in pursuing the phenomenological features of the emptied space, the conveyance of absence as presence surely prompts potentialities in this reading. What does it mean for the viewer to walk through a heavily curated, dense exhibition, only to arrive in a room purportedly devoted to a history of women and formalist film left emptied, but for a letter of protest?

If read through in its totality, the withdrawal is both a protest and literalizing of the invisibility of women from the historical discourse of filmmaking and the exhibition itself. If the removal of their research enunciates a political protest against the UK Arts Council and the exhibition committee, the voiding can be read, ironically, as a positive gesturing towards a historical imaginary, possibility, and like Klein's void, presents an emptiness pregnant with meaning and aura. While Buren blockaded entry, Rhodes' absented work leaves a hole in the exhibition's sense of continuity, one which sends those present back into the street with a tangible sense of this loss, a ghostly presence.

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[424] Lis Rhodes, personal e-mail correspondence, May 27th, 2014.

I'd like to end with a final speculation: Many anxieties about the exhibition of film in the ambulatory spaces of the gallery and museum have been vocalized. However, Rhodes' intervention suggests even more insidious qualities may be found in the museum/gallery's didactic mission. The topological space of the museum and gallery materializes what Gary Shapiro calls "a radically abbreviated form of mankind's march through history" and a desire to find a perfectly arranged historical vantage point from which 'we can survey the past. We are now watching the museological absorption of cinema history, and a churning out of institutionalized and bowdlerized "history." As it gestures towards instrumentalized histories, spectacularized histories, and blockbuster histories, Rhodes' question becomes increasingly imminent: "Whose History?"

Chapter Five – The Contemporary State of Post-Minimal Practice: A Case Study on *The Clock* and Christian Marclay's Instrumental Logic of Appropriation

After a century of creating the basis for an audio-visual technical memory, a new cultural practice of mnemonic immediacy is about to emerge: the recycling and feedback of the media archive (a new archival economy of memory). With new options of measuring, naming, describing and addressing digitally stored images, this ocean needs to be navigated (cybernetics, literally) in different ways and no longer merely ordered by classification (the encyclopedic enlightenment paradigm). Such a media-archaeology is the opposite of iconographic history: What is being digitally "excavated" by the computer is a genuinely media-mediated gaze on a well-defined number of (what we still call) images.[425] —Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst

How many stories have I seen on the screen? All those "characters" carrying out dumb tasks. Actors doing exciting things. It's enough to put one into a permanent coma.[426] —Robert Smithson

The objects discussed in this chapter represent a spectrum of archival interventions organized by post-minimal aesthetic techniques. The use of a priori systems that generate the production of art permeates work after the 1960s, with seriality and process art initializing an engagement with the way information is both recorded and organized. The archive as an organizing principle and as an emblem of governmentality has colored many of these practices as distinctly political in nature. This chapter focuses on Christian Marclay's monumental 24-hour film *The Clock* within a history of post-minimal art practices engaged in the cataloguing and serialization of archival materials. Through a look at this installation and a variety of other works from Marclay, I hope to draw out a disparity between this work and the aesthetic practices and ethical drives of other artists engaged in archival artmaking. Furthermore, I will argue that Marclay instrumentalizes post-minimal aesthetic practices in an acritical and ahistorical way to

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[425] Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, "Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts," *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 264.
[426] Robert Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. ed. Jack Flam. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 138.

produce a slick, palatable, and highly proprietary blockbuster installation which relies heavily on the lure of cinema history to the contemporary art market.

When Christian Marclay accepted the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, he thanked the jury for giving *The Clock* its fifteen minutes. His joke will ultimately be unsubstantiated. It will be considered a monumental work of art in the twenty-first century due to its scale, labor intensity, and aspirations towards a total reflection of time in narrative cinema. It seems incontrovertible that *The Clock* does not provide an exploration of the dynamic expressions of duration in cinema, due to its rigid parameters and structures. This is because its constitutive materials are split between shots of timekeepers and numerous motif clusters—that is, alarm clocks waking disgruntled workers, rushing travelers narrowly missing train departures, school bells ringing and emptying classrooms, angry housewives waiting for husbands to arrive at dinner, and so on. While his representation of time certainly conveys the hailing function of the clock, the administrative functions it serves modernity, and the many dramaturgical devices of narrative cinema itself, in the nearly twelve hours of *The Clock* I was able to watch, time appears organized only in the terms of task-orientation. One finds oneself focused on *The Clock*'s obsessive assemblage of iconography, daily routines, dramatic exposition, and what appears to be an index of the gestures of narrative cinema.

These themes offer some of the most interesting entry points to *The Clock* and help to map the present landscape of found footage work and a move towards the atlas, the encyclopedia and the archival ordering of cinema's constituent motifs, gestures, and iconography. The last two decades of found footage practice have increasingly moved from the refuse of cinematic materials (leader, production discards, B movies, ephemeral

cinema) towards the film canon itself. Iterations of such work have been referred to both in the terms of Lev Manovich's *database,* online as the *supercut,* and in cinema-encyclopedia projects.[427] The found footage films discussed in this chapter harmonize with what Christa Blümlinger has elsewhere called "cataloguing, iconographic-serial work."[428] *The Clock* is the most monumental cinematic contribution to this mode of filmmaking to date.

