
Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art

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Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art

Malcolm Turvey: As anyone who currently visits galleries and museums knows, image/sound installations employing projection technologies or monitors—what we are referring to here, for the sake of shorthand, as “projected image” installations—are ubiquitous in contemporary art. George Baker and I have organized this round table in order to address this phenomenon: its causes; its significance, both aesthetic and social, for the artist, for the viewer, for the traditional mediums and institutions of film, painting, and sculpture; its economic rationale; and, we hope, much more. We have invited the following here because of their expertise with this form or “medium”: Matthew Buckingham is a young artist who works with film; Chrissie Iles, who as curator of film and video at the Whitney Museum of American Art, is intimately and perhaps uniquely familiar with projected image work in both the art world and the avant-garde film and video world; and Anthony McCall is the creator of seminal projected image works in the 1970s such as *Line Describing a Cone* [1973]. We are wondering what insights you can give us and our readers into this phenomenon.

Hal Foster: Perhaps we should start, if we can, with a genealogical sketch of artists’ interest in the projected image, and within that genealogy a typology, because there are all kinds of projected images—image installations, cinema, video, digital, etc.—and it’s important to keep in mind the differences between them.

Chrissie Iles: Mechanical reproduction, of course, has been important to artists since it first emerged in the nineteenth century. In fact, we should go further back to the eighteenth century, when artists were dealing with the camera obscura on the one hand, and the panorama on the other. Both can be cited as the precursors of the twentieth-century artistic concern with both the projection of an image in space, and the three-dimensionality of experiencing an image in space. In the nineteenth century, painters such as Degas, Munch, and Eakins used photography very much in the way painters in the previous century used the camera obscura to aid their painting. In the 1920s, Duchamp is interested in the temporal experiments of Muybridge and Marey. His film and

his rotating discs, along with Man Ray and Léger's films, constitute a brief moment in France when film and motion were explored by artists working in other media. Richter, Eggeling, and Ruttmann introduced abstraction into film, and parallels between film and painting began to emerge—abstract painting and abstract film emerge at the same moment, both in reaction to pictorialist conventions. In America during the 1930s and 1940s, filmmakers such as Feininger, John and James Whitney, and others experimented with abstract film, and searched for a Kandinsky-like fusion between art, film, and music, trying to create a synthesis between image, sound, and color.

The end of World War II marked a new phase in experimental film, as filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Jonas Mekas, Oscar Peterson, Ken Jacobs, and Stan Brakhage took up the newly available 16mm film camera from a background in the novel and poetry. Their cinema was derived from a poetic or literary idea of personal expression, and an interest in language. The importance of literature and language was also strongly evident in Beat films of the 1950s, including the cut-up films involving William Burroughs, and in films such as *Pull My Daisy* [1958] and Shirley Clarke's films, such as *The Cool World* [1963].

In the 1960s, Warhol was the key figure in the reconnection between film and painting. His shift from painting toward film was influenced directly by the filmmaker Jack Smith and the painter and filmmaker Marie Menken, who appeared in films such as *Chelsea Girls* [1966]. Mechanical reproduction, derived from film and photography, was applied to painting in Pop art. Meanwhile, in films such as *Empire* [1964], Warhol slowed film down to stasis, at the same time as Minimalism was introducing a phenomenological, syncretic viewing experience into sculpture.

It was at this point, in the mid-1960s, that artists, mainly sculptors, began to use film. Some employed it simply as documentation of performance and happenings. Others incorporated it into their conceptual practice, such as Mel Bochner and Robert Moskowitz's *New York Windows* [1966], or, like Richard Serra, used it as part of a broader, process-based approach to sculptural issues. At the same time, Structural filmmakers such as Anthony, Paul Sharits, Michael Snow, Ernie Gehr, and Hollis Frampton were exploring many of the same concerns, although Sharits' films remained very connected with painting, especially multiple screen pieces like *Shutter Interface* [1975], which demonstrates a recurrence of the attempt to fuse color and sound.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, narrative began to reassert itself in the work of both experimental filmmakers and artists. In both experimental film and video, and among artists working with film, a shift occurred toward increasingly complex narratives and away from structural ideas, or process-based explorations of space. Filmmakers such as Ken Jacobs and Ernie Gehr were the exception to the rule, however, as were filmmakers such as Peter Hutton, who created, and still create, filmic tableaux that evoke the still

photographic image. There are no clear-cut breaks, and each successive decade contains both the residue of the last, and the seeds of the next.

The 1990s, I think, saw the fulfillment of Marshall McLuhan's predictions of the 1960s. McLuhan described the nineteenth century as being obsessed with privacy, and the twentieth century as being obsessed with communication. Craigie Horsfield pointed out recently that film is essentially a socializing medium. We constantly ask each other, "What film have you seen? Did you like the new so-and-so?" Everybody wants to share their experiences of seeing a narrative film. Film creates a kind of connective tissue, socially and culturally, much more than anything else—novels or TV, for instance. I think that artists' use of film in the 1990s, particularly popular Hollywood film, is partly to do with wanting to engage with, and perhaps influence, the connective tissue that film creates, and participate in a common language of communication.

George Baker: How useful, though, is this genealogy of continuity—the long entanglement of art and mechanical reproduction—for understanding contemporary developments around the projected image? Are there, in fact, new situations or new conditions now that a narrative of continuity, in a sense, does not acknowledge? Shouldn't we pay attention to the historical differences between the periods of film's insurgency into the art world? If we look just to the 1960s and '70s, and the present moment—with the lacuna of the '80s being in fact significant for a genealogy looking more for ruptures, discontinuities—I don't so much see a shared dialogue between painting and film as I do moments of intense technological transformation that have the effect of revivifying work on film. In the '60s and '70s, you have the rise of new electronic media such as TV and video, which have a freeing effect on artistic explorations and uses of film. And since the '90s, we see that new digital media have had a similar effect. But the junctures—technological, historical—are radically different.

Foster: The use of such media in both periods is often very funky, as if they were already secondhand, almost outmoded. There are usually two dynamics at these new technological moments. There are artists who want to push the futuristic freedoms of new media, and others who want to look at what this apparent leap forward opens up in the past, the obsolete.

Iles: The emergence of digital technology has, paradoxically, led to an increased activity in film.

Baker: That's my point exactly.

Iles: A lot of artists today are making life very difficult for themselves, technically speaking, using obscure film stocks and film loopers. Not everyone wants to work with the electronic digital medium.

Matthew Buckingham: I think this is true. I think much of the contemporary interest in cinema within the art world is due to the rich familiarity with its history, which can be mined for its resonance with viewers. The contrast cinema provides to newer media is also very rich, in many ways. Returning to older

media and using them in new ways can be part of a critique of newer media. It's also interesting to see how incredibly long "the death of cinema" is taking. It starts, really, in the late '50s, with metacritiques from Godard and others. This moment is now often spoken of, in hindsight, as both the height of and the end of cinema.

Baker: We might not be witnessing a long death of cinema so much as a fragmented history of moments when cinema is revived at times of crisis.

Anthony McCall: But I think we tend to talk interchangeably, and not very usefully, about film and cinema, as if they were the same thing. Cinema is a social institution, while film is a medium. And I think while the medium may change, the institution will be just fine. I don't see how the institution of cinema—which involves the social act of looking at moving images, and talking about them—is going to be threatened by new technology. Of course, it will be affected by it in terms of how films are made, distributed, and exhibited, but it won't be destroyed by it. I can quite easily imagine film as a medium disappearing quietly in the next ten years with scarcely a blip in terms of the practices of cinema.

