Erika Balsom

# After Uniqueness

## A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation

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**Film and Culture**

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## A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation

### ERIKA BALSOM

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# <u>Acknowledgments</u>

# Introduction

## Copy Rites

> The history of art is the history of copy rites, of transformations that take place during acts of copying.
>
> —Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*

On the occasion of Philippe Parreno's exhibition *Anywhere, Anywhere, Out of the World* (2013–14) the art deco facade of Paris's Palais de Tokyo was adorned with an illuminated marquee ([figure 0.1](#)), the kind one might expect to find at the entrance to an old-fashioned movie theater. The basement of the building housed a further sixteen of these constructions, each one a unique iteration of the same basic vocabulary, each blinking and buzzing at its own rhythm to create a cacophonous spectacle. The relatively outmoded lighting techniques of neon tubing and incandescent bulbs produced a quality of light strikingly different from the low-intensity glare of digital screens on view elsewhere in the exhibition and ubiquitous in our lives. In the basement installation the marquees no longer stood at thresholds, as they usually do, but were crowded together in a single, converged space. They were shorn from the architectural forms that have historically supported them and arrayed all across the ceiling, much closer together than they would normally be, forced to compete for the attention that it is their mandate to attract. Even though it stood alone, the marquee on the Palais's facade was also far from where one might have expected it: rather than at the entrance to a cinema, it was positioned over the doorway of a contemporary art institution.
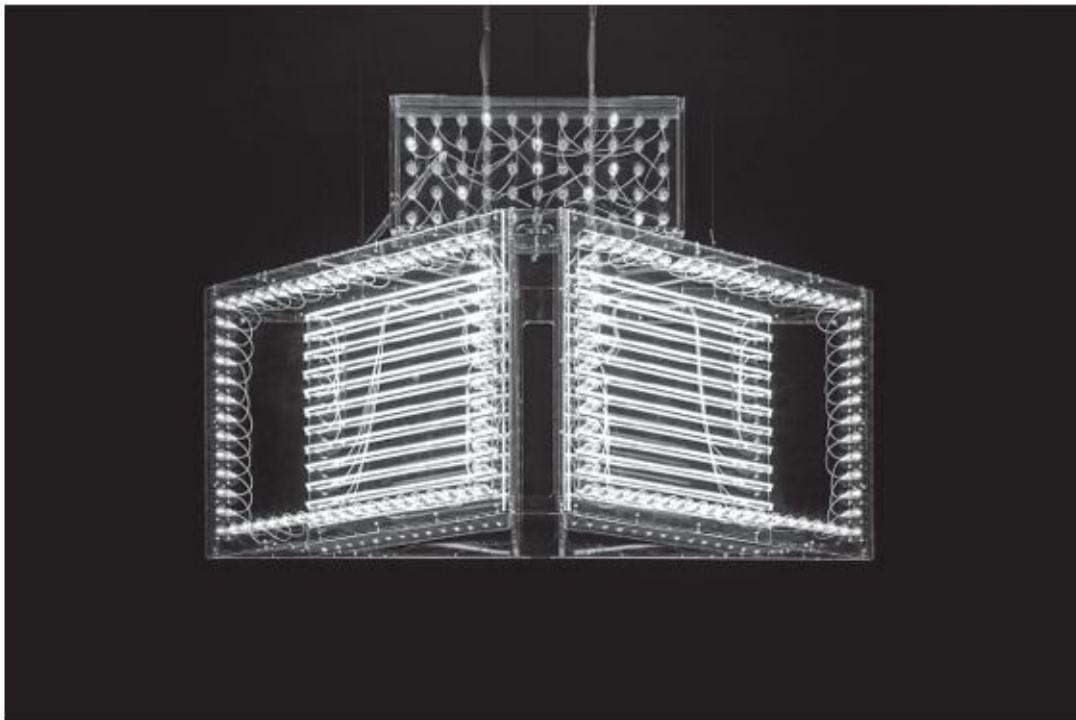


**FIGURE 0.1**   Philippe Parreno, *Marquee* (2013). Exhibition view of *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World*, Palais de Tokyo, 2013. Courtesy of the Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photo by Andrea Rossetti.

This series of light sculptures, titled *Marquees*, has been under way since 2006, with various iterations appearing at the artist's exhibitions around the world. As elements of cinema architecture redeployed outside their traditional context, they function as figures of relocation. They point to the ways in which moving images are no longer contained within a single site but rather move across diverse exhibition contexts, each with its own specificity. When appearing one at a time—outside the Guggenheim Museum in 2008 or at the entrance to the artist's exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 2009—they signal both the transportation of the cinema into the museum and the transformation of the latter into a site of technologized spectacle. Grouped together, as they were for the first time at the Palais de Tokyo and again at Milan's HangarBicocca in 2016, they stage a more elaborate collapse of formerly distinct spaces of exhibition and gesture toward the inability to fix cinema in a single location. They point to a major question confronting the study of the moving image today: how can one take account of the diverse array of exhibition situations that confront the contemporary spectator? Or, put differently and more succinctly, *where* is cinema?

Raymond Bellour has proposed a rather restrictive answer to this question, positing that only a projection in a movie theater before a collective audience may be called cinema; "film" can circulate outside of this situation, but cinema, no.[1] Francesco Casetti, meanwhile, has endeavored to trace out the migrations of cinema beyond the traditional *dispositif* by describing the persistence of a particular form of experience across new sites of exhibition.[2] This focus on location and exhibition practice constitutes an important step in thinking through the transition from analog to digital. But there is also a sense in which it overlooks a key site of inquiry, one that has been as transformed by digitization as the domain of exhibition: *how* precisely the image arrives at these new locations. If moving images are now consumed on more platforms and in more exhibition situations than ever before, what networks do they traverse in order to reach their audiences? What factors intervene to enable or restrict these passages? Answering these questions means examining the repercussions of the fact that film and video are reproducible media, founded in an economy of the copy. It means exploring the domains of distribution and circulation, where distribution designates the infrastructures (whether formal or informal) that make work available to be seen, and circulation designates the trajectories particular works can take through one or more distribution models.

A second artwork from Parreno's Palais de Tokyo exhibition suggests what it might be like to approach the contemporary transformations of the moving image from this vantage point. When purchasing a ticket for the show, the viewer was invited to take an unlabeled DVD in a blank plastic case ([figure 0.2](#)). The exhibition guide noted that the DVD was an artwork entitled *Precognition* (2012), containing versions of two of the videos on display elsewhere in the exhibition, *Marilyn* (2012) and *C.H.Z.* (2011). By allowing the viewer to continue the experience of viewing *Anywhere, Anywhere, Out of the World* after leaving the Palais de Tokyo, Parreno plays with the spatiotemporal limits of the exhibition and enables its images to travel between the large-scale, public projection of the art institution and the smaller screens of private, domestic situations. The artist makes use of the possibilities of digitization to distribute innumerable cheaply produced copies of his work.

The videos the viewer finds on the DVD possess soundtracks that differ from those encountered within the space of the exhibition, thus replaying the tendency for digital media objects to exist in multiple versions and dramatizing the transformations that may occur as a single work circulates across multiple distribution channels.



**FIGURE 0.2**  Philippe Parreno, *Precognition* (2013). Courtesy of the Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photo by Erika Balsom.

In this regard *Precognition* may be seen as exploiting and reflecting on the reproducibility of the medium of video. Reproduction plays a double role in the ontology of the moving image. In capturing an indexical trace of the profilmic event, film and video produce a copy of physical reality. This understanding of the reproducibility of the moving image—what one might term its *referential reproducibility*—has been amply discussed throughout the history of film theory; indeed, its centrality to an understanding of the medium is such that it is frequently taken as an indicator of cinematic specificity. As Geoffrey Batchen has noted, however, there has been a "striking absence of discussions of reproduction and its effects in the literature about photography" since the appearance of Walter Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay.[3] The same holds true for the moving image. Batchen is here making reference to a second form of reproducibility, one that has received comparably little attention. This understanding of reproducibility—what one might term *circulatory reproducibility*—has to do not with the production of a trace of reality but with the way the image may be copied and copied and copied, transforming that singular trace into something multiple that is primed for circulation. It is not enough to understand the specificity of the moving image as residing in the trace alone; rather, its power resides in the ability to take this singular sign and render it mobile through the production of potentially innumerable facsimiles. It is the moving image's circulatory reproducibility that Parreno investigates in *Precognition*. He forgoes the questions of indexicality, documentary, and verisimilitude that so often get asked in relation to the

image's referential reproducibility and instead takes on the issues of authority, authenticity, and access that stem from its status as a copy in circulation.

Despite its interest in digital abundance, *Precognition* is also marked by a form of extreme limitation: the exhibition guide informs the viewer that the disc erases itself after a single viewing. Parreno is here following in the footsteps of William Gibson, whose book *Agrippa (A Book of the Dead)* (1992) was fabricated to be readable only once.[4] *Precognition* was issued on a DVD-D, a disposable disc format engineered by the Swiss company FDD Technologies to play a single time.[5] A number of disposable DVD formats, including DIVX and Flexplay (also known as EZ-D), were introduced in the first decade of the twenty-first century in an attempt to provide a convenient rental option while limiting the possibility of piracy, with many lasting up to two days before being rendered unplayable. In the case of DIVX, special players were needed to handle the encrypted discs, which would require an additional key after two days if the renter wished to extend the viewing period. Flexplay and DVD-D, by contrast, needed no digital rights management system: both coat the disc with a chemical that causes the disc to disintegrate after it is exposed to the air. Flexplay's standard was a forty-eight-hour window of functionality—akin to video store or iTunes rentals—but the technology can be calibrated to variable durations; Parreno chose an extremely brief period of playability.

The versions of *Marilyn* and *C.H.Z.* installed at the Palais de Tokyo are distributed as most moving image artworks are today: as limited editions accompanied by certificates of authenticity and sold on the art market to private and institutional collectors for large sums. Quite differently, the versions of those works found on the DVD-D are both free and ephemeral. At first, *Precognition* seems to stand against the purposeful scarcity of the editioning model by embracing mass distribution, but in fact the DVD versions of *Marilyn* and *C.H.Z.* are also subject to extreme rarity, albeit through very different means. It is possible to construe this gesture as pointing to the contemporary disposability of images, but one might also see it as marshaling ephemerality in order to endow the experience of watching the videos with a sense of urgency that is very out of the ordinary in today's media environment, in which so much seems to be but a click away. The title, *Precognition*, takes on added resonance in light of this latter reading: while it perhaps refers to the spectator's preexisting familiarity with the works on the disc (which were presumably seen at the exhibition), it also suggests that the spectator's foreknowledge of the disc's self-destruction might impact the viewing experience, or might even make one reluctant to play the disc at all. Here, the DVD format ceases to be conceived of as something that allows a film to be experienced again and again in any number of different situations and instead becomes the carrier of an event intended to be singular and unrepeatable. Parreno uses a curious distribution format that never attained real commercial viability to both exploit and deny the reproducibility of the moving image in the same gesture.

The market potential of Flexplay and the DVD-D was hindered by at least three factors: the disposability of the disc posed environmental concerns; the formats were introduced at a time when authorized streaming and downloading platforms were on the rise; and, quite important, the formats failed to do the very thing they promised—prevent piracy. Before the disc "self-destructs," it is exceedingly simple to copy, a feat possible even with Parreno's short playback window. Pop *Precognition* into a computer's DVD drive,

immediately copy the files, and voilà: an apparently ephemeral artifact has been transformed into a reproducible bootleg. In resurrecting the DVD-D as a curiosity after its piracy-related failure, Parreno both recalls and enables the illicit acts of copying that are such an integral part of the circulation of images today. *Precognition* is notable for intervening directly into distribution circuits and bringing together in a single artwork the opposing ends of the spectrum of attitudes toward reproducibility that exist today in artists' uses of the moving image. On the one hand, digital technologies have made images more easily and cheaply copied and circulated than in the past. Many find in this situation a utopian possibility of access and democratization. On the other hand, this same capability throws authority and authenticity into crisis, prompting a reinvestment in various forms of rarity. In between these two extremes, one finds an artist like Parreno, ambivalently negotiating the implications of working in a medium founded in an economy of the multiple and bringing considerations of distribution and circulation to the fore of his work.

While this tension between rarity and reproducibility is an issue for visual culture at large, it is especially pressing for practices that exist outside the film industry, in experimental cinema and what is increasingly called "artists' moving image." (Further remarks on this terminological minefield will follow.) This area of practice is paradoxical in that it has long valued the moving image qua multiple and exploited the attendant possibilities of access, yet it also has close ties to—if not full residence inside—the financial and symbolic economies of art, which manifest a deep investment in authenticity. The questions of dissemination that Parreno negotiates in *Precognition* are central to the history of the moving image in art. Film and video entered artistic practice as a challenge to the singularity of the traditional artwork. Along with photography, printmaking, and some sculptural processes, they initiate an era of art after uniqueness. No longer can the work of art be presumed to exist as a sole genuine object; rather, an economy of the multiple emerges in which circulation figures as a central problem that bears on the aesthetic, conceptual, ideological, and financial dimensions of the artwork. After uniqueness, copies proliferate and demand to be managed. From the moment it began to brush up against the conventions of the art system, the reproducibility of the moving image was subject to both endorsement and repression, as some embraced the possibilities of the copy while others attempted to recapture uniqueness. Tracing this tension between a belief in abundance and a desire for scarcity offers a new perspective on the history of the moving image in art, one that is especially valuable in the contemporary moment, in which the most highly regulated form of distribution in the history of the moving image, the limited edition, exists alongside the most promiscuous form of distribution in that same history, the BitTorrent tracker. Digitization has unleashed a multiplicity of new modes of image circulation and has retroactively assigned new meanings to those that already existed. Distribution circuits, whether alternative or mainstream, have always been plural, but never before has this plurality been as manifold and as in need of attention. Christian Marclay sells limited editions of *The Clock* (2010) to museums for close to $500,000 each, while Kenneth Goldsmith makes hundreds of works available at no cost— though in many cases, illegally—on his website, UbuWeb. Images have never been as free and as controlled as they are today.

More than ever, it is clear that distribution channels are not simply neutral pathways

but, in fact, exert a key impact on how we encounter, make sense of, and write the history of film and video art. Turning to an examination of distribution as a mediating process means understanding cultural production as a network of heterogeneous and interlocking agents rather than as an activity undertaken by a single individual. The mythology of the heroic visionary artist-filmmaker remains especially strong. Yet as Pierre Bourdieu has argued, this individualist emphasis is a limited and deeply ideological way of conceiving of the reticular field of artistic production. The subject of artistic production must not be reduced to the one who produces the art object but rather must encompass "the entire set of agents engaged in the field," including "the producers of works classified as artistic (great or minor, famous or unknown), collectors, middlemen, curators, etc., in short, all who have ties with art, who live for art and, to varying degrees, from it, and who confront each other in struggles where the imposition of not only a world view but also a vision of the artworld [*sic*] is at stake, and who, through these struggles, participate in the production of the value of the artist and of art."[6]

The role that the "middlemen" (and –women) of distribution play in the production of artistic value is far less acknowledged than many of the other agents Bourdieu mentions, but it remains crucial. Distribution participates in the generation of value and canon formation, as particular works may be made widely available to be seen and written about, while others remain inaccessible. Equally, distribution can be a site of advocacy and a way of remedying a lack of visibility. Specialized outfits can engage in the promotion of specific kinds of material, as is the case with distributors focused on women's film and video, whether exclusively, such as Circles (London, 1979–91) and Women Make Movies (New York City, 1969–), or as a designated emphasis, such as the Serious Business Company (San Francisco Bay Area, 1972–83). As Bourdieu notes, distributors are engaged in struggles with other actors in the field, whether artists, collectors, or audiences. Through the course of these struggles an understanding of art—or, in the specific context of this study, the place of film and video within the art system—is articulated. As this articulation tends not to be explicit and may not be apparent to all actors involved, vital tasks of this book will be to delineate exemplary moments of conflict, render visible the assumptions of those engaged, and demonstrate how such encounters determine the status of the moving image qua artistic medium and participate in the production of cultural and financial capital.

*After Uniqueness* will engage in a comparative analysis of selected distribution models in North America and Western Europe with the double aim of presenting a more complex picture of this history than is currently available and identifying how the aspirations and values attached to particular initiatives are being rearticulated and challenged in light of digitization. Through historical analysis and theoretical elaboration I will explore how artists, filmmakers, distributors, and theorists have grappled with the implications of the reproducibility of film and video, with particular emphasis on the more recent ramifications of digitization. This means examining not only the limitations and affordances of particular technologies but also the legal controls, financial concerns, institutional policies, and aesthetic considerations that artists and filmmakers must confront when conceiving of how to best put their work in circulation. While copyright is often understood as the primary means by which the movement of moving images is regulated, this is only one of many determinations. Indeed, in the domains of experimental

film and artists' moving image, matters of copyright are frequently of limited relevance. Instead, of greater importance are copy *rites*: those extralegal social and historical conventions that shape the possibilities and meanings of image reproduction. The following pages will explore these practices, charting how the circulatory reproducibility of the moving image has figured as dangerous inauthenticity, a utopian possibility—and both at once.

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One might have thought that the time for an investigation into reproducibility was the 1980s, amid questions of originals, copies, simulationism, appropriation, and the "Pictures" generation. In 1986 the College Art Association held a panel entitled "Multiples Without Originals: The Challenge to Art History of the 'Copy,'" the results of which were published in *October* later that year as the dossier "Originality as Repetition."[7] This interest in the copy arose concurrently with the embrace of poststructuralism throughout the humanities, a central component of which was a potent critique of originality and essence. As Rosalind Krauss wrote in the introduction to that dossier, art history is a discipline marked by "an obsession with authorship, with the status of the creative individual"; the writing assembled in the *October* dossier sought to problematize that obsession by destabilizing some of its governing terms, thus contributing to a broader program of inquiry occurring at that time in scholarly and artistic production alike.[8] The forms of postmodern appropriation theorized by Douglas Crimp, Hal Foster, and others are exemplary in their dismantling of the figure of the author as the locus of genius and *ex nihilo* creativity.[9] The privileged terms here are producer and consumer or, put differently, author and reader, artist and beholder. Through the act of appropriation the consumer becomes a producer, troubling the latter's hegemonic control over signification and diverting received cultural forms to produce new signifieds.

The present inquiry shifts gears from this earlier interest in originals and copies in that it is situated firmly in the domains of distribution and circulation rather than those of production and reception, while taking up a specific focus on the moving image. Certain theoretical concerns remain in play, particularly questions of authorship and authority, but the two-term relationship between author and reader here gives way to a network paradigm that traces the movement of images across disparate exhibition platforms and material supports. The 1980s' interest in originals and copies was in large part spurred by the postmodern collapse between high and low culture and the interpenetration of sign systems that resulted. The urgent task of an inquiry into image circulation is no longer a diagnosis of the admixtures of mass media and fine art. Rather, the need now is to confront the role that new technologies are playing in effecting a qualitative shift in the mobility of images and sounds and to reevaluate the longer history of predigital distribution in light of contemporary conditions.

This new mobility is characterized by an unprecedented visibility of unauthorized forms of distribution, often in a closer relationship to their authorized counterparts than they possessed in the past. As a recognition of this state of affairs, my understanding of the distinction between the terms *distribution* and *circulation* departs from that of Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, who propose that *distribution* should be reserved

for top-down dissemination, leaving *circulation* to designate the peer-to-peer sharing of media by consumers.[10] As Jenkins's own research demonstrates, the boundaries between distribution and circulation when conceived of in this way are increasingly porous, as media conglomerates now directly encourage and even profit from certain forms of peer-to-peer sharing, prompting one to question the usefulness of differentiating between distribution and circulation along the lines of top-down versus peer-to-peer. Instead of aligning distribution with official, sanctioned dissemination and circulation with informal practices, this book will understand the difference between these terms as residing in the subject of the action they designate: institutions and individuals distribute film and video within particular infrastructures, whether formal or informal; film and videos circulate through and across them. Terminology aside, what is most important is the extent to which these mediating processes, relatively overlooked in the theoretical and artistic discourses of originals and copies in the 1980s, here become paramount. My goal is less to distinguish between copies and originals or to invalidate the very notion of the original than it is to examine the relationships between reproducibility, the mobility of moving images, and the generation of cultural and economic value. This is to approach the question of the copy from an angle altogether different from 1980s postmodernism: instead of valorizing the copy as possessing the power to critique the ideology of originality, the aim here is to explore how the mechanism of copying serves to make images mobile and to question how and why some individuals and institutions refuse this mobility by exerting restrictions over the possibility of copying, whereas others embrace it.

Parreno is far from the only moving image artist to take up these questions in the early twenty-first century. There is ample evidence of an explicit concern with these issues in artistic practice in the wake of digitization. Many artists are interested in pursuing new kinds of reproducibility and exploring the aesthetic forms engendered by the low-definition images of digital circulation, while others push back against the frenzied movement of digital replicas and reassert control over an image that is authentic, rare, or ephemeral, challenging the oft-repeated claim that today "everything" is available to see online. Though the latter group retreats from an explicit address of the frenetic circulation of images that characterizes today's visual culture, they may nonetheless be understood as contemporary in Giorgio Agamben's sense: the contemporary is "*that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism.*"[11] Some artists reperform patterns of digital circulation while others negate them, but both gestures engage with the implications of the reproducibility of the image. As Jörg Heiser has put it, "Postmodernism described the artist as an eclectic bricoleur (corresponding in turn to the rise of consumer society); currently we find ourselves in a period of capitalism where the key factor shaping both economics and culture is circulation."[12] Artists and filmmakers are now taking up this concern and developing practices that put questions of image circulation—something once thought to be external to the work, occurring after its release from its maker—at their core. The pages that follow will investigate this interest in circulation through case studies of selected works of this type, while also delineating and interrogating the broader ecologies that take shape around such practices in an effort to diagnose the role and character of distribution infrastructures.

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From the postwar period onward, the distribution of experimental film and video was dominated by the rental model of the cooperatives. The first major distributor of experimental film in the United States was Cinema 16, founded in 1947. Instead of mimicking the distribution structures of the art world, which at that time displayed little interest in film, Cinema 16 was modeled on the system of print rentals that held sway in mainstream film distribution. Despite preferring this model to that of the art world, when a group of independent, documentary, and experimental filmmakers, producers, and actors in New York City came together to issue "The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group" in 1961, they foregrounded the pressing matter of imagining an alternative to commercial film distribution. The document makes clear the extent to which the task of the New American Cinema was not simply to create new forms of filmmaking but also to build new supporting infrastructures. Its fifth point states, "We'll take a stand against the present distribution-exhibition policies. There is something decidedly wrong with the whole system of film exhibition; it is time to blow the whole thing up." The next point offers a glimpse into how this would be accomplished: "We plan to establish our own cooperative distribution center."[13]

This would occur in 1962, when the opening of the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative established the artist-run cooperative as a model that would soon thereafter crop up elsewhere in North America and Europe, including London, with the founding of the London Film-Makers' Co-operative in 1966, and San Francisco, with the creation of Canyon Cinema in 1967. In this system filmmakers deposit their works with an agency that then rents them for exhibition, charging a relatively modest per-screening fee that is split according to an agreed-upon percentage between the artist and the organization. The principles guiding this paradigm were access and autonomy; the desire was to reach as many people as possible while retaining independence from commercial exploitation. As Robert Nelson, who distributed his films through Canyon, put it in 1967, "The co-op system…gives us our only real hope of remaining independent and receiving fair treatment for ourselves and our films. Our youth and idealism can keep us free from the disease of commercialism. The commercial world has a list of priorities: money at the top, we and our films at the bottom."[14]

This model was also adopted early in the history of video art. Howard Wise closed his eponymous commercial gallery in 1970 in order to establish Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), a not-for-profit organization with a mandate to provide support for video as an art form, a year later. In 1973 EAI's Artists' Videotape Distribution Service was founded as a way of ensuring the circulation of tapes beyond the limited-edition model of the commercial galleries, which was also taking shape during this period. As EAI director Lori Zippay has put it, in its early years the organization was "very fundamentally and philosophically in favor of an uneditioned model. The founding of EAI was based on an almost utopian notion of reproducibility, access, and an idea that video was a democratic medium."[15] Similar organizations developed throughout North America and Europe, including London Video Arts (founded in 1976, later merged into LUX), Montevideo in Amsterdam (founded in 1978, later merged into the Netherlands Media Art Institute), and Vtape in Toronto (founded in 1980). For both experimental film and video art, then,

organizations administering the rental of films and tapes were instrumental in building audiences, nurturing production, and creating both discourse and community around these fledgling spheres of media practice.

This model remains active today in much the same way as it was originally formulated in organizations such as Canyon Cinema, the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative, Chicago-based Video Data Bank, and Paris-based Light Cone. However, infrastructural and technological change has resulted in a crisis of the traditional rental model and the increasing adoption of alternatives. The Netherlands Media Art Institute closed to the public in 2012, and Canyon Cinema and the Film-Makers' Cooperative have been the subject of well-publicized financial difficulties since at least the turn of the millennium. In 2012 the *New York Times* reported that Canyon was in "critical condition" owing to falling revenues.[16] In 2009 the Film-Makers' Cooperative was threatened with eviction and saved only by the intervention of an angel investor, real estate developer Charles S. Cohen, who provided the organization with a space at 475 Park Avenue South for a symbolic rent of one dollar per year.[17] Some organizations historically aligned with the rental model, like LUX and EAI, have adjusted their practices to adapt to this new ecosystem, now adopting hybrid strategies that retain an investment in rental-based distribution while also pursuing alternatives. This is all to suggest that the relative monopoly once possessed by the rental model has now given way to a situation in which radically different forms of distribution compete and cooperate, from the sale of limited editions on the art market to authorized and unauthorized online distribution and the sale of mass-market DVDs and Blu-rays. Film and videos routinely circulate across these infrastructures, sometimes at the behest of their makers and sometimes as the result of unauthorized copying, existing simultaneously in multiple distribution models.

Although the rental model remains a vital means by which film and video circulate today, the pages that follow concentrate on forms of distribution that lie beyond it. This decision is taken out of a double motivation: first, because the historical dominance of the rental model has led to its receiving more attention than other forms of distribution; second, and more importantly, because the contemporary crisis of this model demands an assessment of how it might function within a heterogeneous distribution ecology encompassing both complementary and competing strategies. This is not meant as a sign of a lack of faith in the continued viability of rental-based organizations; rather, it is to foreground the incontrovertible fact that the rental model no longer occupies the hegemonic position it once did. In light of this situation there is a pressing need to take account of the prehistories and limn the present contours of the forms of distribution and circulation that have become newly prominent since digitization, such as home-viewing formats, bootlegging, and the limited edition of the art market.

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Experimental film, avant-garde cinema, video art, artists' film and video, artists' cinema, artists' moving image, moving image art, even time-based media—the heterogeneous practices discussed in this book are known by many nonsynonymous names, each of which possesses particular connotations and is attached to specific institutional and historical contexts. Each term carves up the field of practice in a different way, articulating

positions on medium, market, exhibition site, and cultural location in the process. Larry Jordan noted this terminological quagmire already in 1979, when he called his text about the economics of the sector "Survival in the Independent–Non-Commercial–Avant-Garde–Experimental–Personal–Expressionistic Film Market of 1979," overloading his title with adjectives in order to avoid having to side with just one.[18] Although a thorough rehearsal of the multiple genealogies of these various labels and their implications would be a very welcome contribution to the field, it lies beyond the scope of the present inquiry. Nonetheless, a brief remark on terminology is necessary given the important role distribution has played in articulating the relationships between these overlapping but ultimately incommensurable categories.

To put it perhaps far too schematically, from the 1960s to 1990s one can identify three major fields of practice in North America and Western Europe: artists' film, video art, and experimental (avant-garde) film. There are clear aesthetic differences between experimental and artists' film on the one hand and video art on the other owing to the diverging affordances of their respective material supports, which in turn led to the development of medium-specific communities and infrastructures. But as Jonathan Walley has noted, the distinctions between experimental film and artists' film are less aesthetic than infrastructural and economic: while both sectors employed the same medium and at times engaged with similar formal and conceptual issues, experimental film privileged the exhibition context of the movie theater whereas artists' film inhabited the gallery; experimental film was supported by the cooperatives and teaching jobs, whereas artists' film was buoyed by art dealers, private collectors, and work made in other media.[19] Although this distinction was more explicitly formulated and maintained in North America, the schism was operative in Europe as well. Certain individuals might work across two or more of these fields, but as modes of production, distribution, and exhibition they remain relatively distinct during this period.

In the 1990s, technological developments recalibrated the relationships among these three fields of practice, giving birth to new categorizations that signal an emerging medium agnosticism and a changing institutional landscape. While the term *experimental film* has remained strong in some cases (particularly in the United States), much of the work encompassed by this heading is now made on video. Meanwhile, the adoption of large-scale projection from circa 1990 onward led to the waning of the category of video art and its merging with artists' film, giving rise to now-common labels such as "artists' moving image," "artists' cinema," and "moving image art," all of which avoid specific reference to a particular material support.[20] The phrase "artists' moving image" is used most frequently in the United Kingdom, in all likelihood a result of the strong influence wielded by LUX, which has pushed strongly for its adoption.[21] But it does show signs of breaking ground in North America: in 2015 the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis changed the name of its film and video department to Moving Image, noting "a commitment to contemporary artists' moving image practice";[22] the term has also been adopted by DINAMO, the Distribution Network of Artists' Moving Image Organizations, an international consortium consisting of twenty-three members, nine of which are based in North America.

This move beyond medium-specific terminology has been accompanied by significant infrastructural transformations that have muddied the relatively sharp distinctions that

formerly existed between experimental film and the art world. Many filmmakers historically associated with experimental film have moved into the art world's structures of exhibition and distribution, producing installations and seeking commercial gallery representation with the hope of issuing limited editions. Simultaneously, artists are increasingly exhibiting work in the cinema context and participating in festival programs historically devoted to experimental film. For some, *artists' moving image* now functions as an umbrella term that encompasses the entirety of this diverse field, including what was once known as experimental film; this is the position taken by both LUX and the Walker Art Center. For others, however, this terminological shift signals the incorporation of experimental film into the art world in something of a hostile takeover. Filmmaker Roger Beebe, for instance, sees the encroachment of *artists' moving image* on what had long been termed *experimental film* as an unwelcome development: he professes "some objection to this relabeling of [his] practice under an art world rubric," seeing it as an attempt "to claim the prestige of art" and a means of generalizing the gallery installation as the default mode of display. For Beebe this increased proximity to the art world— signaled terminologically but far from limited to mere semantics—is a betrayal of the ways in which experimental film has historically "resist[ed] some of the worst tendencies" of the art system by being geographically decentered and poor, and thus possessing motives that are "(relatively) pure."[23]

Questions of distribution are at the heart of what historically distinguished these modes of production from one another and what characterizes their integration today, thus offering an excellent optic through which to interrogate the shifting relationships that have existed between the worlds of film and art from the 1960s onward. While much scholarship remains confined to practices located in one sphere or the other, this book strategically traverses both contexts with the conviction that such an approach is necessary in order to provide an adequate account of our present moment, in which they are increasingly conjoined. This poses specific terminological difficulties. Given how contentious such issues can be, for the sake of simplicity it is tempting to anachronistically project the term *artists' moving image* back through the decades and use it as the inclusive catchall it is today. To do so, however, would be to enact a violent leveling of heterogeneous institutional contexts that must be understood historically to be understood at all. Such a gesture would function precisely counter to this book's mandate: to render visible and interrogate the specificity of particular distribution infrastructures. As such, the following pages will attempt to preserve whenever possible the use of categories proper to the historical moment and form of practice under discussion. Some instances will require a generalization, such as "film and video art," that cuts across multiple modes of practice; I beg the reader's understanding that such cases do not represent any attempt to recuperate experimental film into the field of art but are used both to avoid the awkward wordiness that would otherwise result and to point to the increasing overlaps between these historically distinct modes of production. The variation in terminology the reader will encounter throughout the text should not be understood as an inconsistency but as evidence of an interest in charting how these categories have changed and, in so doing, altered our understanding of the cultural position of the moving image in its (to reprise Jordan) artistic–independent–experimental–non-industrial–non-commercial–artisanal–expanded–oppositional–avant-garde incarnations.

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In the foreword to Julia Knight and Peter Thomas's recent book *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith notes the absence of scholarly inquiries into the mediating process of distribution: "Sometimes it seems as if, in the world of cinema and the moving image, commodities do indeed mysteriously get to market all on their own."[24] Of course, they do not. Distribution and circulation have historically been marginal topics of concern in film studies, elbowed out by an emphasis on textual analysis and questions of spectatorship. Ramon Lobato explicitly characterizes his work on the "shadow economies" of film distribution as a "deliberate step away from the debates over representation and interpretation that have long occupied the discipline of film studies."[25] There are signs, however, that the discipline is taking a contextual turn. This entails an important methodological shift away from a focus on the supposed autonomy of the text and toward an examination of the networks—whether online or off—through which these texts travel, the sites at which they are encountered, and the material and discursive practices that frame them. This shift encompasses not just studies of distribution and circulation but also debates around the relocation of cinema after digitization, as well as the burgeoning interest in film festivals, "useful cinema," publication practices, curatorial strategies, and exhibition histories. Such an emphasis is also to a degree visible in art history, particularly in the recent interest in the historiography of exhibitions, encouraged by the emergence of the curator as a major authorial figure over the last twenty-five years. To be sure, this delineates a broad and diverse set of concerns, yet they congeal around an attention to contextual factors that have in the past been too often overlooked despite their status as important processes through which meaning and value are produced.

In general, scholarship on experimental film and artists' moving image has been especially guilty of the avoidance of circulation and distribution as sites of inquiry. Notable and very welcome exceptions to this rule exist, including Scott MacDonald's invaluable work on Canyon Cinema and Cinema 16, Michael Zryd's examination of the relationship between the academy and avant-garde film in North America, Knight and Thomas's study of the distribution of independent film and video in the United Kingdom, and Malte Hagener's delineation of the multiple networks subtending the European avant-gardes in the 1920s and 1930s.[26] Nonetheless, the neglect of this area is palpable. It perhaps emerges from the aversion to speaking about money in relation to a noncommercial sphere of practice, but it also is a matter of the particular methodologies that have become engrained in the subfield. Analyses tend to focus on form, style, aesthetics, and authorship. Even questions of spectatorship and exhibition have been far less frequently pursued than they are in the study of narrative feature films, perhaps because of the intense primacy accorded to the figure of the artist as creator. Although such approaches can be fruitful, they can also be limiting. Tess Takahashi has suggested that we "shift our gaze from medium-specific experimental works and the artists who made them to the screens on which the experimental work appeared."[27] This might involve pursuing a historiography of screening spaces, programming strategies, pedagogical practices, publications, or film festivals—all areas of scholarship that have recently seen promising interventions but in which much more work remains to be done.

In the following chapters I will proceed in the spirit of Takahashi's call but will take this turn away from the text farther, moving beyond the screen to examine the distribution infrastructures that serve to enable and shape viewers' overall experience, impact the economic dimensions of the sector, and participate in the discursive construction of film and video vis-à-vis the other media of artistic production. The close consideration of individual artworks will remain important but will occur in tandem with an examination of the networks through which they circulate. Taking up this perspective means leaving behind histories of experimental film and artists' moving image that consist of a series of masterpieces, a morphology of forms, or a succession of geniuses operating in a relatively insular fashion. As Takahashi puts it, "In reaching out to far messier and more material questions of display and circulation, the idea of 'experimental film' also opens up: what was initially considered obscure, difficult, and hermetic instead emerges as a rich site of community, movement, and exchange."[28]

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In *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* Peter Decherney writes, "New media require new ethics."[29] Indeed, they do. New media also require new thinking about concepts like originality, authenticity, access, and rarity—all of which are intricately tied to the circulatory reproducibility of the moving image. The following pages will take up this challenge, presenting a series of case studies that together offer a historical and theoretical account of how the reproducibility of the moving image has been conceptualized and confronted in the artistic context.

Chapter 1, "The Promise and Threat of Reproducibility," will lay the theoretical foundation for the chapters that follow. Scholars tend to interrogate the reproducibility of the moving image in terms of the medium's ability to reproduce reality, largely overlooking the implications of a second understanding of reproducibility: the fact that film and video are founded in an economy of the multiple. In this chapter I will outline a theory of the moving image as a reproducible medium that considers the way an image may be copied repeatedly so as to facilitate circulation across distribution networks. By moving into this domain of circulatory reproducibility, one confronts not the questions of indexicality, documentary, and verisimilitude that so often get asked in relation to the image's status as a copy of the profilmic; rather, issues of authority, access, and authenticity become paramount. This chapter will unfold what is at stake in approaching the moving image in this way and will examine how its circulatory reproducibility has been conceived of as both a utopian promise and the site of a dangerous inauthenticity since its emergence in the late nineteenth century.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 explore models that prioritize access and circulation. Chapter 2, "8 mm and the 'Blessings of Books and Records,'" unearths an untaken path of experimental film history. In the mid-1960s Stan Brakhage, Bruce Conner, and Jonas Mekas were deeply invested in the possibility that 16 mm experimental films might be reduced to 8 mm and made available for sale to home collectors. Though some attempts were made to institute this distribution model—notably a collaboration between Brakhage and Grove Press to sell a shortened version of *Lovemaking* (1967) as experimental pornography—on the whole, the initiative failed to achieve viability. This chapter will explore the history of

the 8 mm reduction print in the American avant-garde and offer an explanation for why precisely this distribution model was thought to be so appealing in the mid-1960s. The desire to sell 8 mm films to domestic collectors is a precursor of the various forms of possessable cinema that have become prevalent in the digital era, such as the sale of commercial DVDs and online file-sharing sites, but also displays notable differences from these later initiatives. In addition to relating a historical episode heretofore untold, this chapter will question what relevance this prioritization of access over quality has for us in the contemporary moment, when these terms are once again embroiled in a fierce battle.