In broader art practice, iconographic seriality reflects an approach to the archive as a "system of discursivity"[429] engaged with the logics and structures of taxonomy and classification. Frequently employed to present intertextual interpretations of art and mass-cultural objects, this archival discourse interrogates how art history might produce cultural memory and how media archives become "centres for interpretation."[430] These priorities and drives form the crux of a broader crisis in the landscape of found footage today and a move towards a database aesthetic where film fragments are serialized through an archival discourse according to iconography and narrative motifs. The central question of digital platforms in relation to the digital archive for Lev Manovich is: "how can our new abilities to store vast amounts of data, to automatically classify, index, link,

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[427] Dara Birnbaum and Marlon Riggs present early iterations of this type of work in their approach to television motifs. It appears frequently in the more recent works of Matthias Müller, Christoph Girardet, Volker Schreiner, Jesse McLean, Aleesa Cohene, Mike Hoolboom, Mike Olenick, and Oliver Laric.

[428] Christa Blümlinger, "On Matthias Müller's Logic of Appropriation," in *The Memo Book,* ed. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2005), 81.

[429] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 145. This idea is expanded upon by Marlene Manoff in "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *Libraries and the Academy,* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2004): 18.

[430] Thomas Osborne argues this in "The Ordinariness of the Archive," citing archives as "centres of interpretation." *History of the Human Sciences,* Vol. 1, no. 2 (1999): 52. However, Hal Foster has suggested that archival art may "emerge out of a similar sense of a failure in cultural memory" and implicitly then justify the archive as successfully fostering such hermeneutic potentials. Hal Foster "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 21.

search and instantly retrieve it lead to new kinds of narratives?"[431] It goes without saying that the expedited opportunities for the cataloguing, classifying, and ordering native to digital technologies have advanced the database strategies we see in found footage work today. Rembert Hüser uses the term "QWERTY cinema" (referring to the typewriter's statistically determined spatial logic which must be internalized by the typist for efficacious use) to demonstrate the reciprocal nature of the interface upon the artist.[432] But a number of important questions must be raised when the opportunities afforded by new technologies become instrumentalized rather than interrogated.

Many of the concerns of found footage filmmakers and the ethical-political contours distinct to the appropriation of film and video seem to be lost in the understandable excitement over opportunities afforded by these digital tools. It would be wise to repeat what Clint Enns has elsewhere argued, that to suggest that digital tools restrict creativity is as ridiculous as making the same argument for the optical printer or Bolex.[433] Having said that, database cinema does *not* merely borrow digital tools for filmmaking but takes up certain principles of digital storage as an aesthetic prerogative.

This chapter juxtaposes Marclay's art with archival art projects by Marcel Broodthaers and Annette Messager and found footage projects by Harun Farocki, Wolfgang Ernst, Matthias Müller, and Christoph Girardet. By comparing the database grammar of collection in *The Clock* with other archival practices in art, the chapter will allow competing approaches to archival discursivity and the hermeneutic properties of

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[431] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 208.
[432] Rembert Hüser, "qwerty Cinema: Christoph Girardet/Matthias Müller's *Phoenix Tapes,*" in *After the Avant Garde: Contemporary German and Austrian Experimental Film,* eds. Randall Halle and Reinhild Steingröver (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 258.
[433] Clint Enns, "Navigating Algorithmic Editing: Algorithmic Editing as an Alternative Approach to Database Cinema," *Millennium Film Journal* (Fall 2012): 70.

serializing and ordering motifs and gestures to emerge. Accounting for these tendencies in Marclay's work and situating *The Clock* within a continuity of archival art projects produces important clues to understanding Marclay's logic of appropriation and the database itself as an aesthetic engine.

Marcel Broodthaers, The Department of Eagles*, and Instrumental Reason*

On May 16th, 1972, Marcel Broodthaers completed his four-year "museum fiction" known as *The Department of Eagles,* with its Figures Section at the Kunsthalle in Dusseldorf.[434] Comprising paintings, photographic reproductions of art works, antiquities, ornaments, furniture, national symbols, patches, flags, natural and scientific objects, as well as slide-projected images from comic strips, advertising, logos, currency, book covers, and other mass media, it was hung parlor-style, in vitrines, and using other formal exhibition props. While *The Department of Eagles* is largely understood as a critique and investigation of the institutionalization of art, the framing mechanisms of exhibition and the discursive authority of the museum, the assembled iterations of eagles were also central to Broodthaers's critique of the bureaucratic aesthetics of the Conceptual art movement. Benjamin Buchloh argues that this critique parodied conceptual art's positivist instrumentality, its miming of "the operating logic of late capitalism" and its "aesthetics of administration."[435] Buchloh frames *The Department of Eagles* as a travesty of "the totally administered world," an idea that dominated the post-war cautionary philosophy of Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. In point of fact, the phrase "totally administered world" was written by Adorno in correspondence with

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[434] Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 163.

[435] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, Vol. 55 (Winter, 1990): 143.

Marcuse in response to the German student uprisings of 1969, themselves echoes of the events of May 1968.[436] It is not incidental that these events were the catalytic moment of Broodthaers' *The Department of Eagles,* conceived just months after the events of May '68 in Belgium, when Broodthaers joined students to occupy the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels to force its director to resign. The political critique of the storage houses of culture was not in this moment an abstract notion; it was literalized in the struggle by students of the arts to place themselves into positions of power in the museum.[437]

Fig. 15 - *The Department of Eagles, Figures Section* (Marcel Broodthaers, 1968).

While critical of their prospects for success, Adorno praised the student movement as a rebel yell against the increasing administration of society. Adorno critiqued the homogenization of perception and voiced increasing skepticism over the

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[436] Theodor Adorno, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," *New Left Review* 233 (January 1999): 136.