Turvey: I couldn't agree more. Claims about the "death of cinema" are vastly exaggerated.

Foster: I have two questions. What is it that lights up at the moment of a technology's death? Is it film in general, or a particular kind of film? And what exactly is this common knowledge that we call cinematic? What is its canon? Is it commercial movies only?

Iles: It's film as a physical medium, and it's also commercial movies. But I think the relationship between film and art is a one-way love affair. Artists love film, but the film world is largely indifferent to the fact. In fact, it often irritates them—they deride it—because filmmaking is still essentially a craft.

McCall: It's an industrial craft, also.

Iles: It's an industrial craft, and it's a group activity . . .

McCall: . . . with a broad division of labor.

Iles: It's not something that you can take credit for as a single person. Traditional narrative films, whether commercial or independent, involve a director, a director of photography, actors, a cinematographer, a sound engineer . . .

McCall: . . . the screenwriter.

Iles: Some artists, such as Matthew Barney, acknowledge their team, and take on the role of director in a conventional film world sense, in films that rival commercial movies in their ambition and budget. But the difference is also a technical one. A trained filmmaker like Peter Hutton shoots everything himself, but has tremendous technical skill, and works with the specifics of film editing and the aesthetics of celluloid. Anthony, when you wrote, in *October* 103 [p. 48] about the art and film worlds as a "double helix, spiraling closely around one another without ever quite meeting," I think that that really is the case. For example, if you look at the films of Stanley Kubrick or Ken Russell in relation

to Barney's *Cremaster* series, there is a clear influence. But there has not been a serious analysis of his films in cinematic terms, and most art world writers are not cognizant enough of film history or theory to attempt it.

Turvey: But, when you say film world, are you talking about commercial entertainment cinema, or film in general, including art cinema and experimental film?

Iles: Mainstream, independent, experimental, the whole lot.

Turvey: What side of this split between art and film worlds do you occupy, Anthony?

McCall: Well, the generation of filmmakers that I was contemporary with in London, grouped around the London Filmmakers' Co-op, almost to a person came out of a '60s art school background. Most of them had studied painting or sculpture. I think it is fair to say—because there are a lot of different people we are talking about here—that most of us were self-taught, as far as the medium of film is concerned. And we approached it as material, much like one would approach the use of any sculptural material. We discovered it as we went along.

Iles: Matthew, your training was very different, wasn't it?

Buckingham: I think that's probably another thing to look at—the new combinations of histories and disciplines made available to students of my generation that weren't necessarily as available to prior ones. I was in a studio art program in the '80s, working with film and video while also taking courses in film history and theory. I became interested in the continuities and separations between these practices, particularly around documentary.

Iles: Another aspect to the split I was talking about is the fact that projected images are shown in galleries, which is something the film world finds completely odd and irrelevant, but artists find very compelling. The physical space of the gallery is critical to this discussion, because in the early '70s, artists were focusing our attention on the space of the gallery, whereas in contemporary installations, the space is not part of the conceptual structure of the piece. It tends to be artists from earlier generations, like Craigie Horsfield with his installation at *Documenta*, or Gary Hill, whose work continues to engage both space and our retinal perception of images, who bring our attention back to the space, and the relationship of the moving images to it.

Foster: This speaks to a modernist formation: treating film reflexively, as a material; thinking about process; working with the apparatus; being concerned with the embodiment of the viewer, the parameters of the space. That's the difference for me. When you say that film now is related to painting, I wouldn't say painting so much as "pictorialism." There's a rampant pictorialism, which is also a rampant virtualism, that the sculptural and spatial interests of your generation, Anthony, wanted to challenge, or at least to probe. The pictorialism of projected images today often doesn't seem to care much about the actual space. Sometimes it doesn't matter when you walk in, or even whether you do. It's as if the work doesn't care whether you're there or not. This is beyond disembodiment: It's habituating us to a kind of condition of post-subjectivity.

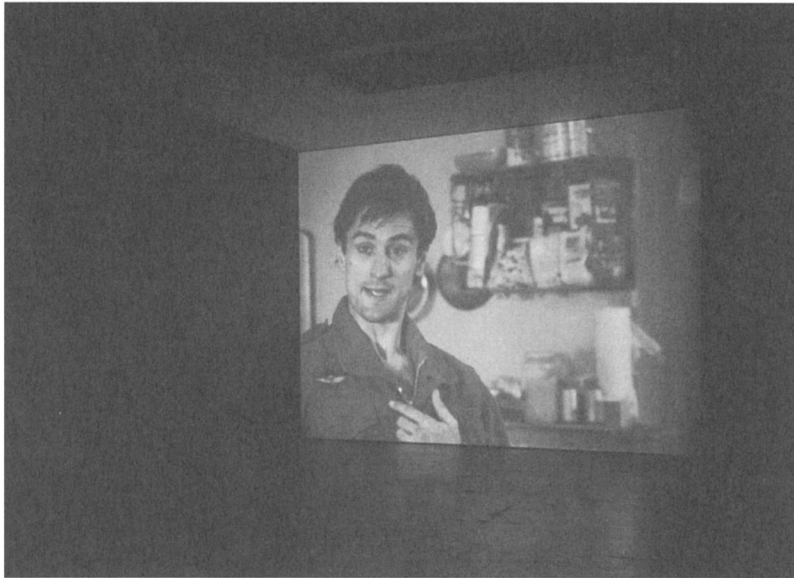
McCall: I'm often struck by how, in these installations with projected film and video, the gallery visitors are motionless. Of course, what's happening is that, in fact, they're not installations at all, in the original sense of being just about sculptural space.

There's an installation at Dia right now by Rosemarie Trockel called *Spleen* [2002], which illustrates the problem. Physically, the large space contains five free-standing walls adjacent to, or loosely facing, one another. Each wall is covered on one side with mobile aluminum plates. The reverse side of each of these walls are the screens for short, continuously looped, projected video sequences. Each sequence has a different camera style and each is of a different type of event: a press conference, a domestic party, a theater performance, and so on. The relationship between the five video sequences is the riddle of the piece and the visitor must walk from one to another, stopping at each screen for the number of minutes it takes to watch each sequence through, in order to compare them. For most of this time, you are rooted to the spot, absorbed, as you watch and listen to a clip, before you move on to seek out the next. During this entire process, you barely notice the free-standing planes of aluminum plates, which you are invited to consider as part of a single, integrated installation. Physically, these are large, sculptural surfaces. But while you study the clips, they seem gratuitous. And if you re-focus your attention onto the plate-covered walls, you are aware that your concentration is being attacked by sound spillage from the projections. If you are in a position where both can be seen at the same time, then the moving image always wins, hands down. Neither seem to have much to do with the other.

The problem is that one does not look at video screens and sculpture in the same way. However placed within a space, when you watch and listen to video or film, you enter the elsewhere of the moving image, and you leave your physical body behind, which remains rooted to the spot. To study sculpture—or to explore architectural space—you must walk, measuring what you see with your eyes and your physical body. These two experiences are diametrically opposed.