Chapter 3, "Bootlegging Experimental Film," explores the ambivalence of the copy by examining the impact of low-quality, unauthorized digital bootlegs on the domain of experimental film, an area of practice that has historically exhibited a strong investment in medium specificity and the moral rights of the filmmaker. I confront these issues through a case study of Josiah McElheny's *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* (2010), a yearlong installation at the Whitechapel Gallery in London that consisted of copies of historical abstract films taken from UbuWeb—an online repository of low-definition files posted without permission of the filmmakers—and projected onto prismatic screens. McElheny appropriates existing films *in toto* and intervenes in a controversial unauthorized distribution channel, highlighting the ways in which such forms of reproduction can cast into sharp relief the ethical questions that surround artistic appropriation and institutional responsibility. This chapter offers a reading of *The Past Was a Mirage* that sees the installation as a symptom of how the historical products of experimental film circulate in digital visual culture.

Chapter 4, "Copyright and the Commons," interrogates how artists' moving image has grappled with the increased rigidification of copyright that has occurred over the last two decades. Copyright must not be understood as a body of laws that is inherently antagonistic to reproduction: it does not seek to prevent reproduction per se but rather to control the circumstances under which it may lawfully take place and to regulate who may profit from it. In recent years, however, copyright law has effectively served as a means of discouraging and even outlawing noncommercial practices by amateurs and artists that depend on the reproduction and redeployment of existing cultural materials. In the United States, Canada, and the European Union the cooperation of new legislation and anticopying technologies has served to criminalize practices that would have formerly been deemed fair use, while successive extensions of copyright terms have prevented countless works from falling into the public domain. Many artists champion the freedom to reuse copyrighted materials but fail to interrogate the circumstances that make it possible for them to do so without retribution. Most avoid engaging directly with the significant encroachments on fair use and the public domain that have been implemented as part of new copyright legislation that seeks to control the unruliness of digital reproduction. As a counterpoint to such positions, this chapter examines Ben White and Eileen Simpson's *Struggle in Jerash* (2009), a work made by repurposing a public domain film of the same title made in 1957 in Jordan. Simpson and White contest the increasing privatization of visual culture, insisting on the wealth of the cultural commons precisely as it is under threat.

Turning away from the promise of the copy, chapters 5, 6, and 7 examine instances in which the reproducibility of the moving image is partially suppressed, if not entirely

refused. Chapter 5, "The Limited Edition," examines the history of the predominant model for the distribution of artists' moving image today. The limited edition was a nineteenth-century invention that sought to rescue compound arts such as lithography and bronze sculpture from becoming mere copies in an economy of desire that increasingly privileged uniqueness. From the 1930s on, various individuals attempted to apply this model to film and, later, video with the hope that these media might become viable on the art market. When issued as a limited edition, the moving image's capacity for reproducibility is reined in and regulated through contractual agreement. For most of the twentieth century, attempts to sell films and videos as limited editions were largely failures. In the 1990s, however, in conjunction with the massive institutional endorsement of the projected image, the limited edition began to attain market viability. This chapter traces the history of this distribution model and offers hypotheses concerning its steps toward success in the 1990s. It explores the relationship between the limited-edition model and the rental model of the cooperatives, outlines the various criticisms this artificial rarity has provoked, and discusses the possible benefits it might have for artists and collectors.

Chapter 6, "The Event of Projection," examines the implications of ceasing to conceive of cinema as a reproducible object and instead understanding it as a singular event marked by liveness through a case study of Paolo Cherchi Usai's *Passio* (2006), a live film performance. Working with photochemical film in an age of obsolescence and making a claim for the authenticity and humanity of the medium, *Passio* deploys multiple techniques to protest the placement of film within an economy of the copy, instead resituating it on the side of uniqueness. This chapter unfolds what is at stake in this gesture, arguing that Cherchi Usai's project is a conservative response to anxieties provoked by the "clones" of digital forms of reproduction. Turning to Nelson Goodman's categories of allographic and autographic arts, this chapter will explore various paradigms of live cinema, while also proposing that the liveness of the event can serve as a critical method one can use to uncover the variability that exists even within practices apparently marked by the sameness of mechanical reproduction.

Chapter 7, "A Cinematic Bayreuth," continues chapter 6's investigation of rarity beyond the limited edition through the example of Gregory Markopoulos and his dream of the Temenos as a remote, site-specific cinema. This radical rejection of circulation began to take shape in the late 1960s, as the filmmaker gradually withdrew from all established models of distribution out of disgust and frustration that they were overly commercial enterprises that threatened the integrity of his work. In ancient Greece the Temenos was a sacred grove set apart from the profane world; for Markopoulos it designated the utopia of absolutely ideal and controlled exhibition that would arrive in the messianic future. This chapter charts Markopoulos's gradual rejection of distribution and the development of the concept of the Temenos in his writings and correspondence from the late 1960s to its current incarnation: the quadrennial screenings of *Eniaios* (c. 1947–91), an eighty-hour film cycle made to be projected only at the Temenos, that have taken place since 2004 at Rayi Spartias, a remote field in the Peloponnese. Whereas chapter 6 deals with the singularity of the event as a temporal category, this chapter examines the spatial questions of site specificity and pilgrimage.

Chapter 8, "Transmission, from the Movie-Drome to Vdrome," serves as a coda, revisiting the utopian moment of exhibiting experimental film and video art on television

in light of contemporary efforts to develop authorized platforms for the distribution of artists' moving image on the Internet. This concluding chapter turns to the life and legacy of the late-night programs *Screening Room* (1971–81) and *Midnight Underground* (1993–97), comparing and contrasting the broadcasting model with the recent narrowcasting initiative Vdrome, a website located at [www.vdrome.org](http://www.vdrome.org) that shows a single video for a limited time, usually ten days. In combining a desire for mass access with the ephemerality of broadcasting, Vdrome skillfully negotiates the dialectic of rarity and reproducibility explored throughout previous chapters. It also demonstrates how resilient traditional values of authenticity and rarity have been within the digital media landscape and provides an example of how contemporary artists' moving image is characterized by a multichannel distribution ecology that embraces new forms of circulation while continuing to shore up the authority of the old.

Hillel Schwartz has written that "in our postindustrial age, the copy is at once degenerate and regenerate."[30] In considerations of the moving image this holds absolutely true. New forms of image reproduction can lead to a glut of disposable images, but so, too, can they reignite the utopian spark of mass access that accompanied both the development of film at the end of the nineteenth century and, later, the entry of film and video into artistic production. Forms of rarity may be tied to preciousness and commodification, but they may also offer a real and welcome alternative to the prevailing regime of perpetual availability and distracted disposability of images. The tensions between quality and access are accompanied by the delicate balancing act of defending fair-use permissions and ensuring that the author's moral rights are not violated, of negotiating between public memory and private property. At every turn the act of reproduction partakes simultaneously of this degeneration and regeneration: it is the means by which works are disrespected and the means by which works become known; it is the way formats will be driven into obsolescence and the way works in obsolete formats will be saved from obscurity. After uniqueness, the copy is both savior and curse, and it is everywhere.

# 1

# The Promise and Threat of Reproducibility

Philippe Parreno's use of the disposable DVD-D format in *Precognition* (2012) engages at once in an embrace of access, something that has historically been extremely important to artists working in film and video, and attempts to maintain authorial control over the work through the inclusion of a chemical that will render the disc unplayable after it has been watched once. *Precognition* thus takes up a conflicted position in relation to the possibilities of circulation enabled by digital forms of reproduction, finding in them both hope and menace. While Parreno's gesture depends on the specific technical affordances of the DVD-D support, this attitude toward reproducibility is by no means particular to the digital moment. The tension it dramatizes is not novel but rather must be seen as reigniting and reanimating an old friction through new technologies.

The fear of the copy is ancient: in making a fundamental distinction between form and matter, Plato established an enduring tradition of conceiving of the copy as an imperfect imitation of the elevated original, forever marred by an inescapable secondariness. While this schema remains influential, the Platonic dichotomy is insufficient for characterizing the profound ambivalence that surrounds the reproducible image. It offers only a reason to denigrate the copy, not one to praise it. In the nineteenth century the advent of photographic processes such as the calotype—able to produce multiple positives from a single negative—initiated a new culture of image production and circulation that occurred alongside a massive reorganization of the fabric of life. Industrial modernity reconfigured the relationship between original and copy, displacing the idealism of the Platonic conception with a new, immanent materialism. Unlike the transcendental, atemporal status of Plato's forms, now the original resides in this world, on the same plane as the copy. The two might even meet one another, dynamically interacting in scenes that pit the allure of rarity against the principle of access. The original might be threatened by the copy, or it might find its status reaffirmed or even augmented by it. Under this regime the copy could remain lowly, insulting, and secondary, but it could just as easily be unshackled from any attachment to an original and championed for its mass reach.

The moving image is inherently reproducible, but to chart the shifting and plural meanings of this reproducibility, one must examine how film and video have been discursively constructed, as well as how these discursive formations have evolved over time. Indispensable to the articulation of this protean character of reproducibility is a concept that stands in an antithetical relationship to it: authenticity. A veritable nineteenth-century obsession, authenticity provides a means of elucidating the connection between the modern subject and the world of things. It illuminates precisely why a phobia of new forms of reproduction takes hold circa the advent of photography and cinema but also sheds light on why these technologies are equally thought to harbor a utopian potential. It is to this moment and this concept that one must look to discern the formation of the

discourses that first shaped the position of the moving image vis-à-vis traditional artistic media and that continue to do so in the contemporary moment, when a desire for authenticity remains in force despite decades of assault on varied fronts. The following pages will explore how new forms of image reproduction both challenged and inspired the privileging of authenticity during two periods some one hundred years apart: the early years of cinema and the digital dissemination of moving images at the threshold of the twenty-first century. In both instances one sees the simultaneous promise and threat of the copy rear its head: it offers greater access and availability but also threatens to liquidate uniqueness and historicity. Thomas Elsaesser has suggested that there is a tremendous value in developing a "bifocal perspective on the cultural fabric that is cinema around 1900 and 2000," for it allows for a consideration of how these two moments of immense technological and social change offer productive points of comparison and contrast with one another.[1] This chapter will take up this methodology, seeking thereby to theorize how and why the circulatory reproducibility of the moving image has figured as both promise and threat across the decades.

## The Soulless Copy

Already in 1759, Edward Young asked, "Born *Originals,* how comes it to pass that we die *Copies*?"[2] This question is rooted in a romantic conviction, associated primarily with the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that sees society as destructive of the authenticity, goodness, and uniqueness of humankind. In the nineteenth century such ideas found increased currency as new processes of urbanization and mechanization forever altered the subject's relationship to nature, time, work, and leisure. Industrial modernity proceeded as a rationalization of all aspects of life driven by a capitalist economy, prompting some to see it not as progress but rather as experiential impoverishment. We die copies, to reprise Young's formulation, after being subject to a lifetime of dehumanization at the hands of society. In this postlapsarian understanding of modernity the copy is particularly denigrated: its mechanical sameness emblematizes precisely the spiritual sickness resulting from the deindividualization that takes place as one becomes a part of the modern masses. Uniqueness becomes something that cannot be taken for granted and must be pursued.

In the mid-nineteenth century, works of literature such as Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (1853) communicated the extinguishing of the soul experienced by their main protagonists at the hands of the ruling classes by casting the men in the profession of manual copyist.[3] Copying is thought to be mere drudgery and is marshaled as a way of pointing to the broader societal transformations that Max Weber called the disenchantment of the world. All of the interconnectedness and fidelity to tradition that had characterized premodern society would now find itself destroyed in the rise of the modern *Gesellschaft*, in which atomization and self-interest prevailed. Copying is degraded and devalued because of its close ties to standardization. As all difference was collapsed into sameness, the notion of the nonreproducible would be at once thrown into crisis and exalted, while the copy would stand as a metonym for broader processes of rationalization.

Young's assertion that we are born originals articulates a conviction that we begin life

as essentially true to ourselves, before experiencing a progressive estrangement from this state that takes the form of a false outer self concerned with being-for-others—something Jean-Paul Sartre would much later term "bad faith." Rather than a yearning for originality, this sentiment is better understood as the desire for authenticity. In 1972's *Sincerity and Authenticity* Lionel Trilling traces the emergence of the modern conception of authenticity to the mid-eighteenth century and ties it to a perceived impoverishment of experience.[4] Drawn from the museum and the connoisseurship of art, authenticity is a polemical concept that seeks to revive a fullness of meaning and an unalienated state of being at a time when increased secularization and industrialization prompted a crisis of absolutes. In the absence of the transcendent and eternal the subject turns inward, taking authenticity as a paragon of personal virtue. The desire for authenticity is, then, first and foremost the desire for an authentic existence, a truth to oneself. It provides a way of guaranteeing the stability of the subject, proposing a notion of self-presence that would come under fierce critique with the advent of poststructuralism. This emphasis on the achievement of subjective uniqueness and consistency is found in the word's etymology, which combines *autos* (self) and *hentes* (to accomplish or to do). Authenticity is thus a subjective ideal invested with a heavy moral weight.

According to Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, in the nineteenth century authenticity became a key term in the artistic critique of capitalism, which posits the latter as a source of disenchantment and alienation: "This critique foregrounds the loss of meaning and, in particular, the loss of a sense of what is beautiful and valuable, which derives from standardization and generalized commodification, affecting not only everyday objects but also artworks (the cultural mercantilism of the bourgeoisie) and human beings."[5] The valorization of authenticity emerges as a subjective response to mass culture that in turn offers a criterion by which that culture—and the traditional formations it threatened— might be judged. It is a conservative reaction that tends to make recourse to an earlier time, a supposedly primitive state, or traditional modes of production. The authentic is diametrically opposed to the reproducible, its character stemming precisely from its supposed existence outside any regime of fungibility or equivalence. It sits firmly on the side of rarity. As Walter Benjamin wrote, "*The whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological—and of course not only technological—reproduction*."[6] Art in particular was thought to provide a nourishing reservoir of authenticity within and against the increasing standardization of life under industrial capitalism. Trilling writes, "As for the audience, its expectation is that through its communication with the work of art, which may be resistant, unpleasant, even hostile, it acquires the authenticity of which the object itself is the model and the artist the personal example."[7] Even if the art object is fabricated according to means unaligned with authenticity, as would increasingly occur throughout the twentieth century, it maintains its authentic status through its connection to the figure of the artist as the "personal example" of a life authentically lived. Trilling describes a form of mimetic contagion, whereby the wholeness and integrity associated with the authentic art object—an emanation of the artist's ownmost being—might be transferred to the viewing subject as if by sympathetic magic. The desire for authentic existence and the valorization of authentic objects and experiences are thus deeply connected: anxiety over the fate of the subject is enacted in the world of objects, as the two enter into a mirrored relationship. Though authenticity is above all a personal virtue, its discursive field extends much farther than the individual, marking out a dynamic relationship between the subject

and the object-world of industrialized society.

   As the emanation of a system of standardization and commodification, the mass-produced image emerges as the epitome of the threat of inauthentic sameness. Its means of production, the machine, is particularly maligned. As Trilling writes, "The anxiety about the machine is a commonplace in nineteenth-century moral and cultural thought…. It was the mechanical principle, quite as much as the acquisitive principle—the two are of course intimately connected—which was felt to be the enemy of being, the source of inauthenticity. The machine, said Ruskin, could only make inauthentic things, dead things; and the dead things communicated their deadness to those who used them."[8] Once again, one encounters here the rhetoric of transfer, this time as the literal deadness of machines transmutes into the metaphorical deadness of the subject. This mistrust of machines arises at a time when many handicraft traditions were being replaced by automation and when the implementation of rationalized manufacturing processes meant that workers no longer made a product start-to-finish but were simply cogs in the wheel of the assembly line. Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1933) captures this fear in an iconic scene, when the worker—after frenetic repetitions on the assembly line—is swallowed into the machine, tightening its gears even while it submits him to bodily violence (figure 1.1). When it spits him out like a finished product, he dances with balletic grace but is unable to distinguish between his interaction with the machine and his interaction with fellow humans. Everywhere he sees nothing but bolts to be secured, even on the buttons of women's skirts and dresses (figure 1.2). Sameness reigns. His entire existence—including his libidinal drive—has been disciplined into a machinic productivity from which he will derive no profit. While Chaplin makes a mockery of this condition, he points to something serious: the colonization of the totality of the subject by the rationalized processes of industrial modernity. Against such a notion of a lifeless, mechanical assemblage that might swallow up the being of the worker and flatten it into uniformity, supposedly authentic modes of production are marked by an organic wholeness, one that soothes the individual subjected to alienated labor, promising personal fulfillment and the preservation, or even rehabilitation, of uniqueness.
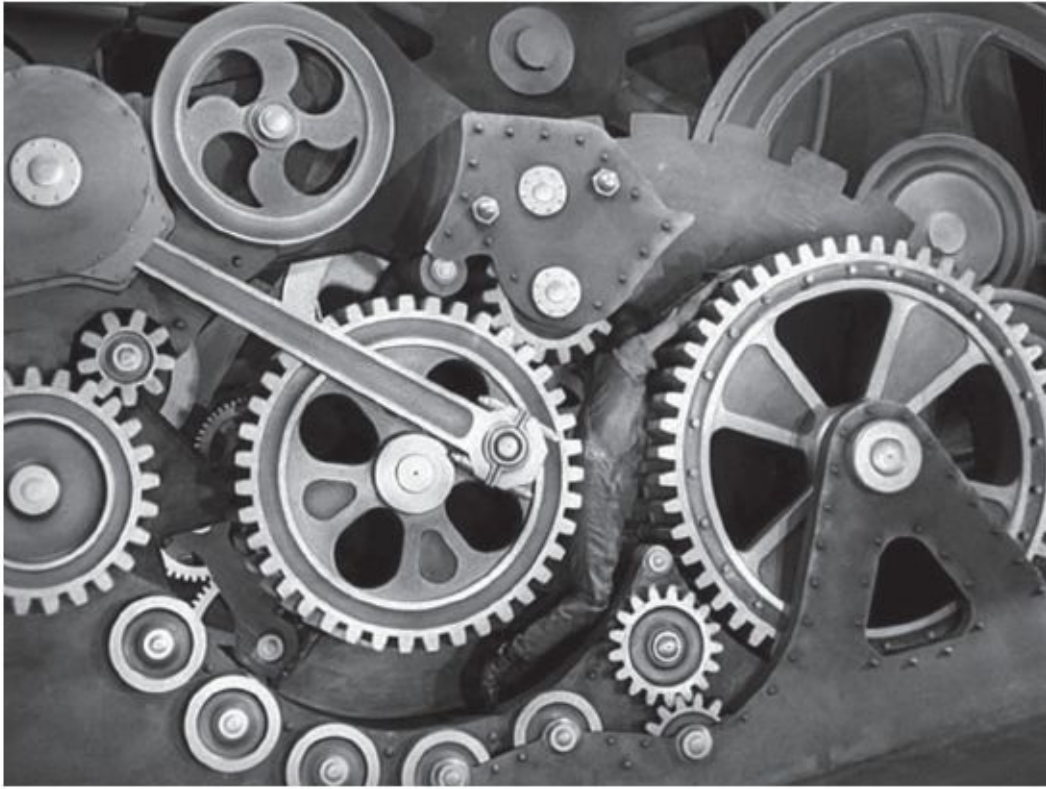
**FIGURE 1.1** *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936). The worker's body incorporated into the machine.



**FIGURE 1.2** *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936). The worker cannot see beyond the assembly line.

Geoffrey Hartman has written that authenticity is a "value word with complex associations" surrounded by "a swarm of synonyms and antonyms. Authenticity contrasts with imitation, simulation, dissimulation, impersonation, imposture, fakery, forgery,

inauthenticity, the counterfeit, lack of character or integrity."[9] It is worth pausing here to consider a word missing from Hartman's swarm but requiring particular attention in the present context, especially because of its currency in discourses of the artistic sphere: *originality*. The relationship between authenticity and originality is complex, owing in part to the multiple meanings condensed in the latter. These terms are often used interchangeably to signal that an artwork is not a forgery or an illicit copy. Both share an allergy to reproduction and are frequently taken as grounds for the cultural and economic valorization of an art object. But while there are indeed occasions when they may legitimately function as synonyms and although their respective meanings may in some cases overlap, ultimately these terms designate nonisomorphic qualities. James Elkins has enumerated three nonessential properties for a work of art to be considered original: the status of being originary, that is, appearing to be without antecedent in a given context; primacy, the condition of referring mostly to itself; and uniqueness, the state of being singular rather than multiple.[10] A significant difference between originality and authenticity is found in Elkins's first criterion of originariness and the temporality it implies: originality understood in this sense is engaged above all in a privileging of novelty in that it involves the staking of a new, vanguard position; authenticity, meanwhile, tends to make recourse to a past, whether revived or invented.[11] There are, however, instances in which originary works may resonate closely with authenticity in their shared opposition to reproduction and standardization. Pablo Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), to take an uncontroversial example, fits all three criteria of originality: it makes an intervention in the advancing history of modernism; it refers primarily to itself; and it is a unique object. Yet it also issues from the artist's hand, inhabiting a mode of production allied with a time before industrial mechanization. In this case the avant-garde novelty constitutive of the work's originariness coexists with its authenticity owing to the mode of production employed, which is understood in contrast to industrial automation and replication. Moreover, the painting's originariness may be understood as an emanation of the unique subjectivity of the artist and thus consonant with the discourse of authenticity. Contrarily, originality and authenticity can just as easily part ways. An object might be authentic in the sense of uniqueness yet lack originariness, as in the case of traditional handicrafts or a retardataire painting. Elkins notes that artworks may equally be original and inauthentic, providing the example of an original artwork subject to restoration processes that compromised its authenticity by adding features not part of the work at the time of its creation.[12] One might wonder if this action would compromise originality, too, but it does not: once rightfully assigned, originality cannot be lost, whereas authenticity remains vulnerable to corruption over time since it is characterized by a persistent fidelity to the past. It requires a constant vigilance, imbuing it with a chronic anxiousness that originality notably does not inspire.

Given that the concepts of originality and authenticity are united in their mutual antipathy to the copy, why diagnose the promise and threat of reproduction through an analysis of the discourse of authenticity, as this chapter does, rather than through the discourse of originality? Originality is a property of objects; it provides a way of articulating their importance to a historical narrative of progression and claiming their value within a marketplace that puts a high value on rarity and innovation. Authenticity, by contrast, is quality that applies to objects, but not just: it can also belong to experiences and—crucially—is ultimately rooted in the subject. Authenticity enables a

conceptualization of the relationship between the constitution of the subject and the world of things. The form of mimetic contagion that Trilling describes offers an explanatory mechanism for the anxiety provoked by reproduction that the discourse of originality is unable to provide. For just as contact with authentic works of art might impart wholeness and integrity to the subject, so, too, could encounters with inauthentic objects and experiences result in an exacerbation of the spiritual sickness of modernity. What is at stake in the rejection of the copy as inauthentic is, then, nothing other than the fate of the subject.

## Cinema: The Artist's Dilemma

If in the late nineteenth century the art object was the exemplification of authenticity, this privileged status decidedly did not extend to the new medium of photography, which found itself firmly lodged in the domain of inauthenticity. In his review of the Salon of 1859 Charles Baudelaire acknowledged that photography was a tremendously useful tool for storing information, but he famously condemned it on account of its "impoverishment of the French artistic genius."[13] As is typical of a discourse invested in authenticity, Baudelaire proceeds according to a binary opposition that sets the humanity of art against both mechanically reproduced images and the broader transformations of industrial modernity, explicitly forging an alliance between "the invasion of photography and the great industrial madness of our times." He writes, "Poetry and progress are like two ambitious men who hate one another with an instinctive hatred, and when they meet upon the same road, one of them has to give place."[14] The advent of photography thus represented the defeat of poetry in the name of progress. Photography was simply a banal copy of external reality, not something that possessed the transformative creativity of art. Baudelaire echoes Ruskin's rhetoric of mimetic transfer in his closing provocation: "Are we to suppose that a people whose eyes are growing used to considering the results of a material science as though they were the products of the beautiful, will not in the course of time have singularly diminished its faculties of judging and of feeling what are among the most ethereal and immaterial aspects of creation?"[15] Once again, exposure to the inauthentic objects of mass reproduction is seen to bring about a deterioration in those faculties of the subject deemed most valuable, most human: judgment and feeling. In 1862 a text entitled "Protestation émanée des grands artistes contre toute assimilation de la photographie à l'art" (The protestation of great artists against all assimilation of photography to art) was published in *Le moniteur de la photographie* and signed by nearly forty artists, including Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. The objections voiced therein were, like Baudelaire's, that photography was a purely machinic medium that lay outside the domain of the "works that are the fruit of intelligence and of the study of art."[16]

The cinema inherits this accursed character. The definitively modern images of the cinema, like those of photography, were machinic copies twice over: a copy of profilmic reality lacking the discernible presence of the artist's hand and a reproducible medium lacking an original. The moving image shunned the artisanal quality of the painted image and was produced en masse for mass consumption, doubly anchoring it to the regime of dehumanizing—and hence, inauthentic—rationalized production. For classical film theorist Ricciotto Canudo cinema's referential reproducibility—its capacity for

indiscriminately copying the profilmic—was a severe obstacle standing in its path to becoming an art. To achieve such a status, he argued in 1911, a filmmaker would have to transcend simply replicating the surfaces of the visible world and endow the filmic image with the marks of subjective intervention.[17] Throughout Canudo's text "The Birth of the Sixth Art" one detects a palpable fear of the inhuman automatism of copying. Beyond this, as it developed into an industry, cinema also proposed a new mode of production: it transformed the fabrication of images, an activity once associated with the authentic ideal, into something subject to the division of labor and, hence, intense compartmentalization, thereby shattering the organic unity proper to authentic forms of creation.[18] It jeopardized traditional artistic agency both by automating the production of images and by enabling these images to circulate with less authorial control.

These fears are potently allegorized in the early Edison shorts *An Artist's Dream* (1900) and *The Artist's Dilemma* (1901). While many other films, such as Georges Méliès's *The Black Imp* (*Le diable noir,* 1905) and *The One Man Band* (*L'homme orchestre,* 1900), signaled the new medium's capacity for copying by using trick effects to create a proliferation of identical objects,[19] these Edison films are notable for connecting this conceit explicitly to the figure of the artist and to the relationship between old and new technologies of image production. Set in the artist's studio—an exemplary space of authentic creation—they allegorize the impact on portraiture painting of the cinema itself, which is embodied in the figure of an imp or, as the catalogue description of the 1900 film puts it, as Mephisto. Both films begin with the artist dozing in his studio; taking advantage of his authentic existence, he keeps no regular schedule, sleeping when tired and painting when inspiration hits. In *An Artist's Dream* the fiendish Mephisto appears, bringing two female portraits to life—precisely the promise of the moving image. The artist awakens and enthusiastically attempts to embrace them, but each one disappears. The women reappear in more matronly clothing, charging after the artist. He pushes them away, and they disappear once more. The artist has ceded control over the space meant to be his sovereign domain. He begs Mephisto, presumably for the reappearance of the young women, but the demon casts him back into his chair asleep, reinstates the women as painted images, and disappears. When the artist awakens and sees the inert canvas, he consoles himself with alcohol. This artist's dream of Mephisto and the women is a form of thwarted wish fulfillment, signaling his impossible desire to make images come to life. It is a desire that he is unable to satisfy; this falls to the mischievous demon endowed with the powers of animation proper to cinema, who succeeds where the artist had failed. It is notable that the folkloric figure of Mephistopheles originated in the Faust legend and is thus closely tied to the notion of giving up one's soul in a deal with the devil. Once again notions of spiritual impoverishment in the face of mechanical reproduction arise, here within a powerful allegory of painting's confrontation with the infant art of cinema.

Made the following year, *The Artist's Dilemma* repeats a similar scenario in a more elaborate manner. A woman emerges from a large clock to have her portrait done (figure 1.3). She is followed shortly thereafter by a clownish imp, a character Lynda Nead has called "the *genius technologi,* or the spirit of film."[20] In a trick effect created through the use of reverse motion, the imp makes a portrait materialize with a simple sweep of the brush, invoking the process of developing a photographic negative much more than that of painting a portrait. The imp possesses not only a remarkable speed but also an ability to

duplicate likeness so truly that the painted subject comes alive to join her model in a short cancan, thus repeating the premise of *An Artist's Dream* and, like it, invoking the animated images of the cinema. The imp, as a personification of cinema, has rendered the painter obsolete. After the dance, the figures disappear, and the artist is left alone in his studio with a blank canvas.



**FIGURE 1.3**  *The Artist's Dilemma* (Edwin S. Porter, 1901). A battle of old and new forms of image production.

These films follow what Fredric Jameson calls the "Bordwell-Hansen hypothesis": the notion that "whenever other arts are foregrounded within a film…what is at stake is always some implicit formal proposition as to the superiority of film itself as a medium over these disparate competitors."[21] Cinema here trumps painting on two counts: the speed of its image production and an automatic analogical fidelity that yields time-based images of an uncanny vitality. Pitting film against art, these films assign magical powers not to the painters but to the oneiric apparitions that operate with at least a touch of malevolence. In other words, film is distinctly positioned as a technology that threatens the human and, in particular, human creativity and authenticity. The Faustian contract guarantees animate images that would allow the painter to triumph as a latter-day Parrhasius—but only at the price of his own obsolescence. *The Artist's Dilemma* is not called "The Artist's Fantasy" or "The Artist's Reverie," for the film is something of a terror, an anxiety dream of the nineteenth-century artist faced with the new, inauthentic images of photographic and cinematographic reproduction. Indeed, the Library of Congress, which holds the film in its Paper Print Collection, lists an alternative title for the film: *Artist's Dilemma, or, What He Saw in a Nightmare*. As Nead writes of the 1901 film, but which might also apply to its 1900 precursor, "The artist is a dupe; turned upon both by his model and his living image; humiliated both as a maker of images and as a man."[22] Mary Ann Doane has noted that it is remarkable that in *The Artist's Dilemma* the artist's visitors emerge from a clock, rightly

emphasizing the connections between this element of the mise-en-scène and the film's central focus on the relation between reversible and irreversible time, particularly in its use of reverse motion.[23] But one might equally assert that the presence of the clock is noteworthy as a signifier of standardization. The creation of World Standard Time had occurred only eighteen years earlier, in 1883, while the segmentation of temporal flow into discrete units was a key feature of the rationalization of labor occurring during the period. As the portal through which the cinema imp comes to confront the artist, the clock serves as a metonym for these broader processes of standardization, which were so closely aligned with a loss of authenticity. Where its 1900 precursor did not, the 1901 film forges a link between new technologies of image reproduction and new models of social control, counterpoising both to the authentic existence of the nineteenth-century artist, now under threat.

## The Small Utopia

For some, the inauthenticity of the film image was precisely its radical potential. Germano Celant has referred to the desire for the unlimited fabrication and widespread distribution of art objects as a "small utopia" that constitutes, in the words of Maria Gough, "a dream that punctuated the twentieth century across myriad historical and aesthetic contexts and moments."[24] The moving image provides a particularly significant context within which to consider this proposition, especially given the extent to which it can evade the petit bourgeois fantasies of ownership that sometimes accompany the multiples of print and sculpture. This utopian dimension of the copy is closely tied to the supremely contradictory character of authenticity: the loss of authenticity is mourned as a part of what Boltanski and Chiapello designate as the artistic critique of capitalism, but as a part of what they call the social critique of capitalism—the objection to inequality and the selfishness of private interest—the attachment to authenticity is deplored for its class character.[25] After all, authenticity can be easily understood as a reactionary impulse that seeks to valorize the status quo at the expense of the new and resist whatever promises of democratization and positive change the new might bring. Understood in this second sense, the desire for authenticity is nothing other than the apotheosis of commodity fetishism: it is a way of dissimulating a relationship to capital by cloaking a yearning for the rare, expensive, and exclusive in spiritual, romantic terms. It was this contradiction that, many years later, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet would attempt to mediate by issuing their film *The Death of Empedocles* (*La mort d'Empédocle,* 1987) in three different versions; in so doing, they reject auratic authenticity and the leveling sameness of reproduction in one gesture. Straub wrote that the filmmakers were very proud "of having launched an attack against the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, but—also—an attack against the uniqueness of the work of art."[26] In his "Work of Art" essay Benjamin does the very same thing, making authenticity a deeply antinomic concept. Authenticity is revealed to contain within it both a hope for salvation from the leveling of experience in modernity and a conservative attachment to the tradition of bourgeois aesthetics.

Benjamin is by no means entirely pessimistic about the liquidation of cultural heritage occasioned by the advent of mechanical reproduction. Rather, he finds in the decay of aura

a revolutionary potential, one that recurs throughout the historical avant-gardes' desire to overcome the autonomy of the aesthetic and reintegrate art into the praxis of daily life. It is this promise of democratization that guides the artistic and theoretical arguments for the "small utopia" of circulation throughout the twentieth century. The revolutionary potential of the mass character of commercial cinema was largely—though never entirely—quashed by the development of industrial cinema as an ideological apparatus. As Miriam Hansen has shown, the development of the classical system of narration was accompanied by a disciplining of spectatorship that sought "to standardize empirically diverse and to some extent unpredictable acts of reception," replacing the unruly horizon of public experience that characterized cinema's earliest years with a normative space of middle-class entertainment.[27] But despite the clear evidence and success of this undertaking, it is worth noting the extent to which the notion of the mass-produced multiple persisted as a disruptive force in artistic production well into the twentieth century, both within film and video practice and without. Celant notes that the impulse to form such small utopias of circulation does not dissipate in the 1920s but constitutes an important counterhistory of twentieth-century art, one grounded in Russian constructivism as much as in the protoconceptualism of Duchamp and spanning printed media, ceramics, and industrially produced objects. In this narrative the value of artistic practice is found not in formal innovation but rather in the adoption of modes of production and distribution that favor access and dissemination. Here, reproducibility constitutes not a source of anxiety that prompts a conservative return to authenticity but rather a site at which to rethink the social function of art beyond the unique object.

According to Celant this trajectory culminates in the late 1950s and 1960s with the vogue for artists' books and theoretically unlimited editions of sculptural objects, such as those issued by Daniel Spoerri through his Éditions MAT (Multiplication d'Art Transformable), founded in 1959. But one might just as easily claim that it is not in these object-based multiples but rather in film and video art—and the institutions that developed to support them—that one might locate the true apotheosis of this counterhistory of art after uniqueness. The history of artists' engagements with the moving image is in large part the history of a drive to democratize distribution, disentangle the production of art from the intertwined regimes of rarity and commodity fetishism, and reassert the potential of collective, public experience that had marked cinema's earliest exhibition practices. The institutions that were founded to support experimental film in the postwar period took access as a guiding principle, prioritizing the ability to reach audiences, an impulse also found in the excitement surrounding the advent of video in the late 1960s. In this regard the rental model of the cooperatives represents perhaps the most fully developed and enduring articulation of the "small utopia" of the distribution of art. As Jonas Mekas wrote in 1964, "Our art is for all the people. It must be open and available to anybody who wants to see it."[28] One finds here an investment in reproduction that exists far from the logic of mass culture, which relies on automation and replication as a means of lowering production costs while maximizing the quantity of goods for sale. Quite differently, the copying practices of film and video art were initially not driven by a profit motive. Indeed, financial strain has been a long-standing feature of experimental film production, as captured by Mekas in a humorous fable:

> There is a tale according to which, after God created the world he looked at it and he thought it was great. So he created cinema to record and to celebrate that world. But the Devil did not like that. So he put a money bag in

front of the camera and said why celebrate reality if you can make money with this instrument? And believe it or not, all filmmakers ran after money. So God, to correct his mistake, created independent filmmakers and said you will make movies and you will record and celebrate life, and you will never make any money.[29]

In place of the economy of scale and the financial possibilities that accompany it, and in opposition to the economy of scarcity proper to the art system, experimental film and early video art proposed an ethos of access that resurrected the utopian spark of public experience that inhered in the massness of the moving image prior to its colonization by industry—even if it resulted in severe economic hardship.

As much as the reproducibility of the moving image figured as a major challenge to the symbolic and financial economies of art in the 1960s, the increased recognition of film and video as legitimate media of artistic production that occurred simultaneously equally effected a push in the opposite direction: the moving image found a new alliance with authenticity, a value that had endured as central within the artistic context despite a proliferation of practices that rejected its habitual markers, such as subjective expressivity and evidence of the artist's hand. A pendant image to the Edison films captures the immense transformation in the relationship between film and art that had occurred since 1901: a man stands on a small ladder behind an apparatus that looks at once like a painting machine and a film projector ([figure 1.4](#)). Full of knobs and dials, it registers his inputs and processes them through obscure mechanisms before projecting them onto a waiting surface, rendered minimally enough so as to pass as both screen and canvas. Behind him, a crowd of people looks on. This undated drawing, sketched by the experimental filmmaker and artist Joyce Wieland while living in New York, is accompanied by a caption: "The New 'Old Master' Machine Perfected and Demonstrated January 19, 1964."[30] In a rather precise echo of *An Artist's Dream* and *The Artist's Dilemma* this technological marvel produces the image of a woman; here she does not come to life but exists as an abstraction, captured inchoate in the gendered moment of creation. Instead of figuring as a threat to the artist, the apparatus—rendered as a Tinguely-esque contraption rather than as an imp, yet fantastical still—becomes the means through which a venerable old master will be produced. No longer a terrorizing nightmare, the film medium is here endowed with the nobility of painting. Wieland wittily satirizes this operation, as if to side with Benjamin's claim that to annex film to art was to speciously endow it with the cult elements it might otherwise have combatted.[31]
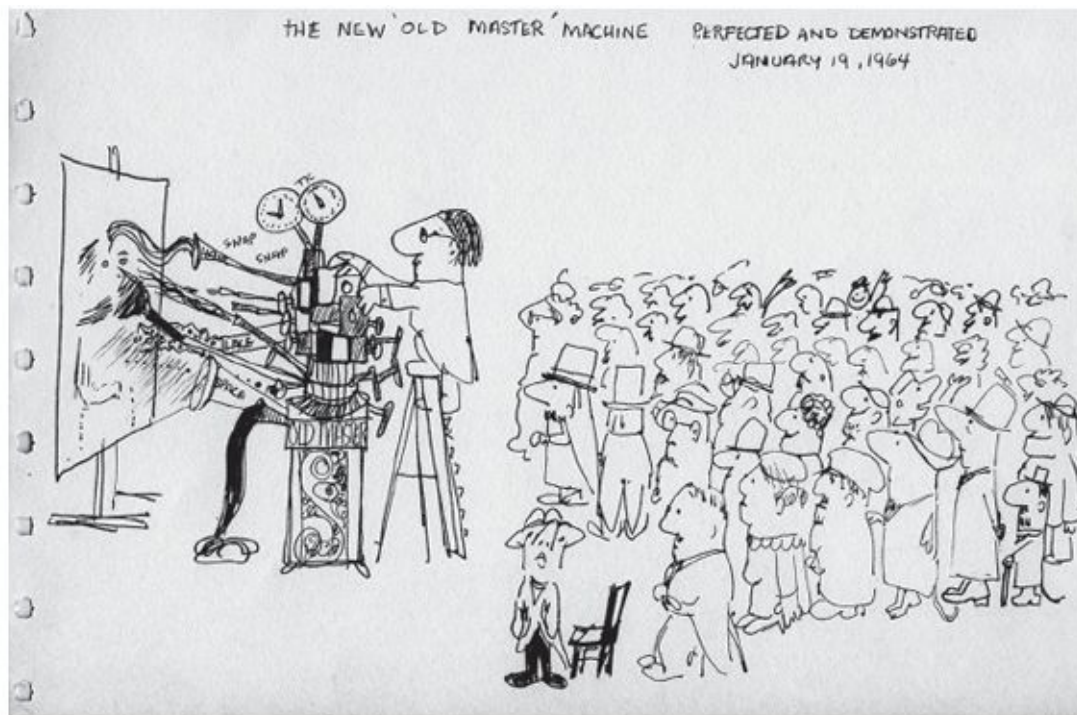
**FIGURE 1.4**  Joyce Wieland, *The New "Old Master" Machine, Perfected and Demonstrated, January 19, 1964*. Courtesy of York University Libraries, the Clara Thomas Archives, and Special Collections, Joyce Wieland fonds, ASC04888. Used with permission of the National Gallery of Canada.