[437] For an extended discussion of this, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers," in *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 54.

concept of choice embedded in mass production and consumption, both of which he read as a radical force of social conformity and the leveling of culture.[438] Adorno's critique was anti-positivist and critical of the rise of instrumental logic. Here I borrow from Max Horkheimer's description of instrumental reason:

> Concepts have been reduced to summaries of the characteristics that several specimens have in common. By denoting a similarity, concepts eliminate the bother of enumerating qualities and thus serve better to organize the material of knowledge. They are thought of as mere abbreviations of the items to which they refer. Any use transcending auxiliary, technical summarization of factual data has been eliminated . . . Concepts have become "streamlined," rationalized, labor-saving devices. It is as if thinking itself had been reduced to the level of industrial processes. . . .[439]

These observations were not occurring in a vacuum, and were distinctly reactions to the significant collection of data and use of computer calculation associated with the military-industrial complex. In the wake of systems analysis by think tanks like the RAND Corporation, used to determine the fate of thousands in South East Asia, or in the emerging use of psychology in public relations and marketing firms, it is clear why the 1960s set the stage for archival projects where data, artifacts, and cultural detritus are assembled in architectures that mock official culture and the administrated, top-down collection.

Christian Marclay's *Arranged and Conducted* (1997), like *The Department of Eagles*, is a permutative installation within the museum, that presents shocking visual parallels while reversing Broodthaers' ideological premises. Jennifer Gonzales explains *Accompagnement Musical,* one permutation of the *Arranged and Conducted* series:

> For *Accompagnement Musical* (1995) . . . the artist re-installed more than 400 art objects and artifacts, each tied to the history of sound-making and its

[438] This argument is extensively outlined throughout Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum Press, 1989).
[439] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004), 15.

representation. To prepare for the project, the artist selected items from the museum's extensive holdings in drawings, prints, coins, photographs, furniture, musical instruments and ancient arms . . . Marclay's *Accompagnement Musical* turned the normally staid setting of the traditional period galleries into a visual cacophony that more closely resembled a storage space or antique shop than a museum display. . .[440]

The ideological inversion of the critical premises of Broodthaers' *Figures Section* occurs in a number of important ways. First, Broodthaers wants to show how cultural meanings and definitions of art might be inscribed by the discursive authority of the museum, executed through an insincere and fetishistic proliferation of a single image—one historically tied to authoritarianism and fascism. Marclay's interface with the museum is incidental. It occurs mostly through a mimicking of the same fifteenth century exhibition vernaculars as the *Figures Section,* common to aristocratic galleries.[441] For Broodthaers, the maniacally repeated eagles illustrate the discourses of authority that frame them. This museum's "disciplinary mode of knowledge-production" and its aspirations towards making "the visible *legible*" are assumptions Marclay (mis)takes for the discourse of interpretation itself—or which, at best, he never questions at all.[442]

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[440] Jennifer Gonzales, "Overtures," in *Christian Marclay* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 56–57.
[441] To see visual analogies for these galleries, try a Google image search for *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Gallery in Brussels* (David Teniers the Younger, 1651), or *Kunst- und Raritätenkammer* (Frans Francken the Younger, 1636).
[442] See Donald Preziosi, "The Art of Art History," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 509. Preziosi conveys the interpellative features of the museum as an ideological site of cultural interpretation.

Fig. 16 - Installation view, Wall of Sound, from Arranged and Conducted, Kunsthaus Zurich (Christian Marclay, 1997).

Aesthetics of Archival Discourse

Marclay engages an archival discourse not to interrogate its arbitrary logics and structures, but to cement them. This is symptomatic of much of Marclay's art, which instrumentalizes modes of classification and ordering. Another powerful visual echo can be seen in Annette Messager's *Voluntary Tortures* (1972), which appropriates and serializes violent cosmetic procedures undertaken by women. The procedures she documents range from the familiar (facial creams) to the extreme (breast-enlarging vacuum mechanisms). Her sci-fi/horror assemblage reveals the contemporary idealized state of femininity: infantilized, emaciated, antiseptic. Her sources, mostly from magazines and other advertising materials, while purloined from their contexts, immediately reflect back upon them, bouncing between a parlor style of exhibition and the phenomena of ephemera sprawling across the bedroom walls of adolescents the world

over.

While *The Voluntary Tortures* present a critical assemblage of materials highlighting their traffic from advertisement to art object, Marclay bluntly empties his materials and their status as circulated images, instead emphasizing their iconographic similarity. In *Chorus II,* Marclay crops photographic imagery from unknown sources illustrating singing, speech, and vocal sound. The evisceration of all source contexts and their iconographic criteria once more conveys his instrumental logic, where images serve as a means to an end for the artist. Anything approaching a politics of representation has been erased through contextual conformity.

Fig. 17 - The Voluntary Tortures, (Anette Messager, 1973).

Fig. 18 - Chorus II (Christian Marclay, 1988).

Fig. 19 - Video still from 60 Seconds (analogue) (Christoph Girardet, 2003).

Fig. 20 - Video still from the Clock (Christian Marclay, 2010).

Negotiating the disjunctions of historicity, context, and appropriation remains a longstanding ethical concern in found footage filmmaking. In a recent interview, filmmaker Christoph Girardet unfavorably compares an early Marclay video work called *Telephones* (US/UK, 1995), a film in which Marclay constructs a seemingly cohesive telephone conversation from actors across film history, to German video artist Matthias Müller's *Home Stories* (DE, 1990), a film locating parallel motifs from across Hollywood melodramas. The film illustrates a series of repeated gestures: women staring sadly out of windows, collapsing forlornly onto beds, and rushing down stairs. The film, which Federico Windhausen argues acts as a "critique of the ways in which women have been 'trapped' within narratives shaped by heterosexual masculine fears and desires,"[443] also addresses ways in which images are trafficked through culture. Müller explains, "I used

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[443] Federico Windhausen, "Hitchcock and the Found Footage Installation: Müller and Girardet's "The Phoenix Tapes" (*Hitchcock Annual,* no. 12, 2003/2004): 107.