Baker: I think we should turn to more of these specific examples. For in fact there is a split in contemporary uses of projection between the phenomenological and the virtual, a split that perhaps follows that between film and cinema more generally. As Chrissie well knows, some contemporary artists do attempt to continue the phenomenological interest in film. Liisa Roberts has made film installations throughout the '90s, for example *betraying a portrait* [1995], that use things like the changing daylight entering the exhibition space itself to either destroy or allow the image to be seen in that space. She is an example of someone concentrating on space and time as opposed to virtualization. In fact she calls many of her films "sculpture." But some artists engaging with virtualization make it so excessive that we in fact enter into a new dynamic. An

Douglas Gordon.
through a looking
glass. 1999. Photo:
Stuart Tyson. Taxi
Driver © 1976
Columbia Pictures
Industries, Inc. All
rights reserved courtesy
of Columbia Pictures.



example that comes to mind is Douglas Gordon, who, in so many ways, represents the diametrically opposite position to Roberts's. I'm thinking of a piece he exhibited a few years ago in New York called *through a looking glass* [1999], in which, in line with his continual use of Hollywood films, he returns to Robert De Niro's famous role as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* [1976], appropriating the "Are you talking to me?" scene in which the character is looking at and speaking to himself in the mirror. Projected simultaneously on two opposite walls of the gallery, Gordon at first seemed to place the viewer in a position of being directly and aggressively addressed by the installation. And yet the opposite effect ultimately took over, as the two looped appropriations gradually fell out of synch with each other, producing a cacophonous "disassociation," one in line with the narrative plot of Gordon's cinematic source. The work derealized the exhibition space and seemed in a parallel manner to utterly negate the viewer by recourse to a pathological space of the virtual, of the virtual as a space of pathology. This is opposed to the hyperconsciousness of the phenomenological typical of the tradition of the '60s and '70s. This seems to be an opposition that we are experiencing at this moment.

But I think that this engagement with virtualization can also be a utopian condition for contemporary artists, as opposed to the utopias of the previous generation around phenomenology. Artists from the French context, such as Pierre Huyghe, or other members of what we might even call the new "Ecole de Paris" (Philippe Parreno, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster) are thinking of fictionalized scenarios, or virtualized scenarios, as a reengagement with utopia—with reconstructing social relations, imagining difference, constructing impossible scenarios—and are not dealing with physical limitations at all. Virtualization here is a potential source of utopian ambitions that one wants to reconnect to now in the wake of postmodernism, in a sense.

Foster: That's a scary thought.

Baker: Why?

Foster: I can't imagine how the utopia projected by the media conglomerates could be troped by Pierre Huyghe, as much as I'm intrigued by his work.

Baker: That's not really what he does.

Foster: That's what it sounded like from your description. What's the content of this utopia according to you?

Baker: Utopia is the term these artists specifically embrace. It seems a constant in many bodies of work using projection that have emerged over the last decade; there is the ever-present notion of utopian possibility or space. It's present in your work, Matthew. It's present in Stan Douglas's work, where, often, he's dealing with moments of utopian possibility or failure, like May '68 or later moments. It's present, most specifically, in these French artists such as Huyghe, where the idea is not to reconnect to the phenomenological concerns of the '60s and '70s, but to reconnect, quite specifically, to a different legacy, to what you earlier called "pictorialism"; to reconnect to the "Pictures" generation of artists, like Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine, and their work on representation and its critique. But again we witness an almost 180-degree inversion of an earlier set of concerns: With the younger artists, one is not dealing so much with a "critique of representation," a dispelling of illusion within fictional or mass-cultural constructs, but a very concerted project to bring those constructs into the realm of the real, to bring fiction into reality as a utopian model. There is a negative aspect to this, or at least an immensely confusing one, as you've just put your finger on, Hal. Is one dealing with a claiming of utopian space that remains inside, somehow, the imaginary of late capital? Or is one, in fact, generating some kind of a difference from mass-media spaces?

Huyghe is an interesting example, since he seems to be looking specifically in so many of his works for moments when there can be a rupture between the mass-media product and actual lived experience. There are many projects in which he focuses on a figure who reclaims some sense of experience from the mass media, like the *Third Memory* [2001] film, where he focuses on the actual criminal whom the lead character in *Dog Day Afternoon* [1975] is based upon; or the piece in which he focuses on the woman who did the voice-over dubbing for the French version of the Disney movie *Snow White* [1962], and who sued Disney successfully for control of her voice; or the piece in which—in a specific reflection on his precursors dating back to the '60s, but not necessarily connecting to the same concerns—he interviews John Giorno about Warhol's movie *Sleep* [1963], a movie he calls, instead, *Sleeptalking* [1998], in which Giorno mostly talks about Warhol's inability to use his Bolex, and how he couldn't really even make the film for a long time. There is this constant concern.

Foster: So utopia there has more to do with loss and failure, doesn't it? It's not necessarily a projected future as it is some version of a fictionalized past that could be repositioned in the present?

Buckingham: I think it's important to look at utopia not as something that is intended to succeed, but as a fiction that is meant as a critique of the present moment.

Baker: Can you talk a little bit about your own work with this, Matthew?

Buckingham: Utopian projects, I believe, ask you to consider why they are impossible—why, even if they are partially realized, they will never be completed. This was the question that Joachim Koester and I tried to address in our work about the community of Christiania in Copenhagen. Christiania is a large squat of about 1,200 people that was founded in 1971 on an abandoned military base. It has often been discussed in Scandinavia as a “failed utopia.” Joachim and I felt that this judgment was irrelevant. What was interesting to us was the way that Christiania, as a self-proclaimed “Free City,” resonates historically and politically with its site (a seventeenth-century military base) and with the city of Copenhagen.

Baker: So why was film crucial for working on these issues? Because Koester's first engagement with Christiania was to photograph it, albeit with a cinematic dimension as he employed the blue filters of Truffaut's “day for night” technique. So what was the next step? I'm not actually familiar with your film.

Buckingham: We decided to return to the initial parameters of 16mm hand-held documentary filmmaking that existed at the time Christiania was founded. We were also really interested in the distinctions made in the '60s between cinema verité in Europe and direct cinema in the U.S. and Canada—the two documentary models that filmmakers tended to gravitate toward in making truth-claims through documentary methods. In exhibiting the work, we also wanted to construct a social space. This relates very much to what we were saying a minute ago about space. For me, the primary reason for working with the projected image is that it always implies some kind of social space.

Foster: Why is sociality always inscribed in projected space?

Buckingham: Because physical space is required to project an image. The focal-length separating apparatus from projection measures out a space for the viewer. Even when the viewer is alone, there is a social implication that doesn't exist for me in other types of image display. I thought it was interesting, Chrissie, that you pointed to the social side of Hollywood, which compels people to talk about films after they see them. In my work, I've been interested in opening the viewing experience to a different social dimension. I've tried to complicate the viewing process by using the space, particularizing the space, so that the viewer sees herself not only in relation to the piece but also in relation to other viewers.

Foster: Can I ask again for a typology of these different experiences? What are the different subject effects and social projections of these different apparatuses? What does, for example, a series of different video monitors in space evoke culturally? What kind of subject does it address? What kind of sociality does it imagine, as opposed to, say, film in a gallery, or digital projection?

Iles: First of all, if a projected image reaches the floor, it's usually called an "installation." That space between the image and the floor is a critical part of the piece. If you bring the image down to the floor, you're negating cinema on a certain level. You're saying: "This is not meant for you to watch all the way through like a narrative film. This is part of the 'going for a walk' of museum and gallery viewing." With a film or video projector, if you move it in, it looks like a Super-8 film you'd see at home. If you move it this way, up and down, it looks like television, while if you move it that way, it looks like 16mm. Is the space painted white? If so, it refers more to the gallery. Is it black? Well, then it's more of an immersive space, like cinema.