Experimental film in the 1960s offers a fascinatingly contradictory moment in which the film medium was discursively constructed as a refusal of the cult value of the art world —understood as an attachment to auratic, salable objects—precisely as it simultaneously accrued such value in a symbolic sense, outside of any market logic, through claims for film's status as an art form. Though inhabiting an economy of the multiple, experimental film in this period adopted an artisanal mode of production and a focus on self-expression that enabled it to resonate with traditional conceptions of authenticity despite its grounding in reproducibility. Though these uneditioned film prints were by no means authentic art objects in a market sense, the aesthetic experience they enabled struck a chord with an enduring authentic ideal. New "old masters" were indeed minted via the machine, in some cases inhabiting a romantic form of artistic subjectivity elsewhere under attack at that very moment (e.g., in minimalism and conceptual art). Experimental film's rejection of commodification positioned it outside the economy of uniqueness that held strong within the art system. Yet rather than harming its alliance with authenticity as a moral value, this opposition to the exchange principle arguably buttressed such an association. This recourse to authenticity did not leave the concept uninflected: in prioritizing aesthetic experience over the acquisition of commodified objects by remaining outside the sales model of the art system, experimental film in the 1960s disentangled authenticity from its typical coupling with the unique, handmade object and its accompanying class-character. A tension emerged that continues to haunt the moving image qua artistic medium to this day: it is recognized as a major art form but remains in some respects inassimilable to the means by which value is produced on the art market. For some this would be part of its promise, for others a fatal problem to be overcome.

# Hardly More Than a Sign

In 1928 Paul Valéry foresaw the day when images would "appear and disappear with a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign"; that day has arrived.[32] Pursuing his earlier conviction that his "art must be open and available to anyone who wants to see it," in 2007 Mekas released one film per day for free on his website, www.jonasmekas.com, calling the initiative *The 365-Day Project*. In line with the practice he has been developing for decades, the films were diaristic, often working from the vast archive of material the artist has accumulated over the years. Mekas intended for viewers to download the videos onto iPods and view them in diverse locations, image and beholder sharing in a state of ambulatory mobility. In the early twenty-first century, new forms of digital reproduction and dissemination emerged in conjunction with economic deregulation, the restructuring of labor, and the remapping of global flows of people, capital, and information—in short, they occurred as part of a sociocultural transformation just as immense and wide-ranging as that of the nineteenth century. Once again, the appearance of a new technology of image reproduction is seen to harbor both promise and threat. Digital reproduction can offer the possibility of new forms of circulation that enable greater autonomy and upset hierarchies: for Mekas it constitutes "the People's Underground," enabling an unprecedented "technological avant-garde" that rearticulates the small utopia of circulation once promised by film.[33] Yet simultaneously, what Henry Jenkins terms "spreadability"—the circulation of images by users who redeploy and reframe the media products they encounter—has become a primary locus of value creation in neoliberal cultural industries, while also potentially eroding provenance and authority.[34]

Artist and theorist Hito Steyerl's "In Defense of the Poor Image" has been fervently embraced as something of a manifesto for this new age of circulation, championing the low-definition digital copy not despite but precisely because of its inauthenticity. Like Benjamin before her, Steyerl discerns a utopian promise in the poor image's possibilities of mass circulation and celebrates it precisely where others would see only a breach of copyright or an evacuation of aesthetic interest. Steyerl claims that the poor image is a "copy in motion" that "transforms quality into accessibility" by producing a low-quality file optimized to travel.[35] It is a copy that indexes its movements through time and (virtual) space, registering visually the goal of reaching as many viewers as possible, even at the cost of pictorial integrity. Film was deemed inauthentic for severing the image from its emplacement in a singular space and time, inhabiting a mode of production characterized by the division of labor, and existing outside the domain of uniqueness. The digital image augments this condition but often adds another insult: in order to move quickly across networks with limited bandwidth, images are subjected to compression algorithms that reduce file size but in the process create a low-definition image lacking in fidelity.

Throughout Steyerl's text one finds an organizing opposition between the cinema, taken as a "flagship store" of quality, and an online culture of streaming images and file sharing that revels in its poverty. Yet Steyerl refers to two key figures from the history of politicized film production: Dziga Vertov and Julio García Espinosa. From Vertov she takes the notion of a "visual bond," the idea that the moving image could function as a

social relationship, creating community and solidarity between its viewers. From Espinosa she takes the proposition of an imperfect cinema, one that would eschew technical perfection in favor of a committed cinema of popular struggle made with whatever means available. By locating the precursors of today's poor image in the history of cinema, these references hint at a crucial point that is nowhere articulated in Steyerl's text: that what counts as a poor image is historically variable. The history of forms of image reproduction that favor access over quality is a long one that by no means commences with the digitization of media. Well into the mid-nineteenth century, engraved reproductions of paintings were a lucrative enterprise for painters, engravers, and publishers alike.[36] Certainly, one can imagine that much higher quality reproductions could have been, and in some cases were, produced through the medium of painting. But despite the lack of color and the possibility of unfaithful renderings, engraving was the primary method for the dissemination of reproductions of paintings until photographic technology was sufficiently developed to take its place. Plaster casts of marble sculptures filled museums, providing viewing copies of lost or inaccessible works. In the 1920s Pathé produced versions of theatrical releases in the 9.5 mm gauge, marketing them to home viewers; in the 1960s avant-garde filmmakers like Stan Brakhage resurrected this practice by making 8 mm reduction prints of 16 mm work, knowing that image quality would be compromised but keen to open up new avenues of circulation and the possibility of domestic spectatorship. CinemaScope films shot in color were shown in Academy ratio on black-and-white televisions. More recently, the smeared colors and scan lines of the VHS tape became the dominant way viewers in the 1980s and 1990s encountered cinema. In short, despite the obsession with image quality that reigns in certain sectors of artists' moving image and Hollywood alike, the inverse ratio of access to quality has by no means always tended to come down in favor of the latter. Rather, visual culture has long been marked by the consumption of images inferior in quality but less costly and more transportable. The contemporary proliferation of ultra-low-definition images is simply the latest development in this longer history.

Though the cinema may occupy for Steyerl the position of "flagship store" because of its apparent obsession with image quality, to understand this status as ontological rather than historical is to overlook the extent to which the film image was invested in precisely the same forms of promiscuous circulation Steyerl ascribes to the poor image—only some one hundred years earlier. The invocations of Vertov and Espinosa gesture to this history, but the text goes no further in exploring it, resulting in a situation in which the condition described is implied to be a novel one that occurs with the onset of digitization. Indeed, Steyerl writes, "Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place."[37] Too often discussions of digital media revel unabashedly in discourses of novelty—something that is present even in the strange, yet pervasive term *new media*—that serve to obscure continuities and repetitions that might emerge by taking a longer view of media history. After all, what is Walter Benjamin's theory of the exhibition value of film if not a theorization of the poor image *avant la lettre*? Benjamin describes an image that suffers a loss of quality—in his case understood as the withering of aura, that "unique apparition of distance, however near it might be"—in order to gain in accessibility.[38] While the issue is not one of image fidelity, as it is for Steyerl, the line of argumentation is similar. A new technology of image reproduction is seen to tip the balance away from quality and toward access. In so doing, it both provokes fears that

henceforth images will be nothing but feeble simulacra and ignites the radical promise of the copy to overturn traditional hierarchies of value and disrupt existing forms of distribution. As much as the cinema may today be understood as a "rich image"—whether in its blockbuster iterations or in attachments to pure and pristine presentation in artists' moving image—to see it necessarily as such is to forget about a history of unprecedented circulation, agit-trains, mobile cinemas, and small gauges.

For Benjamin this shift from quality to access provoked a deep ambivalence: though the loss of aura was mourned as a central component of the waning of experience [*Erfahrung*] in industrial modernity, as a shift away from the class character of traditional aesthetics, it was seen as possessing a progressive potential. For Steyerl, as well, the poor image is Janus-faced. Just as Benjamin can easily be misread as simply pessimistic concerning the impact of mechanical reproduction, so, too, can Steyerl be misread as overly optimistic concerning that of electronic reproduction.[39] As her title suggests, she is engaged in a polemical valorization of these images, deemed by so many to be flimsy and insubstantial. She sees the low-definition image as endowed with a sociality that its pristine counterpart lacks: it "constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history," and it "builds alliances as it travels, provokes translation or mistranslation, and creates new publics and debates."[40] In particular, it can provide outlets for the circulation of noncommercial media, like experimental films and video essays, which would otherwise be seen only in specialized venues in major metropolitan locations. It is here that Steyerl locates the political charge of the poor image: its ease of mobility allows for a contestation of the increasing privatization of media by maneuvering around and outside of official, monetized channels.

But despite the progressive potential of the poor image, it is important to remember that there are also times when a poor image is just a poor image, maybe making someone richer. With a nod to Frantz Fanon, Steyerl calls the poor image "the Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores."[41] Such images may indeed be detritus, long detached from any identifiable origin, circulating as fragments outside the official, monetized channels of online distribution. But as much as they are the trash of the digital economy, so, too, are they its nourishment: YouTube's gross revenue was $4 billion in 2014.[42] The pixelated cuteness of someone's corgi doing a belly flop into a lake may be low quality and user-generated, but it is also revenue generating, both for parent company Google and for the user who posted it, who may profit from advertisements placed alongside the video. As the velocity of image circulation has accelerated and texts become mutable, the old rules of intellectual property no longer apply—but this does not simply mean that digital visual culture is a utopia (or dystopia, depending on one's position) of free circulation. It was formerly the case that rights holders approached the unauthorized circulation of copyrighted material simply as illegal infringement to be stopped. As a site of lost revenue, such uses were viewed in largely negative terms and potentially subject to prosecution. The age of spreadable media sees the likelihood of such unauthorized reuse greatly amplified but also radically reconfigured, as systems such as YouTube's Content ID allow rights holders to review, authorize, and monetize unauthorized distribution. All material uploaded to the site—some twenty-four hours every minute—is algorithmically scanned and compared against a database of reference files provided by rights holders.

When a match is found, the rights holder can then decide what to do with the video: block it, authorize it, or authorize it and place advertisements on it. Notably, this application program interface (API) is able to match uploaded content of inferior quality against higher definition reference files, resulting in a situation in which rights holders may sanction and profit from users' unauthorized redeployment of "poor images."

This absolutely transforms unauthorized use from a subversive act into a sphere of activity that is potentially very lucrative for rights holders. One thus confronts an unprecedented situation in which the degraded copy remains a threat while adding new promises to its repertoire: it maintains its alliance with unsanctioned recirculation, but it is now no longer necessarily aligned with an antagonistic stance toward private property, thus drastically transforming the character, meaning, and value of such reuse. Meanwhile, for artists concerned with questions of medium specificity and aesthetic experience, having their work circulate online in low-quality formats and without permission may offer an insult greater than any benefit. This ambivalence is not lost on Steyerl. Despite the title of her essay, she also acknowledges this other side of her object of study: "On the one hand, it operates against the fetish value of high resolution. On the other hand, this is precisely why it also ends up being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings."[43] There is, then, nothing necessarily oppositional about the low-quality copy. Though Espinosa began "For an Imperfect Cinema" with the statement, "Nowadays, perfect cinema—technically and artistically masterful—is almost always reactionary cinema," it would be profoundly inaccurate to invert this claim and posit that today the poor image is *de jure* yoked to a progressive politics or a subversion of private ownership.[44]

## Authenticity, Again

It is this other side of the poor image—the notion that it is a flimsy, disposable copy traveling outside of sanctioned channels—that has contributed to a reassertion of the values of rarity and authenticity in contemporary visual culture. Poor images are sometimes described as communicating authenticity in that their lack of quality is understood to index their precarious circumstances of production.[45] Yet this concerns referential rather than circulatory reproducibility and therefore must be distinguished from the authenticity under consideration here; put differently, it treats the relationship between image and referent rather than the relationships among images. Considered in relation to the velocity of image circulation, the low-definition image speaks to the enduring ambivalence of inauthenticity in the twenty-first century. It is a metonym of frenzied copying and unprecedented access, in response to which authenticity—a long-standing value within the art system—has recently reemerged as a wider force in contemporary culture, where it is perceived as offering an escape from the monotony, automation, and even deceptiveness of mediated experience.

In slight adjustment of Thorstein Veblen, journalist Andrew Potter has coined the term *conspicuous authenticity* to refer to the status-seeking consumption of "authentic" goods and experiences that he sees as pervasive in contemporary culture.[46] An Alex Gregory cartoon published in the May 25, 2015, issue of the *New Yorker* lays bare this practice.

Two men stand together, admiring an elaborate stereo system and a collection of records; the caption reads, "The two things that really drew me to vinyl were the expense and the inconvenience."[47] Unlike conspicuous consumption, in which markers of expense are put on display to boast of one's economic power, conspicuous authenticity dissimulates economic signifiers by elevating moral criteria as informing the choice of product—though, of course, such goods are generally also high in price and difficult to access compared to their "inauthentic" counterparts. To return to the *New Yorker* cartoon: vinyl might be praised for the warmth of its sound or its enlarged artwork, but according to the logic of conspicuous authenticity its true attraction lies precisely in its expense and inconvenience. A similar send-up of this tendency is found in Noah Baumbach's *While We're Young* (2014), in which the Brooklyn warehouse apartment of twenty-something hipsters Jamie (Adam Driver) and Darby (Amanda Seyfried) is stocked with LPs, typewriters, and board games—media they would only ever have experienced as already outmoded but that are deemed essential to their "creative" lifestyles.

While Potter is critical of this mobilization of authenticity, deeming it a "hoax," business management writers James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine proclaim it as a new customer sensibility on which entrepreneurs might capitalize. In their 2007 book, *Authenticity: What Customers Really Want*, they write, "In a world increasingly filled with deliberately and sensationally staged experiences—in an increasingly *unreal* world—customers choose to buy or not buy based on how *real* they perceive an offering to be. Business today, therefore, is all about being real. Original. Genuine. Sincere. *Authentic*."[48] Gilmore and Pine explicitly position this yearning for authenticity in relation to technological change. In a world of "technological intrusion," they argue, businesses can add value by "rendering authenticity." Guidelines for doing so include an absolute prohibition on declarations of authenticity ("It's easier to *be* authentic if you don't *say* you're authentic") and an imperative to "humanize" all interactions customers have with technology.[49] Resurrecting a nineteenth-century discourse formed largely in response to the increased technologization of image production and life itself, this return to authenticity signals the persistent phobia of the machinic copy in a Western bourgeois culture deeply rooted in principles of private property and individual authenticity. Whether in hyperlocal food, crafting clubs, travel to "untouched" destinations, or uses of old media (be they real or simulated; think of the filters that mimic the look of scratched celluloid or Polaroid photography), this turn to authenticity points to the prevalence of an intense, nostalgic desire for an escape from a relentless digital regime of equivalence and easy availability.

In his 1995 book, *Copyright's Highway: The Law and Lore of Copyright from Gutenberg to the Celestial Jukebox*, Paul Goldstein offered a very optimistic view of how digitization might benefit producers and consumers by allowing for new forms of rights management, as well as unprecedented choice and ease of access. The titular "celestial jukebox" was imagined as a digital repository that would allow users to access whatever song, movie, or text they wanted for a small licensing fee.[50] This has to some degree occurred: Jeremy Rifkin, for instance, has claimed we are moving away from a culture of ownership and toward one of access, while services like the iTunes store and the music provider Spotify feel like the celestial jukebox come to Earth.[51] But the man in the *New Yorker* cartoon still wants his vinyl, perhaps more than ever before. In 2014 sales of LPs

hit an eighteen-year high in the United Kingdom, with the market share increasing from £3 million in 2009 to £20 million just five years later; in the United States the same year saw the highest numbers recorded by Nielsen SoundScan since Nielsen began tracking LP sales in 1991.[52] In mainstream media contexts the suppression of reproducibility generally occurs out of a desire to maintain a monopoly over intellectual property, but in the revival of vinyl—as well as in initiatives such as the numbered, limited-edition DVDs released by Eureka Video in its Masters of Cinema series or in special events such as the site-specific screenings organized by independent cinema chain Alamo Drafthouse—one begins to see how restricting circulation in a mass-cultural context can occur in tandem with a recruitment of authenticity as a consumer sensibility.[53]

This mania for authenticity is characterized by the same deep ambivalence that marked its iteration some one hundred years before. When, on the sketch comedy show *Portlandia*, two restaurant customers played by Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen obsessively inquire about the provenance of the chicken they are about to eat, it resonates as a pointed satire of how central the rendering of authenticity has become when targeting an affluent, liberal demographic. More earnestly, but with the same blatancy, a popular advertising campaign for the Canadian province of Newfoundland beckoned prospective tourists with a tagline that directly invokes the rhetoric of subjective authenticity: "Find Yourself Here." One sixty-second commercial offers peaceful scenes of rural life while quoting strange place-names (Little Adventure, Heart's Delight), dating the founding of villages ("first settled early 1800s"), and supplying population statistics ("Little Paradise, Population 2"). It promises the destination to be "as far away from Disneyland"—the epitome of inauthentic simulation—"as you can get." At the end of the ad the viewer is asked to "Call Eileen" for more information, thus attempting a bogus humanization of the eminently standardized activity of phoning a call center. The campaign sells purity and escape, but the origin it depends on is worth interrogating. The ad volunteers the dates of settlement of a number of picturesque towns as a means of claiming historicity, of asserting the persistence of traditional modes of life. But what in fact is found here is the proclamation of European settlement as the origin point of life in the province—an origin that is, of course, completely false and established only through effacing the much longer inhabitation of the region by indigenous populations who were subject to genocide. In making recourse to the moment of European settlement as origin, the discourse of authenticity perpetuates this historical violence in the present, while also negating the hard-won contemporaneity of rural Newfoundland by casting it into a mythic, frozen temporality detached from a global present.[54]

Such examples indicate the extent to which authenticity has indeed emerged as palpable customer sensibility, thoroughly commodified and understood as an effect to be produced rather than an inherent quality. Here one finds the *ne plus ultra* of Adorno's notion that despite authenticity's claims to origins and intrinsic value, it is always retroactively constructed and resides fully within the paradigm of commodity exchange it purports to stand outside: "Only when countless standardized commodities project, for the sake of profit, the illusion of being unique, does the idea take shape, as their antithesis yet in keeping with the same criteria, that the non-reproducible is truly genuine [*eigentlich Echten*]."[55] Although Adorno formulated this position decades ago, this notion of a false projection of uniqueness stemming from a ground of sameness is particularly apposite in

the era of niche marketing and customizable media experiences. If Fordist capitalism succeeded in producing seductive commodities that delivered the ever-same in the guise of the ever-new, the contemporary moment witnesses the continuation of this regime, though now augmented with promises of personalization, customization, and flexibility. Yet the deep ambivalence that characterized the elaboration of the concept of authenticity in the nineteenth century likewise accompanies its twenty-first-century resuscitation. It is easy to mock the concern with avian biography proper to the *Portlandia* characters, but an investment in the politics of food production cannot be written off as simply an instance of "conspicuous authenticity." Similarly, despite the problems of the "Find Yourself Here" advertisement, rural Newfoundland does in fact provide a very different experience of locality, tradition, and remoteness than one finds in major metropolitan centers. One confronts here again the conflicted nature of authenticity, as it continues to hold fast to its ability to challenge a culture of false differentiation, drab sameness, and prefab experiences even as it possesses undeniably retrograde attributes.

Gilmore and Pine's *Authenticity* is something of a sequel to their influential 1999 book, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage,* which offered businesses advice on how to sell experiences rather than products.[56] *The Experience Economy* received some attention within the art context when cited by critics such as Claire Bishop, who claimed that the practices grouped under the heading of "relational aesthetics" in the 1990s might be seen to mirror broader transformations of consumer culture.[57] Gilmore and Pine argue that the turn to authenticity is the logical next step after the experience economy: as they note, in a world filled with experiences, the desire now is for *authentic* experiences. No longer is it enough for a Starbucks barista to write one's name on a cup; now the trend is for single-origin fair trade coffee prepared by hand using a Chemex pour-over method. Just as the "experience economy" gave way to the buzzword of authenticity for the marketing gurus, in the art context, too, one can trace how the relational art of the 1990s developed into a more widespread privileging of authenticity in the new century, whether in the vogue for the liveness offered by dance and performance, the proliferation of old media and artisanal techniques of all sorts, or the propagation of site-specific exhibitions in remote locations. Uses of the moving image in art predominantly remained under the sign of the multiple until the 1990s, when film and video came into a more proximate relationship to authenticity and rarity in a number of ways: the increased endorsement of the moving image by major institutions of contemporary art led to the viability of the limited edition as a model of sale after decades of unsuccessful attempts; digitization threw photochemical film into a rapid obsolescence and recast the tenor of analog reproducibility as authentic and rare by contrast to its digital counterpart; and event-based forms of cinema that reject the regime of perpetual availability attained a new visibility, challenging the presumption that images now travel to the viewer rather than the other way around. While certainly the shift in reproducibility after digitization is not the sole factor at play in the emergence of these phenomena—each of which will be explored at length in the chapters to follow—it is a key element.

The persistent desire for authenticity is undoubtedly at odds with the unprecedented ease and speed of circulation one encounters today. But instead of seeing this tension as a simple contradiction, one must understand it as a dialectical movement wherein the possibility of fast circulation through copying cancels the possibility of rarity while

inciting an increased desire for it. Just as the MP3 led to a renewed interest in vinyl, the promiscuous travels of the digital image have given rise to a variety of responses that attempt to curtail this mobility and reassert the necessity of controlled, authentic images and experiences. If, in the late nineteenth century, it was possible to oppose art and the moving image as respectively deemed authentic and inauthentic, rare and reproducible, the alignment of these terms has shifted. The moving image now occupies a much more complex position, inhabiting both sides of these binaries. New forms of reproducibility inspire new forms of control, which in turn ignite the desire for the utopia of reproduction and prompt a search for practices of copying that will escape regulation. In response to demands for authenticity, some artists and audiences embrace forms of distribution that privilege access over quality, which today means that limited-edition videos appear online as "poor images," and peer-to-peer piracy networks proliferate. And in response to these inauthentic copies, efforts to recuperate authenticity arise, and the cycle continues. The following chapters will explore in detail how these dynamics have played out in the intersecting histories of experimental film, video art, and artists' moving image.

# 2
# 8 mm and the "Blessings of Books and Records"

By adopting a rental model of distribution, organizations such as Canyon Cinema and the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative emphasized experience over object, something that may be understood as a form of opposition to the commodity fetishism of culture in general and the art market in particular. Today, however, in the wake of digitization, a number of alternatives are displacing the rental model of the co-ops from the hegemonic position it has occupied since the mid-twentieth century. These include the sale of films as collectible art objects in the form of the limited edition, the sale of uneditioned mass-market DVDs, and the authorized and unauthorized distribution of films through file-sharing sites and other online outlets. Though adopting very different attitudes toward scarcity, authenticity, and medium specificity, all these increasingly prevalent models of distribution share a conception of the moving image as something that can be not only experienced throughout the duration of an ephemeral projection but also owned and viewed repeatedly. In addition to offering cinema as experience, they posit cinema as possession. Moreover, in many cases they relocate cinema from a public space to a private one.

Both within experimental film and outside of it, possessable cinema is newly ubiquitous but not new. From the beginning Edison imagined that his Kinetoscope might be marketed to home viewers. According to Ben Singer, British manufacturers started selling 35 mm apparatuses for the home as early as 1896: these were extensions that would attach onto existing magic lantern devices.[1] In 1912 Pathé and Edison both introduced home-viewing systems, named the Pathescope and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope, respectively. In 1923 Kodak's introduction of 16 mm reversal safety stock bolstered the fledgling home market, and as early as 1927 the *New York Times* reported that the Kodak Cinegraph system of reduction prints would allow people to collect movies "much as phonograph owners collect records."[2]

As Haidee Wasson has noted, in the early years of cinema it was not "always clear that celluloid would become predominantly understood as a public entertainment nor was it evident that theaters (large or small) would become film's natural venue. Much speculation existed about the place of film in what we would likely today term 'expanded contexts' of exhibition. Homes, schools, store windows, private clubs, urban amusement sites, and churches seemed equally viable venues for this new visual form."[3] As time went on, the notion that celluloid was indeed primarily a public entertainment would become firmly established. Yet the nontheatrical settings Wasson describes never completely faded from view and have attained a new relevance in recent years as moving image entertainment has migrated to sites outside of the movie theater.[4] In the specific case of experimental cinema, though the mention of "expanded contexts" tends to refer less to the sites Wasson mentions than to the installation-based practices that flourished in the 1960s,

nontheatrical exhibition did exist, albeit in a marginal way. In the same period that saw cinema expand beyond the confines of the single screen to create multiprojection environments, there also existed a very different way in which some American experimental filmmakers were invested in expanding the site of cinema: by offering viewers the opportunity to own avant-garde films and view them privately at home, on 8 mm reduction prints.

Thus far, discussions of 8 mm in experimental film scholarship have tended to focus on the rich body of work produced in the gauge, mentioning its use as a distribution format for films originally produced in larger gauges only in passing, if at all.[5] Examining this marginal and largely failed distribution model reveals a great deal about how figures such as Stan Brakhage, Bruce Conner, and Jonas Mekas conceived of their medium and provides an opportunity to excavate a precursor to various forms of possessable cinema that are increasingly prevalent today. It offers a way of returning to a moment in the past when the precise forms experimental film distribution would take were up for grabs, something that is of special relevance at a time when modes of dissemination are undergoing a massive transformation and becoming increasingly plural.

# Home Invasion

In the summer of 1960 a *Film Quarterly* round table entitled "The Expensive Art: A Discussion of Film Exhibition and Distribution in the U.S." stated in its introductory text that "the problem of the independent or unusual film in America is to an astounding extent a problem of distribution."[6] Costs were high, but publics were small. The question of how experimental films might most effectively reach audiences was both open and pressing. Just as Wasson recalls a time when it was not "evident that theaters (large or small) would become film's natural venue," to return to the early 1960s is to return to an era before it was evident that the cooperative model of distribution would become the dominant method of circulating experimental films in North America. Although the New American Cinema is most often remembered for pioneering a decidedly different kind of filmmaking than had existed before it, we should also keep in mind that this new form of production called for new forms of distribution. In addition to formal experimentation, one finds in this period a desire to create experimental infrastructures and to rethink the possibilities of film distribution beyond its mainstream, industrial iterations.

The early 1960s were marked by a major excitement that 8 mm film would make possible new forms of exhibition and distribution, particularly in educational and domestic contexts. Ernest Callenbach compared the format's ability to transform cinema to the then-recent innovations of widescreen processes and portable cameras; instead of revolutionizing cinematography, as those developments had, it would "make far-reaching changes in other conventions: those governing what kind of experience we take film-viewing to be, and hence what kind of works ought to be made for it."[7] Though 8 mm had come to market in 1932 as a cheaper alternative to 16 mm, it was not until 1960 that it was available in color and with sound. The following year, John Flory, a representative of Eastman Kodak, told the Society for Motion Picture and Television Engineers that the new 8 mm sound film would do what the advent of paperback books had done for the publishing industry: mass dissemination at reduced production costs. He predicted that by

1976, 15.5 million 8 mm silent projectors would be in use around the world.[8]

This growing interest in 8 mm was not lost on experimental filmmakers, most of whom were working in 16 mm. In 1956 Eastman Kodak introduced color internegative film that was specially designed to function as an intermediate printing film for reducing 16 mm to 8 mm, thereby displacing the method of producing reduction prints from color reversal masters and resulting in significantly improved image quality. In 1961, printing on 8 mm was 30 percent cheaper than 16 mm, and shipping costs were 60 percent reduced.[9] In addition to this savings on production and distribution costs, circulating work on 8 mm provided the possibility of reaching larger audiences across disparate geographic locations by catering to home viewers who might be located far outside the major cities and college campuses where the theatrical exhibition of experimental film had a foothold.

In the early days of the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative the idea of selling 8 mm reduction prints was pursued alongside the rental model. In an April 23, 1964, *Village Voice* column Jonas Mekas wrote, "The 16 mm. cinema is moving toward the 8 mm., private home cinema. Underground cinema will soon invade the Beautiful American Home. The Film-Makers' Cooperative, though badly crippled, is working on an ambitious plan to reduce its films to 8 mm. and to place them in bookshops and record shops, side by side with your LPs. Soon you'll be able to buy prints of the films you like for three to five dollars for your own library, like books, like records, like tapes…. Our films will be screened in every home."[10] The goal of introducing 8 mm films into the home had already been publicly announced the year before in the cooperative's second catalogue, which included a note that outlined the plan and mentioned that the home was "the most adequate place" for viewing experimental films.[11] But despite this desire to sell 8 mm reduction prints to home viewers, costs were high and the project was slow to take off. In a May 1966 letter to the members of the cooperative Mekas mentions that they wanted to put the project into practice by Christmas of that year but that money was holding them back.[12] He estimated that $10,000 ($73,396.60 in 2015 dollars) would be necessary to pay for the transfers, printing, and packaging—a sum far beyond the means of the financially precarious organization.[13] His briefing on the topic ended, "We are still working on the idea (& money)."

The following year, a letter to members of the co-op announced that Stan Brakhage had taken over the 8 mm initiative and that all queries regarding it should be directed to him.[14] As is well known, Brakhage had begun working in 8 mm in 1964 after his 16 mm equipment was stolen from his car and he was able to afford only the smaller gauge as a replacement.[15] P. Adams Sitney has noted that beyond the theft and the economic benefits of working in 8 mm, Brakhage's shift also offered a "polemical advantage": "Not only would his example dignify and encourage younger film-makers who could afford to work only in 8mm, but he would be able to realize, on a limited scale, a dream he had had for years of selling copies of his films, rather than just renting them, to people for home viewing."[16] Brakhage began to produce short 8 mm films he called *Songs,* which he sold by mail from his home in Rollinsville, Colorado, for prices of between $15 and $30.[17]

Producing work on 8 mm was only one facet of the co-op's desire for home viewing; the second, and perhaps more important, was to make 16 mm works available on 8 mm reduction prints. This would allow filmmakers all of the benefits of working in 16 mm

(such as better image quality and the ability to undertake more complex printing work), while simultaneously making the films available at a low cost to home collectors.[18] David James has noted that an "ideal of an anti-technological, organically human, domestic cinema, entirely separate from rather than oppositional to Hollywood, circumscribed Brakhage's life and art and the peculiarly integral relation between them."[19] This is manifest in the intimacy of Brakhage's cinema—its subjects and mode of production. But after completion, Brakhage's films would leave this domestic sphere and enter into a distribution system that, although distinct from that of Hollywood, had certain commonalities with it: an exhibitor would book a film from a distributor and exhibit it theatrically for a group of strangers.[20] By turning to the sale of 8 mm prints, Brakhage found a way to bring the distribution and exhibition of his films in line with the values he held dear during their production. This is perhaps what lies behind the cooperative catalogue's designation of the home as the most "adequate" place for viewing experimental films: just as it made sense that the industrial productions of Hollywood would be delivered to mass audiences through an impersonal system of distribution, so, too, was it preferable that an individually produced cinema of intimacy would be selected by a single person for purchase and encountered in a private setting.

## Grove Press and *Lovemaking*

Despite facilitating sales of the *Songs*, Brakhage never became the 8 mm reduction print salesman that Mekas had announced he would be. Rather, he pursued the idea that 8 mm reduction prints could be sold like books and records in another way, one that allowed him to get around the problem of start-up capital that Mekas had identified. In 1967 he entered into a partnership with the Evergreen Book Club, an imprint of Barney Rosset's Grove Press, to offer unsigned and unnumbered prints of *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) and one portion of *Lovemaking* (1968) for sale to club subscribers (figure 2.1). *Lovemaking* was a thirty-six-minute film in four parts: heterosexual sex, copulation between dogs, homosexual sex, and emerging childhood sexuality; the Evergreen release excerpted only the first. In the late 1950s Grove's "Evergreen Originals" series had made contemporary literature newly accessible by issuing quality paperbacks; now Brakhage would do the same for film using the press's infrastructure. In June 1967 he wrote to Grove's film division:

**FIGURE 2.1** Advertisement from *Evergreen Club News* 3, no. 4 (1968). Courtesy of Grove/Atlantic Inc. and Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

> I care more about 8mm than all the other mms put together: I want, have wanted for years, to get works of art in film INTO THE HOME, like LP records, poetry books, etcetera—that is: in the sense of having films available to anyone's sensibility for viewing over and over again—that is: for by-passing the theatrical occasion (and all its limitations of filmmart/filmview) ALTOGETHER. I mean I didn't/don't care about theatrical distribution onedamnbitwhatsoever: BUT the very mention of sale of prints to homes in 8mm, etc., DOES make my heart go pittypat, my eyes to sparkle red and green and blue ball and falling-water/shooting-stars.[21]

Above all, the promise of 8 mm distribution was the promise of greater access and enduring engagement. Brakhage's desire in the mid-1960s to overcome the one-time-only limitations of theatrical exhibition chimes with that of Bruce Conner, who wrote on his 1963 Ford Foundation application that he "consider[s] film distribution, as it is now, to be antagonistic to artistic process."[22] Conner believed that his films were best suited to repeat viewings in a domestic setting, so that the viewer might discover something new each time. But whereas Conner compared the collection of films to that of prints and paintings, Brakhage chose to pursue the mass distribution model of publishing. He hoped that Grove, which had become involved in the film business after purchasing the holdings of Cinema 16 in 1967, would create a market for 8 mm sales that would become "the BIGGEST thing in art mark since LPs."[23]

The sale of reduction prints thus shared the mandate of democratization and access that was key to the cooperative model, but it departed from that model in its move to conceive of the moving image as something that could be owned. In this sense its conception of the medium was similar to that of the Fluxus artists, who included film loops in their Fluxboxes and sold them separately for fairly low prices. But in addition to providing filmmakers with a way of pursuing an alternate path to mass access, the sale of 8 mm reduction prints also offered a financial opportunity. One suspects this was what stood

behind Andy Warhol's plan to sell 8 mm loops of selected screen tests as "living portrait boxes" for $1,000 to $1,500 each, though the plan never materialized.[24] As soon as Gregory Markopoulos heard of Brakhage's partnership with Grove, he wrote to the publishing house to say that he thought the initiative "splendid" and "inevitable" and asked if they might be interested in distributing *Ming Green* (1966), *Through a Lens Brightly: Mark Turbyfill* (1967), and *Galaxie* (1966).[25] Grove never pursued the partnership. The Evergreen Book Club edition of *Window Water Baby Moving* sold 540 copies priced at $20 each between July 1, 1968, and June 30, 1970, netting Brakhage $583.50 in royalties.[26] Distribution of the 8 mm version was discontinued by November of that year. Sales of *Lovemaking*, meanwhile, fared significantly better. In the same period Grove sold 6,669 copies of *Lovemaking* at the members' price of $20, providing Brakhage with a profit of $7,516—a buying power of $46,065.53 in 2015 dollars.[27]

Alexandre Astruc's notion of the *caméra-stylo* is most often recalled as a precursor to auteur theory, but in fact part of this concept as elaborated in Astruc's 1948 article involved the idea that moving outside of theatrical presentation would allow a plurality of domestic cinemas to emerge in the place of a single dominant cinema. Astruc imagined a viewer who would own a home projector and who would "go to the local bookstore and hire films written on any subject, of any form, from literary criticism and novels to mathematics, history, and general science."[28] Home viewing would allow for the development of niche markets that lay outside the mainstream. Here one encounters a different motivation for small-gauge home sales: instead of any notion of finding a distribution format that would mirror the mode of production, Astruc rather presciently describes a situation akin to that found in today's digital marketplace, the notion of the long tail. In a 2006 *Wired* magazine article Chris Anderson noted the traditional correlation that obtains between popularity and availability: "For too long we've been suffering the tyranny of lowest-common-denominator fare, subjected to brain-dead summer blockbusters and manufactured pop. Why? Economics. Many of our assumptions about popular taste are actually artifacts of poor supply-and-demand matching—a market response to inefficient distribution."[29] Anderson holds up traditional theatrical distribution as a recurring example of how distribution hurdles—like finding local audiences and having a finite number of seats in theaters—result in businesses being less willing to take chances on fare that may not possess a broad appeal.