VHS recordings of television broadcasts . . . full of dropouts, deliberately degrading the original aesthetics of the cited films . . . re-filmed them on 16mm and brought them back to the screen. This was meant to say something about the path that had brought these images to my own "home," while at the same time, I wanted to guide them back to their former 'home,' the screen, but in an altered, damaged form."[444]

This procedure is similarly echoed in Müller's collaboration with Girardet in *The Phoenix Tapes* (UK/DE, 1999), a work often discussed in relation to *The Clock.* Commissioned for the Oxford Museum show, "Notorious: Alfred Hitchcock and Contemporary Art," *Phoenix Tapes* assembles motifs from forty Alfred Hitchcock films to point to authorial affinities that border on the fetishization of specific objects, body parts, gestures, camera positions, and lighting setups.[445] Rembert Hüser points out that Müller and Girardet utilized VHS tapes for the source material despite the potential of finding more pristine images in DVDs without "visible data loss.[446]

Conversely, Marclay erases the path of the images in *The Clock,* reducing thousands of film clips into a single aspect ratio, producing a powerful leveling and homogenizing of materials. Through the use of high quality DVD rips, expertly produced sound bridges (done with the aid of sound designer Quentin Chiappetta), sound foley work, [447] and a seemingly endless series of shot-reverse-shot one-liners, Marclay

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[444] This is derived from Muller's unpublished talk at Centre Pompidou which he was generous enough to share with me. The focus of his speech was on the works of Morgan Fisher with some extended discussion of Marclay's *The Clock*.

[445] The section *Burden of Proof* presents a more confined collapsing of inserts, where name tags, keys, hand gestures, and monogrammed napkins are serialized. Blümlinger argues that the work is less about "the conventionalizing qualities of narrative cinema that are made visible, than the empathetic style of an author." In this way, *Phoenix Tapes* comes to form a poetic and allegorical approach to Hitchcock's many obsessions and authorial fingerprints, never fully falling into the trap of becoming merely a serial index to his films. Blümlinger, "Matthias Müller's Logic of Appropriation," 77.

[446] Hüser, 258.

[447] Daniel Zalewski writes, "Sometimes, Marclay created new sound effects. A clip, at 6:49 p.m.,

replicates hegemonic Hollywood continuity and production practices. In a public conversation between Marclay and artist Michael Snow, Marclay repeatedly reiterated his lack of interest (if not disdain) for contemporary Hollywood cinema.[448] But in that same talk, when I had the opportunity to ask why *The Clock* remains handcuffed to those rigid editing grammars, he responded by saying, "I wanted to make the work accessible and pleasurable." While this betrays much of Marclay's aesthetic priorities in *The Clock* and the cosmetic facility of his archival-appropriation projects, it is also symptomatic of larger demands upon the museum to create highly legible, accessible and spectacular exhibits.

Chris Petit summarizes *The Clock*'s allure to the museum, saying it "[h]as that marathon & endurance quality that the art world likes, an anti-Internet thing, though you could argue it is YouTube for gallery space. Clever because it does what it says: 1) tells the time 2) can be explained in terms that a child of 6 could grasp 3) you know exactly where you are whenever you drop in 4) it'll generate a raft of writing."[449] Indeed, *The Clock* appears to be preternaturally suited to the museum and the blockbuster exhibition.[450]

William Wees offers a useful schema for understanding how an appropriated image becomes instrumentalized in a comparison of three different found footage iterations of nuclear bomb blasts and how their signification varies. In the compilation

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showing Kevin Spacey shaving, was marred by distracting audio; to redo the soundtrack, Marclay stood in a sound booth and pressed the nozzle of a Noxzema shaving-cream can in sync with the visuals." Zalewski, "The Hours: How Christian Marclay Created the Ultimate Digital Mosaic." (*New Yorker*, March 12th, 2012).

[448] "Christian Marclay in Conversation with Michael Snow," The Power Plant Gallery, Toronto, November 5, 2012.

[449] Iain Sinclair and Chris Petit, "Time Pieces," *Film Comment* (May–June 2011): 51.

[450] This is parsed with greater detail and fluency in Erika Balsom's essay "Around *The Clock*: Museum and Market," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* (Vol. 54: Iss. 2, Article 9, 2013).

film *Atomic Café* (Jayne Loader et al., US, 1982), atomic bomb blast footage from Operation Crossroads is a direct referent to, and is taken from, the Bikini Atoll nuclear tests in 1946. According to Wees, these images are "presented as straight fact: this is what the explosion looked like, these are signifiers of an event solidly grounded in reality and contextualized by other real, historical events such as the beginning of the Cold War."[451] In Bruce Conner's collage film *A Movie* (US, 1958), atomic bomb footage is a pivotal moment in a now infamous sequence: A submarine submerges, a naval officer looks through a periscope, a pin up model provocatively mugs for the camera, the officer reacts by shouting an order, a torpedo is shot from the submarine, a nuclear explosion occurs in the ocean, a surfer rides the ensuing waves. This use of the atomic explosion "produces a series of visual gags and metaphoric links between sexual desire and military aggressiveness, between orgasm and annihilation [and] deconstructs conventional editing strategies that link one shot with the next through implied cause and effect relationships."[452]