Baker: What you're talking about has an effect upon the engagement with mechanical reproduction you spoke about back in your first comments. One of the things that often occurs to me, as I consider the use of projected images in contemporary art, is how such work smuggles in authorial control over the final project in a way that's almost ironclad. We're dealing with technologically reproducible media that are individualized in such a way that you can only see them in the mode of installation. They often cannot be reproduced for study purposes or print venues in any way. They are these unreproducible, singularized experiences. It seems intensely necessary for artists such as Steve McQueen and James Coleman to exert complete control over the manner in which their work is seen. And that singularizes the experience of this otherwise technological form.

Iles: But it depends on the artist. Somebody like Coleman behaves almost like an experimental filmmaker. He is very precise about framing, focus, the kind of lens, everything. It's much, much more intensive than hanging a painting—it's very, very precise. Douglas Gordon, however, in his current show at the Hayward Gallery in London, devotes a room to monitors scattered throughout the gallery space, on which are showing VHS viewing copies—normally reserved for curatorial viewing purposes only—of all his previous installations.

Baker: Right, this acts out his indifference to the medium in which he's working. Huyghe is a little bit like this, too. If you want to see a Huyghe piece, you can see it very easily. It's not like trying to see a Coleman, where it has to be in the exact installation format to see it—no proxies, no approximations, no illustrations. With Douglas Gordon, the individual works themselves are often produced in a way that their actual specifications are not even that exact. For instance, *24 Hour Psycho* [1993] was done with just a kind of old Panasonic VHS rigged to create something roughly twenty-four hours long. I think Amy Taubin once referred to it as "more or less *24 Hour Psycho*."

Foster: The difference in authorial control interests me, at least, much less than the difference in subject effect—whether the means are so controlled that the viewer feels that she's having an absolutely immaculate experience with no sense of the apparatus or the space, all effectively virtualized, or whether, on the contrary, these things are underscored and opened up. In media culture at large now, we're so used to being dematerialized, and what disturbs me is the way that some



Pierre Huyghe. The Third Memory.
1999. Courtesy the artist and
Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

projected images have a similar effect. Go to the top of the Guggenheim now to the Bill Viola piece, and you'll find what Walter Benjamin calls the "blue flower in the land of technology," an experience of spiritual immediacy effected through intense media immersion. And people love it, this bewitching mysticism.

Iles: But that's been at the heart of video since its inception. Video arose during the utopian moment of the '60s. For example, Stephen Beck collaborated with the filmmaker Jordan Belson, who made very spiritual films, to make a wonderful video called *Cycles* [1974], which was very psychedelic. The video image operated almost as a mandala. Zen was very important in all of American art in the '50s and '60s, and video encapsulated it when it first emerged. And I think it's no coincidence that Bill Viola, who was an early pioneer of video, has continued to articulate that.

McCall: Moving onto a different issue, another thing to bear in mind is that there's always been, at least in film practice, two parallel but quite different tendencies. Peter Wollen's piece, "The Two Avant-Gardes," written in 1977 I believe, argued that there was one approach that stressed the physical material of film, and sought the uniquely filmic and self-reflexive, for example, the so-called Structural films, which in the U.S. included artists working in the '60s and '70s such as Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton, and Paul Sharits. The other approach stressed not material, but signification; more comfortable with language and literary narrative than the former, this work made problematic the interplay of cinematic codes and the ideological effects produced by them. This approach is found in many of the films of Jean-Luc Godard, as well as in the films of Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet, such as *Othon* [1975] and *Fortini-Cani* [1977]. It occurs to me that what's happened in the last ten years is that work on signification has come back, albeit in a new context—the art world. For instance, both *Der Sandmann* [1995] and *Journey Into Fear* [2001] by Stan Douglas engage both cinematic codes and literary texts.

I was also interested in you, Matthew, talking about direct cinema, because I think that some of the new work draws on techniques from visual anthropology and ethnography, such as the imperative to inscribe within the text of the film the processes of analysis and interpretation. I am thinking here of Pierre Huyghe's *Third Memory*, which you were talking about earlier, George.

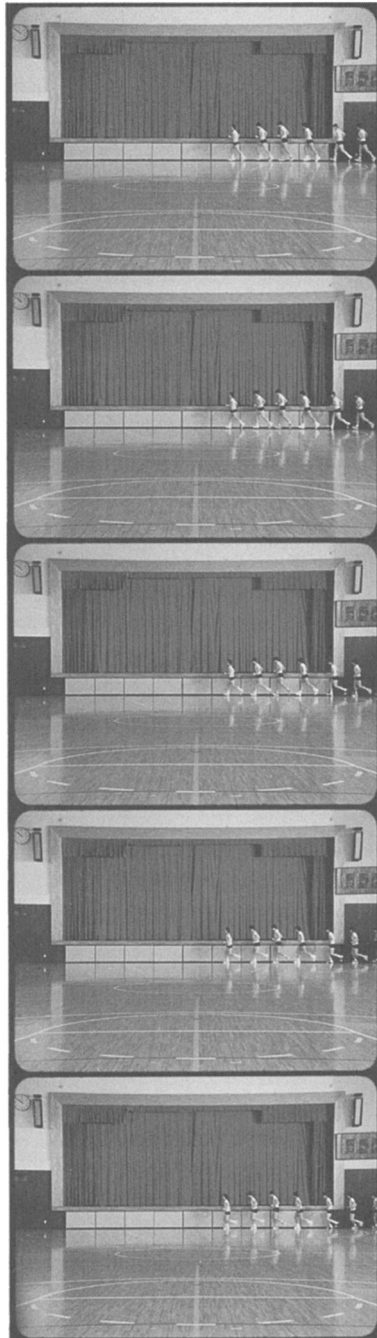
The ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch is enormously important, not only as an influence on Godard in the way he developed the use of live synchronous sound outside the studio, but in terms of his idea of taking anthropological filmmaking a whole step further by saying, "The act of filming is an act of provocation." This is seen in his work from 1954 onward, when his films increasingly involved the creation of fictional scenarios, with himself and the camera acting as the catalyst for the subjects of the film. You later find this technique, of course, in Warhol.

Baker: Among the younger generation of artists who use film, it seems that this link is strong, and nowhere stronger, than in someone like Sharon Lockhart's work. She in fact combines that ethnographic tradition with a completely opposed set of codes, often from Cagean avant-garde aesthetics. Various types of avant-garde strategies are layered in her project that were formerly as incompatible as the materialist and signifying work you were just talking about, Anthony. The work's challenge turns on whether and how these opposed legacies can be brought together. *Teatro Amazonas* [1999] is an ethnographic film that's also a Cagean event; *Goshogaoka* [1997] is an Yvonne Rainer dance performance as much as an ethnographic film.

Foster: But how legible are these combinations? You began, Chrissie, with the argument that artists have turned, once again, to cinema because it is somehow a shared language, a cultural canon. It seems that if you mix a little Godard, a little bit of Cage, and you have these different associations and formations, then it won't be legible to more than a handful of your art/film school colleagues and students.

Iles: But again I think it depends on the artist. One of the reasons for Douglas Gordon's success is that he has made a conceptual approach to film very accessible.

Baker: What about your work with the ethno-



Sharon Lockhart.
Goshogaoka. 1997.
Courtesy Barbara
Gladstone Gallery.

graphic tradition, Matthew? Are you dealing with practices of signification? Or is it a kind of provocation or connection to reality in a documentary sense?