The development of digital forms of dissemination, Anderson argues, results in the creation of millions of micromarkets that would have previously been unprofitable to pursue but now have the potential to become major sites of revenue generation. In this environment of abundance the long tail will flourish, as it will become economically viable to offer a greater selection of products while selling fewer of each one. Anderson's argument that the long tail will be the *most* profitable sector of the digital marketplace may not hold,[30] but his milder claim that the long tail might cease to be *un*profitable does. Though this will not necessarily result in the decline of the dominance of the "lowest-common-denominator fare" as Anderson predicts, it can lead to a more diversified marketplace and a greater ease of access to once-obscure products.

Writing that "it must be understood that up to now the cinema has been nothing more than a show," Astruc predicted home viewership would spur significant change and create an essayistic cinema of thought.[31] Although 8 mm reduction prints of essay films would

never destabilize the blockbuster, the format does heighten the viability of disseminating such material to a wider audience. This essayistic cinema probably wouldn't be able to fill theaters outside of a handful of specialized contexts, but if these films were to be made available in bookshops, it might be viable. While the opportunity costs of selling 8 mm reduction prints remained significantly higher than those of today's digital distribution initiatives, they were dramatically smaller than those associated with theatrical exhibition. Home viewing might allow a space for the "long tail" of cinematic production to reach an audience. There are some examples of this idea being put into practice: between 1947 and 1950 the Italian filmmaker Luciano Emmer and publisher Alberto Skira released a series of luxury art books in a square format evoking a 16 mm film can with accompanying documentaries. In *Aspen* magazine numbers 5 and 6—a 1967 double issue—a reel of Super 8 was included that offered films by Hans Richter, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Robert Morris/Stan VanDerBeek, and Robert Rauschenberg.

But as it turned out, the films most coveted for private spectatorship didn't have much to do with the edifying subjects Astruc mentions. Instead, the films that were most popular for the home market were rather the opposite: they were pornographic. This feature accounts for the popularity of the first section of *Lovemaking* when compared with *Window Water Baby Moving*, undoubtedly a more accomplished film. It also might explain Grove's lack of interest in pursuing a greater number of 8 mm collaborations with willing filmmakers like Markopoulos. The arrival of television put a severe dent in the home market for most movies, but pornography certainly wasn't going to appear on television or in most local theaters. Eric Schaefer notes in his article "Plain Brown Wrapper: Adult Films for the Home Market, 1930–1969" that even though it was still possible to face federal criminal charges under the Comstock Act for using the mail to carry obscene materials, in 1959 postmaster general Arthur E. Summerfield announced that mail-order pornography generated $500 million a year in revenue.[32] Owing to the low cost and ease of 8 mm projection, the smaller gauge was ideally suited for the distribution of pornography, which would be viewed in an intimate setting that did not demand the scale of 16 mm. When purchasing films from Grove's "Classics of the Blue Movie" selections, for example, an 8 mm print would cost only $25, whereas the same film in 16 mm would cost $250.[33]

The relative financial success of *Lovemaking* is closely tied to the film's explicit sexual content (figure 2.2). The seven-minute sequence featured in the Grove release depicts a couple—Paul and Frances Sharits—having sex on a bed, sunlight coming in through the window. Beginning with a shot of Sharits's erect penis in close-up, the film consists primarily of fragmented body parts filling the frame, with an occasional cut to show the entirety of the lovers' bodies intertwined on the bed. Through rapid cutting and proximate shot scales, *Lovemaking*'s first section creates a lyrical and impressionistic account of the sex act, one in which pornography's "frenzy of the visible" is supplanted by an attention to the tactile fabric of experience.[34] The figures show no awareness of the camera, appearing completely absorbed in one another. The act of identifying and attributing body parts becomes frustrated, as shifting, fleshy surfaces fill the screen; as Ara Osterweil has noted, "Brakhage's studies of the human body pivot on the intentional defamiliarization of the flesh."[35] The sequence ends not with any visible evidence of climax but with the two figures kissing on the mouth. In this sense the film's bold opening shot is something of a

red herring, invoking a form of exhibitionist display that the rest will disavow. But despite the film's divergences from the representational systems of both the stag film and hard-core pornography as it would later develop, there is a sense that this abridged version of *Lovemaking* offered a kind of use value to home viewers that a film like *Window Water Baby Moving* did not.



**FIGURE 2.2**    Advertisement from undated and unnumbered issue of *Evergreen Club News* (c. 1968). Courtesy of Grove/Atlantic Inc. and Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

The *Evergreen Club News* marketed *Lovemaking* as experimental pornography, ideal for the kind of private home viewing that 8 mm could afford. The film was advertised with nude photos and was often placed next to a film called *Psychomontage* (1962), by the doctors Eberhard and Phyllis Kronhausen. The ad for *Psychomontage* promoted the film by noting that the Kronhausens were best known for their books *Pornography and the Law* and *The Sexually Responsive Woman*, but it left out all mention of the fact that the film is by no means sexually explicit, at least in the conventional understanding of that term.[36] *Lovemaking*'s price of $20 ($30 for nonmembers) was extremely expensive compared to other erotic films available via mail order in this period. To give some sense

of comparison, a December 1960 issue of *Chicks and Chuckles* advertised 8 mm films priced from $0.80 (when purchased in bulk) to $3.[37] The *Evergreen Club News*, however, was catering to a specialized audience. When Rosset launched the club, he ran a series of advertisements in papers like the *Village Voice* that foregrounded attachments at once erotic and countercultural, with headlines like "Dear Sir: I Swear I'm over 21," "For Adults Only," and "Join the Underground!" ([figure 2.3](#)). The Evergreen Book Club thus constituted the highbrow niche of a lucrative industry, offering smut and culture at once: Pauline Réage's *Story of O* alongside Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and a triple LP version of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine* alongside pulp paperbacks with titles like *Young Girls and Their Older Teachers* and *First-Time Swappers*.



**FIGURE 2.3** Advertisement for Evergreen Book Club from February 3, 1966, issue of *New York Review*. Courtesy of Grove/Atlantic Inc. and Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

According to Loren Glass, this period is marked by a shift in Grove's activities from the promotion of vanguard modernist literature to a more overt interest in pornography: by the late 1960s, he writes, the *Evergreen Review* "had gained a reputation as being the *Playboy* of the counterculture," while "the Evergreen Club had abandoned any pretention to literary value and became a source for anything sexually explicit that Rosset could acquire, including sex manuals, gay porn, stag films, and erotic art catalogs."[38] Despite this turn, however, the cultural capital Grove had accumulated earlier in the decade had not fully dissipated. In this context *Lovemaking* was marketed not by touting Brakhage's celebrity within avant-garde cinema circles but by its tasteful yet explicit nature ([figure 2.4](#)). The catalogue description read, "Daring and honest in its approach, the film makes art of a realm once reserved for forbidden films."[39] In addition to being sold as a stand-alone film, the Evergreen version of *Lovemaking* was a part of the compilation *Erotic*

*Celebration 1,* which included titles such as *Naughty Nurse* and *Everready*—films that made no claims to the artistic status that Brakhage's film did.[40] Glass has rightly suggested that "Grove's film division anticipated both the stabilization of the 'adult' film market and the capitalization of home movie viewing before the distribution networks and technologies were fully in place for exploitation of either."[41] But as much as Grove may be seen to have laid the foundations for the era of home-video pornography that would follow, to see it only as such is to deny its almost utopian wager that art and erotica might find common ground. The case of *Lovemaking* at Grove offers evidence of an inchoate moment before the consolidation of the adult film industry when it remained possible to straddle categories that have since ossified in such a manner as to often render them mutually exclusive. In this sense Grove's release of *Lovemaking* is like the history of 8 mm reduction prints more broadly—it offers a glimpse of an untaken path of film history.



**FIGURE 2.4**    Packaging for Grove Press 8 mm print of Stan Brakhage's *Lovemaking* (1967). Courtesy of Grove/Atlantic Inc. Photo by Royal Books.

   The idea of collectible experimental film arose once more at the Film-Makers' Cooperative in 1970, when the board of directors discussed a proposal from Bernard Stollman to sell videocassettes of film transfers through record shops.[42] Stollman was the head of ESP-Disk, a New York–based independent record label originally founded to release Esperanto music but later specializing in free jazz. In response to this proposal Mekas mailed the board members an article from the *Saturday Review* entitled "Video Tape: This Year Won't Quite Be 'Next Year,'" which outlined the technological and economic developments that were poised to ensure that 1971 would be the year that videotape finally entered the home in a widespread manner.[43] Mekas's inclusion of the article suggests enthusiasm about the possibility of distributing films in this format, but the minutes of the March 1970 directors' meeting expressed doubt about the venture

owing to Stollman's "reputation of talk-but-no-action."[44] In April the minutes report that "some present expressed doubts (fear) (scepticism) as to how many of the cassettes would be sold."[45] It appears that the discussion was dropped and that the initiative never advanced further, but it is notable that objections to the initiative were never articulated as defenses of medium specificity. The concern was not with any betrayal of film that might happen by transferring works to video but rather with Stollman's reliability and the likelihood of a return on investment.

While the Film-Makers' Cooperative failed to initiate sales of films on 8 mm film or on videotape, Conner did attempt the former but had a very different experience of doing so than had Brakhage. In early 1968 he wrote in the *Canyon Cinemanews* that he had been trying to sell 8 mm films for the previous three years but that, despite distributing them to multiple locations, "there [were] very few respondents to the bait."[46] Nonetheless, he published a list of thirteen customers and their addresses so that other filmmakers might contact them, adding—in what might be a dig at Brakhage's success but in any case points to the close ties between 8 mm home sales and pornography—that the list was provided "assuming that these people do not just want to see dirty movies."[47] He also details the costs of making reduction prints and buying reels and boxes for them; the note reads as something of a how-to guide. Indeed, a few months later the *Cinemanews* included a call for makers and collectors of "HOME LIBRARY PRINTS in 8mm."[48] The initiative met with little success. In 1972 Conner wrote to Brakhage to say that he was ceasing production of his 8 mm reduction prints; in 1978 he wrote again: "All my 8mm movie[s] are gone away. Can't sell any more to anyone."[49] By 1981 *Cinemanews*' special issue on Super 8 mm would feature no references to the idea that the medium might make film collectible like books or records, save for a short, melancholic letter from Conner: "For some time I offered prints of these movies for sale through Canyon Coop. It finally became clear that there wasn't much market for the films and I couldn't invent it all by myself…. I seldom look at 8mm films now…. The attitudes towards 8mm film and the intimate space of this image that I have discussed in this letter are past reminiscences and are becoming darker. I haven't made any 8mm films since 1968."[50]

Conner's experience is much more representative of the viability of 8 mm home sales than Brakhage's. Despite Astruc's dream of a domestic cinema, small-gauge home sales remained subject to what Anderson calls "the blanding effects of a century of distribution scarcity"; in other words, costs remained too high in relation to the number of interested buyers.[51] Regardless of the failure of this distribution model to achieve widespread market viability, in the mid-1960s it clearly represented a hopeful avenue for the dissemination of films in the fledgling American experimental cinema. What precisely about this distribution model was so attractive to individuals such as Brakhage, Conner, and Mekas? As noted above, it was a form of film distribution and exhibition that reproduced the values of intimacy and individual experience central to the mode of production. But in addition to this desire, there are two more possible answers to this question. Small-gauge reduction prints offered a solution to two problems, both of which are a matter of access: censorship and the ephemerality of theatrical presentation.

# Where the Censor Can't Go

When Mekas proposed the "private home cinema" of 8 mm reduction prints in the *Village Voice* in 1964, he did so within the context of an article entitled "On Law, Morality, and Censorship." The column was written in reaction to the March 4, 1964, seizure of Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963) from the New Bowery Theater on St. Mark's Place on the grounds that it was obscene, an event that resulted in a six-month suspended jail sentence for Mekas. Two weeks later, Mekas's screening of Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* (1950) met a similar fate, prompting *Variety* to run the headline "Cops Raid Homo Films Again."[52] Perhaps unsurprisingly given these events, the issue of censorship is exceedingly common in Mekas's columns of 1963 and 1964. During this period experimental film exhibition in New York City encountered repeated accusations of trafficking in obscene materials and was subject to frequent police intervention, which some saw as a consequence of an effort to clean up the city in preparation for the 1964 World's Fair.[53]

As is well known, many experimental filmmakers of the period were producing works that would in all likelihood not meet the censors' approval owing to their frank and unconventional depictions of sexuality. Janet Staiger has emphasized the extent to which "at least New York intellectuals associated this cinema with the emergence of tacit, if not aggressive, gay sexual liberation activities and with a critique of traditional gendered, heterosexual, same-race/ethnicity sexual norms."[54] In the popular imaginary this manifested as a close association with pornography. For instance, in an October 1970 letter to William F. Buckley concerning the possibility that he might appear on the television series *Firing Line,* Brakhage wrote that "the very term 'Art Film' popularly means 'dirty movie'…a sad result of sexploitation"; meanwhile, in a 1973 *New Yorker* profile of Mekas, Calvin Tomkins wrote of "the widespread tendency to view [underground cinema] as virtually synonymous with pornography" but deemed this perception "far from accurate."[55] But it was not just this association and outdated obscenity laws that posed a problem for experimental filmmakers; it was also the related licensing laws. Even those films that contained no controversial materials were on uncertain legal ground if shown in New York City without obtaining a license—something that was required for all public motion picture exhibition in the state. In a March 12, 1964, column entitled "On Obscenity," Mekas acknowledged that many of the cooperative's films could pass the process if submitted, but he stated his opposition to it on principle: "There may be a need for licensing guns and dogs, but not works of art."[56] The decision to refrain from licensing became, then, a way of claiming for experimental film the status of art and further marking out its distinction from the commercial cinema. In its 1921 charter the Motion Picture Division of the New York State Education Department commanded that outside of newsreels and scientific or educational films, "All other motion pictures must be submitted for examination with a required application for a license and fees."[57] These fees were based on film length, with each one thousand feet of footage (roughly eleven minutes) costing $3.50 plus the additional charge of shipping the film to the review board.[58] According to Richard S. Randall, the New York Motion Picture division boasted annual receipts totaling approximately $260,000 ($1,994,493.55 in 2015 dollars) in the 1963–64 period, far outpacing their $150,000 of expenses.[59] The motivation to bypass the licensing process was thus not only ideological but also financial.

The need to secure a license for the public exhibition of film in New York State would

remain in force until the 1965 United States Supreme Court Decision *Translux Distributing Corp. v. Board of Regents*, which ruled the practice unconstitutional and resulted in the dissolution of the Motion Picture Division in September of that year. But in the intervening period Mekas continued to look for solutions to the difficulties he and other filmmakers were experiencing. On April 23, 1964, he wrote that one of the results of the various dealings with censorship was that "the independent film-makers are getting some clarity about their work, their audiences, their true friends, their true directions. The most important of all these clarities is that the 16 mm. cinema is moving toward the 8 mm., private home cinema."[60] Eight-millimeter prints would, then, provide experimental filmmakers a way of evading both the cost and implications of the licensing process, as well as the possibility of censorship, by taking exhibition into the private, less-regulated space of the home. In this regard the initiative has something in common with the private forms of publication that had long been embraced in erotic literature. By forging new distribution circuits, the authors of books such as *My Secret Life* (1888)—many of which were publically circulated for the first time by Grove in the 1960s—could reach a specialized audience while avoiding harsh legal punishment. This was clearly the model for a cinematic precedent that would have been well known to Mekas, Genet's *Un chant d'amour*, which was not submitted for the certificate and rating needed for release in France but was instead sold to interested collectors and shown privately.[61]

There is, then, a close link between the distribution of cultural products for private home consumption and the desire to circumvent controls over the circulation of sexually explicit materials, one that preexists the initiative to sell 8 mm reduction prints and continues long after it. A 1969 *Life* magazine profile of Barney Rosset entitled "The Old Smut Peddler" is rather dismissive of the censorship battles Mekas and other filmmakers fought in the early 1960s: "The messiahs of 'underground movies' tried to fight the censorship battle before Rosset came along, but they proved to be a clique of solipsistic, self-defeating amateurs."[62] Yet the journalist seems to be rather enthusiastic regarding a "theory" of Rosset's that is remarkably like the one proposed earlier by Mekas, albeit in a different medium: "It's possible to take [a] movie and squeeze it into a cassette videotape the size of a book. And then one evening, when the kids are in bed, you can slip that cassette into your TV set and, without getting dressed or driving the car, you can watch *Tropic of Cancer* or *Story of O* right there in your own living room—where the censor can't go."[63]

Rosset's *Life* profile appeared only shortly after the Supreme Court's April 7, 1969, unanimous decision in *Stanley v. Georgia*, which made it legal to consume obscene materials in one's own home, thus opening the door to the consolidation of an adult film industry for which the domestic context is primary. Meanwhile, public screenings of avant-garde films possessing sexual themes continued to elicit difficulties. The Gallery of Modern Art in New York City canceled a screening of the full-length version of *Lovemaking* in May 1969 because of concerns about the sequence involving children.[64] Despite the fact that films could no longer be seized in New York City after 1966, in other parts of the United States laws varied. Police in Berkeley, California, confiscated the full version of *Lovemaking* during a November 1972 screening, holding the print for eight months before releasing it without pursuing further legal action. Brakhage's dream of a home cinema would have rendered his films relatively free from any such interference

prior to *Stanley v. Georgia* and assuredly free from it afterward. But in addition to this, the 8 mm reduction print also offered another, very different, advantage over theatrical presentation: the ability to watch the same film repeatedly.

# And Again

Scholarly discourses on home spectatorship often conceive of the activity as a degraded, secondary context for the reception of moving images. The home viewer is a multitasker, always dividing his or her attention between the small illuminated rectangle of the screen and any number of other activities that may be happening simultaneously. The image is shrunken, not on photochemical film, and encountered on a screen that emanates light rather than one that acts as a receptive surface for projection. By contrast, the theatrical setting is considered to be the exhibition situation in which the art of film can be appreciated in the fullest manner possible. Dudley Andrew, for instance, opposes the distracted regime of television viewing to the "absolute concentration" elicited by the movie theater.[65] A second denigration of home spectatorship is found in the claim that the museum and gallery, with their high culture bona fides, will save cinema from the supposed impoverishment that results from its migration to spaces outside the movie theater—the home foremost among them—and endow film and video with the artistic status that has eluded them for so long. And yet one of the key obstacles confronting the display of moving images in the gallery and museum is the problem of distracted spectatorship: the ambulatory spectator can wander through the exhibition halls, desultorily taking in many images but concentrating on few.

Contrary to these lines of thought, in the mid-1960s Brakhage and Conner found the domestic setting to offer a superior viewing situation to the theatrical context and, one might extrapolate, the gallery as well. Crucially, since the home exhibition of 8 mm prints retains photochemical film and projection, it is less subject to the losses typical of domestic viewing today. Though there is some compromise in scale, this occurs in a far less drastic manner than when the gigantic cinema screen is left behind for the television or laptop (or, worse still, a mobile phone). The projector requires darkness, thus shutting out external stimuli and thereby surpassing the gallery by retaining something of the concentration of the movie theater. But most of all, home viewing triumphs over both cinema and gallery by affording the possibility of viewing films more than once and subjecting them to close scrutiny. Despite the superiority of the movie theater's perceptual conditions, its distinct disadvantage is found in its imbrication in an infrastructure that is predicated on seeing a film only once. Brakhage wrote to Luis Buñuel, "I have the policy that I don't ordinarily speak at length about a film I've seen less than 25 times."[66] In the era before home video such repeat viewing would be difficult, indeed, because the distribution and exhibition models of industrial cinema assumed single viewing as the norm. Of course, one could always buy a second ticket for a forthcoming screening, or a third, or fourth, but the system is not designed for such behavior.[67] Even if one did attend a film multiple times during its run, afterward one would have to wait for the film's next booking, which might be years away.[68] In the case of avant-garde cinema, screenings were erratic, making it potentially even more difficult to engage in repeat viewings than with a commercial release. During the projection the film was unstoppable and then gone,

consigned forever to be, in the words of Raymond Bellour, "the unattainable text."[69]

As Vinzenz Hediger has observed, "Repeat viewing was…a practice not favored by a distribution system almost fully geared to novelty."[70] Yet it was a practice necessary for the serious study of film. The use of flatbeds provided one solution—indeed, they were an enabling precondition for the microanalyses of Hawks and Hitchcock that Bellour completed during the 1970s—but were costly. Peter Kubelka offered another, making films such as *Adebar* (1957) and *Schwechater* (1958) available in reels that contained the films twice or five times in a row. He requested that these films, as well as *Unsere Afrikareise* (1966), be projected multiple times in succession because, he wrote, they "give the greatest pleasure to those who know them by heart."[71] Brakhage himself engaged in something similar in his *Eye Myth Educational* (1972), a film based on the eight-second, hand-painted *Eye Myth* (1967), made five years earlier: exceeding two-and-a-half minutes, the original film is looped five times at varying speeds to offer the viewer an opportunity to gain an enhanced understanding of its construction.

Even better poised to respond to the need for repeat viewings were the institutional and discursive frameworks of the 8 mm community. There were more than five million 8 mm projectors in the United States in 1965, and around these projectors coalesced distribution infrastructures that offered a relationship to moving images very different from that available through frequenting movie theaters.[72] While they could not still the image so as to offer the pensiveness Barthes attributed to the photograph and Bellour later elaborated in relation to the freeze-frame of home video, they could make possible affordable, sustained engagement—even more so than their 16 mm counterparts, which were costlier.[73] The 8 mm apparatus possessed the ability to redirect the domestic reception of moving images away from television—the bad seriality of consumer culture—and toward a very different, more positive seriality of sustained engagement through repeat viewing. It might also offer institutions a cost-effective way of creating on-site, on-demand viewing rooms: taking as his model an initiative at the Cinémathèque Québécoise, Brakhage suggested that the Museum of Modern Art create such a space, estimating that the equipment and film library needed could be acquired for under $1,000.[74]

Despite regular travel, in the mid-1960s Brakhage was based in the Colorado mountains, far from a cinema. Even so, through his participation in the 8 mm community, he was able to have prolonged access to many important works of film history. He was a subscriber to *Classic Film Collector*, a magazine based in Indiana, Pennsylvania, that had formerly been named *8mm Collector*. The publication featured articles on film history, letters from readers, film-related classifieds, and, most important, advertisements for print sales. In the mid-1960s, contemporaneous with discussions concerning the release of 16 mm experimental films on 8 mm, Brakhage was an avid customer of businesses such as Cine Service Vintage Films and Film Classic Exchange, which offered 8 mm reduction prints of many important works of film history for sale. He ordered silent slapstick comedies, compilations of Edison and Porter, and films by Keaton, Chaplin, Eisenstein, Dreyer, Pudovkin, Dalí/Buñuel, Murnau, Lang, Cocteau, and others.[75] Brakhage showed these prints in the classes he was teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago at the time and also viewed them at home with his family. The community of 8 mm print collectors thus provided a model that experimental filmmakers might follow.

The two groups of spectators most often associated with repeated viewing are children and cult film obsessives, both of which are aligned predominantly with low culture and uncritical viewing habits. But to assign repeat viewing an inherently regressive character is to overlook its relationship to a third group: scholars and cinephiles. Repeat viewing can absolutely transform one's apprehension of a text.[76] Moreover, to assume that one can glean all that is possible in the duration of a single screening is to conceive of film as a rapidly exhausted, disposable product—precisely the opposite of the artistic status experimental filmmakers were claiming for the medium at this time. When Conner writes that "film distribution, as it is now, [is] antagonistic to [the] artistic process," he might have also added that it was antagonistic to artistic reception. Advocating for experimental film to be owned and seen repeatedly was a way of arguing for its complexity, its difficulty, and its ability to sustain the viewer's engagement again and again. As John Mullarkey has put it, "the apparent greatness and autonomy of the artwork is not only what stands the 'test of time' but what also *emerges with* the test, or experience, of time by being presented and re-presented over and over again to a certain point of view."[77] Repeat viewing allows for a deepened apprehension of the work, one that departs strikingly from industrial cinema's understanding of film as an easily consumed commodity.

The advent of home video—with all its possibilities of monetization—would, of course, transform the film industry into an entity with a significant investment in repeat viewership. But long before that, avant-garde cinema, at least in New York City, found another way to make films available for the sustained attention they merited: the formation of Anthology Film Archives. When Brakhage wrote to Mekas in December 1967 with a list of his suggested titles for what would become Anthology's Essential Cinema collection, he framed his selections as being the films he would most like to own in 8 mm reduction prints: "It has been a (admittedly nervous) pleasure to me to pretend I might actually be ordering these films for my home-movie library: I've done it the same as I would if ordering LP records or books…. What this letter (I now see) is really about, Jonas, is the need for the above-mentioned blessings of books and records"—namely, constant availability through ownership—"extended to film."[78] Though Brakhage's fantasy of owning all the films he named would remain as such, a key element in the conceptualization of Anthology's programming activities would respond to the imperative to extend the "blessings of books and records" to film. The Essential Cinema collection—a canon of film art—would play on a repeated basis, allowing regular visitors to see key works again and again, constituting a central part of the institution's function as what Kristen Alfaro has called "a pedagogical community center for experimental film."[79]

P. Adams Sitney, a member of the selection committee, affirmed this need in his correspondence with Lenny Lipton leading up to the formation of Anthology. He insisted, "What is needed, most urgently, is a *form* by which a number of essential films can come together, and be constantly available for viewing; a true museum holding the history and standards before the eye continually."[80] Sitney envisioned that of the ninety programs to be exhibited every month, sixty to seventy of them would be drawn from the Essential Cinema collection, thus allowing for the frequent repetition of works in the collection.[81] As he wrote, "By repeating that perpetually, we render those films permanently available."[82] As such, Anthology Film Archives' programming rearticulated by other means the same desires that had been at work in the earlier initiative to produce 8 mm

reduction prints and achieved this long-standing goal of prolonged access—at least within the New York City area and with a particular selection of films.

## After Access

The initiative to sell 8 mm experimental films to home viewers never took hold in any widespread way. After the mass dissemination of home video technology, imprints such as the Paris-based Re:Voir appeared, offering VHS tapes of experimental films to home audiences, but the selection remained limited. In 1986 the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* reported that Bill Viola was the first visual artist to distribute video to a home market with the release of *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like* (1986) on VHS, Beta, and videodisc by Voyager Press and the Contemporary Art Television Fund.[83] Many rental-based distributors of video offered tapes for sale but usually according to an institutional purchase model developed for universities, colleges, and other cultural institutions, according to which copies are sold with public performance rights for nonpaying audiences only, often for prices ranging between US$200 and $300, and sometimes more, making them prohibitively expensive for home viewers.[84]

Though recent years have seen an increase in the availability of experimental work on DVD, often released by boutique labels, the problem of access has remained substantial. Even the mass availability of *Lovemaking* was short-lived: the Grove prints have long been out of circulation, though occasionally one turns up on eBay or at specialized bookstores. Brakhage pulled the full-length version of the film from distribution in 1982 following the United States Supreme Court decision in *New York v. Ferber*, which ruled that child pornography was not protected under the First Amendment right to free speech. In a letter to Grove Press's film division, which distributed the work for rent, Brakhage emphasized that he did not regard it in any sense as pornographic but was worried that the film might tempt pedophiles to use the "old ploy" of defending exploitative material as art. Brakhage wrote that the film would "be preserved for a time of greater clarity, a time when love is distinguished from currencies, enslavement and horror."[85] It has yet to reenter official circulation in any format.

It is, however, possible to obtain a copy of *Lovemaking* if one has a membership to Karagarga, a private BitTorrent community devoted to "creating a comprehensive library of Arthouse, Cult, Classic, Experimental and rare movies from all over the world."[86] At the time of this writing, 272 of Karagarga's 21,399 users have downloaded one of the two available versions of the film, which appear to have been dubbed from a VHS copy.[87] In the comments section one user named diallelus thanked the original uploader, markpxxxxx, writing, "you are amazing, markpxxxxx! i'm writing about brakhage and frampton for one of my classes and this is invaluable."[88] Such unofficial forms of distribution are a central means by which experimental film and video circulate today. In providing a possessable, accessible copy for prolonged home study, downloadable files and commercial DVDs may be understood as digital rearticulations of the 8 mm print. So, too, could Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda's project *E-Flux Video Rental* (2004–), for which the artists invited curators to select single-channel works of video art that would be made available as free VHS rentals at a roving pop-up video store. Beginning at the storefront at 53 Ludlow Street in Manhattan, the project later traveled to locations

including Berlin, Seoul, Lisbon, Miami, and the Canary Islands before finding a permanent home at the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2011. By making use of a format already obsolete by the time the project began, *E-Flux Video Rental* was clearly marked as something, in Aranda's words, "more akin to a library of photocopies than a library of cloth-bound books and leather-bound editions."[89] The low quality of the image became a way of making a strong distinction between primary and secondary viewing contexts. Aranda writes, "For us, the assumption that free accessibility somehow undermines the value of an artwork—that there is no distinction between artwork and commodity—is precisely the equation we want to destabilize."[90] Though not articulated as such, the same might be said of the sale of 8 mm reduction prints: the plan involved proving the status of film as art not by recourse to high prices—as the limited edition would—but instead by insisting on the cleavage between market value and cultural value.

Certainly, there are significant differences between these more recent home viewing initiatives and the dream to sell 8 mm prints: the former often involve a shift of medium and in some cases are distributed without the permission of the filmmaker. Despite its thorough imbrication in the official art world, for example, *E-Flux Video Rental* did not obtain permission from the artists involved and did not remunerate them for the distribution of their work. This unauthorized dimension is precisely what is at stake in the Brazilian collective Filé de Peixe's ongoing project, *Piratão* (2006–), for which the group produces pirated versions of historical works of video art—complete with Xeroxed packaging—and sells them cheaply on the street.[91] The online initiative UbuWeb, a website housing hundreds of low-quality files of experimental film and video, has provoked tremendous controversy within the experimental filmmaking community. Authorized forms of distribution geared to the home and classroom contexts—such as the publishing of VHS tapes and DVDs by small labels—are more direct and obvious inheritors of the reduction print initiative. But whether sanctioned by the artist or not, it is worth remembering not only the differences between these more recent proposals and the 8 mm prints but their similarities as well. As debates rage over the ethics of copying and format shifting, it is useful to recall the extent to which the principle of access was central in the founding years of the New American Cinema, as demonstrated by the strong interest in forgoing the perceptually superior experience of theatrical presentation in favor of a format, 8 mm, that might reach more people more easily.

In experimental film scholarship there has been little to no discussion of the sale of 8 mm reduction prints. But there have been frequent references to Kubelka's Invisible Cinema project (1970–74) at the Lafayette Street location of Anthology Film Archives, for which Kubelka erected a barrier between each spectator's seat so as to block peripheral vision and "make the screen [the viewer's] whole world, by eliminating all aural and visual impressions extraneous to film."[92] Why? To be sure, Kubelka's intervention into the space of the theater is fascinating. But there is also a sense that the memory of the Invisible Cinema buttresses a view of experimental film culture that prizes the purity of the theatrical experience. It is a view that continues to exert a strong appeal in our era of shuttered cinemas, discontinued film stocks, and insulting forms of presentation. It is, in short, a narrative in which quality trumps access, which may be recalled today in order to frame such a position as central to the history of experimental film. In contrast with the Invisible Cinema the dream of distributing 8 mm reduction prints forces a reconsideration

of one of the popularly circulating clichés about experimental film—namely, that it is an insular domain of cultural production fixated above all on the pristine presentation of the image. Against such a notion, 8 mm reduction prints sacrifice quality to increase accessibility. In this sense they are a part of a much longer tradition of the reproduction of works of art, one that extends back to engraved copies of paintings, through plaster casts and photographic reproductions, and continues into the compressed JPEGs of the present. In short, the inverse ratio of access to quality has by no means always tended to come down in favor of the latter. Rather, visual culture has long been marked by the consumption of images inferior in quality but less costly and more transportable.

The contemporary proliferation of low-definition digital images is simply the latest development in this longer trajectory. Hito Steyerl sees the analog preciousness of experimental film as an example of the "rich image" to be pitted against the "poor images" of digital forms of circulation, even offering frame enlargements of Brakhage's *Existence Is Song* (1987) as evidence of the former.[93] The rich image is obsessed with quality, whereas the poor image is a degraded image that sacrifices pictorial integrity for access. As discussed in the previous chapter, Steyerl makes use of an organizing opposition between the cinema, taken as a "flagship store" of quality, and digital forms of circulation. Indeed, there is an obsession with image quality that reigns in certain sectors of artists' cinema and Hollywood alike. There is ample evidence of artists and filmmakers who demonstrate deep investments in restricting the circulation of their work out of a determination to guard against the possibility of an image encountered in less than ideal circumstances. But it is worth remembering the historical variability of the poor image and the many, sometimes marginal, parts of film history that form an important part of it. Narrating a procession of quality masterpieces is only one way of writing the history of cinema. The 8 mm reduction print is a key episode in another history of the moving image —a history founded not in unique masterworks but in an embrace of the possibilities of circulation—and one that is all the more important for its position within a sector of filmmaking with an attachment to the purity of the theatrical experience greater than most others. Though it never fully came to fruition, this story of predigital compression offers a way of leapfrogging back over concerns with modernist purity to recover a time when experimental cinema was still figuring out how and where it could be seen—questions newly relevant in our own era as access and quality square off for yet another battle.

# 3

# Bootlegging Experimental Film

If it doesn't exist on the Internet, it doesn't exist. I used to say this hyperbolically but as time has gone on, it's proved to be a truism, perhaps the paradigmatic truism of our times.

—Kenneth Goldsmith

Digital bootlegs are particularly vexing for experimental film. On the one hand, they offer unprecedented possibilities of access, something that has long been a key consideration for experimental film culture. But on the other hand, this sphere of artistic production has historically been adamant about the moral rights of the author and the specific qualities of the filmic medium, both of which tend to be compromised when films are copied and circulated online without permission. Digitization, after all, does not just increase possibilities of access; it also raises the specter of unauthorized distribution and unsanctioned manipulation. Reproduction pries the image away from the control of its author and inducts it into trajectories of circulation that may be marked by transformative reuse.

Though certainly not its only exhibition site, the movie theater has long been deemed to be the primary context for experimental film. This primary status was so in both quantity and quality: it was where viewers most often encountered experimental films but also where these works were presented in the best possible manner. In recent years this unity of quantity and quality has fractured: increasingly the history of avant-garde cinema is encountered outside of the movie theater, reaching viewers through unofficial circuits of distribution that do not necessarily offer top image quality. The relative lack of official DVD releases means that unauthorized copies arguably constitute a more vital resource in this domain than they do for viewers of narrative cinema, who have a better possibility of obtaining copies for home viewing through sanctioned means. Today, the movie theater may be considered the primary site of experimental cinema in quality alone; in terms of quantity other spaces—whether the gallery or the computer—predominate despite being secondary in their ability to provide quality. This begs the question: what happens when formats inferior in quality, often circulating without the filmmaker's permission, become a central way that many viewers encounter the history of experimental film? This chapter will approach this question through a case study of a single artwork that incorporates numerous films from this history: Josiah McElheny's *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* (2011). A heterodox approach to this installation will offer a glimpse of the complexities and contradictions of the unauthorized online distribution of low-definition copies of experimental films and the increasing collapse between primary and secondary exhibition contexts that results from it.

## Archival Refractions

*The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* was commissioned by the Whitechapel Gallery in London as a site-specific installation on the ground floor, to be exhibited for twelve months. It consists of seven prismatic structures made of mirrored glass, wood, and cloth that serve as surfaces for motion picture projection (figure 3.1). Each structure is accorded its own title—*Screen for Observing Abstraction Number One, Screen for Observing Abstraction Number Two,* and so on—and possesses its own distinct form. In one a rectangular wooden frame supports a piece of cloth from its top and a piece of glass from its bottom; they meet in the middle, extending away from the viewer at a forty-five-degree angle so as to form a concave *V* shape. In another a rectangular piece of cloth is flanked on both sides by mirrors set at a perpendicular. A third, more elaborate, structure places a pyramid of mirrors at its center, with cloth rectangles joined to each side of the base.



**FIGURE 3.1** Josiah McElheny, *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*. Whitechapel Gallery, London, September 7, 2011–August 12, 2012. Courtesy of the artist, White Cube, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photo by Todd-White Art Photography.

These are "screens for observing abstraction," but they are not screens as habitually understood. A screen is often thought of as a flat, receptive surface that enables images to materialize with little interference of its own. By contrast, these screens transform rather than simply receive the images projected onto them. One might be tempted to think that the titular abstraction to be observed here is precisely the process by which the projected image is distorted, reflected, and refracted variously as it hits each one of the seven structures. This may indeed be the case, but there is a second abstraction at work: the screens used for *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* are not receptacles ready to welcome just any image but were designed specifically as screens on which a selection of films drawn from the history of avant-garde cinema would be projected. A series of what

the artist terms "abstract films" are projected upside down, backward, and inverted along their vertical axis so as to mimic and redouble the effects of the mirrors. Given the nonrepresentational nature of these films, such transformations are not readily apparent to the spectator unless one possesses a superb knowledge of the originals. The result is that the alterations are easily overlooked. The wall text read, "Fragmented, reflected, and disorienting, the sculptures' images constantly change in relation to the viewer's position, offering an opportunity to piece together these aesthetic fragments into a new history."