But it is Wees' last example that is most useful here. After canonical images of poverty, racism, and violence are front-loaded in the music video for Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror*, a nuclear bomb blast occurs simultaneously with a key change (occurring at the last word of Jackson's bid to "Take a look at yourself and make a *change*") and the entire video shifts tone with images of world leaders shaking hands and malnourished children being fed. Wees argues that the nuclear explosion as signifier of *change*, in the video, expresses how found footage often quotes media, rather than history, not to question its representational character (as in collage film) but towards something

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[451] William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 38.
[452] Ibid., 39–40.

he refers to as *appropriation.* While this term may have been appropriate at the time of his writing, today it might be more useful to describe this as a purely "instrumental" appropriation, used for its surface emotional affect, its visual power, its total decontextualization and abolishing of historicity. One might also observe that the database logic of found footage can become a kind of hybridization of the compilation film's pursuit of organizing the film archive and the music video's exploitation of the emotional power of the surface of the image.

This is nothing less than the evisceration of the political dimension of found footage appropriation and its graffiti-like seizures of spaces and property to recode meanings. This instrumentality is surely a late-capitalist reflex, a side effect of what happens when found footage is so routinized into an aesthetic discourse that it is emptied and returned to the spectacular realms from whence it came. This is visible in some of the more meretricious iterations of this encyclopedic strategy, which betray the eroded priorities of found footage appropriators and their relationship to historicity and representation. The online supercut, a type of video remixing which serializes clichés and motifs, best exemplifies what this looks like. A supercut might involve something like a mashup of the often repeated trope in police procedurals of enhancing a photographic image to discover some hidden evidence (e.g. *Blade Runner* [Scott, US, 1982] or CSI [US, 2000–]).[453] Similar strategies to the supercut can be seen executed with significantly higher production values in media art today. In the Julian Palacz installation *Algorithmic Search for Love* (AT, 2010),[454] search terms are checked against a database of spoken

[453] See "Let's Enhance," YouTube video, 1:44, posted by "dunk3d," December 13, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxq9yj2pVWk.
[454] This installation video may be viewed here: http://palacz.at/work/algorithmic-search-for-love/.

dialogue, producing a rapid succession of exemplary clips. In Palacz's video documentation of the installation, a man approaches a plinth with a mounted computer interface and types "holy shit" into the search engine, producing a rapid fire montage of the expert elocution of Michael J. Fox, Ryan Phillipe, and countless others. While such sequences certainly produce a kind of cross-eyed hypnotic pleasure cloaked in the potential to produce knowledge (a hermeneutic potential I will return to later), these works most often convey a series of readymade clichés, so thoroughly internalized that their rehearsal is meaningless.

Instead of producing memory, we are given a mesmerizing amnesia. Instead of producing *knowledge*, we are given *data.* Here we confront a kind of fetish of the archive, which instrumentalizes the archive's administrative discourse while reducing the film fragment into a visual or auditory surface. The significations, history, and status of the footage as an industrial product are epiphenomena, afterthoughts to the jigsawing of each piece into its appropriate slot. This database model continues the trajectory of appropriation towards the simulacral and the concept of the iconographic as a surface with no inherent "content."

In 2003, Christoph Girardet made an ironic statement on this issue, in a one-minute film meant to play in an infinite loop called *60 Seconds (analog)*. It assembles shots of clocks in an attempt to represent every second of a minute from across sixty films. Girardet describes the piece as illustrating the "interchangeability of the images of industrial cinema"[455] while Müller suggests that within it we see "Marclay's extensive

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[455] Christoph Girardet interview with Jens Hinrichsen, "Ist Christian Marclay's *The Clock* ein Plagiat?" *Monopol Magazine* (October 10, 2011). www.monopol-magazin.de/artikel/20104023/marclay-the-clock-Christoph-Girardet-interview.html Accessed December 4, 2012. This article was generously translated from German by my colleague Birgit

future project in a conceptual, minimalist nutshell."[456]

How can a database be salvaged from this fate? The paradigms that have come to constitute an ethics of appropriation in found footage are not always eviscerated in semantic/iconographic serial works. Prior to Manovich's database essay, Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst were talking about a similar organizational apparatus for the archive, though it is important to note that this "Archive for Visual Concepts" is not framed as an art object itself, but rather as a *tool* or *instrument* which might aid in the creation of found footage work. In *Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts*, Farocki "proposed the project for a kind of visual library of film which would not only classify its images according to directors, place and time of shooting, but beyond that: it would systematize sequences of images according to motifs, *topoi* and narrative statements, thus helping to create a culture of visual thinking with a visual grammar, analogous to our linguistic capacities."[457]

Farocki's films enact these collecting practices and convey the evolution of narrative motifs in cinema with historical specificity. For example, *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (DE, 1995) assembles eleven channels in an installation outlining iterations of the pivotal moments that comprised the first cinematic images by the Lumière Brothers, and is a decisive threshold for narrative commencement. Farocki writes, "One could even say that most films begin where the identity of the protagonist as a worker ends. They begin at the moment when the protagonist leaves the factory behind, and in this sense, the Lumières' film is a precursor to the rest of cinema, with its

Schneidmueller.

[456] This also derived from Matthias Müller's unpublished talk at the Centre Pompidou.