Buckingham: I guess I would have to say both. My project, called *Situation Leading to a Story* [1999], centers around a set of four home movies that I found on the street in New York City. They were all from the 1920s. The first was a film of a family documenting itself; the second was an amateur documentary about a copper mine in Peru; the third was a film depicting the expansion of the house in the first film, including the construction of a four-car garage; and the last was shot at a bullfight in either Spain or Mexico. The question I took up was: What kinds of connections might exist between these films? Presumably they had all been discarded by the same person, so I began thinking about them in light of their materiality and what kinds of histories I could discover about them, even down to the date codes on the films. And, of course, the kinds of connections that I made—imperialism, increased wealth and leisure time, etc.—I recognized as my own projections onto the films. Whether or not they were valid was sort of irrelevant for me. It was much more about using the opportunity to reflect on myself taking up the role of anthropologist investigating these dislocated images. In completing the project, I conceived of a site for re-presenting the material—a constructed space—where the viewer initially encounters the projector and the sound without the image, a sort of talking projector. I thought of it as a two-channel piece really—image and sound—consisting of the films, basically as I found them, and a self-reflective journalistic account of what happened after.

McCall: In your voice?

Buckingham: Yes, my investigative voice.

McCall: These films were silent?



Matthew Buckingham.
Situation Leading to a Story. 1999.

Courtesy the artist.

Buckingham: Yes. So the viewer's first impression is of a small space with the projector and a bit of this monologue. There's a small opening in the wall, in front of the projector, so you realize, immediately, that you have to find the image. You have a choice between going one way or the other, and making your way around this very simple, S-shaped maze or labyrinth. In the second room, image and sound are put together, but this construction always points back to the material conditions that allow the viewer to see what they see and hear what they hear.

Baker: But again, you're making a kind of fictionalized scenario out of documentary material.

Buckingham: Right.

Foster: Can I ask a question about another discourse relevant to film, which might be more tangential than anthropology, namely, psychoanalysis? While there was an antipsychological imperative in your generation, Anthony, for all kinds of reasons—the desire to get away from the private spaces of the Surrealist image, the Abstract Expressionist gesture, and so on—there was also, in the '70s and '80s, in film theory, especially feminist film theory, a great interest in psychoanalytical models. In contemporary uses of film one finds a very different version of psychoanalysis, which is maybe not a particularly conscious one. There's almost a hysterization of film in works by Douglas Gordon, Martin Arnold, and others. There is still an attempt to break up the illusion, still a materialist ambition, in part. But the effect is to shatter the "persona" of the cited film, and to elicit, almost sympathetically, a hysterical response in the viewer. I wonder if there is a way to track this other use of psychoanalysis.

Iles: Well, I think it's very interesting that, in early video, in America in particular, the camera became a confessional tool.

McCall: Do you mean Vito Acconci and people like that?

Iles: Yes, Acconci and many others, including women. And I think it's very interesting that a lot of young British artists have used the video camera in a similar way. Let's not only limit British art to Douglas Gordon. I'm thinking of Gillian Wearing, for example, whose video work has always had that psychological, confessional aspect.

Turvey: I think there might be something else at work as well. People like Annette Michelson and P. Adams Sitney always made the argument that you can understand the tradition of avant-garde film in the United States in terms of the use of film as a metaphor for the mind. When I look at the work of contemporary artists and wonder, What is their attraction to film?, well, sometimes I think that the answer could be, following Annette and Sitney, that film is the artistic medium that is best at representing psychological processes, especially extreme psychological processes. Take somebody like Douglas Gordon. His work is written about in this way all the time, you know, that it is about psychological splitting, fractured identity, and so on. I agree with you, Hal, when you say that a lot of contemporary work is aimed at conveying, or attempting to

make the spectator reexperience, certain types of psychological states, especially traumatic ones like hysteria. Although these states are very '80s and '90s—splitting, trauma, etc.—the actual tradition of using film to represent psychological states is a very old one, and is central to American avant-garde film. Of course, though, there is the other phenomenological tradition, which Anthony's work, I think, exemplifies. If you compare Anthony with somebody like Michael Snow, I think they are on opposite poles. Annette's argument about Snow was that, say, *Wavelength* [1967] is a metaphor for conscious intentionality. It has nothing to do with physical perception of the space in which the image is projected, at least as far as I can see. Anthony's work, meanwhile, has everything to do with physical perception. With Snow, although he's much more analytical than his predecessors, he's still part of the tradition that goes from Deren through to Brakhage, and that uses film as a metaphor for the mind. And I think this tradition is alive in contemporary work, although this work explores very different psychological processes than people like Snow did.

Baker: This kind of argument about what makes cinema attractive for artists like Douglas Gordon, which involves reconnecting to pre-1980s filmic traditions theorized by critics like Annette, makes a lot of sense to me. We don't see now the issues that were arising in film or photographic practices in the '80s, when representation was analyzed through categories that were psychoanalytically informed. That analysis has faded in contemporary work. Somehow, film is now seen as a tool to directly immerse the work into a kind of construction of psychological intensity, as opposed to analyzing the representational product through psychoanalytic categories. Or to put this another way, contemporary work doesn't engage in an antiaesthetic critique of representation, as post-modernism did, but instead creates a kind of aesthetic, an aesthetic of emotional and psychic intensities.

Iles: But I don't see psychic or personal emotional intensity in American projected work any more. I see it in the work of Eija-Liisa Ahtila, or Tracy Emin. But in America it appears more strikingly in experimental film than in installation work.

Baker: Well, one of the caveats I would make to what you are saying is that, for me, most of the interesting artists working with the projected image are not like Matthew—they are not American. The most interesting artists working with film are specifically working out of a geographical relationship of peripherality to Hollywood, for example, people like Stan Douglas in Vancouver, or William Kentridge in Johannesburg, or Eija-Liisa Ahtila in Finland. And when the artist in fact comes out of L.A., such as Paul Sietsema or Sharon Lockhart, they take their camera to Paris or to Japan or to South America. This links back to the question of the most recent *Documenta*, Okwui Enwezor's *Documenta 11*, and its thorough investment in the projected image. There's a connection here between . . .

Foster: The peripheral and the projected?

Baker: Yes. One of the most interesting uses of the projected image now is to disidentify with commercial, Hollywood cinema, and to somehow reconnect to and explore legacies within film that are outside of the Hollywood or the mass-cultural.

McCall: Like ethnographic techniques, for example?

Baker: Yes.

Buckingham: One interesting exception is Morgan Fisher working in L.A., and performing almost an ethnography on film technology in some of his projects, while working peripherally within the industry. It's a very interesting position, I think.

Iles: His work is really very important, and I think it's important that you brought him up. Fisher was Sharon Lockhart's teacher. He made a number of Structural films in the early '70s dealing with the process of production. And Jack Goldstein also was and continues to be hugely important. He occupies a similarly in-between position, using Hollywood studio industrial techniques to create conceptual films that appear almost as objects.

McCall: With Douglas Gordon's work, there is a strong element of nostalgia for a particular period of Hollywood, a classical period that never actually existed, in fact.

Iles: I think the same is true of Stan Douglas, Isaac Julien, and a whole generation of artists who came to prominence at the beginning of the '90s. The specifics of their work are intertwined with the moment when VHS video technology first became widely available, which provided easy access to Hollywood films for the first time.

Baker: Maybe we can be more specific about what nostalgias people are feeling at this moment? For this is also a recurrent structure in contemporary art's "return" to film. There is the one you're putting your finger on, which is very evident in Gordon's projects—an incredible nostalgia for the last moment of the auteur. But there's also a plethora of work that reconnects to the transition between silent and sound cinema as a moment that one wants somehow to resurrect.