McElheny has often taken up strategies of remaking to engage the histories and legacies of modernism in both art and design. His *Bruno Taut's Monument to Socialist Spirituality (After Mies van der Rohe)* (2009) returns to Mies's 1922 model for a glass tower that was never built, and *Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism* (2007) comprises remakes of selected bottles, vases, and decanters in mirrored glass. In this sense the Whitechapel installation can be seen as fully integrated within a larger artistic project that mines the artifacts of the past to insist on, to use Habermas's phrase, modernity as an unfinished project.[1] McElheny has said, "Culture is a series of fragments that are constantly being recompleted. The fragments are real and objective at some level, but the process of completion is subjective and mutable, like life. The incomplete, nonauthoritative nature of fragments allows for new narratives and constructions."[2] In the case of *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* one might say that McElheny draws on the history of avant-garde cinema to resurrect its utopian impulse in the present. Since the advent of video, the whole of film history is now available to us, rife for recontextualization, able to be repurposed by artists such as McElheny in order to reactivate old dreams and forge new connections. *The Past Was a Mirage* takes up the interest in recycling the products of film history that has marked contemporary art over the last two decades and, more broadly, may be understood as a part of what Hal Foster has called an archival impulse in contemporary art. Foster sees this archival impulse as involving a desire to probe forgotten histories through the deployment of material traces of the past, a critique of originality and authorship, and a return to "unfulfilled beginnings and incomplete projects" in order to offer new points of entry and departure. It "assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial and provisional, to this end, even as it also registers the difficulty, at times the absurdity, of doing so."[3]

The reading of *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* proposed by both artist and institution through the texts accompanying the exhibition hews very closely to Foster's conception of the archival impulse. It might equally be understood as a part of a contemporary remix culture in which acts of curation and recirculation figure as creative practices. But might there be another way of approaching this installation? Despite these sanctioned readings, *The Past Was a Mirage* might also be considered in relation to how the new possibilities of digital reproduction impact experimental film. While all forms of cinema are currently undergoing revolutionary changes in distribution, experimental film is a particularly interesting case in that it has traditionally been much more concerned with questions of medium specificity and authorial integrity than other sectors of filmmaking. McElheny's commission is of interest less for its subjective histories of abstract film than for its position in a gray zone between unauthorized circulation and official exhibition, between the liberties of access and the insults of poor quality. This movement of low-

quality digital copies across formats and across exhibition contexts, often without permission of the filmmaker, is a fundamental feature of *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*, one that allows a consideration of the installation as a symptom of contemporary shifts in visual culture.

## The Ambivalence of UbuWeb

To advance this alternate reading, a further description of the installation is in order. In a small room adjacent to the prismatic projections, a list of the films on display was posted on the wall: Peter Gidal's *Clouds* (1969), Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity* (1970), Lillian Schwartz's *Pixillation* (1970), and others. The room also contained supplementary information about the artist and a wall-mounted vitrine displaying a handful of classic books on the history of avant-garde cinema, such as David Curtis's *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-Year Evolution*, Standish Lawder's *Cubist Cinema*, and P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film* ([figure 3.2](#)). The pedagogical bent of this room gave the viewer the impression that the exhibition was a place where one might learn something about the history of avant-garde cinema. The installation space was once the former reading room for the Whitechapel Library, making such an interest in research and scholarship a fitting site-specific touch. Also on the wall in this room was a letter in a small white frame, written by the artist to Kenneth Goldsmith and dated August 14, 2011. The letter explains McElheny's intentions for the commission, including his hope that it will "explore non-canonical histories of abstract film, creating new associations across the past 90 years, or making better-known examples relevant to the contemporary [*sic*]." McElheny invites Goldsmith to be the first of four curators who will select a "personal history of abstract film" to be projected on the prismatic screens.[4] The framed letter inhabits the exhibition as material evidence of McElheny's partial delegation of authorship. A second panel to its right displays a text by Goldsmith explaining the rationale behind his selections.



FIGURE 3.2 Josiah McElheny, *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*. Whitechapel Gallery, London, September

7, 2011–August 12, 2012. Courtesy of the artist, White Cube, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photo by Todd-White Art Photography.

Notably, Goldsmith is neither a scholar of film nor a curator, at least not in the traditional sense of that word. Rather, he is the founder and administrator of UbuWeb, a vast online resource of audiovisual materials pertaining to experimental practice broadly conceived. UbuWeb started in 1996 as a site focusing on experimental poetry, with video added in 2002 in the form of AVI (Audio Video Interleaved) files available for streaming. UbuWeb prides itself on posting files without first seeking permission of the author; the site's FAQ page states, "Let's face it, if we had to get permission from everyone on UbuWeb, there would be no UbuWeb."[5] Perhaps owing to the scale of this collection—at the time of this writing, UbuWeb boasts some twenty-five hundred video files—some, including Goldsmith, have referred to the site as an "archive."[6] Quite notably, this resource developed very much in advance of the wider availability of sanctioned online resources: in most cases the bootleg came first, with official alternatives arriving years later, if at all. In this regard UbuWeb does have claim to the notion of *arché* as the site that inaugurates the presentation of experimental film and video art online. Yet it consists largely of low-definition images optimized for streaming (sometimes in very poor quality), assembled largely without seeking permission of the artists involved, and often not in their original format. As such, it has neither the official status, the investment in materiality, nor the preservation mandate that one would expect from an archive in the usual sense of the word.

Whereas traditional archives are tasked with ceaselessly negotiating the conflict between preservation and access, UbuWeb has a policy of radical access with no interest in preservation. Indeed, even the long-term fate of the website itself is unknown; Goldsmith has frequently emphasized that it might disappear at any moment.[7] There is, though, a sense that this repository is exemplary of the fate of the archive today. No longer grounded in a physical location, it becomes virtual and is in constant flux, as traditional hierarchies and rule-based structures are dissolved. The stability of memory, once guaranteed by the fixity of the material support, now finds itself in crisis as a dynamic flow of endless recycling, updating, and modifying—processes that Wolfgang Ernst refers to as the "demonumentalizing" of the archive—has become a cultural given. For Ernst the traditional archive evanesces in this multimedia space, making way for the "anarchoarchive" of the Internet, characterized by dynamic processes of transmission and feedback.[8] Understood in this way, UbuWeb is very much an archive of our time.

A second way of understanding the site is as a filmic version of André Malraux's *musée imaginaire*. In 1947 Malraux published the first version of what in English would come to be known as his "museum without walls": a virtual domain in which the art of all epochs and civilizations would enter into a new accessibility through the combined agencies of photographic reproduction and the guidance of the author.[9] The book—republished in 1951 as part of *Les voix du silence*—asserted the space of the page as a site of exhibition that was conceived not in diametric opposition to the primary context of the museum but as an exacerbation of the latter's decontextualizing logic. For Malraux photography, like the museum, functioned as an agent of both homogenization and narration. But it also

effected a transformation, stripping artworks of their specificity and offering in return promises of circulation, access, and the augmented possibility of comparative study. Artworks could move unfettered by whatever grounding in ritual they might have had after being touched by the graces of mechanical reproduction. Similar processes of homogenization, abstraction, and virtualization characterize UbuWeb, but as in the *musée imaginaire*, such ostensibly negative attributes also provide an opportunity for new models of thought and study to develop.

The comparison between these two undertakings is, however, not as straightforward as it might initially seem: a significant difference emerges between them when one considers the role of the quality of reproduction therein. As Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe have noted, *reproduction* is a generic term that risks amalgamating diverse practices, prompting the need to speak of how the qualities of "accuracy, understanding, and respect" come into play in specific instances of copying.[10] Rather than simply casting aspersions on reproduction *tout court*, one must differentiate between good and bad practices. In the case of the *musée imaginaire* Malraux pursued a strong didactic impulse, while taking care to make use of absolutely the best reproductions that were accessible to him. In her remarks on the presentation of *Les voix du silence* in the Pléiade edition of Malraux's complete writings, Christiane Moatti identifies the choice and quality of the ample reproductions, as well as their considered placement in relation to the text, as one of the book's most notable features. Moatti reminds us that though such practices may today be fully de rigueur in exhibition catalogues and other illustrated books, at the time of publication the use of these high-quality images was "new and extremely attractive" to readers: "The book satisfied the tastes of a public consuming more and more images; it responded to its author's ambition to use them to democratize access to cultural and artistic life."[11] In his innovative use of the highest quality reproductions possible to encourage broader participation in culture, Malraux might be better understood as a precursor of an initiative like Google's Art Project, which aims to provide images of artworks from museum collections around the world in "brushstroke level detail" achieved through ultra-high-definition gigapixel images—that is, digital image bitmaps comprising at least one billion total pixels.[12] UbuWeb, meanwhile, tends to employ a lower quality of reproduction and does not have the same contextual and pedagogical functions that one finds in Malraux.

UbuWeb is run by volunteers with bandwidth donated by universities; no money is involved. It inhabits the cyberutopianist gift economy that Richard Barbrook has described as flourishing online alongside the rampant commodification of information:

> At the "cutting edge" of the emerging information society, money-commodity relations play a secondary role to those created by a really existing form of anarcho-communism. For most of its users, the Net is somewhere to work, play, love, learn and discuss with other people. Unrestricted by physical distance, they collaborate with each other without the direct mediation of money or politics. Unconcerned about copyright, they give and receive information without thought of payment. In the absence of states or markets to mediate social bonds, network communities are instead formed through the mutual obligations created by gifts of time and ideas.[13]

Such rhetoric pervades UbuWeb's self-conceptualization; the site's manifesto proclaims it to be the "Robin Hood of the avant-garde, but instead of taking from one and giving to the other, we feel that in the end, we're giving to all."[14] Though many have criticized the notion of the hi-tech gift economy,[15] UbuWeb exemplifies the digital potlatch Barbrook

describes at its most utopian: emerging from the legacy of the New Left as rearticulated through the possibilities of new technologies, the site exists at a remove from the many attempts to monetize the promises of digital access, joyfully embracing the communality of sharing—with, of course, the disregard for intellectual property that accompanies it.

Like McElheny's installation, UbuWeb professes to be engaged in a "revisionist art history, one based on the peripheries of artistic production rather than on the perceived, or market-based, center."[16] The object-based work that circulates readily on the art market is not the domain of UbuWeb; rather, film, sound, and performance dominate. These are precisely the artistic media that are not served well by photographic reproduction and which have thus been underrepresented in art history, not simply because of their marginal status on the art market but also because they have in many cases presented problems of reproducibility and accessibility. UbuWeb solves these problems by functioning as something of a clearinghouse for the many bootlegs that had already been in circulation in clandestine, peer-to-peer situations, whether in person or online. Some, for instance, have been digitized from VHS copies, making evident the extent to which the website may be understood as a formalization of already existing, predigital networks of unauthorized distribution. But whereas such networks were relatively invisible and dependent on individual relationships, UbuWeb's resources are available to anyone with an Internet connection. This, combined with the sheer number of files available on the site, has brought UbuWeb a degree of visibility that the bootleg-trading circuit never had. Notably, as was the case with the music industry, this formalization of informal distribution occurred before rights-holders had established a viable framework for the online dissemination of content.[17] The lack of a sanctioned alternative contributed to UbuWeb's emergence as one of the primary ways that experimental film is viewed today, allowing the site to assert a position among official forms of distribution such as cooperative rentals, editioning, and authorized mass-market DVD releases. And significantly, it has done so for free and online, thus bypassing the financial and/or geographical barriers of those sanctioned forms of circulation.

The website does not intend to replace 16 mm exhibition, nor does it claim to provide particularly high quality transfers:

> It is important to us that you realize that what you will see is in no way comparable to the experience of seeing these gems as they were intended to be seen: in a dark room, on a large screen, with a good sound system and, most importantly, with a roomful of warm, like-minded bodies.
>
> However, we realize that the real thing isn't very easy to get to. Most of us don't live anywhere near theaters that show this kind of fare and very few of us can afford the hefty rental fees, not to mention the cumbersome equipment, to show these films. Thankfully, there is the internet which allows you to get a whiff of these films regardless of your geographical location.
>
> We realize that the films we are presenting are of poor quality. It's not a bad thing; in fact, the best thing that can happen is that seeing a crummy shockwave file will make you want to make a trip to New York to the Anthology Film Archives or the Lux Cinema in London (or other places around the world showing similar fare). Next best case scenario will be that you will be enticed to purchase a high quality DVD from the noble folks trying to get these works out into the world. Believe me, they're not doing it for the money.[18]

Despite this statement, UbuWeb's activities have attracted a great deal of opposition from some segments of the experimental film community. The first decade of the twenty-first century was marked by significant financial difficulties for the film cooperatives on

several fronts, often linked to the vexed question of technological change. Digital production and projection became the norm. Universities—the co-ops' biggest clients—saw 16 mm projectors abandoned and rental budgets slashed as administrators felt that "everything" was available on DVD or online. Although this sentiment is, of course, far from true, an increasing amount of material was beginning to circulate digitally through sites such as UbuWeb, particularly when authorized DVD releases did not exist. With a constrained rental budget, some instructors chose to use DVDs and UbuWeb as sources for classroom screenings, thus proving they were able to continue teaching their courses without 16 mm rentals, which in turn could be used as justification for the paucity of rental budgets—a vicious cycle that spelled serious peril for 16 mm distribution to college campuses.

The ethos of UbuWeb in some ways echoes that of the experimental film community in the 1960s: its main priority is access; there is little concern for financial remuneration; and there is a general disdain for the high-priced commodities of the art market. In its disregard for medium specificity and move away from authorial control, however, it signals a major departure from that tradition. It is precisely on these fronts that the distribution of experimental films on the site has been a subject of tremendous controversy. A number of filmmakers, including Peter Kubelka, Bruce Conner, and Michael Snow, have requested that all or some of their films be removed from the site. Until October 2008, filmmakers lodging such requests would be relegated to the "Hall of Shame," a page devoted to calling out those deemed to be copyright conservatives. In a June 2008 thread entitled "UbuWeb: Bad for Business!" members of Frameworks, an email listserv devoted to experimental film, repeatedly singled out the website as illegal, unethical, and particularly implicated in the decline of rental revenues at the film cooperatives.[19]

The UbuWeb FAQ page elaborates the site's position on posting copyrighted material, stating that it will post out-of-print material without reservation and is willing to take a chance on material that is "absurdly priced or insanely hard to procure."[20] "But if it's in print and available to all," the document continues, "we won't touch it," owing to a desire to ensure that the site does not siphon potential income from "the pockets of those releasing generally poor-selling materials of the avant-garde." It is instructive to consider where the 16 mm co-ops fit within this typology of accessibility. Prints in distribution through an organization such as Canyon or the Film-Makers' Cooperative might be considered "in print and available to all," but judging by their presence on UbuWeb, the site places them in the middle category, "absurdly priced or insanely hard to procure." When it comes to moving images, "in print" in fact means available on a noneditioned digital format.

Certainly, the publication of an increasing number of experimental films on DVD did not help the co-ops' finances. But UbuWeb was vilified where such authorized video distribution was not because of its lack of interest in obtaining permission to post work online and its low-definition video. As one tweet from the @ubuweb Twitter account put it, "Legal is boring."[21] When Kubelka and Conner requested that their work be removed from the site, one assumes their motivation was not primarily financial but had to do with dismay that viewers might encounter their work in suboptimal conditions. Jane Gaines has written that "it would seem that if the question of copyright protection mattered—and

continues to matter—it is primarily from the standpoint of a monopoly over signs. Another way of putting this would be to say that only from the standpoint of maximum profit does copyright protection of the singular work matter."[22] What Gaines ignores in this understanding of copyright is the importance of the moral rights tradition, the notion that infringing activities may result in damages other than financial. The objections to UbuWeb were in part linked to co-op revenue but were in vast measure more concerned with authorial integrity.

Despite such opposition, many scholars and filmmakers have embraced UbuWeb, claiming that the unprecedented access the site provides trumps concerns regarding its violation of authors' rights or disregard for medium specificity. Though access has always been a fundamental principle within experimental cinema, in practice such films have circulated in a relatively restricted manner because of the cost and difficulty of showing 16 mm. One critic has proposed that "the Internet is where a popular audience for experimental filmmaking has at last been found,"[23] and Goldsmith claimed in an open letter to the members of Frameworks that Peter Gidal noticed an increased interest in his work after its circulation online.[24] Unlike BitTorrent sites like the Pirate Bay, which provide users free access to materials that might be legally acquired elsewhere, in many cases there is no legal means by which one might access the materials available on UbuWeb if one desired to do so.

# The Fate of Moral Rights

It is from this collection of images that McElheny's installation drew much of its source material, even after Goldsmith's tenure as curator had ended and subsequent delegates had taken his place. The result was that the appropriated films were not simply projected on video, in reverse, flipped, and upside down, but on poor quality video, often obtained without authorization, in reverse, flipped, and upside down. In making UbuWeb a central component of *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*, McElheny brought both its promises of radical access and its controversial attitudes toward quality and copyright to bear on his installation, though artist or institution nowhere acknowledged this gesture. McElheny chose to follow UbuWeb's lead and neglected to obtain permission from the filmmakers or their representatives to include their work in his installation. Soon after the exhibition opened, Benjamin Cook emailed the Whitechapel Gallery in his capacity as the director of LUX, the organization responsible for the distribution of Peter Gidal's films in the United Kingdom. Cook was concerned that the works in the exhibition were on display without seeking approval from the artists or LUX and feared that the exhibition might have a detrimental effect on Gidal's artistic reputation. Gidal is well known for his commitment to medium specificity and does not generally exhibit his film work digitally in public. Cook requested that Gidal's *Clouds* be removed from the exhibition, and the gallery complied.

The Whitechapel emphasized that the projections in McElheny's installation did not intend to be faithful presentations of the appropriated films and organized traditional screenings of the films through the museum's education department during the duration of the exhibition so that they could be encountered in their proper medium and setting.[25] Nonetheless, Cook's position was that *The Past Was a Mirage* constituted an unauthorized

exhibition of Gidal's work, one that compromised its integrity. *Clouds* had been available on UbuWeb for some time with the filmmaker's permission, the rationale being that the Internet constituted a secondary context where one might access a viewing copy of the work that was distinct from the work itself.[26] The Whitechapel, however, was no such secondary context. On March 2, 2011, Cook contacted the gallery again with a similar request, this time concerning Stan Brakhage's *Eye Myth* (1967) and *Night Music* (1986), which were included in the second set of selections even after LUX had requested that none of their represented artists be included in the exhibition without permission. When projected onto McElheny's prisms, the source films become mere decorative patterns and are treated almost as stock footage. Any attention to their compositional principles is hindered by the manipulation of the work and the refraction of the image across the mirrored screens. Yet the installation absolutely depends on the historical status of these films as artworks in their own right. For McElheny the transformations of the source material might be said to allegorize the unreliable nature of memory or the impossibility of objectivity that inheres in the notion of a subjective history. But for an individual entrusted with the guardianship of a collection of artworks, such as Cook, this exhibition situation is first and foremost an insult to the works shown within it.

Cook's request concerns not financial remuneration but the issue of the artist's moral rights. Unlike economic rights, which can be bought and sold, moral rights doctrine holds that there exists an inviolable connection between author and work outside of any financial consideration. Article 6bis of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, an international agreement governing copyright, states that "the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work and to object to any distortion, mutilation, or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to his honor or reputation."[27] It was the moral rights portion of copyright protection that, for example, allowed John Huston's heirs to successfully file suit against colorization of his film *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) in France, where moral rights protections are especially strong. The doctrine of moral rights—and, indeed, much of copyright law—rests on a romantic conception of authorship that holds the author to be the sole originator of the work, conceiving of it, following Locke's theory of property, as an extension of the author's own body. Harm to the work is harm to the author, hence the rhetoric of body disfigurement found in the Berne Convention's language that the work might be "mutilated." Cook's objection was not that a licensing fee had not been paid but rather that the installation violated Gidal's inalienable right to protect his creation from derogatory modification by a third party. Given Gidal's well-known commitment to exhibiting on film rather than video and the intense debates surrounding this issue in contemporary experimental film culture, it is absolutely plausible that McElheny's installation could be viewed as "prejudicial to [Gidal's] honor or reputation."

Moral rights concerns clearly did not enter into McElheny or the Whitechapel's conception of the project, perhaps because the attitudes taken up in *The Past Was a Mirage* have little to do with the romantic notions of authorship and authenticity that inform the moral rights doctrine (to say nothing of much experimental film practice). The installation is the clear inheritor of two recent assaults on the paradigm of author-as-originary-genius: first, the critique of identity and originality proper to poststructuralism

and, second, the transformations digital media has wrought to notions of intellectual property. Ramon Lobato has identified such rethinking of the place of originality in artistic and literary creation as a model of "piracy-as-authorship," writing that it "does important work in destabilizing the concepts of creative ownership and moral rights to control of a work."[28] *The Past Was a Mirage* partakes of this paradigm, disavowing a romantic conception of authorship twice over, both in its use of existing films and in the delegation of the curatorship of these films. In place of a fixed, self-enclosed text produced by an autonomous individual, one finds an embrace of the shifting boundaries and multiple versions of a work produced through the act of circulation—a revised understanding of authorship apposite for the digital age. While recent years have seen copyright protections become stronger than ever before, as the lawyer Simon Stokes has noted, "the very notion of moral rights is under threat from digitisation" because of the way in which new possibilities of copying challenge the foundational ideas on which the doctrine is built.[29] One increasingly encounters the assumption that works are inherently malleable, shifting forms and formats alike as they are encountered and redeployed by users. In his 1994 essay "The Economy of Ideas," for example, John Perry Barlow writes that "because there was never a moment when the story was frozen in print, the so-called 'moral' right of storytellers to own the tale was neither protected nor recognized…. As we return to continuous information, we can expect the importance of authorship to diminish. Creative people may have to renew their acquaintance with humility."[30] Barlow's prediction both has and has not occurred. Copyright policing is fiercer than ever, with anticircumvention provisions (such as those found in the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act and the 2001 European Union Copyright Directive) making it illegal to bypass copy protection software even in cases in which such copying might be fair use. Yet there is no question that there has been an increasing cultural acceptance of the new mutability of images and of the notion that being derivative, rather than original, is the habitual condition of much cultural production.

Many viewers' quotidian activities regularly veer into the territory of infringement, whether by frequenting BitTorrent sites trafficking in illegal downloads or by viewing material posted online without the consent of the artist. After Tony Conrad angrily posted to Frameworks that his work had been posted on UbuWeb without his consent, Rick Prelinger responded that though he respected Conrad's position, "the times may not favor his or any artist's exclusive control."[31] More than ever, acts of selection and recombination —often taking the title of "curation," whether one speaks of exhibitions, blogs, or boutiques—are thought of as creative in nature. Meanwhile, UbuWeb has met with increasing acceptance from the experimental film community in part because the site has taken significant steps toward legitimization. The closure of the "Hall of Shame" eased tensions, as have the partnerships forged with artists and with organizations such as Electronic Arts Intermix to offer authorized resources.[32] This acceptance may also stem from an augmented recognition of UbuWeb's unquestionable value as a study resource, an acknowledgment of shrinking university budgets for 16 mm rentals, and an increasing acquiescence to the inevitability of unauthorized circulation of images by digital means. Technological ability and changing cultural attitudes have combined to naturalize the practice of reusing and manipulating existing products with little regard for the maker's wishes. *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* is fully a product of such a technocultural condition.

# Film on Video

In subjecting works drawn from the history of experimental cinema to such extensive distortions, *The Past Was a Mirage* hyperbolizes what has become a relatively standard practice in the contemporary museum: exhibiting video transfers of historical works of experimental film in less than optimal conditions. The museum and gallery have, since the late nineteenth century at least, been where one has encountered original artworks rather than their reproductions (figure 3.3). By exhibiting video transfers of work produced on photochemical film, the institution betrays its mandate. One might see the incorporation of digital transfers as harking back to the era in which plaster casts and painted copies of masterpieces were regularly exhibited in the museum—except that this readmission of the inauthentic artwork is not a widespread epistemological shift but is confined only to the domain of uneditioned film. Films made by artists and accessioned into museum collections as editioned works—such as the 16 mm works produced by Tacita Dean—come with clear contractual stipulations regarding exhibition specifications and format shifting to guarantee that they will never be shown as digital transfers without the artist's permission. Yet exhibition on video is virtually a rule for uneditioned experimental films shown within a gallery setting. It is as if, lacking the patina of artificial rarity that editioning can provide and instead tarred with the brush of mass culture's reproducibility, they are implicitly held as being worthy of less care. A difference in the distribution model used can in fact have a tremendous impact on the way that a film will be treated after being acquired by an institution. Such a double standard betrays the extent to which film's reproducibility continues to undercut its status as a legitimate artistic medium within many art institutions. It also points to the extent to which the practices of digital mass culture—habitual encounters with images of substandard quality circulating outside of their original context—have permeated the museum walls.
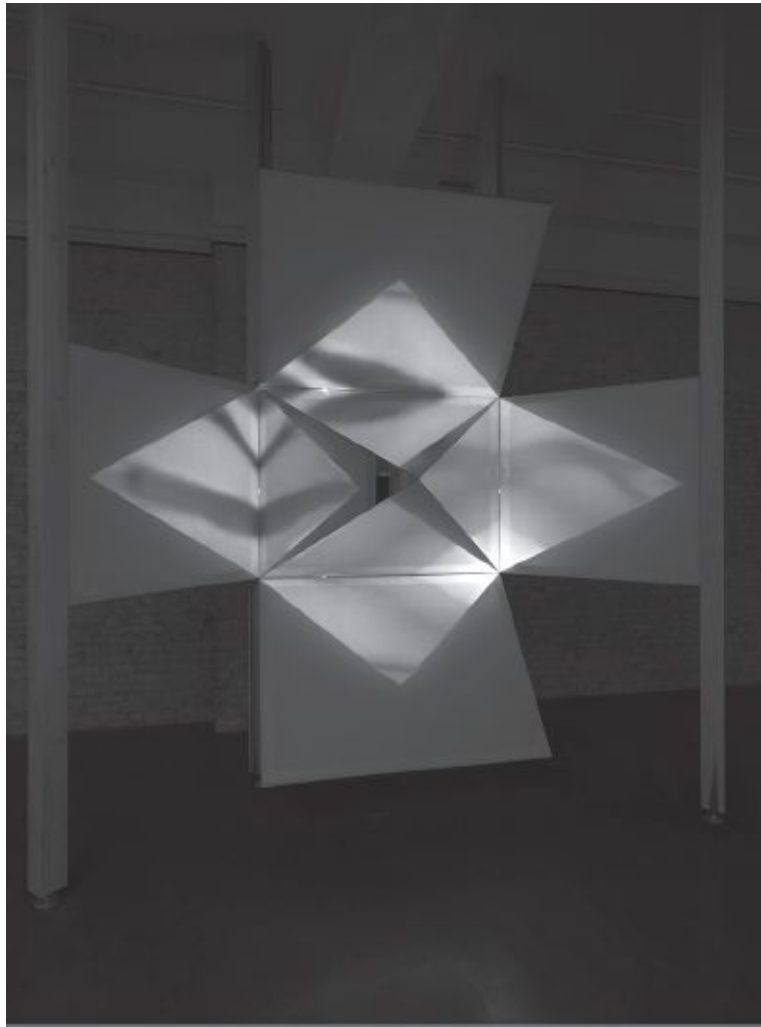
**FIGURE 3.3**  Josiah McElheny, *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*. Whitechapel Gallery, London, September 7, 2011–August 12, 2012. Courtesy of the artist, White Cube, Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Photo by Todd-White Art Photography.

Does the willingness to leave behind photochemical film in gallery exhibition stem solely from laziness and economics? Or is there something about film itself that, to some minds at least, suggests that no substantial transformation occurs with the transfer to video? There are two ways of conceiving of the relationship of the filmic image to its material base. The first holds that projected images are inextricably tied to their material support; to change to a different support is to substantially alter the work, to move from an original to a copy as one would with a postcard reproduction of a painting. This view is particularly strong in some sectors of the experimental film community. The second, by contrast, understands film as a carrier or container of images that exist with no necessary relation to the material base. These images are realized through the base but are free to migrate across material supports; they can be expressed in numerous ways, including video. This conception of the image—as dematerialized, mediumless data—has become increasingly prevalent in the digital age. Of course, digital technologies do retain a material component,[33] but digital images are not tied to any single support. Put differently, interface and hardware are much farther away from one another than film image and filmstrip. Arild Fetveit has described this condition as a "radical separation between what we might call the *medium of display* and the *medium of storage*," one that is initiated by

the positive/negative technique pioneered by Henry Fox Talbot in 1839, developed throughout the ensuing decades, and definitively effected by the computer.[34]

According to Mary Ann Doane, "technologies of mechanical and electronic reproduction, from photography through digital media, appear to move asymptotically toward immateriality, generating images through light and electricity."[35] The projected film image, thrown across the room and away from its material apparatus, begins the dissociation of image and support that reaches its telos with the illusion of immateriality proper to digital media technologies. As this dissociation occurs, it becomes increasingly possible to conceive of the separation of image and support as inconsequential. As Doane puts it, "Digital media emerge as the apparent endpoint of an accelerating dematerialization, so much so that it is difficult not to see the very term 'digital media' as an oxymoron."[36] Quite famously, Friedrich Kittler has asserted a total independence between information and channel.[37] It is just as difficult to conceive of painting as independent from its material base as it is to conceive of the digital image as necessarily tied to any one particular piece of computer hardware. But because of its intermediate position in this trajectory, photochemical film is available to both understandings of how an image relates to its support. As the ubiquity of digital images has made it a commonplace to understand interface and hardware as separable, some have retroactively recuperated the film image into this view. Others, meanwhile, hold fast to the notion that image and support are inextricable from one another. It is in the schism between these two perspectives that the debate over how to responsibly exhibit works made on film in a museum setting emerges.

Film's ability to be digitally reproduced across formats is key to its entrance into the museum. Celluloid, after all, is a costly, fragile material, and the continuous exhibition required in the museum context is hard on prints, projectors, and budgets alike. As it is exposed to the threat of damage at each showing, film brings to new heights the tension between preservation and display that underwrites the museological mandate. By displaying digital copies drawn from the Internet, images of sufficiently low quality so as to wear their format shifting on their proverbial sleeves, McElheny indexes the travels of the historical film image across contemporary formats and exaggeratedly performs what has become a common occurrence. He goes far beyond habitual museum practice, however, by altering his appropriated films and exhibiting them on prismatic screens. On this count it is worth remembering that *The Past Was a Mirage* is an artist's project, not an institutional undertaking. Despite the shift toward "creative curating" and the transformation of the curator's role from one that was primarily scholarly and administrative to one that now possesses an authorial/artistic function,[38] curators nonetheless remain bound by their etymological duty to care for the artworks with which they engage. Artists, meanwhile, have significantly more latitude in their treatment of appropriated material. When criticizing the exhibition of experimental film on video in gallery contexts, participants in workshops held at the 2010 Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Los Angeles on the topics of "Issues in Experimental Film and Media Scholarship" and "The Avant-Garde and the Archive" often repeated the by-now-familiar question, "Would you show a photograph of a painting in a museum?" In fact, there are times when photographs of paintings are exhibited in museums: when they are incorporated into the work of other artists. Marcel Duchamp defaced a postcard of the

Mona Lisa to make *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), and Jean-Luc Godard integrated reproductions of paintings by Vermeer and others into his Pompidou exhibition *Voyage(s) en utopie, Jean-Luc Godard, 1946–2006, à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (2006). To take a cinematic example: no one was upset with Douglas Gordon for subjecting Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) to a VHS-induced rigor mortis. All three of these examples involve an artist appropriating a reproduction of a work of art in its entirety and subjecting it to significant alterations.

How is *The Past Was a Mirage* any different? For some it may not be. But unlike Duchamp, Godard, or Gordon, in delegating the selection of films to be included in the installation, McElheny blurs important boundaries between the artistic and curatorial functions and throws into crisis the respective responsibilities accorded to each. As Martha Buskirk has noted, "Artists who construct their work via collecting or assembly have in effect adopted institutional procedures as the basis for their act of invention—a turn on art as a museum practice that reveals deeply rooted overlaps between art making and institutional priorities."[39] In *The Past Was a Mirage* McElheny clearly adopts institutional procedures by making the act of curatorship central to the project and by assembling a reading room of historical material regarding experimental film. But just as McElheny adopts institutional procedures, so, too, does the Whitechapel adopt artistic procedures or, at the very least, artistic liberties: the selection of films is outsourced to four chosen individuals who, although not Whitechapel employees, function as independent curators contracted to work within the Whitechapel space. Instead of concerning themselves with the integrity of the works they bring into the gallery, as their role would traditionally demand, they partake of the relative freedom accorded to artists working with appropriated materials. This act of curatorial delegation pulls *The Past Was a Mirage* away from occupying the status of found-footage installation and toward a very different paradigm: the artist-constructed cinema.

Unlike most artists engaged in the recycling of film history, McElheny does not recut the films he appropriates but repurposes them in full and posts a list of selections along with dates and running times. Over the course of the yearlong exhibition the same physical structure was used to display four different film programs. Aside from the criterion of abstraction, there was no necessary link between the sculptural screens and the films projected onto them. The focus was less on the manipulation of found materials—though manipulation does occur, it is not readily apparent to the spectator—than it was on the act of exhibiting them in an environment designed by the artist. As such, *The Past Was a Mirage* bears a kinship with artist-constructed spaces of cinema exhibition such as Douglas Gordon and Rikrit Tiravanija's *Cinéma Liberté / Bar Lounge* (1996–), Phil Collins's *Auto-Kino!* (2010), and Ben Russell's *Peripheral Vision* (2012). Such projects bring contemporary art's broad fascination with cinema together with interests in the publicness of exhibition and a conception of curation as an artistic activity.

Maeve Connolly has described the ways in which these artists' cinemas demonstrate a "focus on cinema as a social form, rather than an ontological concern with the medium of film."[40] Although, as Connolly demonstrates, many artist-made cinemas do indeed take up notions of relationality and the formation of counterpublics, the same cannot be said of *The Past Was a Mirage*. It lacks the concern with the start-to-finish, collective form of spectatorship proper to the movie theater that is key to most artists' cinemas. Yet true to

Connolly's diagnosis, the installation does stage a site of exhibition that engages in an interrogation of cinema while steering away from a concern with the medium of film. McElheny's installation is symptomatic of what happens when a body of work produced mostly on 16 mm becomes MP4s, AVIs, and FLVs. It points to the new ways that this form of cinema circulates in digital visual culture: promiscuously, across formats and display contexts far beyond those intended by the filmmaker. It also stages the increasing collapse between exhibition contexts once deemed absolutely separate by engineering a collision between two very different exhibition spaces with two very different mandates: a prominent public gallery and a website at once celebrated for its accessibility and reviled as illegal and unethical. The installation is not about what cinema is or was but about how experimental cinema moves today. Depending on where one stands on the issue, this movement may be understood as a new freedom full of radical possibility, or it may be seen as a tragic betrayal of the authenticity of the work. But whichever position one takes, one thing remains incontrovertibly true: like it or not, *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* accurately points to the translations and transformations of the moving image that are ubiquitous in the early twenty-first century.

Is it simply a conservative, rearguard position to problematize the use of low-definition images and insist that they are, at times, nothing other than degraded copies? Perhaps not. While the low-quality digital copy *might* possess the ability both to remind one of the false promises of the digital revolution and to reignite its true potential, it might also be a simple banalization of the image, one that unselfconsciously indulges in the disposability and desacralization of the image. McElheny's transplantation of UbuWeb's resources into the Whitechapel is emphatically not an example of the protocols of the white cube being contaminated by the dirty video of digital circulation. The problem here is not UbuWeb itself, which operates in a very different exhibition context. Rather, the difficulty of *The Past Was a Mirage* is that it takes the protocols and hard compromises of UbuWeb and transports them into a realm where they signify quite differently. It purports to make a historical claim—however "subjective" it might be—while patently disrespecting and mutilating archival images to produce a visual experience for a distracted spectator, an experience that aims for intensity and promises an encounter with the past but is diluted of any substance. It speaks to how important it is to consider the relationship between distribution and exhibition and to recognize that what may constitute an appropriate form of presentation in one exhibition context may not in another.

*The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* draws its title from Bernard Kops's poem "Whitechapel Library, Aldgate East." The phrase describes the mental state of the narrator before visiting the library, whereupon he experiences a transformation: "And I am a locust and I'm at a feast."[41] The past had been a mirage before entering the library, but there it ceases to be so and returns to the narrator with striking vivacity and immediacy. McElheny's exhibition engages in no such reanimation. The past—the history of experimental cinema—remains very much a mirage. The library visitor in Kops's poem convenes with authors in a meaningful way ("And here I met Chekhov, Tolstoy, Meyerhold / I entered their worlds, their dark visions of gold"), but McElheny's installation provides no such experience. Instead, it is just a hollow, refracted simulacrum —one that sits uneasily inside an institution in which one would expect to encounter these images in all their richness or, in Kops's words, to find "an orchard within for the heart

and the mind." One might object to such a criticism and understand *The Past Was a Mirage* as an instance in which recirculation functions as a creative act, but its blurring of distinctions between artistic and institutional procedures means that it also must be considered within the framework of how the Internet and the gallery offer new sites of exhibition for the history of experimental film. Despite the vogue for transformative redeployments of historical materials, it is also imperative to assert the enduring need for fidelity to both curatorial responsibility and the past itself.

In *The Past Was a Mirage* unauthorized forms of circulation attain a quasi-official status owing to the institutional frame of the Whitechapel. This legitimization of unauthorized use both contributes to and parallels UbuWeb's increasingly hegemonic and accepted position as a digital repository of avant-garde media. Once a hotly contested domain of unsanctioned use, more recently the site has moved toward increased acceptance, something that both results from and is reflected in its growing partnerships with official channels of distribution and venues of exhibition. In 2009, for example, the site was, with NASA, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, and the National Film Board of Canada, one of four "archives" featured in the Canadian Centre for Architecture's exhibition *Transmission: Films from a Heroic Future*. Like *The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind*, this exhibition is indicative of an increasing porosity between official and unauthorized forms of distribution and exhibition. This marriage raises important questions concerning the fate of the traditional distribution models of experimental film and the ethics of exhibition in an era of easy and cheap digital reproducibility. Will future audiences continue to qualitatively differentiate between primary and secondary viewing contexts? Will the notion that interface and hardware are inherently separable become so dominant that thinking of the film image as indissociable from its support will fade away entirely?