[457] Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, "Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts," *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 265.

inclination to tell the story of life that is left to the individual after work is over, or indeed of the life that one dreams of and wishes for beyond the realm of work."[458]

We are in an age overpopulated with art-historical art and, more recently, film-historical filmmaking. When undertaken, questions of memory and the human architectures of information retrieval—its ideological frameworks and their attendant reinforcement of hierarchies of power, access, ownership, and property—must be scrutinized. The parameters of the crisis in found footage envisioned in this essay could be more concisely summarized as how artists interrogate the photograph's inherent archival ambitions.[459] I envisage this as a negotiation of what Allan Sekula calls the "twin ghosts haunting photography . . .the voice of a reifying technocratic objectivism and the redemptive voice of a liberal subjectivism."[460] This binary reflects two dominant functions of photography that have marked its use, for example, by both efficiency experts like Lilian & Frank Gilbreth streamlining the motion and movement of laborers on the one hand, and the documentary impulses of Walker Evans to document the dust bowl during the great depression. This tension informs broad practices of photo-conceptualism and archival art. We see it in the typological serial photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher, the archival works of Broodthaers, Messager, and in the works of Hanne Darboven and Gerhard Richter. These latter artists engage in a critical and ironic comportment with the discourse of archives, opening up a space for collection, portraiture, and biography as an antidote to the administrative aesthetics critiqued by Buchloh. In such works we see a staging of the ambivalence over archives and museums and their

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[458] Ibid., 277.
[459] See Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive," *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 442–52.
[460] Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41.1 (1981): 20.

utopian possibilities of ensuring the perpetuity of cultural history and memory while simultaneously problematizing their self-appointed authority as guardians and gatekeepers of culture.

Implicit in Marclay's iconographic serial works is the assumption that through a mode of iconographic classification and the interplay of difference and repetition, a curator or collagist might collate knowledge and facilitate hermeneutic possibilities.[461] Rembert Hüser has perceptively observed a connection between encyclopedic tendencies in found footage works and the image comparisons produced in art-historical slideshow lectures.[462] The genesis of these lectures and the dominant methodologies for image comparison emerge in the art historian Aby Warburg's scholarly circle, when his apprentice Fritz Saxl devised dual image projection in the early 1900s.[463] Farocki's interest in the evolution of images and the gestural iterations of workers situates him in intellectual dialogue with Warburg, who rejected the dominant art historical models (in which works are examined in relation to periods, styles or formal techniques), through examinations of the shifting meanings of an image's past and its living significations.[464] This provisional but altogether novel approach to the study of culture is outlined by Giorgio Agamben:

> For Warburg, the significance of images . . . lay in the fact that, being strictly speaking, neither conscious nor unconscious, they constituted the ideal terrain for a unitary approach to culture, one capable of overcoming the opposition between history, as the study of "conscious expressions," and anthropology, as the study of "unconscious conditions," which Lévi-Strauss identified twenty years later as the

[461] See Douglas Kahn, "Surround Sound," in *Christian Marclay,* ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: UCLA Hammer Museum, 2003), 62–3, which argues that *Arranged and Conducted* offers viewers agency through modes of interpretation.
[462] See Hüser, 257.
[463] Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "Serious Issues: The Last Plates of Warburg's Picture Atlas Mnemosyne," in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), 184–85.
[464] Richard Woodfield, "Introduction," in *Art History as Cultural History,* 2.

central problem in the relations between these two disciplines.[465]

At the root of this project was the horizon of an alarming reality wherein the gestures of the past would become the subject of a "memory crisis."[466]

Warburg's approach and his attempt to circumvent a memory crisis are enshrined in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a series of image constellations meant to provide a historical orientation or interpretive schema for art historians to grasp representations of collective memory. This atlas, along with Warburg's broader project, have been resuscitated because of new relevance they offer to cinema, to the study of film history, and finally to the discourse around cultural memory itself. Philippe-Alain Michaud conveys the overlapping priorities of filmmakers and historians:

> In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the filmmaker and the historian apply identical procedures in separate fields that reveal a common orientation. Under the intersecting light of texts and films, a shift occurs in the order of discourse that will lead us to see cinema less as a spectacle than as a form of thought and to see art history as practiced by Warburg as research directed less toward a knowledge of the past than towards its reproduction.[467]

Warburg has become something of a specter haunting texts about an encyclopedic cinema-form. The qualities of media-archaeology, the unitary approach to human gesture through art, and art historical models of image-comparison described by Warburg are exceedingly attractive when apprehended through the prism of twentieth century cinema. While this is an eminently valuable undertaking, it would be wise to note Warburg's concerns over aestheticizing art history, and his insistence that the Atlas was an

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[465] Giorgio Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 99.

[466] Benjamin Buchloh cites Richard Terdiman for coining "the concept of 'memory crisis' to analyze those historical circumstances that generate an actualization of mnemonic efforts within the cultural practices of modernity, the efforts both to theorize the conditions of memory and to enact new cultural models of the mnemonic." Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas': The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 136.

[467] See Philippe-Alain Michaud. *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 39–40.

instrument rather than an art object.[468]

Instrumentalizing the Archive

When Farocki and Ernst work through technological questions of how an archive of visual concepts might be feasible, words of warning frequently emerge. Farocki senses the potentialities for homogenizing materials that this methodology seems to guarantee when he laments, "I personally would not want my first acquaintance with a film such as Fuller's *Pick Up on South Street* (US, 1953) to be as an appendix in a text on hands in close-ups."[469] Such renditions invariably fall into the traps of the database, where the privileging of semantic-iconographic content tends towards the evisceration of those pieces of contextual information that instead produce difference, historical reference, political contexts, and a tradition of found footage filmmaking that has tended towards deconstruction of the politics of representation.