Foster: There's also an interest in animation.

McCall: And then there's Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Paradise Institute* [2001] at Luhring Augustine, an elaborately constructed miniature movie theater, which you go in and out of. I wonder what that expresses a yearning for.

Iles: I think it expresses a yearning for a very different form of theatrical experience. Nowadays, cinemas resemble sitting rooms, and everyone has seen the same films; it's more of a televisual than a cinematic experience. The blandness of this communal televisual experience makes people want something different, such as the moment when going to the cinema was a more theatrical affair, and when it provided the "connective tissue" I was talking about earlier. Now, watching a movie at the cinema is like watching television at home. I watch movies at home on television, and I go to the cinema to watch, basically, bad TV.

Turvey: But opening weekends in this country for “megapics” pull in millions of Americans, all seeing and talking about the same film at the same time. A film like *Spiderman* [2002] opens on 3,000 plus screens, showing four or five times per day on each screen, and can earn more than \$100 million in three days. So I think it’s quite hard to argue that cinema has lost its “connective tissue.”

McCall: The demographics have changed utterly, though. In the time of Hitchcock, demographics were such that movies were made for all kinds of age groups, whereas now they’re essentially made for teenagers.

Turvey: Well, it’s more complicated than that. While it’s true that classical Hollywood films were made for people of all ages, one could argue that, as a result, they were a much more homogenous product with less room for variation than today. They had to appeal much more to the same common denominator in a homogeneous mass audience. Since the breakdown of the studio system in the ’50s and the decline in audience attendance, however, Hollywood has targeted more specific audiences with the result that it produces a more diverse product. Hence the rise of the ratings system in the 1960s. Certainly, I think it’s undeniable that you get a wider range of films coming out of Hollywood today than you did in the classical era.

Buckingham: I see it more this way: There was a brief period when there were multiple audiences in the ’70s, at the point when the studio system was dissolving. And then, through demographics and marketing, there was a return to the kind of consolidated audience now seen in the opening weekend phenomenon.

Turvey: Well, it depends on the film. Since the success of *Jaws* [1975] and the rise of the blockbuster, a major studio will make perhaps twenty or thirty films a year, and most of those films will be geared toward more specific audiences—college students, adults in their twenties and thirties, older adults, women, African-Americans, teenagers, children. But the studio will also invest in two or three megapics a year, because a successful megapic, along with its ancillaries—the book of the film, the soundtrack available on CD, the toy figures of characters in the film, the video game based on the film, cable, satellite, VHS, and DVD sales, all of which are often made and sold by companies within the same corporation—will draw in audiences from a wide range of constituencies all around the world, thereby making a huge amount of money and single-handedly providing the studio’s operating budget for the following year plus profits. *Harry Potter* is a classic example. I hate bloody *Harry Potter* with a vengeance, but it is a superbly well-designed product. It is being consumed via a number of different media, talked about, and shared by people all around the world of both sexes, all age groups, classes, nationalities, and ethnicities. It’s very hard, therefore, to argue that cinema has lost its “connective tissue,” I think. If anything, it’s the opposite.

Iles: But I think one of the reasons for the nostalgia for the architecture of cinema of the past is that cinema today has become an exaggeratedly immersive

space. Everything is heightened, especially the sound. The immersiveness of surround sound is extraordinary. Going to the cinema didn't used to be like that, because the proscenium arch, the old-fashioned vaudeville theatrical space, the single speaker behind the screen, the smaller screen with the academy ratio, gave you more distance from the experience. You were more aware of the audience, and the space around you, and of each other's conversations. This is what Janet's piece is all about. The immersive space of contemporary commercial cinema is like the immersiveness of the projected image in much installation art that Anthony was talking about earlier, where you're passive and motionless, and you're transfixed by the image.

Turvey: Perhaps you're right, I don't know, although critics of mass culture like Adorno used to make roughly the same argument about classical Hollywood cinema. As for the interest in the moment of the transition to sound, I read it as part of the interest in film's unexplored potential that you mentioned earlier, George. What you get in the late 1920s right before sound arrives, with people like Eisenstein and Pudovkin and the famous manifesto on sound, or René Clair in France, is an interest in exploring the possibilities that a disjunction between image and sound can create, possibilities that the commercial industry does not really explore. And it struck me, looking at *Journey Into Fear* by Stan Douglas, that this is a very interesting work because of the way it uses disjunction between image and sound to create some fascinating effects. Of course, it's not the way Vertov or Clair used disjunction. Indeed, I think it is an example of the psychological tradition we mentioned earlier. But it is exploring a mismatch between image and sound that was envisaged in the late '20s, but was never really taken up by the commercial film industry.

Foster: In this sense we're not really talking about nostalgia, but the attempt to recover moments in film's history when there were other possibilities, such as the animated moment; the moment before sound, which is the moment before, in the Debordian scheme of things, the birth of the society of the spectacle; or the auteur moment of Hitchcock.



Above and right: Stan Douglas. *Journey Into Fear*. 2001. Courtesy David Zwirner Gallery.

Iles: Yes. When artists reference Hollywood film, it's generally not late-'80s movies, but silent film, or classic films by Hitchcock, or early Scorsese.

McCall: One of the other things that's interesting about *Journey Into Fear* is that it has many different versions of the dialogue, and a computer switches between the different versions all the time. These are dubbed onto two or three different versions of the characters moving around a room. I think this structure is a very interesting response to the problem of creating film installations for a gallery space, where you have people coming and going, staying for you don't know how long, and then maybe returning later. It is a way of creating, as it were, a unique moment for each viewer. I've always thought that this is an unfronted issue in a lot of film and video installation, the question of the duration of a piece relative to its context. It is surely a rather lazy solution to simply say: "Well, three minutes and then we'll just loop it." That's not a response to the specificity of the exhibition space.

Turvey: I agree. I felt that that work confronted duration pretty well. My experience of watching it recently at the Guggenheim was that I almost left after about a minute or two, because I didn't think it was very interesting at first. And then I gradually realized what was going on in terms of the mismatch between image and sound, the different versions of the dialogue, and the mise-en-abyme in the narrative this created. And that really drew me into it. I think I spent longer with that work than any other in that particular show, for that reason. It almost reminded me of a '60s piece, in terms of the attention and time it required.

McCall: Yes, it's absorbing in a very interesting way, actually.

Buckingham: But then, on the other hand, I was surprised that it didn't really account for or relate to the space it's shown in.

McCall: Yes, that's right.

Iles: I just took part in a seminar at the Santa Monica Art Museum with Peter Wollen, Jeremy Blake, Morgan Fisher, and Heidi Zugman-Jacobson on art and film. One of the things we were talking about was, Have you seen the piece if you haven't seen it all the way through? Morgan Fisher argued strongly that



you haven't, while the rest of us were much less purist. Of course, it also varies according to the artist. But it is an interesting question. When you go into a James Coleman piece, for example, at what point in the narrative do you really start to understand it properly? It is only in short loops that one can see the entire piece within the time span of most viewers.

McCall: But you're creating repetition if it's a short piece and you loop it. And is that repetition part of the piece, or is that just an accident?

Baker: These questions are raising issues, for me, of the way narrative has been reconfigured in many of these contemporary projects. Some of them do have a more sculptural or static existence as short loops that you can see easily. But some are about opening up entries into the work that a notion of seeing a piece from beginning to end is totally anathema to. They are about partial engagements, works where the "whole" becomes literally impossible to experience.