The answer to both of these questions is yes and no. There will always be a place for theatrical screenings in the original format, and there will always be those who cling to this context and see anything else as a betrayal. But notably, after a somewhat slow take-up, distributors affiliated with the rental model are now beginning to explore possibilities for the online dissemination of their titles. In his 2010 open letter to Frameworks, Goldsmith wrote, "It [*sic*] think that, in the end, Ubu is a provocation to your community to go ahead and do it right, do it better, to render Ubu obsolete."[42] While these initiatives have by no means rendered Ubu obsolete, distribution organizations are now trying to do it better by obtaining permission from artists and filmmakers, working with high-quality transfers, and, in some cases, attempting to offer a revenue stream to artists. Both Canyon Cinema and the Film-Makers' Cooperative have made selected films available through www.fandor.com, a subscription-based service for online film viewing available only within the United States. Canyon began the partnership in 2011, and the FMC joined in 2014. For $10 per month, subscribers can access a wide variety of films; the site then returns 50 percent of subscription revenue to filmmakers, dividing 20 percent of that amount among all filmmakers and distributing the remaining 80 percent by comparing the number of seconds a given film is watched to the total number of seconds of all films available on the site that month.[43] In May 2014 the Canada Council for the Arts announced a CDN$1.5 million grant for the creation of a national streaming platform for independent Canadian film and video, administered by a coalition of distributors,

including the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre and Video Out Distribution. LUX has made certain titles available for streaming through its website, and in March 2015 it launched a video-on-demand platform called LUXplayer. A rental fee of $4 gives the viewer access to the work for a forty-eight hour period, similar to the model used by Apple's iTunes store, but 50 percent of the revenue is returned to the artist as it would be in LUX's brick-and-mortar operation.[44] EAI is pursuing an educational subscription model that would allow institutions access to a database of titles in exchange for an annual fee. In May 2015 Video Data Bank launched VDB TV, a site that offers free streaming access to curated programs of work from the VDB collection, and that same month the Walker Art Center launched a series of online artists' commissions.[45] Many artists choose to make their work available online through the Vimeo portal; these are sometimes password-protected files intended for curators and critics but are sometimes open to the public. Although it is too early to judge the success and impact of such initiatives, they are evidence of the extent to which some of UbuWeb's initial, once-controversial propositions have now been accepted by more traditional distributors: they continue to face the dissolving distinction between primary and secondary exhibition contexts, the question of free versus paid access, and (for film works, at least) the issue of format shifting, but such compromises are deemed to be worth the increased access that digital distribution provides.

# 4
## Copyright and the Commons

David Joselit's *After Art* is devoted to analyzing the scale and speed at which images proliferate today, as well as the ways in which these trajectories have been taken up in recent artistic practice. In the midst of a discussion of the work of Pierre Huyghe, an artist who has dealt extensively with issues of intellectual property, a footnote with an at best tenuous relationship to the body of the text rather perplexingly deems a discussion of copyright beyond the scope of the book.[1] As the body of laws that serves to regulate the scale and speed at which images may legally proliferate, one might assume that considerations of copyright would play a significant role in Joselit's text. But it is this exclusion that allows Joselit to set up what is perhaps the book's grounding opposition, between what he terms "the free 'neoliberal' circulation of images" and a "fundamentalist" attitude that "posits that art and architecture *are rooted to a specific place.*"[2] There is no question about where Joselit locates his own allegiances in this conflict: for him, neoliberal circulation proposes exciting new forms of connectivity, while the fundamentalists cling to the rather unfortunate privileging of discrete objects and fail to recognize that contemporary existence is characterized above all by ecstatic mobility. Despite the centrality of the logic of privatization to the economic philosophy of neoliberalism, the privatization of visual culture through the aggressive enforcement of copyright nowhere enters into Joselit's application of this term to the realm of images.

The absence of a discussion of copyright in *After Art* might be explained by copyright's limited role in regulating the circulation of images in the artistic context. The artificial scarcity of the editioning model tends to ensure reproducible artworks remain outside the channels of mass distribution (at least officially), with the result that recourse to copyright is not necessary to control circulation. The art context tends to be more about copy rites than copyrights, regulating image mobility by conventions that are developed internally and that function very differently from their mass cultural counterparts. Yet copyright's absence in Joselit's discussion takes on a strategic importance because it allows him to map an opposition of present/past onto that of neoliberal movement/fundamentalist stasis in order to make an epochal claim for ours as a time of unfettered transmission and networked relationality. A consideration of copyright law, and particularly the extent to which it has rigidified over the last twenty years, would temper the apparent freedoms of neoliberal circulation Joselit values by introducing to the discussion a pervasive form of control that is irreducible to the fundamentalism he so easily dismisses as old-fashioned. During this period aggressive legislation and prosecution, copyright enforcement robots, and digital rights management systems have transformed a set of laws originally formulated to stimulate creativity into a framework for profit-motivated policing. In particular, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998, passed by a unanimous vote in the United States Senate, heralded a new era of extremism.[3] But for Joselit an assessment of the realities of copyright in the post-DMCA context would reveal

its ability to render sclerotic the connective circuits he holds so dear.

Such an affirmation of unbridled circulation exemplifies a pervasive tendency among artists and critics engaging with the contemporary mobility of images, though it is seldom expressed as explicitly as it is in *After Art*. It is a tendency that cuts across a wide variety of aesthetic and political investments to celebrate promiscuous circulation as the sine qua non of contemporary visual culture, often implicitly replaying the long-standing but spurious associations of digital technology with freedom, democracy, and user autonomy. But just as it is necessary to recognize the Internet as a technology of both freedom *and* control, so, too, is it imperative that the contemporary circulation of images is understood as both more unmoored and more restrained than ever before. In 1994 John Perry Barlow, founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, wrote that "intellectual property law cannot be patched, retrofitted, or expanded to contain digitized expression any more than real estate law might be revised to cover the allocation of broadcasting spectrum"—yet this is exactly what has occurred.[4] Although such revisions are certainly not watertight, they cannot be ignored. Moreover, this development is not particularly surprising; after all, the history of copyright legislation is nothing other than the history of grappling with technological innovations that challenge it. As Martha Buskirk has noted, "The initial establishment and the subsequent development of copyright principles should be understood as a series of responses to the potential for disruption inherent in various new forms of technology."[5] The possibilities of digital circulation have been matched by the adoption of increasingly aggressive intellectual property legislation. Contrary to the still pervasive mythos of digital liberation and the technological ease of copying, not everything is available, not everything is archived, and not everything is free for reuse.

Contemporary artists such as Richard Prince and Luc Tuymans have recently been charged with copyright infringement for creating works based on appropriated photographs. The case against Prince concerned his *Canal Zone* series of paintings, which incorporated photographs taken by Patrick Cariou from his 2000 book, *Yes, Rasta*. After Prince was initially found guilty of infringement, a 2013 appeal overturned the decision but reserved the right to further review five paintings to ensure that their use of Cariou's photography qualifies as fair. In the case of Tuymans the artist used a copyright-protected photograph taken by Katrijn van Giel of the Belgian politician Jean-Marie Dedecker as the basis of a painting he named *A Belgian Politician* (2011). The court rejected his claim of parody, fining him €500,000—apparently tied to the estimated value of the painting. As art lawyer Daniel McClean has noted with reference to these decisions, it is striking that most copyright disputes in twenty-first-century art have been brought by photographers against artists. For McClean this signals that such proceedings are about "not just economic remuneration, but authorial recognition. In reproducing the readymade image of the photograph without recognition of the photographer as author, artists have tended to occlude its provenance."[6] This is a very persuasive claim: it may be that appropriation stings most when it occurs but is not clearly coded as such. But certainly the blue-chip status of artists recently involved in high-profile suits—besides Prince and Tuymans, add to the list Jeff Koons and Andy Warhol—suggests that financial remuneration is an additional contributing factor.

Within the sphere of artists' moving image, practices of recycling have a long history and have been exceedingly common in recent years. In the case of uneditioned work the

level of economic remuneration and the lack of authorial recognition of appropriated material present in the Prince and Tuymans cases tend not to be at play. Moreover, the works generally circulate in niche contexts, all of which helps explain why such practices have proliferated without legal intervention from rights holders.[7] Though more money may be at stake with editioned works, their even more tightly controlled circulation and fine art imprimatur serve as protection. Indeed, the prevalence of repurposed images within such practices has frequently been taken as evidence of the new freedom and availability of moving images. For example, in his highly influential book *Postproduction—Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, curator Nicolas Bourriaud writes that "contemporary art tends to abolish the ownership of forms, or in any case shake up the old jurisprudence. Are we heading toward a culture that would do away with copyright in favor of a policy that would allow free access to works, a sort of blueprint for a communism of forms?"[8] Nowhere does Bourriaud address the contradiction that the very works of art he believes "abolish the ownership of form" are distributed as contractually regulated limited editions. Pierre Huyghe's *The Third Memory* (1999) may make use of footage from Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon* (1995), but this "blueprint for the communism of forms" was offered for sale in a limited edition of four, its circulation tightly controlled. The artist's *Blanche Neige Lucie* (1997), a 35 mm film detailing performer Lucie Dolène's legal action against the Disney Corporation to regain the rights to her own voice, was once available on YouTube but was removed at the artist's request. Contemporary art may be replete with practices that assail notions of authorship and intellectual property, but its market would fall apart without them. There is, then, a distinct incongruity between the understanding of image circulation thematized in these works and the distribution circuits they inhabit.

Despite some significant engagements with intellectual property issues, most artists and scholars emphasize the possibilities of reuse and resignification of proprietary materials over any interrogation of the increasingly strict legal controls that have been instituted in an effort to restrict unsanctioned uses. Neither of the most prominent book-length studies of the found-footage film in English—Jamie Baron's *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* and William Wees's *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*—includes discussion of the legal dynamics of such redeployments.[9] At best, the repurposing of existing cultural forms may be understood as an implicit critique of recent developments in copyright law. But less generously, one might say that in neglecting to consider the various controls to which images are subject today, such works risk perpetuating a fantasy of free circulation. Christian Marclay's disinclination to consider copyright issues during the production of *The Clock* (2010) was well publicized, with the artist stating, "If you make something good and interesting and not ridiculing someone or being offensive, the creators of the original material will like it."[10] While Marclay indeed ran into no trouble for his use of hundreds of clips in *The Clock*, there are many other criteria in addition to those of "good" and "interesting" that might be said to be responsible for this outcome, including the artist's preexisting prestige, his decision to exhibit the work exclusively in art spaces, the adoption of the limited-edition model of sale, and the absence of any critical relation to the source material used within it. In his false opposition between "interesting" and "offensive" art Marclay dissimulates the fact that copyright very much does remain an issue for artists who may lack his cultural capital, choose to adopt different distribution models, or want to

repurpose copyrighted material to political or critical ends. Furthermore, as Richard Misek has noted, although *The Clock* is "premised on the existence of a shared cinematic imaginary," the strict policing of its circulation through the limited-edition model is "not only a cultural appropriation but also an economic appropriation" that betrays the share-alike ethos that made the work possible and, in its place, reinscribes private ownership: "Marclay took thousands of copyrighted clips and effectively said, 'These are mine.' Having *expropriated* them from their copyright holders, he then *reappropriated* them for himself."[11] *Pace* Bourriaud's claims for a "communism of forms," this is not an inspiring testimony to the status of the cultural commons.

Beyond this logic of privatization, the refusal to confront pressing questions of intellectual property constitutes a tragically missed opportunity. The easy assumption of freedom of reuse within the art context occurs precisely at a time when the vernacular redeployment of existing images is being policed and monetized by rights holders like never before. By minimizing discussions of copyright, whether within the work or in the discourse surrounding it, artists forgo a chance to intervene in or at least draw attention to the increasing privatization of visual culture. Eli Horwatt has remarked on the "utopian discourse" that sees practices of digital remixing as inherently critical; in addition to this it is necessary to highlight another equally utopian discourse that celebrates the unimpeded movement of images rather than recognizing that new forms of freedom have been met with new forms of control.[12]

Against this prevailing attitude, Eileen Simpson and Ben White's archival footage project *Struggle in Jerash* (2009) is significant for the manner in which it both partakes of the new mobility of digital images *and* foregrounds the dangers of increasingly aggressive copyright legislation. Rather than buy into specious assertions of the free mobility of images after digitization, *Struggle in Jerash* stages an astute consideration of the various constraints—not just legal but also financial and infrastructural—that regulate the circulation of cultural products across time and across formats. It departs from the montage aesthetic that characterizes so much of the history of recycled images to instead appropriate an existing work *in toto* to ask, "Who owns a film?"[13]

## The First Film

Simpson and White are best known as the initiators of the Open Music Archive, a collaborative project whose aim is to find, digitize, and distribute audio recordings that have fallen out of copyright. The pair has worked extensively with issues of intellectual property and archival material, most often in the domain of sound. Invited in 2008 to a residency at Makan House in Amman, Jordan, to undertake a project concerning the resources of the public domain in that country, the artists' research led them in a slightly different direction: to the cinema. Specifically, they became interested in the 1957 film *Struggle in Jerash* (*Sira'a fi Jerash*), directed by Wasif al-Shaikh, which had fallen out of copyright that year ([figure 4.1](#)). Set in Jordan and Jerusalem and made by a group of independent filmmakers of Palestinian descent, *Struggle in Jerash* was the first feature film produced in the country, which had gained independence from Great Britain just over a decade earlier, in 1946.

**FIGURE 4.1**   Still from *Struggle in Jerash* (1957/2009). Courtesy of Eileen Simpson and Ben White, (cc) Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0.

Most films produced in Jordan have been international productions interested in using its desert landscapes for location shooting. Jordan's Royal Film Commission, founded in 2003, lists only fifteen Jordanian films in its "Jordan's Hall of Films" list, ten of which were made in 2007 or later; the other forty-seven are international films like *The Hurt Locker* (2007), *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), in which the country often stands in for another location inaccessible to the filmmakers.[14] When *Captain Abu Raed* (2008) was released as the result of a state-sponsored push to cultivate domestic production, the Jordanian film critic and historian Adnan Madanat became upset with those who proclaimed it to be the country's first film. In response he published an article in Jordan's *al-Rai* newspaper entitled "The First Film and National Identity":

> In the western Arab World, it was…foreigners who started film production, be it fiction or documentary. Such film productions were not considered First Films inasmuch as they were viewed as colonialist-era products. In other countries, such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, First Films were purely local enterprises, albeit technically and artistically immature, made by enthusiasts who were passionate about cinema even though they have not fully mastered cinema production.
>
> But not only did these pioneers not contend [*sic*] themselves with making the film; they manufactured their own production equipment and developed production techniques according to available recourses [*sic*].
>
> This was the case for pioneering Jordanian feature film *Struggle in Jarash* [*sic*] (1957), which was produced, directed, filmed, and acted by local independents. Some worked as projectionists in movie theaters, some artisans, others welding technicians, projection repairmen. Those were some of the skills that were employed in manufacturing film development gear, printing and cutting hardware, and sound sync system for the film.[15]

It was through this article that Simpson and White became aware of the film, which combines the romance and gangster genres with elements of a travelogue. The film was

heavily influenced by the Egyptian cinema of the time, in particular that of Youssef Chahine, who had produced two films with similar titles, *Struggle in the Valley* (*Siraa fil-wadi*, 1954) and *Struggle in the Pier* (*Siraa fil-mina*, 1956).

Madanat came across the film in the 1980s while researching a book on the history of Jordanian cinema. In the absence of an official archive *Struggle in Jerash* had no clear guardian. Madanat found that Mustafa Najjar, an assistant director on the film, possessed the only remaining 35 mm copy, which was in extremely poor condition. Madanat made a telecine copy of the print, which later went missing, making the low-quality VHS tape all that was left of a crucial text in Jordanian film history. Working from Madanat's tape in collaboration with Jordanian artists and intellectuals, Simpson and White produced *Struggle in Jerash*, a project that unfolds the cultural history residing in this near-forgotten film by making use of two key components of the digital afterlife of commercial film releases: the DVD director's commentary track and the market for bootleg DVDs. *Struggle in Jerash* appropriates a noticeably low-quality copy of a film historical text in its entirety and asserts a connection to an illegal form of distribution proper to the digital age —the market for pirated DVDs—in order to contest the privatization of images and the uncertain fate of the public domain.

## Polyvocality

Simpson and White digitized Madanat's VHS copy and used the transfer as the basis of a new, sixty-minute work. The image-track of the video consists of the 1957 film played in its entirety. The picture is extremely degraded, both from significant damage to the original 35 mm print and from its transfer to VHS tape. There are numerous scratches and blotches of decay, and sometimes the analog video scan lines become visible, clearly indexing the travels of the image through time. Simpson and White's intervention occurs on the soundtrack, which consists of the voices of twelve Jordanians who comment on what they see in the film. Giorgio Bertellini and Jacqueline Reich have described directors' commentary tracks as "value adding paratexts" that "[expand] films' authorial halo."[16] Inaugurated by the commentary the Criterion Collection produced for its 1984 laserdisc release of *King Kong* (1933), such extra features have traditionally served two primary functions: to regulate the meanings attached to the text through the reassertion of authorial control over signification and to generate revenue by producing a product for the collectors' market that offers more than simply the feature film. As such, the director's commentary track might be said to have a relationship to private ownership twice over.

Simpson and White turn this element of the digital circulation of moving images on its head (figure 4.2). On their *Struggle in Jerash* DVD the original 1957 film is included as a special feature (with English subtitles), while the commentary track occupies the main menu; text and paratext are inverted. Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus have written that on the standard commentary track, "individuals involved in the film's production are presented in the extra text as having privileged insights regarding a film's meaning and purpose, and, as such, they are used to articulate a 'proper' (i.e., sanctioned) interpretation. This privileged positioning may be best understood as a return to 'auteurism.'"[17] Something very different happens in *Struggle in Jerash*: the contemporary spectators commenting on their viewing of the film occupy no privileged position in

determining its meaning, nor do they serve to articulate a singular, sanctioned interpretation of the text. Often, they do not try to understand the text on its own terms but instead bring to it their own experiences.



**FIGURE 4.2** Photograph of table for recording commentary track of Eileen Simpson and Ben White's *Struggle in Jerash* (2009). Courtesy of Eileen Simpson and Ben White, (cc) Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0.

   None of the individuals involved in the making of the film—nor anyone of their generation, for that matter—offers commentary. Rather, those who share their viewing experience do so in an effort to open, rather than to close, the possible meanings that one might attach to their country's first feature. Hito Steyerl sees the poor image as endowed with a sociality: it "constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history" and "builds alliances as it travels, provokes translation or mistranslation, and creates new publics and debates."[18] Here this potentiality is borne out quite literally, as the rescreening of this forgotten film serves as the occasion for a discussion that ranges from questions of film technique to issues of national identity. White has noted that the group of individuals who comment on the film were not a representative sampling of the inhabitants of Amman but simply one group of people, those whom the artists met during their residency. He said, "It's almost possible that another version could be made by someone else. In a way, this is just one potential iteration of a number of commentaries."[19] Through its polyphonic weaving of voices the video contests a notion of the film as private property over which a single individual might lay discursive or legal claim, understanding it instead as part of a shared cultural commons. In line with this approach the disc is distributed using the Creative Commons license Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0, meaning that the work may be reused or remixed for commercial or noncommercial purposes, provided that the derivative work credits the authors and adopts the same license in turn.[20] Rather than simply flouting copyright law, then, Simpson and White draw on the

resources of the public domain. They produce a transformative work that serves to enrich and extend the cultural life of the source text.

# Purposeful Pirates

The second component of the *Struggle in Jerash* project reinforces this understanding of the 1957 film as a public good. Simpson and White reinserted the film into the most widely used distribution circuit for feature films in Jordan: the market for pirated DVDs. The Motion Picture Association of America estimates that the major American studios lose $6.1 billion to piracy each year, with 80 percent of piracy occurring outside of the United States.[21] As Barbara Klinger writes, "Piracy has thus incited an economic, legal, and moral panic in Hollywood, causing pirated films to appear as monstrous transgressions of copyright laws."[22] In the Jordanian context, pirated films do not appear as transgressive but rather are the primary way that commercial films are distributed in the country (figure 4.3). Simpson described the pirate markets in downtown Amman as "the best archive in town," a place where one might find a wide selection of American movies and television shows, as well as films from across the Arab world and beyond, on sale for one Jordanian dinar each.[23] Simpson and White took their version of *Struggle in Jerash* to Hamudeh DVD, a pirate operation large enough to have multiple branches and a website (figure 4.4). Hamudeh produced a bootleg version of the film with a color photocopy cover sporting the Hamudeh logo and a blank-labeled DVD inside, and integrated it into its collection of films. The artists have also made it available for free streaming on Vimeo.



**FIGURE 4.3**   Box of DVDs of Eileen Simpson and Ben White's *Struggle in Jerash* (2009). Courtesy of Eileen Simpson and Ben White, (cc) Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0.

**FIGURE 4.4**    Outside of Hamudeh DVD, Amman, Jordan. Courtesy of Eileen Simpson and Ben White, (cc) Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0.

This gesture reintroduced Jordan's first film into wide distribution, using an unofficial form of circulation to return a part of the country's audiovisual patrimony to its people in the absence of state-initiated efforts at preservation and dissemination. Steyerl writes that "poor images circulate partly in the void left by state-cinema organizations who find it too difficult to operate as a 16/35-mm archive or to maintain any kind of distribution infrastructure in the contemporary era."[24] In the case of Jordan such an organization never existed to begin with. *Struggle in Jerash* responds to this void while also speaking to another: the increasing emptiness of the public domain worldwide. Simpson and White's determination to seek out and make use of the resources of the public domain occurs at a time when its very existence is in jeopardy. The Berne Convention requires that signatory states guarantee a copyright term of the life of the author plus fifty years, but states are free to pass legislation guaranteeing longer terms, and such practices are increasingly widespread. Lawrence Lessig has noted that in the United States, "from 1790 to 1978, the average copyright term was never more than thirty-two years, meaning that most culture just a generation and a half old was free for anyone to build upon without the permission of anyone else."[25] This is no longer the case. Successive extensions of existing and future copyrights and the abandonment of renewal requirements caused the average American term to triple between 1973 and 2003, from 32.2 years to 95 years.[26] In the European Union, copyright extension legislation was passed in 2011 that extended the protection of sound recordings by twenty years to the author's life plus seventy years. Copyright critics fear that such extensions could continue indefinitely, effectively sounding a death knell for the public domain.[27]

In Jordan, films are protected by copyright for only fifty years following the date of production. Thus, *Struggle in Jerash,* made in 1957, entered the public domain in 2007, while European and American films produced in the same year remain under copyright. As the public domain shrinks, Simpson and White's project demonstrates how important it is to ensure that copyright terms remain limited. By working in a country that has yet to adopt major term extensions, they point to precisely what kinds of interventions are possibly being closed off to artists, scholars, and educators in jurisdictions that have. In this regard it is notable that *Struggle in Jerash* involves the appropriation of a film in its entirety, with minimal intervention on the part of the artist. Whereas fair use provisions might cover the use of small excerpts, this form of wholesale appropriation requires public domain material to be done legally. If Jordan had a longer copyright term, comparable to that of the United States or the European Union, *Struggle in Jerash* would have been an orphaned work, that is, a work that is still under copyright but commercially unavailable, with no copyright owner to be found. For archivists the most common response is to leave such works alone, for fear of unintentional infringement and possible litigation.[28]

As much as the recirculation of *Struggle in Jerash* can be seen as a gesture that makes manifest the losses to the public domain in Europe and North America through the extension of copyright terms, Simpson and White's intervention takes on an added resonance for contemporary Jordan, a country currently undergoing a significant reconfiguration of its attitudes toward copyright and piracy as it emerges as an important intellectual property market in the Middle East. In 1997 and 1998 Jordan appeared on the United States Trade Representatives' (USTR) watch list of countries with insufficient copyright legislation and enforcement. The 1997 report noted, "Jordan's 1992 copyright law is cumbersome and falls far short of international standards in most respects. Any protection offered by the law is undermined by a lack of effective enforcement mechanisms and, as a result, piracy is rampant."[29] New legislation passed in 1999 ensured Jordan's removal from the watch list and caused it to be singled out in the USTR's report that year as a site of significant progress.[30] Increased intellectual property compliance is key in stimulating foreign investment and, for Jordan, was necessary for the passage of the bilateral free trade agreement with the United States that was signed on October 24, 2000, and went into effect in 2002. The agreement included an obligation to adopt anticircumvention provisions of the sort mandated by the DMCA.[31] Such provisions render illegal even forms of copying that might qualify as fair use by criminalizing the disabling of copy-protection mechanisms. Economic incentives were thus accompanied by the forced importation of stringent American copyright statutes.

The period immediately following the signing of the trade agreement saw a significant increase in the number of copyright infringement cases filed in Jordan: from 6 in 2000 to 149 in 2001 and 210 in 2002.[32] Motion picture and software piracy remains rampant in the country despite efforts to conform to international standards of intellectual property law. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to expect that copyright legislation in the vein of that of the United States and the European Union will increasingly make its way to the country, resulting in augmented efforts to clamp down on piracy and in the impoverishment of the public domain. In Ramon Lobato's words the exportation of American-style copyright legislation to other countries through provisions in free trade agreements provides "a taste of the IP maximalism to come."[33] During this moment of

transition the recirculation of *Struggle in Jerash* asserts the value of a resource that might be lost—or, at the very least, rendered illegal to repurpose—if such developments were to occur.

## Documentary in Fiction

The notion of a cultural commons is crucial not simply to the gesture of bringing *Struggle in Jerash* back into circulation but also to the remarks found on the commentary track and, indeed, to the original film itself. Three primary forms of discourse populate the commentary that runs through Simpson and White's version of *Struggle in Jerash*: translation, historical contextualization, and the retrieval of documentary information about Jordanian history from within the film's fictional diegesis, often in the form of comparisons to the present day. Some respondents narrate what is happening in the film, translating key fragments of dialogue into English, so that this new version of *Struggle in Jerash* remains intelligible to viewers who have not seen the 1957 film. Adnan Madanat speaks through a translator, supplying a wealth of information concerning the production of the film and the context of its release. He relates, for example, that the movie was banned on its release owing to the appearance of the lead actress in her bathing suit and the inclusion of a kissing scene at the film's end. He adds that according to Mustafa Najjir the ban was overturned after Prince Hassan—at the time only ten years old—saw the film and "considered it a national achievement." Madanat also narrates the rediscovery and subsequent loss of the surviving 35 mm print. His contributions come closest to the variety of critic's voice-over that might be found on the special features of a DVD release of a historical film. His voice occupies a distinctly different discursive register from the others on the soundtrack, who seem to be encountering the film for the first time.

While the translation and historical contextualization serve clearly important functions within *Struggle in Jerash,* perhaps most interesting are the many remarks constituting the third form of commentary: observations that engage in a comparison and contrast of the Jordan depicted onscreen and the Jordan that exists today. As Bill Nichols has noted, every film is a documentary film; beneath the veneer of fiction, the moving image captures a real profilmic event, real landscapes, real monuments.[34] In a country such as Jordan, where no official audiovisual archives exist and very few films were produced prior to 2007, the images of *Struggle in Jerash* possess a strong testimonial value, even when they are integrated into the fabric of fiction. The 1957 film is of interest not simply because of the key position it holds in Jordanian film history but also because of the historicity of its images. When watching characters swimming in the Dead Sea, commentators remark that the water level was higher then and that the water appears to be less salty than it is today; in an extreme long shot showing mountains on the horizon, one speaker says, "These mountains are now filled with refugee camps."

Such voices guide the viewer to see forms of documentary testimony in *Struggle in Jerash* behind the fiction. Significantly, though, this investment in nonfiction representation exists also in the 1957 film. The film is riven between two tasks: constructing a narrative drawn from popular genres and using the moving image to showcase landscapes and important historical and religious sites within Jordan. The film begins as a romance, as the protagonist, Atif, picks up his love interest, Maria, at the

Amman airport. Maria is Jordanian but left for Turkey when she was ten years old. Though her age is ambiguous, she would most likely have departed the country before its 1946 independence. Atif, an employee of the Department of Investigation, takes Maria on a series of dates that also serve as a tour of the country. The film takes a turn toward the gangster genre when a band of crooks target Atif during his and Maria's outing to Roman ruins at Jerash, but after justice prevails, the romance resumes (figure 4.5).



**FIGURE 4.5** Still from *Struggle in Jerash* (1957/2009). Courtesy of Eileen Simpson and Ben White, (cc) Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0.

Alongside this narrative intrigue lies another project, one very much bound up in the efficacy of cinema in nation building, of the power of a people representing itself to itself. Maria tells Atif, "As long as I am by you I feel like I am home." He answers, "You are truly home," to which she responds, "It's true. I was born in Jordan." This moment represents an intersection of the film's two axes, as the romantic story line meets the film's desire to use cinema as a way of creating a nationally shared image repertoire. An amorous remark is resignified as an assertion of nationality. As if to create a Jordanian national cinema *ex nihilo*, the filmmakers of *Struggle in Jerash* ensured that as much as they might appropriate the narrative conventions of the Egyptian films that dominated the region, their film would be specifically Jordanian. It would, in Benedict Anderson's terms, imagine the nation-as-community through the cinema. As noted above, *Struggle in Jerash* appeared only eleven years after Jordanian independence and did so in a void of indigenous representations of the new nation-state. The precise territory of this new nation was also changing: Jordan captured the West Bank in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and formally annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem on April 24, 1950.

Easily identifiable locations in Jerusalem, such as the Temple Mount, feature prominently in the film. When Maria and Atif travel to the city on her second day in the

country for a leisurely outing, the car journey from Amman is given ample screen time, beyond any narrative function it might serve. After Atif's car pulls out of the driveway, there are forty seconds of extreme long shots of the car traveling across the Jordan River and through the landscape. No dialogue is heard; the interaction between Atif and Maria cedes its place to the display of territory. The film returns to the pair for a six-second medium long shot before departing again to display the landscapes of Jerusalem. Rosalind Galt has suggested that "landscape images in film are uniquely able to investigate [the] relationship of politics, representation, and history because landscape as a mode of spectacle provokes questions of national identity, the material space of the profilmic, and the historicity of the image."[35] Landscape provides a way to visually represent otherwise intangible notions of identity, to anchor a people to a place. Such deployments of landscape generally rely on on-location shooting, which injects a charge of actuality into what would otherwise be a fictional diegesis. Landscape emphatically emerges as a mode of spectacle in *Struggle in Jerash*, one carrying a strong political and affective charge for viewers in 1957 as much as today. Since Israel recaptured East Jerusalem and the West Bank during the 1967 Six Day War, visa issues and border checkpoints can make mobility between Amman and these areas difficult. After Maria and Atif cross the Jordan River, one female commentator remarks, "That's crazy. That's what my mom used to do. They used to go and have lunch in Jerusalem and then come back to Amman for dinner, all in one day. It used to take an hour. Now it takes a whole friggin' day." As the sound of the call for prayer rings out over a series of extreme long shots of the old city of Jerusalem, a male commentator remarks, "It's still used now. In all Muslim countries around the world, in movies it's always a symbol. To tell that you are in a Muslim country you put in the background the sound of the *adhan*, which is the call for prayer." In this instance the pairing of sound and image serves to signify a claim over contested land.

After these long views over the city, Maria and Atif visit the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, where in 1951 Mostafa Ashu, a Palestinian, assassinated Abdullah I, the first king of Jordan. On the commentary track one commentator notes that the film depicts the Jordanian crown at the door of the mosque—something that has long been absent. Though the film's characters are ostensibly present during this sequence, they largely disappear. The film breaks out its already tenuous fiction and shifts into a mode of nonfiction address typical of the historical documentary or travel film, with a male voice-over supplying information about the various attractions depicted onscreen. Maria and Atif must form part of the crowd of tourists that one sees onscreen, but they are not easily identified. The cinematography clearly prioritizes the documentation of these landmarks over any advancement of the fictional narrative. When the characters do reappear, they do so almost incidentally. On the commentary track a woman notes that the film uses classical Arabic for the voice-over that is quite different from the colloquial speech of the rest of the film, emphasizing how clearly the film shifts its mode of address in this sequence.

## After the End of History

In her 1999 book, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Catherine Russell writes, "Often including apocalyptic scenarios of crisis and destruction,

found-footage filmmaking tends toward an 'end of history.' The techniques of appropriation, recycling, and re-presentation place the status of the past, the history of the referent, in question."[36] Since the publication of that work, Russell has changed her attitude about the relationship between found footage and historical memory, stating that such practices can now provide "interesting access to cultural history" and that "film-makers are using images in ways that are not simply recovering the past but bringing all these histories to light."[37] *Struggle in Jerash* provides ample evidence to support Russell's optimism that repurposed archival images might in fact offer creative ways of reopening cultural history. The project displays an understanding of a film not as a discrete, self-enclosed text but rather as a social space that can facilitate dialogue and memory. To use the terminology of Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, *Struggle in Jerash* attempts to explore the "catchment area" of the work of art, that zone through which it travels via reproduction.[38]

The project also demonstrates an adamant refusal to find in its appropriated material a determinate point of origin. A work such as Sherrie Levine's *After Walker Evans* (1980) engages in a critique of the author-as-origin, but its very subversion of this notion is a form of reliance on it. In *Struggle in Jerash,* by contrast, the point of interrogation is shifted from an attempt to reconfigure producer-consumer relations to focus instead on the mediating term of circulation. The result is that the status of the author ceases to be the main point of interrogation, as is so often the case in works trafficking in found materials. Instead, the travels of the image become paramount, particularly the reproduction of images across formats and beyond their sanctioned or intended uses. But against the utopia of free circulation, Simpson and White cannily signal that whatever "image commons" may be said to exist is at once a contested ground under increasing threat. They fulfill Joselit's call for artworks to "build networks into their form by, for example, *reframing, capturing, reiterating,* and *documenting* existing content," but they do so while troubling his primary assumption: that these networks are mere pathways through which images may circulate as they like rather than channels that variously mediate, block, shape, and condition that which moves through them.[39]

A key element of Steyerl's concept of the poor image is the notion that the low-quality copy bears the imprint of its travels. One certainly sees this in *Struggle in Jerash,* not only in the degradation suffered by an image that has passed through multiple generations of copying but also on the soundtrack's capturing of those who encounter the past in the present through their viewing of the film. Here one finds an inversion of the idea that it is solely the auratic original that is inscribed with time; the copy, too, is shown to possess the ability to register the traces of its passage through the years. Theodor Adorno was deeply critical of Benjamin's notion of aura because he believed it risked resuscitating an ideal of authenticity precisely at the historical moment that such a thing became impossible to experience. As Adorno put it, "It is hardly an accident that Benjamin introduced the term [*aura*] at the same moment when, according to his own theory, what he understood by 'aura' became impossible to experience. As words that are sacred without sacred content, as frozen emanations, the terms of the jargon of authenticity are products of the disintegration of the aura."[40] Although Adorno articulated a scathing critique of authenticity, he also reserved a positive use of the word, one that locates the authentic in what is vulnerable and transient rather than pure and fixed. As Martin Jay has noted, this

usage of the term tended to take the form of *Authenticität* rather than the Heideggerian neologism *Eigenlichkeit*. It thus left behind the existential notion of what was "ownmost" to the subject and instead designated "artworks that register the passing of time, the inability to return to something primal and originary."[41] In other words, for Adorno the possibility of true authenticity lies paradoxically in that which denies what is often taken as authentic, namely, an uncorrupted return to a purity of origins. As he writes, "Scars of damage and disruption are the modern's seal of authenticity; by their means, art desperately negates the closed confines of the ever-same."[42] A modern conception of authenticity would not resurrect how things were then but rather register how that then has weathered the passage into this now. In all its scratches and blotches, video scan lines, compression artifacts, and polyvocal commentary, *Struggle in Jerash* registers "the scars of damage and disruption" that accumulate as time passes and thus opens the possibility of that paradoxical thing, an authentic copy that leaves the regime of private property far behind.

# 5
## The Limited Edition

In the early 1930s gallerist Julien Levy had a brilliant idea: to sell film prints as art objects. Levy is primarily known as the New York dealer who represented the surrealists; like them he had a passion for cinema and for challenging what counted as an artistic medium. He was a powerful advocate for the filmic experiments of artists, hosting the first American screening of Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* (1929) on November 17, 1932. He exhibited works such as Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936) and Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926). In 1932–33 he served as the president of the Film Society of New York, a not-for-profit organization that aimed to show films that might be too unconventional to attract a broad public. Taken by this enthusiasm for cinema, Levy wrote in his memoirs, "As part of my program to promote camera work as an art I hoped to be able to sell short films in limited editions to collectors."[1] He saw this model of sale as essential to the valorization of cinema as an artistic medium: "I had formed a collection of films reprinted on 16 mm stock, with two purposes in mind: films conceived by such important painters as Duchamp, Leger, or Dali should command much the same value as a canvas from their hand, and if a collector's market could be organized, I thought to persuade other painters to experiment in this medium."[2] Levy tried to promote the venture, but there is no record that he ever succeeded in selling a single print.[3]

Levy's initiative may be understood as participating in two seemingly contradictory impulses that marked the era: first, the desire to claim for cinema the status of art, something associated with French impressionist film theorists and filmmakers, as well as burgeoning film society movements in France and the United States; second, the desire to use cinema, with its basis in mechanical reproducibility and mass culture, to challenge the institution of art, something one might align with the filmmaking activities of the historical avant-garde. Steven Watson describes Levy as a "Harvard modernist," an individual who, like Alfred Barr Jr., "saw the traditional art hierarchy—which granted museum status only to painting and sculpture—as insufficient and inaccurate."[4] Though Levy's interest in cinema perhaps best embodies his desire to confound high and low and to rethink the status of the art object, his questioning of the hegemony of painting and sculpture extended beyond his involvement in avant-garde film. He sold books and periodicals, as well as found tchotchkes he called "kinack kinacks."[5] Levy was keenly interested in the sale of photographic prints, but such sales never generated enough income to keep his gallery afloat; this duty fell to the tried-and-true medium of painting.[6] One might think that in the middle of the Great Depression a market would emerge for photography as a cheaper alternative to unique works of art, but hard economic times are often accompanied by risk aversion, and banking on the collectability of photography as art in the early 1930s was a risk indeed. Given the lukewarm reception collectors gave Levy's photographic offerings, the notion that there might be a market for limited-edition film prints seems unthinkable. After all, like a photograph, film problematizes the notion

that the work of art is founded in uniqueness, but unlike a photograph, a film print cannot simply be displayed on a wall.