I would argue that nothing like "film history" is interrogated in *The Clock.* Similar to how Hal Foster describes neoconservative iterations of history in art, Marclay's return to film history should be questioned:

> What, first of all, is this "history" but a reduction of historical periods to rulingclass styles that are then pastiched. A history of victors; a history, moreover, which denies the historicity of forms and materials—an *a*history, in fact. And what, secondly, does this "return" imply if not a flight from the present? . . . sheer post-histoire escapism . . . In this sense, "history" appears reified, fragmented, fabricated—both imploded and depleted . . . The result is a history-surrogate, at once standard and schizoid.[470]

Foster could be summarizing Marclay's optimization of cinematic materials, his replication of Hollywood continuity, *The Clock*'s pastiche of film history through a novel

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[468] See E.H. Gombrich. *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 88.
[469] Farocki and Ernst, 281.
[470] Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (New York: New Press, 1999), 122.

a priori container, and the emptying of historical reference.

In a *Sight and Sound* interview, Marclay was asked why he imagines *The Clock* has enjoyed so much success. He replied, "People like numbers—it's 24 hours, and 'How long did it take you?' and 'How many films?' and 'How many hours a day did you work?' It has this marathon aspect."[471] Agreed. *The Clock* confronts the spectator with a demonstration of the colossal profusion of cinematic imagery, allowing for the representation of nearly every minute of the day—an impressive feat of research and development. This has carried on into Marclay's current project, in which hundreds of film clips of actors opening, entering, and closing doors are strung together.[472] The nascent idea for *The Clock* (in Marclay's words, "Wow, wouldn't it be great to find clips with clocks for every minute of all twenty-four hours?"[473]) betrays Marclay's focus on questions of the artwork's possibility, rather than how, or even why it should be undertaken. One fixture of the publicity surrounding *The Clock* is the almost gleeful recounting of the fact that Marclay acquired calluses on his fingers during the editing process. It is appropriate then that *The Clock* should be received as a spectacle of labor, and that the chronometer from which it borrows its formal conceit serves to affirm the same task-oriented administrative embodiment of time. Ultimately, this labor provides a slick, palatable, and mesmerizing confection of cinematic fragments contained in an easily understood logic of cooperative form and content, a marathon movie made for the YouTube era. It is also interesting to observe that, while the creation of *The Clock* and much of its critical reception is steeped in the rhetoric of the creative commons, fair use,

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[471] Jonathan Romney, "What Time is it Where?," *Sight & Sound* (May 2011): 30.
[472] Daniel Zalewski, "The Hours: How Christian Marclay Created the Ultimate Digital Mosaic," *New Yorker* (March 12, 2012): n.p. Accessed January 11, 2013, www.newyorker.com/ reporting/2012/03/12/120312fa_fact_zalewski?currentPage=all.
[473] Ibid.

and sharing, the work itself is one of the most guarded, proprietary, and expensive pieces of media art in history.

In its finality, *The Clock* will continue to be a source of fascination for media scholars, however the question of its endurance may depend on how scholars appraise the artwork's hermeneutic aspirations towards the study of cinema history. While I have made clear here my own doubts about any such hermeneutic properties, the duration of the film and the fragmented way we are meant to experience it as viewers will very likely supply compelling scholarship about these very pedagogical properties.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

In writing this dissertation, I set out to trouble the historical approach to the legacies of 1960s and 1970s experimental film, which has relied on prescriptive and insufficient categories – such as structural film and expanded cinema – to demarcate a space for practices challenging once dominant modes of modernist cinema. I wanted to examine aesthetic continuities, such as the use of the readymade, interrogations of institutional vernaculars and political-economy of filmic exhibition, and archival-seriality to explore a profound reciprocity between film & video art and post-minimal aesthetic intelligence. This brought forth a number of basic questions: 1) What practices and intellectual currents define post-minimalism? 2) How have film and video articulated essential features of post-minimalism? 3) How are visual art strategies transformed and distinguished in the medial shift to the moving image? 4) How have the documentary practices of post-minimalism been reinterpreted by filmmakers? In attacking these questions I have selected objects which bridge art world/film world divides. Importantly, these projects challenged notions of modernist aesthetic autonomy by including social and political content, engaging variously with questions around race, gender, sexuality, anthropocentric notions of time, and the politics of the archive.

Perhaps the most important criteria for selecting the objects discussed in this dissertation, is the way each is exemplary of an engaged political praxis of artmaking. In each case, the specificities of cinematic exhibition, time-based media, film history, or the increasing demand for film & video in the museum, has caused the mutation of aesthetic practices in turns both dynamic and meretricious. Many questions remain, to comprehensively understand post-minimal and conceptual practices in the moving image,

and still many of the issues confronted in these pages have produced new questions. The

most imminent future lines of research that remain revolve around site-specific cinema

and institutional critique.

First, how might institutional critique become a model for assailing the increasing

nomadism of the moving image in contexts outside of the cinema? Second, how have

film festivals, art fairs, and post-cinematic contexts fomented antagonism between artists

and exhibitors? And finally, how are practices of cinematic site-specificity enhancing the

political power of the moving image?