Buckingham: I think that distinction is really key. Giving up control over the duration of the audience's experience can create the opportunity to work totally differently with cause and effect. Doing so gives you, as an artist, all this material to work with—who's seen how much, the disruption of other people entering, and so on, although a lot of work doesn't consider this.

McCall: You do have to compose differently for individual visitors coming and going in their own time, than you do for an audience that you know is going to assemble at one moment to watch your piece all the way through. It's a completely different process from the point of view of making. And what surprises me is how little this is taken into account with a lot of the new work, especially given that it is made to be shown in gallery spaces, where the indeterminate spectator is a given.

Iles: Anthony, does it matter to you that anyone knows that there's a different way to experience *Line Describing a Cone* than the way most people experienced it in the gallery in the *Into the Light* show? The experience of most art varies enormously according to the context in which it is shown.

McCall: Well, I do think that coming across *Line* in a gallery at a random moment is qualitatively different from experiencing it from start to finish with an audience. But the degree of access that running it continuously in a gallery enabled seemed to me to be worth it.

Turvey: I think one of the great things about seeing a film such as *Line* in the gallery is the way in which repetition enters the viewing experience. I loved seeing *Line* in *Into the Light* because you could walk in on it halfway through, review it again, and then come back and see it again after having looked at other works around the corner, thereby creating all sorts of associations with other works. I would argue that the possibility of seeing something again, several times, really opens up film spectatorship in a way that's not possible in a theatrical venue, and that this is a really good thing about the current use of the projected image in contemporary art.

McCall: Yes, I think that's true.

Iles: This is something that first became evident with the VCR. Before that, one didn't have access to films outside the cinema, and you could easily misremember them. But with the VCR, for the first time you could play a scene over and over or see your favorite films again and again.

Foster: This entered into actual filmmaking. There was a jump between film school directors like Scorsese, De Palma, Coppola, and video-store jockeys like Tarantino. The former would revisit whole genres almost academically; the latter would fetishize isolated scenes that they could replay obsessively on the VCR.

Baker: What is being pointed to here is the way in which bringing film into the formerly sculptural space of the art gallery opens up new possibilities, like repeated viewing, that are unavailable in a theater. Perhaps we're confronting a new form born of the amalgamation of the two traditions?

Iles: Do we need a new word to describe this amalgamation? Because "installation" implies physical space being part of the work. Some people now say "projection"; some people say . . .

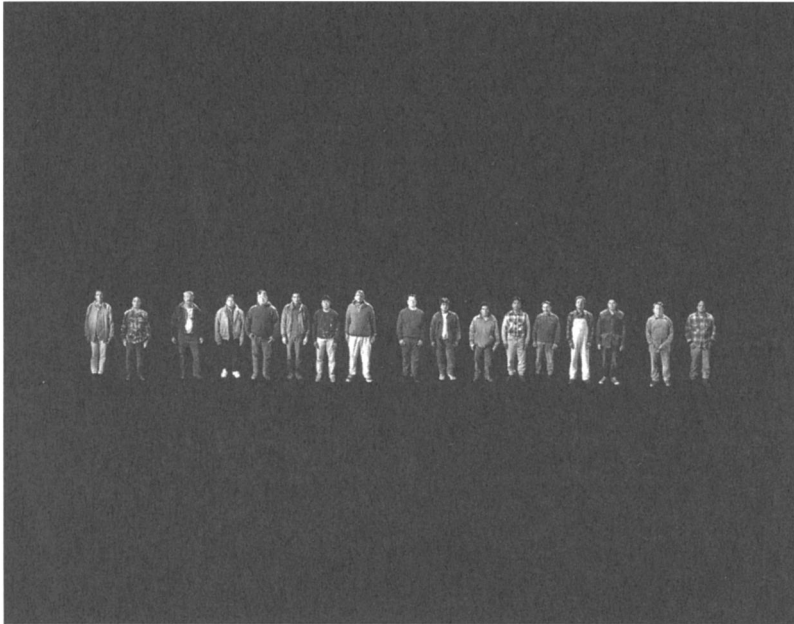
Baker: Some people say "cinema of exhibition." That's the new term the French are using.

McCall: Ah, it'll never catch on.

[Laughter.]

Baker: But there are also losses as well as new possibilities, right? Which relates to one of my *Documenta 11* experiences, one that was somewhat of a great disappointment. Before the exhibition, I was with James Coleman in his studio, looking at the piece *INITIALS* [1993–94], and having a certain relationship to the work. But at *Documenta*, the piece was completely different in that specific space of exhibition. The difference in the studio is, it's a cold, wonderfully decrepit, uncomfortable place. You have to stand, and you move around the image, as is, I think, Coleman's ideal for how one should relate to his projected images. Despite the fact that he is somebody who attempts to oversee directly the way his art is exhibited, one of the things that characterizes the way his works are installed in exhibitions is that you always have a carpet. Perhaps it's for sound purposes. But what it allows the audience to do is to lie on the ground, or sit on the ground, and engage in a passive cinematic or spectatorial experience in what, I think, the artist would like to conceive of as a sculptural space of mobility for the spectators. *INITIALS* as a piece in fact is all about the body's potential physical relationships to the flat, incorporeal characters in the projection.

Iles: The reason everyone stayed at the back, or sat down, was because the speakers were placed two-thirds of the way from the image. And people will not move beyond the speakers. They feel that they should be in front of the speakers. Coleman must have wanted them like that, because he's so precise about the installation of his works. And yet, what it served to do was to create a line drawn in front of the speakers, because nobody wanted to walk beyond them.



Gary Hill. *Viewer*. 1996.
Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery.

In Gary Hill's piece *Viewer* [1996], a similar thing occurs. The piece consists of a very wide, horizontal, floor-to-ceiling, dark projection of a row of men standing silently in a line, waiting for work, all facing the viewer. The viewers who come into the gallery all mimic the men; they stand in a row, looking at them; but they will not move beyond a certain distance, toward the image. It's as though the men are so real that they create a social space not to be intruded upon. It is very interesting how the artists, themselves, create—knowingly or unknowingly—these boundaries.

Baker: I've never seen a public projection in a public space of exhibition where people were not lying on the ground, or making automatically a cinematic arrangement for themselves before the image, which then becomes just another kind of cinematic theatrical product. Yet the critical reception of much projection work, including my own, clings to and insists upon the work's opening onto a phenomenological or sculptural space of transition and movement. This perhaps connects to Hal's earlier worries over art's "virtualization" under the hegemony of projection.

Iles: But there it is. You see, when you're with an artist in the studio, it's more informal and it's more raw. The very precise nature of the installation of all of Coleman's pieces inhibits the viewer from walking around.

Baker: Okay, but is it the artist or the institution that does that?

Iles: It's the artist, because the institution installs the space according to how the artist wants the piece presented.

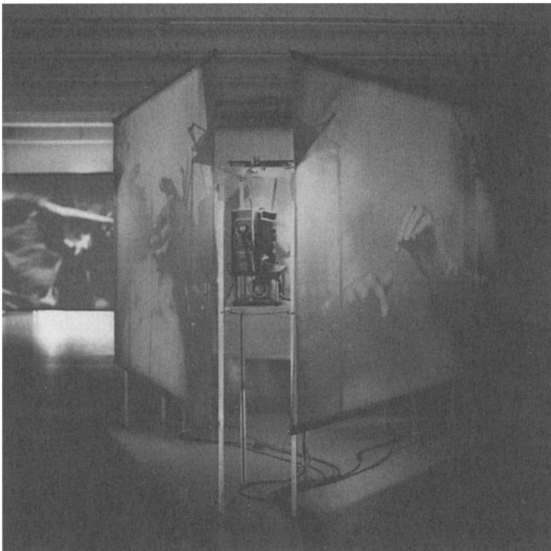
Baker: But I think my larger question would be, To what extent can these conventions actually be played with and changed, without a thorough-going transformation of the institution that's showing such work? There is a kind of utopian hope that, in the exhibition space, in the museum or gallery, cinema or projection

will simply become sculptural, that cinema will become a kind of object of interaction, which it is not in the traditional theater space.