The situation appears considerably different today. Over the last two decades, as the popularity of film and video in contemporary art has soared, the limited edition has finally proved itself as not only a viable model of distribution but perhaps *the* model of distribution in artists' moving image. It represents a radical change in the sale of film and video when compared with uneditioned tapes and prints.[7] Today, films and videos are regularly sold as art objects, most often in an edition of three or four plus artist's proofs.[8] Although still nowhere near the salability of more traditional art objects, film and video are attaining a new market viability that has drastically changed the ways in which moving image art is bought, sold, valued, and seen. Though most editions are sold to institutions, a growing private collectors' market exists. In 2005 the *New York Times* profiled San Francisco collectors Pam and Dick Kramlich, who have numerous works installed in their home: "As eccentric as the Kramlichs' domestic situation may seem today, 10 years ago it would have been a downright oddity…. But now, video art is widely bought and exhibited by collectors and museums alike, and there are those who say flat screens may soon be as common on household walls as picture frames."[9] The moving image is now collected like painting, and central to this enterprise is the artificial imposition of scarcity effected by editioning.

The widespread espousal of the limited-edition model represents a reining in of the inherent reproducibility of the moving image and its wholesale recuperation into the symbolic economy it once compromised, that of the unique work of art. Authenticity—a concept that had never mattered much to film and video—becomes paramount. Though authenticity has historically been defined against the exchange principle, paradoxically it is precisely the authenticity attained through the rarefaction of the limited edition that has enabled the moving image to circulate on the art market. Put differently, here authenticity is not opposed to the exchange principle but in fact its precondition, something that throws into crisis authenticity's supposed residence outside an economy of fungibility. Of course, the precise variety of authenticity operative in the limited edition is far from the romantic concept of authenticity as an antitechnological, premodern wholeness. Rather, it is a form of authenticity that is philosophically false yet enables the generation of market value. For some this denial of reproducibility represents a betrayal of the specific qualities of film and video and the utopian hopes invested in them; for others it represents the only way they will be taken seriously as artistic media and the most viable economic model to support the livelihood of artists and filmmakers.

When purchasing a video edition, the collector will usually receive an archival master (once Digital Beta, but increasingly an uncompressed file format), exhibition copies in a current format, digital files, a signed and numbered certificate of authenticity, and a contract specifying the rights to exhibition, duplication, and format shifting. In the case of film the collector will usually acquire a master in the form of an internegative, a number of prints, a digital preview copy of the work, a signed and numbered certificate of authenticity, and a contract specifying the rights to exhibition, duplication, and format shifting. In some cases the technological support required to display the work might be included as a part of the edition, though such a practice is relatively rare. Editions sometimes also include ancillary materials such as still photographs or sculptural

packaging, included to endow the work with objecthood, but more commonly such objects (when they do exist) are sold separately from the edition.[10] When one buys an edition, one purchases a rather curious combination of rights, content, and technical support, the specifics of which are all closely regulated by the contracts accompanying the acquisition. This makes the accession of film or video into a museum collection distinctly more complicated than would be the case with more traditional artworks. Although the moving image does possess a kind of objecthood, it is crucial to recognize that what is for sale is less this object per se than a set of permissions, privileges, and responsibilities concerning the exhibition and guardianship of a given work over time. This was made especially clear in the case of Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010). Because of its high price and the great demand for the work, some editions were sold to coacquiring institutions; these institutions (such as the National Gallery of Canada and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) would both receive the hardware for the installation, but only one would be allowed to exhibit the work at a given time.

Between Levy's inaugural attempt to sell film prints and the recent embrace of the limited edition, there have been a host of efforts to sell film and video as art objects. This chapter will examine the roots of the limited edition in late nineteenth-century printmaking and bronze sculpture before tracing its persistent rearticulation in relation to film and video throughout the twentieth century. The notion of selling film and video as limited editions is proposed repeatedly but fails again and again until the 1990s, when it finally begins to meet with some success. This chapter will account for this important shift in the distribution and valorization of the moving image in art, while exploring both the benefits of this model and the criticisms it has provoked. Often, scholarly discourse eschews questions concerning the sale and pricing of art, with such subjects presumably thought to be vulgar and tasteless, a disavowed part of a business that never wants to recognize itself as such. Serious art magazines such as *Frieze* and *Artforum* rarely discuss the art market. But as the following pages will show, these practices in fact have an intimate relationship to the symbolic value attached to a given art object, as well as a direct impact on how that object may be collected and archived. As Isabelle Graw has noted, the notion that there is a strict separation between the lofty ideals of art and the more earthly concerns of the market is patently false, though often assumed.[11] Although not isomorphic, the financial valorization of art and the cultural valorization of art are inextricably tied. The discipline of cinema studies, whether dealing with experimental film or a blockbuster megaproduction, has consistently embraced questions concerning the economics of circulation in a manner that has largely eluded contemporary art history.[12] When dealing with an interdisciplinary object like artists' moving image, it is imperative that one follows the enthusiasm of the former rather than the reticence of the latter. Understanding editioning is key to making sense of the past, present, and future of artists' moving image and to parsing the relationship between practices that exist within the art market and those that exist on its periphery or in opposition to it.

# Origins

The practice of escalating the price of the art object and inciting consumer desire through the artificial cultivation of rarity existed long before the moving image was used in an art

context, but its appearance in the form known today is curiously contemporaneous with the invention of cinema. Artists had, of course, sold prints for centuries, but an economy of scarcity was not in force. When Albrecht Dürer abandoned painting for engraving, he explained his attraction to the reproducible medium as residing in its "economic expediency," but such financial considerations had to do with augmenting rather than restricting the number of copies the artist could produce. Dürer did not offer his works as numbered editions, and they were copied throughout Europe, both in their original medium and also as paintings, reliefs, and tapestries. Though such an indifference to one's intellectual property might seem strange to contemporary minds, as Edwin Panofsky put it, "The postulate of originality—and, conversely, the condemnation of plagiarism—is a fairly modern phenomenon which presupposes the interpretation of art and other intellectual achievements as a matter of individual 'genius.'"[13]

As early as the mid-eighteenth century, engravers began to announce that they were limiting the number of prints they would produce, though such prints were neither signed nor numbered.[14] Throughout most of the nineteenth century, reproducible artworks were issued in unlimited editions. As Élisabeth Lebon notes in her study of French bronze foundries, at this time "the impulse was not to limit production—on the contrary. Fairly early in the century, some founders simply tried to number their casts without limiting how many could be made, something that can only be understood as an attempt to better manage production."[15] When clients became reluctant to purchase a bronze with a high number stamped on it, the initial move was not to restrict the size of the edition but to eliminate numeration altogether.[16] Artistic production at this time inhabited what Rosalind Krauss has termed an "ethos of reproduction."[17]

Changes, however, were afoot. By the second half of the nineteenth century, with an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie and a proliferation of images resulting from the invention of photography, the value of originality was on the rise. Michel Melot has identified the "foundation stone of the marketing of the modern print" as residing in Jean-François Millet's etching *Departure for Work* (1863), produced for a group of collectors, the Société des Dix.[18] Collector Alfred Sensier wrote Millet a letter, asking him to write on each of the first edition of ten prints, "1st state. M. Jules Niel, November 1863, J. F. Millet." There was no guarantee that no further prints would be made, but such an inscription nonetheless served to mark out the prints belonging to the first edition as more originary and hence more valuable than what might come later. Despite this seeming interest in rarefaction, when one collector, Philippe Burty, insisted that the plate be destroyed, Sensier wrote in return, "I must inform you that nine of the subscribers are of an entirely different opinion: they do not want the plate to be destroyed."[19] In 1869 Millet was once again confronted with a request to destroy the printing plate, this time of his *Spinner from the Auvergne* (1869), which was to be included in a book Burty was assembling that would be limited to 350 copies. On January 15, 1869, Millet wrote to Sensier: "I gave my consent to the destruction of the plate in spite of my wish to hold on to it…. Between ourselves, I find this destruction of plates excessively brutal and barbarous. I am not competent enough at business to understand what the outcome is supposed to be, but I do know that even if Rembrandt and Ostade had made each one of these plates they would still be annihilated. That's enough about all that."[20]

Millet's experiences with Burty are evidence of a changing attitude toward rarity and

reproducibility, one that can be traced to the appearance of photography. Photography threatened to pull fine art prints down into the degraded status of mere copies in a climate that increasingly privileged uniqueness. As a response printmakers turned to a number of strategies, often deployed in tandem, to differentiate their work from such reproductions. Significantly, several bear striking resemblance to those used today in the sale of the moving image on the art market: printmakers could limit the size of the edition, destroy the plates, use outmoded techniques, or number or sign each print. The categories of art and originality were demarcated by double recourse to artisanal techniques and contractual means. Publications such as André Marty's *L'estampe originale* (1893) championed the notion of the *belle épreuve*, or one-of-a-kind print. This concept privileged the originality and uniqueness of the print, even if the artist was working with a reproducible medium. It was less as a financial consideration than a matter of authorship and artistic status, but one is not strictly separable from the other. As Melot has put it so aptly: "There is no criterion of quality without a criterion of quantity."[21]

Phillip Dennis Cates writes, "By 1889, with the organization of the Société des peintres-graveurs (Society of Painters-Printmakers), the limited-edition, signed, and numbered print became the standard for guaranteeing the artistic status of a print, and thus, its commercial value."[22] The same development occurred in bronze sculpture at roughly the same time. According to Walter Benjamin, the advent of mechanical reproducibility threatened an economy of art founded in aura and uniqueness. With the invention of photography and cinema, cult value gave way to exhibition value, and the work of art was made possessable through the proxy of its reproduction. The history of bronze editions and fine art prints suggests a different, more dialectical narrative: there is a shift from an unrestricted number of copies to a largely artificial imposition of scarcity precisely as the reproduction of images and goods attained a new facility. Rather than a preexisting value that was compromised by reproducibility, authenticity and originality were produced by it. Amid the new threat of the copy, of endlessly reproducible images, these qualities took on the status that they retain today, even after decades of vanguardist assaults on their hegemony. In a world of surfeit, rarity triumphs. Or, in Krauss's words, the copy is nothing other than "the *underlying condition of the original*."[23]

The limited edition was, then, a late nineteenth-century invention that rescued compound arts such as lithography and bronze sculpture from succumbing to the degraded status of mere copies in a new economy of desire. Henceforth, the number of objects produced would be restricted to generate an aura of quasi uniqueness. In the case of the compound arts, value was assured by what Jean Chatelain has called "systematic rarefaction";[24] although artificial, this scarcity possesses a true market agency, particularly as it became convention through consensus of the actors involved. In a striking prefiguration of later attempts to sell film and video as art objects by drawing on the artist's established reputation in more traditional artistic media, in the first decade of the twentieth century Ambroise Vollard began to sell limited-edition engravings made by painters such as Cézanne and Munch. These prints participated in the new culture of reproducibility by extending high art into the domain of bourgeois accessibility. But they did so while reconfirming the values of rarity and authenticity produced as a reaction to this culture of consumption by insisting on the limited availability of prints. In a second parallel between Vollard's moment and our own, just as the tectonic realignment of image

circulation proper to the late nineteenth century spawned rearguard efforts to reconstruct uniqueness, the new mobility of images following digitization of media in the 1990s would result in the countermovement of restricting the circulation of moving image artworks by instituting the limited edition as the market standard.

In the early twentieth century, however, the limited edition was not simply an issue of rarity for rarity's sake. Until the passage of a French law in 1968 that would restrict bronze casting to an edition of eight plus four artist's proofs, the most frequent size for bronze editions in France was six, something that Lebon speculates is in all likelihood linked to the lifespan of the gelatin mold.[25] In the case of lithographs, as well, limiting the edition size could be justified as guarding against the possibility of degraded prints. In its initial employment, then, the "systematic rarefaction" of the limited edition was both a question of fabricating the status of a quasi original *and* a means of ensuring quality control—which, of course, would have been increasingly important when dealing with the augmented prices that resulted from limiting the size of the edition. Here one encounters a crucial difference from the moving image, which can produce many more copies—in the case of digital video an infinite number—before image degradation becomes a concern. In bronze sculpture and certain printing processes editioning finds partial motivation in the material limitations of the media involved; in the case of the moving image it goes against what is the most potentially revolutionary attribute of its material base. Nevertheless, in another echo from the turn of one century to another, the rhetoric of ensuring the quality of the work quite interestingly reappears, mutatis mutandis, in the 1990s as a justification for the necessity of restricting moving image art to a limited-edition model of sale: major galleries insist that editioning is necessary to ensure that a given work will not be viewed in unfavorable circumstances, such as on a laptop screen or in a highly compressed digital file format. In a span of roughly one hundred years the very media that exemplified the supreme threat and radical promise of the copy would be, through a series of expectations and agreements, transformed into de facto originals.

## Collectors and Cooperatives

In 1957, a year before making his first film, A MOVIE (1958), Bruce Conner wrote a letter to his gallerist, Charles Alan: "New horizons, Unexplored territory. There is a potential patron of The Experimental Film. He hasn't been touched. I don't mean [a] patron who finances a film. Someone who buys a 'print' of a film. People can be found who will purchase experimental films as they would a print or a painting. They have to know that these films can be considered as valid works of art as well as paintings and sculptures and musics [*sic*] and dances etc. This means apart from the mass public phenomena called movies."[26] Resurrecting Levy's dream of a model of film distribution that would be more aligned with the realm of fine art than industrial cinema, Conner put into writing his plans for the sale of such films before even having one ready to offer to collectors. The Alan Gallery, however, declined to finance the venture. Once more, a proposition to sell prints as art objects—though not specifically as limited editions—remained unrealized.

While this failure might be due in part to the lack of an established market for the sale of film as an art object, it is also linked to the absence of a provision to limit the number of

prints that would be available and to the proposition that the collector would purchase a single print for exhibition rather than a master format (such as an internegative or interpositive) from which prints could be made. Celluloid film is an eminently fragile material, inescapably subject to wear and the possibility of damage at each projection. What motivation would a collector have to purchase an artwork that would degrade each time it was exhibited, particularly one that might be owned by countless others? The model of the limited edition that emerged in the 1990s would provide solutions to both of these problems by restricting the number of certified copies and providing collectors with a master format from which to make exhibition copies. Nonetheless, the notion that a viable distribution model for experimental film could be found in selling prints to private collectors was not something that Conner immediately abandoned. In his 1963 application for a Ford Foundation grant he reiterated his conviction: "I do not rent my films. I sell prints. I conceive of them as an engraver might conceive of an etching and then sell copies of it in a gallery…. I consider film distribution, as it is now, to be antagonistic to artistic process."[27]

As I noted in chapter 2, Conner believed that his films were best suited to repeat viewings in a domestic setting so that the viewer might discover something new each time. The 8 mm reduction print provided one avenue of accomplishing this, the art market another. There is, though, an element of disingenuousness present in the statement that Conner did not rent but rather sold prints. Instead of any private collectors' market, whether editioned or uneditioned, rentals from distributors such as Cinema 16, the Museum of Modern Art, the Film-Makers' Cooperative, and later Canyon Cinema constituted the primary method of circulation for Conner's films from the time they were produced until close to his death. His statements on the possibility of selling prints as art objects nevertheless serve as a reminder of an untaken path of experimental film history— for one of the primary characteristics that distinguishes experimental film from artists' moving image is the former's commitment to a rental model of distribution rather than a limited-edition model of sale.

The origins of experimental film's rental model are found in the late 1940s. As an increasing number of individuals began to make what would come to be known as avant-garde or experimental films, it became necessary to build distribution networks to support this fledgling field of practice. Amos Vogel's Cinema 16—which took on A MOVIE immediately after its release—was founded in 1947 and became the first major distributor of contemporary experimental film in the United States. At a time when film was by no means an accepted medium of institutionalized artistic practice, the channels of distribution and exhibition developed to nurture the emerging art were by necessity outside of the gallery context. Rather than imitating the art world and selling prints as collectible objects, Cinema 16's adoption of a rental model based on a per-screening fee mimicked both commercial film distribution and an organization with which it had much more in common: the circulating film library established at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935.

Cinema 16 served as a crucial precursor for the establishment of artist-run organizations such as the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative (1962), the London Film-Makers' Co-operative (1966), and Canyon Cinema (1967, of which Conner was a cofounder), which would support experimental film as a distinct mode of production that continues to this

day. Central to the founding ethos of the cooperative model was an emphasis on access and integrity. Such organizations charge a per-screening rental fee, determined largely by the format and length of the work. Though such fees vary, at the time of this writing, an average fee at Canyon Cinema is between $3 and $5 per minute of projected 16 mm film, plus shipping charges. Institutional sales sometimes occur but constitute a small fraction of overall income and are made for the life of the print only, meaning that the print is not to be duplicated in any way and that the sale contains no provision for the replacement of damaged prints.[28] LUX has a set fee schedule for theatrical screenings, with works up to 30 minutes long renting for £50, 30–59 minutes for £120, 60–119 minutes for £180, and 120 minutes or more for £250, but artists are free to set their own, higher fees if desired. These fees are split according to a preexisting agreement between the distributor and the filmmaker.[29] In the case of gallery-based exhibition, bespoke arrangements are made that depart from pricing used for the per-screening model. On the whole the result of experimental cinema's belief in the democratizing status of the film medium was severe financial difficulty. While this poverty of experimental cinema in some sense resonates with its countercultural affiliations, it is important not to romanticize it: most filmmakers were very concerned with being able to make a living, turning to other forms of employment, such as teaching, to supplement the meager income gleaned from rental receipts.

While public exhibition was by far the dominant context for the viewing of experimental film, initiatives to develop a private sale market did exist. Although both turn cinema into a form of privately owned property, the notion of offering reduction prints for sale to home viewers was very different from the artificial rarefaction of the limited edition in that the former proposed to exploit the possibilities of reproduction inherent in the film medium to reach new audiences. Like proponents of the reduction print, the Fluxus artists turned to film precisely for its capacity for circulation and reproduction: issuing unlimited film editions as a part of the Fluxboxes was a way to intervene in the symbolic economy of the work of art, to refuse the notion of the original in favor of the industrially produced multiple. Fluxfilms were available for sale both on their own and as a part of the Fluxboxes; in 1965, for example, Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1964–66) was sold on its own as a loop in a small plastic box for $3 ($22.73 in 2015 dollars) or as a part of a Fluxkit for $100 ($757.58 in 2015).[30] In addition to these initiatives Fluxfilms films were shown at festivals and deposited with the Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York City for rental distribution.

At this time the moving image provided a way to pursue the same dematerialization of the art object that was occurring in performance, happenings, and conceptual practice alike. Raymonde Moulin has noted that the contestation of the singular rarity of the work of art in the twentieth century played out between two poles: the nothing and the multiple.[31] In its lack of objecthood, performance embodies the nothing, while the work of Fluxus artists may be thought of as exemplary of the multiple. Notably, the moving image partakes of both, doing away with the art object and denying singularity at once, thus positioning it as a potentially trenchant critique of rarity and uniqueness. The entry of film into the art world occurred under the sign of democratization and a leveling of hierarchies and, as such, had much in common with the fledgling experimental cinema and its emphasis on access. Even Warhol's prolific film production remained outside of any real

sales initiative. Despite the desire to undo uniqueness and rethink what counted as "art," however, the Fluxus artists and the filmmakers interested in issuing 8 mm reduction prints nevertheless prefigured later efforts to edition moving image art by conceiving of film as an object that could be sold and possessed rather than simply experienced. They suggested that film was something that could be owned.

## Certified Art

Despite the fact that film and video are visual forms, on the art market they are wholly logocentric in that they depend absolutely on signatures and certificates to secure economic value. The 1960s marked the emergence not only of a more widespread presence of the moving image in art but also the appearance of a document that is integral to the way that it circulates on the market today: the certificate of authenticity. Though the use of agreements between artist and collector is centuries old, such documents traditionally guaranteed the work from conception to completion, specifying attributes such as subject matter, size, or materials and also fixing a date by which it might be delivered. The modern certificate of authenticity, by contrast, is largely concerned with what happens after the work's completion, with ensuring its enduring connection to the moment of fabrication and to the artist. By understanding the existence of the work of art to reside in the performative act of certification rather than in any of its inherent qualities, such certificates owe less to the old agreements between artist and patron than they do to Marcel Duchamp. In the words of Benjamin Buchloh, "Beginning with the readymade, the work of art had become the ultimate subject of a legal definition and the result of institutional validation…. The definition of the aesthetic becomes on the one hand a matter of linguistic convention and on the other the function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (a discourse of power rather than taste)."[32] Perhaps surprisingly, Duchamp did not issue certificates authenticating his readymades or declaring them to be works of art. But after the move of the readymade had been made on the chessboard of artistic intervention, the path was open to designate anything as a work of art and secure its status as such through the act of notarization.

In the 1960s the legal contracts that would ensure the enforcement of the artificial rarity of the limited edition were developed and employed by artists who were engaged in challenging what might count as a work of art. Already in 1944 Duchamp had paid for a notary to certify that his *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) was authentic, and by 1959 Yves Klein was selling *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility* (1959–62), in which the artist would sell empty space ("immaterial zones") for gold and issue the collector a receipt in return. The purchaser then had two options: to keep the receipt or to burn it, at which time Klein would throw half of the gold he had received for the work in the Seine. In Piero Manzoni's *Declarations of Authenticity* (1961) the artist would sign another person and issue a certificate stating that the person is "therefore to be considered an authentic work of art for all intents and purposes." Robert Morris's *Untitled* (*Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*) (1963) reversed the usual function of certification by employing a notary to help execute a document in which he would withdraw "all aesthetic quality and content" from a work for which the collector, architect Philip Johnson, had not paid him. In the 1960s, then, the certificate is closely aligned with a sometimes humorous rethinking of artistic authorship

and objecthood. In the case of artists such as Manzoni, Klein, and Morris the certificate was not simply an administrative and legal support to be hidden from public view but an integral part of the work—sometimes its only enduring trace.

The use of the certificate of authenticity in relation to the moving image is rather different in this regard, having much more in common with its employment in minimalism, which also dates to the 1960s. For minimalism the removal of the artist's signature from the artwork was part and parcel of the broader withdrawal of his or her hand in favor of the impersonality of industrial production. But rather than do away with the signature entirely, it was simply displaced onto an accompanying certificate. Here, such a document is a matter of authenticating the object, thereby facilitating market exchange and ensuring value. Such certificates are not understood to be artworks in themselves and would not tend to be displayed publicly. Dan Flavin's graph paper certificates, for example, include a drawing of the work in felt-tip marker but also the handwritten proviso "This is a certificate only. It is not a drawing of mine." But this certificate is not just any piece of paper. If it is lost or destroyed, the collector would be unable to resell the work since Flavin refused to issue replacements.[33] (Many artists will offer replacement certificates in the case of loss or theft.)

What had begun as a satirical play on the centrality of authenticity as a criterion for judging the work of art became, with minimalism, a no-nonsense market standard. The certificates of minimalism establish the contractual means that govern the sale of the moving image today. Artist David Claerbout has said that the certificate he provides in addition to the various technological components of his installations is "the most important thing of all. If the certificate is lost, the work itself is also lost. I therefore usually advise the buyer to above all store the certificate safely."[34] For both minimal art and the moving image the certificate of authenticity has the power to transform a mass-produced industrial commodity into a work of art through a legal contract. Moreover, in both cases such documents are frequently used to prescribe guidelines for the maintenance or manufacture of the work after purchase and can specify terms of exhibition, refabrication, and resale. The widespread acceptance of the certificate as a way to reintroduce notions of authenticity and authorship when dealing with works of art made in reproducible media was a key touchstone in smoothing the way toward the valorization of the moving image on the art market.

## Thwarted Pioneers

Despite the general alignment of the moving image with reproducibility and circulation, in the late 1960s several galleries across Europe began to explore the possibility of issuing limited editions of artists' films. In 1966 Claude Givaudan opened a gallery on the Boulevard St-Germain in Paris that specialized in the sale of artists' multiples; by 1968 he began to include film in his offerings. News of this initiative spread from Paris to London, where Gregory Markopoulos and Robert Beavers entered into a partnership with René Gimpel of Gimpel Fils Gallery to do the same. In a letter to his friend Alice Burkhardt written in late August 1968, Markopoulos expressed interest about the plan, writing that it was "the only way to survive with filmmaking" since "distribution was for the birds."[35] As will be explored at length in chapter 7, Markopoulos withdrew his work from rental-based

distribution that year out of a conviction that this model was inhospitable to the filmmaker and did not permit the level of control he desired to have over his work. In correspondence with Gimpel, Markopoulos established guidelines for the sale of prints, producing documents such as "Proposals Towards a Mutual Agreement of Sale" and "Proposals Towards a Preservation System of Collector's Prints." He tried to get other filmmakers, such as Stan Brakhage and Peter Kubelka, interested in the project.[36] Birgit and Wilhelm Hein, who also became involved, were keen for the initiative to work, citing the hope that it would be more lucrative than their previous experiences with distribution.[37] On September 20, 1969, Gimpel held a screening at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in an attempt to promote the venture and stimulate interest among collectors. An anonymously penned column entitled "Films for Sale" appeared in the ICA's publication *Eventsheet* to advertise the evening. It justified the sale of editions by emphasizing that fine art and experimental film shared a mode of production: the maker works alone, with "total, individual control."[38] In addition to works by Markopoulos the evening included films by Robert Beavers, Stan Brakhage, Kurt Kren, the Heins, and Dieter Meier. In a letter to Peter Weibel and Valie Export the Heins described the audience as composed of "*very* successful [*arrivierten*]" individuals, while to Kren they wrote, "All the important people were there."[39]

Although the author of "Films for Sale" was in large part correct in comparing the modes of production employed in fine art and in experimental film, it is worth emphasizing the extent to which artistic production—and particularly sculpture, the medium mentioned in the column—was undergoing increased technologization at this time. Writing in the *Observer* in February 1969, critic Nigel Gosling noted that Gimpel's initiative was "an intriguing example of a current fashion in reverse": instead of art objects being transformed into multiples through the embrace of industrial fabrication, here multiples were being transformed into art objects.[40] Though the editions were expensively priced, between £600 and £5,000 (a purchasing power of between £8,820.96 and £73,508.00 in 2014),[41] Gosling specifies that the filmmakers would retain both the original negative and normal distribution rights, meaning that the collector would have to negotiate issues of wear-and-tear and be open to the possibility that copies of the film might circulate beyond the numbered edition. Indeed, in his "Proposals Towards a Mutual Agreement of Sale" Markopoulos suggests that the gallery should take on the task of promoting "projection copies" that would circulate outside the edition to galleries and museums across Europe and North America, meaning that the limited nature of these editions was far from guaranteed.[42]

When Gimpel and his family expanded to New York City in March 1969 with the opening of the Gimpel Weitzenhoffer Gallery at 1040 Madison Avenue, the *New York Times* carried an announcement of the initiative, noting that Gimpel Weitzenhoffer was the first major American gallery to engage in the sale of film as art objects.[43] Despite this enthusiasm and promotion, the initiative was stillborn. Birgit Hein recalls being very disappointed at how quickly the venture fizzled.[44] Correspondence between Gimpel and Markopoulos continued through the close of 1971, as both parties attempted to move forward with their plan and smooth out wrinkles, but there were no willing collectors, and Gimpel does not recall selling any prints by Markopoulos or Beavers. He attributes this failure to 16 mm technology being "too impractical" for collectors to operate at home and

also to unresolved legal questions concerning copyright and exhibition rights.[45] Markopoulos and Beavers ended their involvement with Gimpel after the gallery proposed to abandon the limited-edition model and sell the films at a lower price in unlimited editions.

Markopoulos did not, however, immediately give up on the sale of film prints as art objects. Throughout 1971 he continued to discuss the possibility of editioning film with galleries in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Italy but had no success. Paolo Cardazzo of the Galleria D'Arte Del Cavallino in Venice wrote to say that Markopoulos's prices were too high and that "it [was] unusual for a customer to spend so much money for a movie that lasts so little time."[46] Before finally abandoning the editioning model, Markopoulos's last idea was to sell the editions himself through advertisements in arts publications. Inspired by an advertisement in the *International Herald Tribune* for a limited-edition book by Muriel Sparks, he proposed the plan to Beavers, but it does not appear that he went further with the idea than writing to the Baden Baden–based magazine *Das Kunstwerk* to inquire about its advertising rates.[47]

The close connection between the vogue for sculptural multiples and the fledgling market for film and video is also visible in Gerry Schum's twin projects in Düsseldorf, the Fernsehgalerie (1968–70) and the videogalerie schum (1971–73). In 1968 Schum made a film about multiples entitled *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum* (1968), or "Consumer Art—Art Consumption," for the West German television station Westdeutscher Rundfunk. Produced in collaboration with Hannah Weitemeier and Bernard Höke, it was broadcast only once, on October 17, 1968. The thirty-minute film begins with a series of pans over brochures and price lists advertising multiples for sale, while a voice-over lists them by artist, issuing agency, edition size, and price. *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum* introduces the viewer to a number of gallerists dealing in multiples and adopts a somewhat pedagogical tone. It aims to help a broad public understand the benefits of what is presented as a democratization of art occurring as a by-product of contemporary artists' interest in seriality and industrially produced materials. The Swiss graphic designer Karl Gerstner calls for the necessity of creating an art market that would be "different from today's market" and would include a broad public, those who don't yet "visit galleries, just as in the past people were timid about visiting banks." Schum interviews Heinz Mack, an artist who plans to engage, as the voice-over puts it, in a "special form of multiplication: reproduction through the mass medium of television." Mack describes a plan for an exhibition that would take place solely through broadcasting, with all the objects displayed therein to be destroyed after the program ended. The artist fulfilled this desire with the *Tele Mack, Tele-Mack, Telemack* project (1968–69); Schum would take up a similar idea for his Fernsehgalerie.

With the Fernsehgalerie Schum escaped the objecthood of the work of art and the elitism of the gallery. His first commission, *Land Art,* was broadcast on the West Berlin television station Sender Freies Berlin on April 15, 1969, and included artists such as Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and Robert Smithson. To introduce the program, Schum expressed that "the Fernsehgalerie was borne [*sic*] of a wish to directly confront the broadest possible audience with the current trends of international art production."[48] It is worth noting that the particular trend of international art production Schum chose to showcase was one with the relationship between rarity and reproducibility at its core: much land art was concerned with, among other things, interrogating the dialectical

tension between the singular, auratic work inseparable from its geographic emplacement and the ways in which it would circulate via its reproduction. Perhaps best encapsulated in Smithson's notion of the site/nonsite, much land art was not about resurrecting auratic purity but about understanding rarity and reproducibility as at once propelling and cancelling one another. Smithson, for example, intended that his *Spiral Jetty* (1970) would circulate through documentation, particularly through his film of the same name, which includes numerous references to the ways by which natural landscapes enter cultural representation (be it in surveyors' maps or in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* [1959]). Schum's Fernsehgalerie took up a similar wager, using the dematerialized medium of television to bring works of obstinate materiality and singularity to a vast audience. Some one hundred thousand viewers watched the broadcast.[49]

After a second commission, *Identifications* (1970), Schum had great difficulty securing the continued support of broadcasters, leading him, in something of an about-face, to the idea of the videogalerie. The advent of video had drawn an increasing number of artists to the moving image. Although the new medium was by no means wholly accepted by the artistic establishment at the time, it did enjoy a closer relationship to the gallery world than did experimental film, largely because many of its practitioners simultaneously produced work in other, more salable media. Like experimental film, early video did not derive the bulk of its funding from the sale of individual works. But whereas experimental filmmakers often held teaching positions to secure an income and had little involvement with the art world, video art was largely funded by grants, residencies, and the sale of the artist's nonvideo works. Despite these differences, video shared with experimental film the sense that it was a noncommodifiable, reproducible medium invested with a democratizing potential that would revolutionize artistic production.

Schum's videogalerie, located at Ratzingerstrasse 37 in Düsseldorf, turned away from this paradigm and away from the dematerialized mass dissemination of the Fernsehgalerie. The videogalerie issued videotapes in both limited and unlimited editions according to a precisely formulated pricing model, complete with signed and numbered certificates of authenticity. Editions were made available as early as the October 1970 Cologne Kunstmarkt art fair, even before the November 30, 1970, broadcast of *Identifications*. Schum believed that the relative simplicity of the technology involved made video into a salable object in a manner that was impossible with film: "The key point about videos is that they do not have the problems 16mm films do…. The problem with films is that you need a darkened room and someone who knows how to project the film, while television is a part of our daily environment, it has none of the difficulties of projection as people are familiar with the medium."[50] A 1971 price list for the videogalerie shows unlimited editions priced between five hundred and eight hundred Deutschmarks, thus beginning slightly above the four hundred Deutschmarks Schum had designated as the average price for multiples in *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum*. An edition of six of Joseph Beuys's *Filz-TV* (*Felt TV*, 1970, shown in *Identifications*) is listed at DM9,800 and an edition of four of Gilbert and George's *The Nature of Our Looking* (1970, also in *Identifications*) is priced at DM4,800 and declared sold out.[51]

Ian White has written that Schum's videogalerie embraced "an effectively untested financial model" in its embrace of the video limited edition.[52] It is a model that would have to undergo its true test not in Düsseldorf with Schum but in New York with Leo

Castelli: in late 1972, after eighteen months in operation, Schum decided to close his gallery because of financial difficulties. A low demand from institutions and private collectors, coupled with problems of video format compatibility and high overheads, pushed the gallery into an untenable financial situation. Schum committed suicide in March 1973. While it would be easy to see Schum as a sell-out, trying and failing to commodify film and video, based on the understanding of multiples advanced in *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum,* a rather different view comes into focus. Commodification might have been a necessary side effect, but it was more likely that Schum's primary aim in editioning film and video was to open contemporary art to new audiences who would have been priced out of the luxury market of unique objects. Understanding Schum's activities in this way makes the switch from the Fernsehgalerie to the videogalerie appear not as a betrayal of principles but as an effort to carry on the same project by other means: to open new pathways of circulation for artistic production.

Unlike Schum, Castelli had no particular commitment to the advancement of the multiple as an art form or to the expansion of contemporary art's collector base. Castelli had begun to deal in film and video in 1968 for the simple reason that several of the most prominent artists he represented—such as Bruce Nauman and Robert Morris—had begun to produce work in those media. In 1974 Castelli undertook a joint venture with Ileana Sonnabend that would legitimate the sale of videotapes as art objects, while simultaneously offering a rental-based model of distribution. Run by Nina Sundell and Joyce Nereaux and initially based in a loft on Greene Street in New York, Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films Inc. became the first organization devoted to selling moving image art in the United States, offering both film and video for sale to private collectors and institutions. *Art Rite* magazine publicized its inauguration this way: "Most of their tapes sell according to length and whether they are b & w or color (rather than by the status of the artist). Prices tend to be under $250. A distribution system is just beginning to be set up. Castelli-Sonnabend will control the showing and rental of the tapes (and film) while other galleries will be able to buy for resale at a gallery discount. The market at this time is almost exclusively universities and museums, but the number of collectors who are interested is slowly growing."[53]

Like many bronze editions in the late nineteenth century, these prints and tapes were numbered solely for administrative purposes and produced as demand presented itself. If a purchase became damaged or worn, the collecting institution could have it replaced for the cost of copying and shipping. In most cases only a handful of copies were produced and even the most popular offerings—such as Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll* (1972) and Richard Serra's *Television Delivers People* (1973)—made it to just over fifty copies.[54] The organization also issued a very small number of videotapes (but no films) as limited editions of twenty, priced at $1,000, all of which had been made at Art/Tapes/22, a production center in Florence run by Giancarlo and Maria Gloria Bicocchi.[55] Though these are marked as such in volume 1, number 1 of the Castelli-Sonnabend catalogue, by 1982 none of the works marked as editions of twenty retain that designation—though they do retain their elevated price.

At Castelli-Sonnabend rentals far outweighed sales, and the artificial scarcity imposed by limiting the number of tapes available did not incite increased demand; on the contrary, the editioned tapes did not sell as well as many of the uneditioned tapes, presumably

because of their inflated prices. As early as 1977 the venture was experiencing serious financial difficulty. A memo dated September 30, 1977, states that the organization had $14,415.23 in outstanding bills and owed $29,539.33 to artists.[56] By February 1979 there was serious discussion about alternative ways of running Castelli-Sonnabend, which consistently posted an annual deficit of some $10,000, a buying power of $32,870.24 in 2015 dollars. The ideas floated included obtaining not-for-profit status or reabsorbing the organization back into the Leo Castelli Gallery. Despite these ongoing difficulties, Castelli-Sonnabend continued its activities until ceasing operation on July 1, 1985, in part because it could not keep pace with shifting video formats.