The sites where cinema is exhibited are no longer an abstract question of

exhibition architectures. They have even stronger bonds to mammoth investment, the

global financial industry, and transnational corporations than the art world. Still,

interventions by the makers of cinema via boycotts, removals, and other forms of

political activity based on institutional affiliation occur almost exclusively at the

interstices between art and industry, and only very rarely in the entertainment industry

itself.[474] Removal has been a stalwart feature of institutional critique crossing over into

the world of the moving image, with many recent iterations worthy of including in any

continued analysis of institutional critique and cinema. John Greyson's withdrawal of his

film *Covered* from the Toronto International Film Festival in 2009 protests a spotlight on

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[474] Notable exceptions have occurred in the last decade. Precarious labour practices and
exploitation of visual effects workers in Hollywood have incited campaigns to have film-goers skip
opening weekend (to impact box office profits on the critical first weekend) and protests during
the Academy Awards in light of the bankruptcy of seval VFX studios. (See
http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/03/oscars-2014-visual-effects-workers-protest and
http://www.businessinsider.com/special-effects-artists-protest-the-oscars-2013-2). Another
significant event occurred when hackers tied to North Korea dumped thousands of documents
from inside Sony Studios in the wake of the upcoming release of the film *The Interview* revealing
casual racism at the highest levels of the organization and significant pay-gaps between men and
women.

films from Tel Aviv, which may have been influenced by a substantial donation from an Israeli public relations firm.

More recently, the artists' collective HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN, (better known as Yams), withdrew their film *Good Stock on the Dimension Floor* from the 2014 Whitney Biennial in protest of a performance project by the white artist Joe Scanlan's black alter-ego Donelle Woolford. *Yams* have in interviews claimed this was only a small part of their withdrawal, gesturing towards the wide-spread absence of black artists in the Biennial that year, itself echoing the activities of the Art Workers Coalition.

In recent years, the increasing portability and lumen-power of digital projectors has made them an attractive alternative to the protest banner, leading to remarkable appearances in site-specific projection projects. The Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction utilized such projections onto the face of the Guggenheim Museum to protest the building of a satellite institution in Abu Dhabi utilizing slave labour for construction. *Illuminator*, a nomadic activist projection collective utilized projections during the Montreal student protests in 2012 to help fight a draconian law passed to limit the number of students able to march. Subsequently the group has mounted site-specific projections to address fast-food workers seeking to raise the minimum wage in California, to produce an ephemeral monument to Edward Snowden, and to lobby against the Canadian Tar Sands. These projects are ushering in a new era of sited cinema, one which is extraordinarily mobile, ephemeral, and offers an opportunity for unauthorized site specificity in ways never-before-seen. These projects will impact the continued writing of institutional critique and the cinema in the most compelling ways, because the very nature of site-specific art is so often also a history of static and immobile objects, permanence, and landscape marking.

Above all, through engagement in discourse analysis of artists, curators, scholars, and art critics, this research has repeatedly challenged my understanding of art historical categories across disciplines, and the inherent political and etymological challenges of terms such as conceptual art and structural film. The prescriptive nature of these terms, especially as they are described and defined inorganically from critics, has done significant violence to the evolution of cinema practices, and furthered disciplinary stratification between the "art world" and "film world." If there is one goal that has guided my research and writing in this dissertation, it is the firm belief that a shared terrain of critical practices emerged from post-minimal aesthetic intelligence, which was bifurcated into disciplinary boundaries.[475] What does this mean for my own scholarship, which similarly prescribes the aesthetic category "post-minimal" to refer to a wide berth of practices, a polyamorous relationship to institutional settings, a multi-medial approach to cinema, and a culling from a broad swath of artistic traditions?

It behooves me to return again here to Foucault's warning in his essay "Theatrum Philisophicum," that attempts to address how philosophy's desire to escape categories frequently reproduces an anarchy of difference. The paradox at the heart of this essay is the desire to be "liberated through the invention of acategorical thought" and to also escape the "monochrome" of sameness[476] invariably produced by the loss of categories. Foucault illustrates the pitfalls of both Aristotelian universalism and Hegelian dialectics, but similarly approaches the bifurcations that categorical thought produces, as a kind of infinite regress. But an attempt to move outside of this paradigm confronts us with what

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[475] This fact has long been attributed to a variety of competing factors including significant differences in institutional support, the economic models characterizing film exhibition and art exhibition, the rise of a discrete discipline of film studies in Universities, as well as a documented sense of mutual suspicion between the art world and film world.

[476] Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philisophicum," *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, James Hurley ed., (New York: The New Press, 1998): 359.

Foucault eloquently calls "the magma of stupidity"[477] where all difference is eviscerated and all categories fall into a sea of sameness. What does this mean for scholarship? Perhaps it suggests a move away from the problems raised by artificially constructed movements and prescriptive categories, and a return to the aesthetic engines of artmaking, which offer opportunities for constant renewal, evolution, and refinement. Despite the impetus of my intervention to bridge disciplinary stratifications between art and film, it would also appear that the historical interest of filmmakers to adopt a parallel history may have contributed in some sense to an adventurousness and singularity from art history. The last two decades of film scholarship around this cross-pollination is the proverbial "day of reckoning" and part of a broader move towards a media studies unencumbered by the specificities of institutional spaces, exhibition media, and other separations, but which thrives on articulating the specificities of these features across disciplines.

At the culmination of the 1970s, certain post-minimal practices associated with avoiding aesthetic choice, appropriation, and a priori operations were dismissed as dehumanizing and mechanistic. The return of abstract painting in the 1980s manifested a certain withdrawal from conceptual operations eviscerating subjectivity, the hand of the artist, and notions of skill and craft. This also occurred in conjunction with the rise of intersectional identity politics associated with queer, feminist, post-colonial and race studies in academia, which troubled the anti-subjectivist leanings of post-minimalism as a hold-back from modernism, and a testament to the dominance of white male artists during this time. Despite the pervasive utility of these critiques, this dissertation utilizes objects, texts, films, and installations troubling a clear dichotomy between politically reflexive or activist media works and post-minimal aesthetic tactics.

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[477] Ibid: 361.

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