Iles: It will only do that if you make very specific physical alterations to the space, to bring people in and get them to move around the space. The moment people see a moving image, as Anthony pointed out, their immediate reaction is to stand still and watch it. There are exceptions, of course, as George has pointed out. Liisa Roberts's film installation *Trap Door* [1997] constructs a triangle of plane-like screens, which invite you to move around that triangle. Its sculptural form makes you want to move around its space. But with any work that is standing in an otherwise empty space, the empty space means "cinema."

Foster: It seems that the moments when artists have used film in the past are moments when film is treated as a way out from other mediums or conditions. But what happens to the aesthetic field when the use of film becomes dominant, as it seems to be now? What happens when it's a default category? What happens to the rest of the aesthetic field of painting, sculpture, and all the rest? Film or filmic effects are so pervasive in the art world they have begun to reformat all kinds of other practices.

Iles: I don't know that that's going to be the case for long though, because whenever anything occurs, there's always a reaction against it. Look at the current emphasis on painting and drawing. One thing to bear in mind is the conservatism of art institutions in relation to the collecting and conserving of this kind of work. Some curators are passionate about film. But others have huge gaps in their knowledge. There needs to be a better understanding of film, and its role in relation to contemporary art.



Liisa Roberts. Trap Door. 1996. Photo: Werner Maschmann. Courtesy the artist and Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki.

Baker: These concerns may be true enough, and perhaps certain institutions are not prepared for the shift we currently are undergoing, but Hal's comment points to what now seems an undeniable fact: that film and projection are dominant aesthetic modes for contemporary art institutions and mega-exhibitions (like *Documenta*), and that we are now witnessing an intense relativization of the field of the art institution, the art critic, and the art historian by film history, cinema history, film theory.

Foster: And media history too.

McCall: There's also the economic aspect of film's entry into the art world. Although the art world has now accommodated itself to filmmaking, there is still a vital and parallel tradition of avant-garde filmmaking that's been going on since the beginning of film. This work is still outside of the art world and is completely unknown by it, as Chrissie will attest, because hers is one of the few institutions that tries to bring in both and show them together. One of the problems for avant-garde film is that there's never been a viable form of financing for production. But what seems to be happening within the art world is that private galleries are now becoming producing entities. They're actually financing the production of film and video. I'm thinking, for instance, of the David Zwirner Gallery's role as executive producer of *Journey Into Fear*, the Stan Douglas film; or of the fact that the Barbara Gladstone Gallery raised the millions needed for Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3* [2002]. This is a new thing, and it's quite interesting.

Iles: I don't think it is a new thing, actually, because Leo Castelli was doing that in the late '60s.

McCall: I was aware that he was providing stipends. I didn't know that he was providing the money for actually producing videotapes.

Iles: Yes, he produced films.

Buckingham: But he was fairly unique, don't you think?

Iles: I don't think so. Films and video installations entered both private and public collections almost at the moment they were made, through the support of dealers—I'm thinking, for example, of Virginia Dwan's editioning of Walter de Maria's film *Hardcore* [1969]. But I also think, Anthony, one reason for the split between avant-garde film and film in the art world that you mention is that filmmakers in an avant-garde situation insist that you come, quite rightly, and sit in the space and watch their films from beginning to end. And that's, actually, antithetical to the art world.

McCall: The gallery is a completely different type of exhibition space.

Iles: Avant-garde filmmakers cannot imagine their films being sold through an art gallery, because they want someone to come in and watch the entire thing, and leave at the end, which, in an art-gallery situation, is extremely difficult to do.

McCall: There is another economic issue as well, which is the business of a gallery editioning a work, and finding a simple logic to justify the work's selling

price that can fund the next project. The problem facing the avant-garde film world is that there has never really been any sustainable form of financing for it, other than teaching. Its economic model, if you can call it that, has been based on occasional grants, honoraria for screenings, or a share of ticket sales. Since the audiences are small and screenings tend to be singular and infrequent, this has generated insufficient funds to underwrite any kind of ongoing practice. A gallery, however, is used to selling to a small number of people, and its solution for film or video is very simple, namely, creating an edition out of a piece and selling it for a multiple of the cost to three or four collectors. I have some problems with the idea of editioning: The scarcity value is created quite artificially since there is no technical limit to the number of copies that could be made. But it is also, perhaps, a realistic response to the size of the audience, and, for some artists at least, it is sustainable—the sale of each work contributes to the costs of the next.

Also, what's quite interesting about having a limited number of owners for a work of time-based art is that it spreads the responsibility for preservation and conservation. Film is a medium that needs to be stored carefully. I speak from experience. I've just had to remake *Four Projected Movements* [1975], because, being stored in my studio, the original print had shrunk. Meanwhile, video and digital formats—DVD and so on—perhaps have a life of only four or five years before the work will have to be reformatted into some newer standard. Well, who takes the responsibility for these processes? There need to be stakeholders in the future of a work of time-based art, and private ownership by a few people, or a few institutions, may be a very good thing in terms of maintaining a piece so that it will be viewable twenty-five years from now.

Baker: Throughout the conversation, I've been wanting to ask you about your work in the 1970s. Did you consciously see that work, or position that work, as some kind of an endgame for cinema? Was that the project at that moment?

McCall: No, not really, I don't think so. It was the result of asking questions about the medium of film. In retrospect, however, I think that I did feel myself backed into a corner. I jumped out of it by working collaboratively, and by addressing related concerns from a different perspective. *Argument* [1978], for instance, which I made with Andrew Tyndall, was a densely layered discursive film that was, among other things, a critique of avant-garde film practice. And a year later, in a similar vein, there was *Sigmund Freud's Dora* [1979].

Turvey: But following up on George's question, there is a sense with *Long Film for Ambient Light* [1975]—in which there is no projector, no celluloid, no soundtrack, just a loft experienced over twenty-four hours, some light, and a short text—that you do get somewhere that you can't get beyond.

McCall: That's right.

Turvey: But you've told me that you're making some new films. Why is it that

you're making this new work? Is there some sort of possibility that you now realize you didn't explore in the '70s?

McCall: Yes. Some three years ago I started to look afresh at *Line Describing a Cone* and the related projected pieces—the ones that came before *Long Film for Ambient Light*—and I discovered, rather to my surprise, that it wasn't a completed series as I'd previously thought. There were ideas that simply hadn't occurred to me then, ideas that seemed worth developing. This realization came on gradually.

Baker: Do you feel that any of the current work by a younger generation of artists has made you want to ask these questions of the medium again? Or is it something more self-generated?

McCall: Both, I think. As a personal matter, I have increasingly felt the need to make films again. But I have certainly been looking with considerable interest at the time-based work that has been emerging over the past few years. Obviously, this interest has not been dispassionate. What has often struck me, I think, is less what I have seen than what seems to be absent from what I have seen, namely, a focus on the physical here and now.

—New York City, December 8, 2002