After the shuttering of Castelli-Sonnabend, video found continued support in public and private granting agencies and not-for-profit distributors. Uneditioned works could be rented through organizations such as Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), founded in 1971 by Howard Wise after the closure of his eponymous gallery, and Video Data Bank (VDB), founded in 1976. In fact, after the dissolution of Castelli-Sonnabend many of the tapes distributed by that organization found their way to EAI and VDB, where they were made available for rent.[57] In the British context video also stayed outside the commercial gallery circuit. David Curtis notes that though galleries such as Lisson Gallery, Nigel Greenwood, Jack Wendler, Robert Self, Angela Flowers, and others began to dabble in video in the early 1970s, they soon became aware that no market for it existed. Furthermore, Curtis writes that the arrival of selections from Castelli-Sonnabend at "The Video Show: First Festival of Independent Video" in 1975—evidence that a commercial gallery might stand behind video—was at odds with the British experience: "Interest by British galleries had been limited; many British artists disapproved of limited-edition works in principle; certainly any hope that a market might develop in Britain proved premature."[58]

In experimental film, although the rental model stayed strong, some individuals began to display frustration about the limited possibilities for remuneration stemming from that form of distribution. Seeing the increased acceptance of the moving image in the art world, certain experimental filmmakers followed Markopoulos in looking to that realm for financial support. Kenneth Anger claims to have made a series of limited-edition films in the late 1970s for private collectors that were never publically exhibited.[59] After a visit to Amsterdam, where he had come into contact with successful efforts to sell film prints, Larry Jordan published a polemic entitled "Survival in the Independent–Non-Commercial–Avant-Garde–Experimental–Personal–Expressionistic Film Market of 1979." Jordan advocated not joining the art world per se but adopting some of its practices, such as the sale of films to private collectors. "Film artists," he wrote, "have been too long intimidated by their own counter-cultural identifications on the one hand and fear of the art 'establishment' on the other."[60] Jordan ruefully acknowledged that the elevation of a work's monetary value can lead to an augmented respect and to increased possibilities of archival preservation, as well as the fact that the sale of films as art objects was perhaps the only way filmmakers would be able to secure a livelihood from their practice without resorting to other forms of employment, such as teaching. Unlike Conner before him, Jordan recognized that the sale of a film for the life of that print only would not succeed: "Purchase of film *prints* has never greatly interested art collectors for the very reason that a *print* is of no real value as an investment. Only one-of-a-kind originals (from which the collector can make prints or not) have saleable value—saleable, that is, at prices which

will be of any sort of real help to the film artist. Progressive collectors *will* collect films (as they do Video) under the right conditions."[61]

Jordan recognized that collectors wanted to be able to display their acquisitions while also maintaining the work in pristine condition—something that would be impossible through the sale of prints alone. He also acknowledged the pull of the unique object. Though Jordan does not elaborate on what would count as a "one-of-a-kind original"—the negative, perhaps—he identifies solutions to two key problems that had obstructed the sale of films as art objects in the past. If film were to become collectible, it would have to bend to the demand for scarcity proper to the collector's market, much as video had done before it. Jordan's proposal received no substantial attention within the experimental film community. Yet he looked forward to the day when the "first sale of a five minute film original for $10,000 or more" would change "the face of the art world…. Film would be a valuable commodity, which at present it is not. And no one could ever shrug it off again."[62]

## Toward Market Viability

This is precisely what took place in the 1990s. The decade witnessed a tremendous explosion of moving image art. With improvements in projection technology video was no longer restricted to the small image of the television monitor. The digitization of media spurred a new mobility of images and offered artists a new ease with production and postproduction techniques. Analog film found itself under threat of obsolescence and reappeared as a major component of gallery-based practice for the first time since its displacement by video. Moving image art had finally accumulated an aesthetic history, with pioneers such as Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Andy Warhol now firmly canonized. Many of the decade's most prominent emerging artists, such as Matthew Barney, Stan Douglas, and Douglas Gordon, worked extensively in video, and major museums endorsed the moving image as never before.

Amid this flurry of activity, the old idea of the limited edition, which had never entirely disappeared, gained new life—and this time both private and institutional collectors were ready to invest. The 1980s had solidified the position of editioned photography on the art market; the 1990s would do the same for film and video. Major New York gallerists such as Barbara Gladstone, Marian Goodman, and David Zwirner began to represent an increasing number of moving image artists and to edition their work. Though active throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bill Viola began to produce small editions of his work with his first private gallery show at Donald Young Gallery, Seattle, in May 1992, offering three works in an edition of two plus one artist's proof.[63] David Zwirner Gallery opened in 1993 and immediately began to offer editioned video by artists such as Stan Douglas (*Hors champ*, 1992) and Diana Thater (*Late and Soon: Occident Trotting*, 1993). In 1994 Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 4* (1994), the first of the series to be produced, was issued by Barbara Gladstone Gallery in an edition of ten on 35 mm in deluxe sculptural packaging. Lucy Gunning, Ann Hamilton, William Kentridge, and other prominent artists all began to edition work in the first half of the decade. As moving image art began to increasingly mimic the structures of independent film and production costs soared, the high revenues secured by the editioning model were more necessary than ever.

Multiple cooperating factors worked to create increased market viability for film and video in the 1990s, the first of which was economic. Art Basel's Noah Horowitz emphasizes the crash of 1990 as instrumental in the creation of a new market for video: "Galleries increasingly began exhibiting video largely because, according to Barbara London, associate director in MoMA's Department of Film and Video, 'they had nothing to lose'; sales had dried up and the opportunity cost of showing video and other alternative practices diminished."[64] After the market for large-scale color photography—also a medium of the multiple—began to boom in the 1980s, the moving image could appear as a worthy risk with a low opportunity cost. While the new viability of cheaper, less-object-oriented work may be ascribed in part to the severe price deflation at that time, other key factors were at play, factors that demonstrate the extent to which market valorization is never a matter of economics alone but rather is deeply shaped by elements of the art world that at first glance operate far from the transactions taking place at auction houses and commercial galleries.

The second factor is linked to technological innovation and changes in the speed and facility of image reproduction and circulation. While the mainstream adoption of the Internet in the mid-1990s spurred a significant artistic trend of remaking and recycling existing cultural forms, it also resulted in a qualitative leap in the transportability of images and sounds that induced a crisis of authenticity comparable to that of the late nineteenth century. Just as was the case for printmaking and bronze sculpture in the late nineteenth century, the moving image editions that emerged in the late twentieth century were attempts to reconstruct authenticity and (near) uniqueness amid a new proliferation of copies. During this period edition sizes shrank dramatically: while Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films offered editions of twenty, by the 1990s this number had dropped to fewer than ten and often as few as three. At a time when images were more mobile than ever before, the limited edition provided a way of guaranteeing that the work would circulate only within authorized channels and would be seen only in the proper setting. While it was always possible to duplicate videocassettes, the 1990s and 2000s heralded a qualitative shift in the ease of image reproduction. Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America had cause to assert that his organization was fighting its "own terrorist war" against copyright infringement—a war it continues to lose.[65] Unlike the film industry, the art world had access to radical measures that would successfully ensure the integrity of its product. Rose Lord, director of Marian Goodman Gallery, has stated that "all our artists want their works to be shown under very specific circumstances, where every aspect is carefully calibrated. That's why we have collectors sign purchase agreements that insure that the works will be shown as per the artist's wishes."[66] The open circulation of artists' work on DVD would result in a flood of copies of varying quality that could be consumed on laptops or as ambient background at a party. Quality control is thus asserted as a motivating factor behind the limited edition: the rarity of the work is constructed not simply to entice collectors but also to guard against the possibility of a degraded image.

The third and perhaps most important factor in the rise of the limited edition is again a matter of technological change but also of institutional politics: it concerns the advent of high-quality, low-cost video projection and its tremendous institutional endorsement from the early 1990s onward. The moving image might have once challenged the traditional

museum, but in the 1990s, endowed with a new, large-scale mode of display, it was recruited to help institutions secure relevance in an increasingly competitive marketplace demanding breathtaking, immersive experiences. Where institutions go, the market follows. Institutional endorsement can have a profound effect on the price of an art object, a fact clearly demonstrated by the controversy surrounding the New Museum for Contemporary Art's *Skin Fruit* exhibition of trustee Dakis Joannou's private collection in 2009.[67] In the case of photography the J. Paul Getty Museum's June 8, 1984, purchase of five major private collections of vintage prints for a reported $20 million forever changed the market possibilities of the medium.[68] While no single event comparable to the Getty purchase may be cited in the case of the moving image, the 1990s and 2000s saw an institutional investment without parallel in the history of art. The cavernous spaces of newly opened or newly renovated museums, many of which are devoted exclusively to contemporary art, called for colossal installations and big box office receipts.[69] The turn away from monitor-based presentation and toward projection resulted in a greater sense of monumentality and an increased assertion of presence in the space of the gallery. It pulled video away from its associations with television and its domestic banality and aligned it with a medium by then possessing increasing cultural cachet—the cinema.[70]

While projection had been possible since even before the invention of video recording technology, it was seldom used in art practice until cheap, bright, crisp projectors came to market in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1992 video installation featured heavily at Documenta IX, the biggest, costliest, and best-attended Documenta since 1959.[71] As one critic put it, the curator, Jan de Hoet, "knows that there is an almost desperate need now to bridge the worlds of high art and popular culture in a new way, and that using massive exhibitions like this one to attract hundreds of thousands of people is certainly a part of that process."[72] In 1996 both *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and *Spellbound: Art and Film* (Hayward Gallery, London) were huge shows, bringing together contemporary artists with Hollywood directors in a drive for accessibility. Museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, and the Whitney Museum of American Art greatly expanded their moving image holdings during this time, purchasing historical and contemporary work and also commissioning temporary projects.[73] Christopher Eamon, former curator of the Kramlich collection, has stressed the extent to which the institutional endorsement of the installation format—rather than the 1990 market crash—is key in understanding the ascendance of video art on the 1990s and 2000s art market.[74] An installation, after all, cannot be easily rented and more clearly asserts its difference from mass circulating films and tapes through its claiming of gallery space. It was a reciprocally beneficial situation: major museums looked to the moving image for scalar intensity and relevance, making commissions and purchases at prices high for the moving image yet a pittance compared to painting; in turn, this institutional legitimation accorded the moving image a new status on the primary market.

# Opposition and Advocacy

The increased visibility of the limited-edition model has brought increased criticism. For some artists, such as Martha Rosler, the solution is to opt out, to continue to issue

unlimited editions that will be distributed through organizations such as EAI and VDB.[75] For others the popularity of the limited edition is something to be attacked outright. Produced anonymously and distributed online by the activist/artist collective ®™ark (pronounced "art mark"), *Untitled #29.95: A Video About Video* (1999) is a fifteen-minute work that constructs a schematic history of video art based on the changing relationship between the medium and the market. It embraces a low-tech collage aesthetic that appropriates various clips of video art from the last forty-five years and rephotographs them off of television monitors. On the soundtrack a computerized female voice-over offers a narrative of the medium as subject to a tragic fall into market exploitation. As *Untitled #29.95* would have it, at the time of its introduction to artistic production, video was used to "challenge the authority of the mass medium and the materialism of the art world." The narrator continues: "Video was born under radicalism, and from the beginning it was used as an instrument of resistance." A brief interval of black gives way to Rosler stabbing a fork into the air, her *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) playing on a television screen. Castelli is singled out as the villain who tried to commodify video by making it into a limited edition, but, the narrator tells us, "It didn't work. Thank God. Perhaps they thought video was too much like TV, the ultimate in lowbrow culture."

*Untitled #29.95* follows the development of video through the late 1970s and 1980s, asserting it to be a rich field of practice closely linked to activism—not just uncommercial but decidedly anticommercial. The video posits the decimation of National Endowment for the Arts funding for media art as the event that put an end to politicized video practices circulating outside of the institutional art world. In its place a gallery-bankrolled video art emerged that eschewed political commitment in favor of productions *Untitled #29.95* deems decadent (Matthew Barney) or trivial (Lucy Gunning).[76] The video cites a 1998 *New York Times* article by Roberta Smith, "Art of the Moment, Here to Stay," as signaling the new acceptance of this brand of video in the gallery establishment. Smith proclaims the importance of 1990s practices by comparing them to pioneers like William Wegman and Bruce Nauman. The narrator intones, "She does not even mention the eighties, as if an entire decade of incredible video production around race, class, gender, sexuality, media, politics and power relations never even existed. Now videos are being sold in limited editions in New York galleries and not for $29.95." White text scrolls on black screens, listing works that have been editioned and their prices: "Stan Douglas, *Overture*, $150,000, limited edition of 2. Diana Thater's *China* $60,000. *Cremaster* by Matthew Barney, limited edition of 2, $25,000. Gillian Wearing's *10–16* I heard went for $60,000. It's just a videotape, for God's sake."

*Untitled #29.95* is not alone in arguing that the existence of the limited edition fundamentally contradicts the medium-specific qualities of video. Pierre Huyghe has said, "For videos, editions are fake…. When Rodin could only cast three sculptures of a nude before the mold lost its sharpness, it made sense. But all my works are on my hard drive, in ones and zeros."[77] Yet Huyghe issues his films and videos in limited editions through Marian Goodman Gallery, suggesting that despite being "fake," editioning remains worthwhile for him. In a similar vein Dieter Daniels has remarked that "the principle of the signed, limited-edition video cassette or DVD is absurd. A signature does not impart an image carrier with the character of an original, but only stands for a commercial agreement to limit the edition to a certain number of copies, whose extent depends not on

the reproducibility of the medium as for woodcuts or etchings, but merely on market-strategy factors."[78] Certainly, the aura of rarity that surrounds the limited edition is an artificial construction, but it is one with real effects—both positive and negative. Editioning is no more "fake" than the convention of delaying the DVD release of a film until after its theatrical run has been completed; it is, like the delayed DVD release, a mechanism to generate value. These are conventions that are agreed upon by market actors, conventions that possess a certain truth despite their status as historical constructs.

The critique of editioning advanced in *Untitled #29.95* greatly oversimplifies the relationship between moving image and the art market today. Nowhere does the video confront the difficult question of how artists might make a living from their art if not by editioning. The recent movement of many individuals associated with the experimental film tradition into the gallery context testifies to the possibility of the kind of financial support private and institutional collectors can provide. Kenneth Anger, Harun Farocki, Isaac Julien, Jonas Mekas, and Leslie Thornton are but a few examples of those who have decided to edition their work after long careers outside the art system. Matthias Müller, another such filmmaker, has stated that, owing to financial realities, "there is no alternative *but* a gallery, which demands that works be sold as limited editions."[79] Similarly, though Anthony McCall has expressed "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," he simultaneously recognizes it as a sustainable model that allows the sale of one work to finance the next.[80] For those who are successful in selling work to collectors—a fate certainly not met by all—editioning can help to resolve the problem that had perennially faced experimental film: the lack of a viable economic framework.

At stake in the sale of the moving image as limited edition is not only the artist's present but also the artwork's future. When a collector buys an edition—sold not as film print or as DVD but as a set of archival materials and rights governing the usage of those materials—he or she also takes on responsibility for the care and preservation of that work. Many museums, such as Tate Modern, will only accession editioned artworks—which means that the limited edition is not simply a way of cashing in but is also a way of ensuring that the artwork will be amenable to institutional structures that participate in history-writing and that enable the preservation and exhibition of the work for posterity. It is without question that much work remains to be done to grapple with the particular challenges that the moving image poses to the practices of acquisition, collection, and exhibition at major institutions, and there may be cases in which such institutions will have to adjust their policies to cater to its needs. But the limited edition constitutes a site at which the moving image and the museum are meeting each other halfway. While certainly some rental-based distribution organizations, such as Electronic Arts Intermix, are engaged in serious preservation activities, the involvement of collecting institutions is necessary to ensure the stewardship of vulnerable media artifacts. Freely circulating VHS tapes, DVDs, or compressed computer files are unable, for reasons of quality and longevity, to function as archival masters. It is expensive and time-consuming to engage in processes of digital migration from format to format. Preservation is a costly business, and an institution is more likely to invest in a given work if it has secure knowledge that it is one of a limited number of stakeholders in it. For many moving image artworks, editioning is perhaps the

best way to ensure long-term safekeeping.

## Ex Post Facto

These financial and archival benefits have together motivated the increasingly common practice of retroactive editioning, whereby historical works uneditioned at the time of production—sometimes circulating through the rental model—are later offered for sale in limited editions. Like editioning more generally, this practice has precedents in the photography market, where editioned prints are sometimes made long after the photograph was taken, even after the photographer's death. In 2012 the Center for Visual Music issued a three-screen "reconstruction" of Oskar Fischinger's multimedia event *Raumlichtkunst* (1926/2012) in an edition of five.[81] The Paul Sharits estate has offered the multiscreen installations *Shutter Interface* (1975) in an edition of five and *Dream Displacement* (1976) in an edition of three. In 2008 the Jack Smith estate was sold to Barbara Gladstone Gallery, which financed the restoration of eleven films made between 1950 and 1980, offering them together as an edition of ten to institutional collectors only.[82] (Restricting sales to institutions asserts increased control over the circulation of the editions, as they will not risk being flipped as they might be by private collectors.) Especially given the extent to which Smith resisted any form of commodification during his lifetime—consistently turning to the unfinished film as a means of evading a commercial logic and decrying the "landlordism" of the "rented world"—this gesture signaled a significant recuperation of the history of experimental cinema by the art market, even though Gladstone also deposited new prints with rental-based organizations, intelligently allowing this form of distribution to coexist with the edition. Institutions acquiring the edition received a set of prints and an exhibition copy on DVD but no master materials, meaning that they must go back to Gladstone to replace prints or update formats when necessary. Although this solution is viable in the short term, while Gladstone Gallery remains in operation and is able to supply replacements, the future of these editions after such a time remains uncertain.

More forward thinking is the model adopted by the Conner Family Trust. Under the direction of Michelle Silva, the Trust issues historical works by Bruce Conner in editions of six plus two artist's proofs through the Michael Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles, providing acquiring institutions with a package of master materials that enable long-term preservation. The first three of these editions were issued during Conner's lifetime and are not fully retroactive in the sense that they involve not only the digital restoration of film elements but also the artist's reimagining of his own historical material to create new works. EVE-RAY-FOREVER (1965/2006) is a new edit based on a silent three-channel 8 mm installation exhibited in 1965 at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, using footage from COSMIC RAY (1961); THREE SCREEN RAY (1961/2006) is a three-channel installation with sound, also originating in COSMIC RAY; and EASTER MORNING (1966/2008), the last work Conner completed before his death, returns to the 8 mm Kodachrome of EASTER MORNING RAGA (1966). Acquiring institutions for these works include the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Walker Art Center. This strategy of revisiting past work to edition a new version has also been pursued by Kenneth Anger,

who exhibited a three-screen edition of *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1958/2014) through Sprüth Magers in the Unlimited section of Art Basel in 2015, based on a rarely screened 1958 version.[83] Neither Conner nor Anger used triple projection for the first time with these editions; both had employed it in historical iterations of the works in question. Yet the resurrection of the three-screen format in the new century is notable for transforming canonical films known almost exclusively as single projections seen in the cinema—namely, COSMIC RAY and *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*—into multichannel installations befitting the gallery setting in which editioned artworks are most often encountered. Greg Zinman's astute assessment of the editioning of *Raumlichtkunst* might apply here, too: these are "timely instantiation[s] of the burgeoning art world interest in cinema's expanded field."[84] Film history is reconfigured to meet the demands of contemporary exhibition practice.

Approaching Conner's death in 2008, the estate initiated the process of meticulously restoring and editioning selected films. The estate withdrew from circulation the uneditioned DVDs issued in 2002 and 2003 by the Kohn Gallery and in 2006 pulled all prints in distribution with cooperative organizations such as Canyon Cinema.[85] (Prints and digital copies remain available for rent through the estate on a discretionary basis.) The first film selected for editioning was CROSSROADS (1976), which had received substantial attention in the art world after its inclusion as a digital installation (Conner's first) in *Unknown Quantity*, an exhibition conceived by theorist Paul Virilio for the Fondation Cartier in Paris in 2002–3. Its reputation in the art context grew when it was included in the 2006 Berlin Biennale, *Of Mice and Men*, curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni, and Ali Subotnik. CROSSROADS was editioned in 2013 following an extensive restoration and digitization.[86] Offered to institutional collectors only, it was acquired by institutions including the Israel Museum, the Pinault Foundation, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art/Museum of Modern Art (a coacquisition), and the Hammer Museum. Editions of A MOVIE, BREAKAWAY (1966), REPORT (1963–67), and LOOKING FOR MUSHROOMS (both the Beatles and Terry Riley versions, 1959–67/1996) are currently in progress. Silva describes the motivations behind the decision to edition selected historical works as multiple: it allows the works to reach new and larger audiences, it provides a way to finance costly restoration work, and, above all, it is a means of ensuring quality control for the work of an artist who never wanted his films to be shown online because of the presence of advertisements and what he believed to be poor viewing conditions.[87]

A comprehensive edition package enables the estate to guarantee the long-term integrity of the work and endow institutions with the materials and information necessary to preserve the artist's intentions. Institutions purchasing CROSSROADS, for instance, receive a 35 mm release print; a DCP; 4K DPX restored files and audio on an LTO-6 cartridge; 4K DPX restored files, audio, and exhibition formats on RAID; and a certificate of authenticity signed by Jean Conner, the artist's widow. From the 4K scans collectors can produce further film prints if required. Accompanying these materials are extensive installation guidelines that establish acceptable dimensions, lighting conditions, projection standards, painting specifications, and seating provision. Editioning has also made it feasible—though it remains costly—to clear copyright for music that appears in the films, something Conner never did during his lifetime despite his use of songs from high-profile

musicians such as Ray Charles and the Beatles, leaving his work open to charges of infringement. Editioning has in two ways enabled the estate to bring Conner's work, in Silva's words, "above ground": the restricted circulation of the editions allows the estate to safely clear rights to only cinema and museum exhibition, forgoing unrestricted rights that would allow online broadcast (which would be much more expensive but is prohibited in the edition contracts), and it provides the funds to do so.

If Huyghe deemed editions "fake," the practice of retroactive editioning adds an additional twinge of phoniness by occurring ex post facto, often transforming works that had inhabited an economy of the multiple into quasi originals and betraying the ideology of access that has historically characterized experimental cinema. The rise of this practice poses serious questions about historicity and authenticity.[88] For instance, to what extent are the original distribution choices of a particular work to be considered as an integral part of its constitution as an artifact? Does the retroactivity of later editioning compromise the work's authenticity by imposing a condition not present at the time of production? Current institutional practice suggests that the answers to these questions are "not very" and "no." On the photography market later editions are not valued as highly as vintage prints, which are presumed to be more authentic owing to their having been printed close to the time the photograph was taken, either by the photographer or under their supervision.[89] This hierarchy does not appear to resonate in the market for moving image works, where the uneditioned prints of many museums' film and education departments are more akin to vintage prints (that is, they tend to have been made closer to the film's creation) but are nowhere near as valuable as an edition. This difference between the film and photography markets possibly stems from their very different material constraints: photography does not degrade with each showing as film does, and there need be no debate about whether an institution possesses the rights to transfer a photograph to a digital format for exhibition, as there is with film. The edition's more expansive set of rights (which can ensure image quality and format flexibility), newly restored materials, and greater archival stability accord it more value than would be generated by whatever augmented, "vintage" authenticity one might attach to an older print.

If an institution owned an old, uneditioned print of CROSSROADS, its curators might wonder why they should now invest in the high-priced edition, when they could instead continue to rely on their print. Showing prints on loop in a gallery setting results in their ruin within days, so inevitably copies must be made. Given the high cost of photochemical film, most institutions turn to the production of digital exhibition copies when they wish to display an uneditioned film from their collection in the gallery. Although it is a common occurrence, the production of such copies—analog or digital—often violates the terms of the license under which that print was acquired, which establishes a lease for the life of the print only, with no duplication permitted without the artist's permission. Even if this license does allow duplication, if the film was acquired in the predigital era, only a very generous reading of the contract would assume that this includes format shifting. The relatively low price of such prints—conventionally three times the laboratory cost—is tied to the restricted set of rights they offer. If an institution wishes to go beyond these rights, as is necessary to show work on loop in a gallery setting, it has a duty to clear permission with the artist or the estate and, if necessary, to renegotiate the terms of the license. Though this does not always occur, it should be recognized as best practice. The artist, of

course, has the right to refuse and insist that the print may not be duplicated for exhibition, in which case it cannot be shown, at least outside of rare cinema screenings that will have minimal effect on its material integrity. It was this situation that led the Rose Art Gallery —owner of the original, uneditioned 1965 EVE-RAY-FOREVER reels used to undertake the restoration—to repurchase the work as edition six of six in 2011.

Retroactive editioning provides a way of according institutions the reproduction rights they want given current technological and exhibitionary conditions, and it provides artists a means of being remunerated for this greater latitude. But despite these advantages for both parties, this practice has one significant drawback for museums: it is very expensive. It is patently unfeasible for institutions to repurchase editions of all their uneditioned films. They habitually depend on artists to grant permission for them to take liberties beyond the license originally accorded with the sale of the uneditioned print so that exhibition copies may be produced, or, as often occurs, they simply proceed without asking. The ascendance of retroactive editioning threatens to jeopardize this practice and put additional constraints on the exhibition of historical experimental film in a gallery setting. Such is the double-bind of retroactive editioning: while it proposes a possible model for ensuring quality control, long-term preservation, and financial viability, it does so for a very limited number of artists and an even more limited number of works, at times in stark conflict with existing practices. While receiving significant criticism for the imposition of artificial scarcity, the Conner estate has successfully accomplished the artist's transition out of one model and into another, helped undoubtedly by his high stature and established reputation as an artist working in other, more traditional, media. But things remain much less certain for other filmmakers, even the most prominent. In its collision with the older practice of acquiring uneditioned prints, retroactive editioning makes abundantly clear the extent to which all editioning is more about rights and permissions than about the ownership of objects. But it also stands as perhaps the most potent symptom of the shifting institutional position of historical experimental film in the era of artists' moving image, the fate of which remains to be seen as the practice develops beyond its current, nascent stage.

## Viewing Copies

Like any good manifesto, *Untitled #29.95* ends with a call to action. Over rephotographed footage of Barney's *Cremaster 5* (1997) the viewer is told that by going to the ®™ark website, [www.rtmark.com](www.rtmark.com), one can purchase "liberated" copies of limited-edition videos for only $29.95. Viewers are also asked to send whatever "liberated videos" they may have in their own collections to the ®™ark website so they can be made available for free downloading.[90] The Robin Hood(s) of Chelsea, the maker(s) of *Untitled #29.95* plan to "steal video art from the rich and give it away for free, or at least for the reasonable cost of $29.95." The viewer is advised, "Remember: video was meant to be a democratic medium." Since the release of *Untitled #29.95* in 1999, many works have indeed been "liberated," though not precisely as urged in the video's closing call-to-action. Alternative economies of circulation have emerged precisely as the limited-edition model has gained in popularity. Though *Untitled #29.95* proposes an intervention that would contest the way that videos are "held captive" by editioning, these unauthorized channels of circulation

exist in parallel to the sale of official editions. The circulation of editioned artworks on the Internet is exceedingly common, whether through illegal YouTube postings, DVD trading networks, or members-only BitTorrent sites. Many Bruce Conner films, for instance, continue to circulate on Karagarga as rips of the DVDs issued in 2002 and 2003. Artists frequently supply screeners of editioned works to curators and scholars that are neither a part of the edition nor a designated artist's proof. Through these unofficial channels interested individuals can access these works for their personal or professional use with no harm done to the official editions in the possession of galleries and museums. Without the signature or certificate—inscriptions imparting authenticity and uniqueness—a DVD copy is simply a DVD copy.

Rather than an overturning of the limited-edition model, Sven Lütticken has advocated for the growth of this parallel economy of distribution grounded in "viewing copies" that are distinct from collectible, certified copies.[91] Lütticken notes that the viewing copy tends to circulate "confidentially and in semi-secrecy" rather than through official channels of distribution. Notably, these unsanctioned copies tend to be more common than official DVD releases. *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, *Zidane: Un Portrait du 21ᵉ siècle,* 2006) was issued as a mass-market DVD and as a limited edition of seventeen that paired a DVD of the film with rush footage from one of the seventeen cameras trained on Zidane throughout the football match, but this case is something of an exception. In an effort to come to terms with why this may be the case, Lütticken has speculated that "the emergence of over-the-counter viewing copy editions was halted not so much by fears that the 'real' work would be tainted artistically and/or financially, but by the fact that there was big money to be made from exclusive limited editions. Even if unlimited viewing copy editions do not threaten the aura of such gallery pieces, why bother with them when the returns are bound to be marginal at best, or, more likely, non-existent?"[92]

Indeed, while in 1997 the David Zwirner Gallery had a waiting list for Stan Douglas editions priced in the six figures, a group show of uneditioned videotapes priced between $20 and $100 sold only five copies.[93] These uneditioned tapes do not promise the same return on investment as a Douglas edition might; issuing mass-market DVDs promises no lucrative financial returns, simply exposure to potentially less-than-favorable viewing conditions. However, in the case of artworks that do not rely on substantial installation components, such viewing copies can serve as important resources for scholars, students, and educators. Even works that do rely on a particular spatial configuration can be relayed through forms of documentation that provide a secondary form of access to the work that clearly distinguishes itself as such. At present it remains difficult to teach contemporary artists' moving image because of the very limited availability of many of the most significant works produced since the early 1990s. If prominent commercial galleries wish to truly support this sector, ensuring that such works are available to students and scholars is of utmost importance. A promising gesture in this regard is the website of Candice Breitz, an artist represented by the blue-chip gallery White Cube but who took it upon herself to create an online portal for the display of her work. Breitz makes her multiscreen installations viewable in their entirety through a controlled interface that does not enable downloading and clearly frames the materials presented as documentation, while also including installation shots that allow the viewer to imagine how they would appear in a

primary context.

In the meantime LUX, the London-based not-for-profit distributor of artists' moving image, has proposed another way of mediating between the exclusivity of the limited edition and the conviction that film and video are democratic media. LUX was founded in 2002 as an amalgamation of three predecessor organizations: the London Film-Makers' Co-operative, London Video Arts, and the LUX Centre. As such, it has a strong historical connection to the rental model of distribution and its focus on access, often taken to be antithetical to the practice of editioning. Yet LUX has not eschewed editioned works altogether. Director Benjamin Cook has said, "We realized a few years ago that [the cooperative] model was becoming increasingly anachronistic in terms of the market and the institutional art world, which is informed by the market. We really felt like we needed to rethink our position in relation to those things."[94] The result involved devising a novel compromise that acknowledges the financial and archival benefits of editioning while also insisting on the need to ensure availability and circulation.

Though LUX does not sell editioned works, it partners with artists and galleries to serve as a renter of editioned works, thereby forging a hybrid space between two otherwise separate modes of distribution. If, for example, a work is issued in an edition of three plus artist's proofs, one of those artist's proofs will be deposited with LUX and be made available for rent. Although this model is suited only to single-channel works, it represents a true step forward in the attempt to find innovative solutions for collection and display. It preserves the cooperative spirit while making use of the benefits of the limited-edition model without succumbing fully to its fetishization of rarity. As Cook puts it, "We really believe that one thing about film and video, in its very nature, is that it needs to circulate and be seen. What we are trying to do here is to create a system that equally values the need for works to be sold in limited editions—in a way so that the institutional art world can understand the value of those works—and that has built in a respect for the fact that these are theatrical works that need to continue to circulate in the world."[95] If a work is acquired by an institution and then never seen again, its value—even understood in a strict market sense—will be compromised. It must be remembered that value is produced not only through scarcity but also through circulation. There is at times an assumption that the limited-edition model is fundamentally incompatible with other forms of distribution, whether the rental model, online streaming, or the publication of uneditioned DVDs. This, however, is emphatically not the case. Since the editioning model is essentially one of rights management, offering one set of rights to a collecting institution and another to a client, whether educational or private, who rents the work from a distributor, is perfectly feasible.

The example of LUX and its hybrid model is instructive: it speaks to the need to move beyond existing models to develop better and more sophisticated ways of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the moving image. Commenting in 2010 on his 1979 proposal to sell experimental films as originals, Larry Jordan remarked, "I never thought that the exact idea I proposed in that article would be *the* idea, but I wrote the article to provoke those ideas. The mechanics were up for grabs."[96] Without a doubt the mechanics remain up for grabs today, at a time of tremendous technological change. The limited-edition model is now appearing online: in 2011 the platform Sedition (www.seditionart.com) launched as an online marketplace for limited-edition digital artworks, including videos,

while in 2015 Daata Editions ([www.daata-editions.com](www.daata-editions.com)) followed suit, commissioning artists to make editioned works expressly for the platform. While Sedition's editions are large—between two thousand and ten thousand—and priced between £5 and £500, Daata Editions positions itself more closely in line with art market conventions, with an edition size of fifteen and prices beginning at $200 and extending to $5,600, with the edition increasing in price in $200 increments as it sells out, then doubling to $5,600 for the final copy.[97] While the long-term viability of such initiatives remains to be seen, they are indicative of the ways in which new forms of digital reproduction are challenging traditional mechanisms for the distribution, sale, and exhibition of art. In translating established protocols of authentication and rarity into a digital media context, however, they equally point to the resilience and rearticulation of traditional practices in a changed media ecology. It is notable, for instance, that all purchases from both platforms are accompanied by certificates of authenticity, while Daata Editions specifies that each edition features a digital watermark ensuring copyright protection.

In the offline context, though initiatives such as Matters in Media Art have done crucial work in setting out guidelines for the acquisition and loans of media art,[98] a clearer set of best practices is necessary. There is still a considerable amount of trepidation and uncertainty concerning the sale and acquisition of media artworks, particularly to private collectors. Practices vary enormously across the sector, and transparency is sorely lacking. The narrative of the ascendance of the limited edition presented here is not one of unqualified triumph; when compared to painting, sculpture, and photography, film and video remain relatively unsalable. Yet the limited-edition model is increasingly hegemonic in artists' moving image, constituting a massive historical shift in the management of reproducibility and the meanings assigned to it.

# 6

# The Event of Projection

Given that the moving image is founded in an economy of the multiple, what does it mean to speak of a "unique film"? Daniel Pennac's comic novel *Monsieur Malaussène* (1997) orbits just such an object. Near the beginning of the book, the reader is introduced to a mysterious film made by Job Bernardin and Liesel Fraenkhel, a married couple. The pair made the film secretly over the course of sixty-five years with the intention that it would be projected only once, following their deaths, for a dozen handpicked spectators—a meaningful number, indeed. They envisioned that after the lone projection the print and its negative would be publicly destroyed. "Only one unique projection for the Unique Film," says Julie Corrençon, the woman tasked with organizing the screening. "An event doesn't repeat itself. I had Job drum that into me all throughout my childhood."[1]

If the moving image is often understood in relation to its ability to circulate through the act of copying, here one encounters a denial of this possibility, a stark refusal of reproducibility that goes beyond even the rarity of the limited edition. Whereas the editioning model proposes that the moving image attain near uniqueness for financial and institutional reasons, here one finds an absolute singularity achieved out of artistic and conceptual motivations. The refusal of circulation is not incidental, something necessary to make the work amenable to institutional or market protocols, but absolutely intrinsic. There are, of course, numerous precedents in the history of art of works purposefully rendered inaccessible or made to be ephemeral. (Not incidentally, it is often through film or video documentation that such works encounter a broader public.) When a performance artist like Tino Sehgal forbids the production of catalogues, photographs, or video documentation of his work, he may be understood as pursuing the telos of the medium of performance, provided that one conceives of it as grounded in an ontology of disappearance and ephemerality.[2] Such a gesture, however, signifies very differently when working with the moving image, as it constitutes a major shift away from the historical alignment of film and video art with access and circulation, and a departure from their founding in an economy of the multiple. Whereas Sehgal's stance arguably exploits the specific attributes of performance, when an artist working with the moving image refuses reproduction, he or she is actively suppressing a key attribute of the medium—at least as it is commonly understood.

It would be easy to assume that Pennac's Unique Film is but a novelistic invention, purely the stuff of fiction, and that no real filmmaker would spend so much time working on something that would be seen by so few and only once. But in fact experimental film and artists' moving image are littered with projects that annul or at least compromise the medium's ability to circulate widely. Many artists and filmmakers working outside of the limited-edition model impose restrictions on the distribution and exhibition of their work that make it difficult to access, whether purposefully or as the by-product of an objective

valued more highly than circulation. Sometimes the reasons behind this have to do with preserving the integrity of the primary aesthetic experience. A filmmaker might insist on being present at all screenings, refuse to allow a work produced on photochemical film to be exhibited via digital formats, or decide to produce no further prints of a work after its original film stock is discontinued. Or, a work might be seldom exhibited owing to difficult technical requirements, such as the use of multiple projectors or the employment of performative elements (such as live sound, bodily presence, or manipulation of the projector or image). There are also more idiosyncratic requirements: the screening must begin at dawn (David Larcher); the work can take place only in a single, remote location (Robert Smithson, Gregory Markopoulos, Melik Ohanian); a cycle of films must be exhibited according to a precise calendar (Hollis Frampton); the film must be remade each time it is shown in a new location (Morgan Fisher, William Raban).[3] In all these cases, although the precise motivations may differ, one encounters a willingness to engage in an at least partial suppression of the moving image's reproducibility, with the result that the moment of exhibition takes on the character of a special event marked by a sense of liveness.

Such strategies push back against the investment in access evinced by many artists and filmmakers and are particularly notable when considered in relation to a contemporary visual culture predicated on the simultaneous dream and nightmare of perpetually available images circulating freely across numerous formats and exhibition situations. In many recent cases, but not all, artists pursue these strategies in conjunction with a turn to photochemical film, finding in it a medium now less aligned with circulation than it once was. Gestures like these intervene into standard scenarios of circulation and exhibition and make these processes—normally occurring after the "release" from the author—into an integral part of the work's conceptual framework, thereby rethinking how one might rightly draw a line between what counts as text and what counts as context. In positing cinema as event, such projects assert a viewer experience grounded in a face-to-face public encounter with a work in its original format, often one using strategies that would be difficult or even impossible to reproduce in a domestic viewing situation and that may vary from one iteration of the piece to the next.

This chapter will explore the relationship between the moving image and singularity through the interrogation of a term that might at first seem like an oxymoron: live cinema. The liveness of cinema might be found in a filmmaker's presence at screenings; in performative practices that use live narration, live musical accompaniment, and/or manipulations of the projection apparatus; or in the imposition of unusual screening conditions such as those mentioned above, which endow the moment of exhibition with the sense of a departure from the ordinary. This chapter will examine these paradigms through a case study of a provocation nearly equal to the Unique Film imagined in *Monsieur Malaussène*: Paolo Cherchi Usai's *Passio* (2006). Although reduced possibilities of circulation are sometimes a by-product rather than an express objective of works privileging the event, in *Passio* one encounters a quite purposeful intent to remain outside the domain of widespread accessibility. Finitude and filmic obsolescence loom large in this monumental undertaking, profoundly entangling its investment in singularity with a rejection of digital replication and circulation. Amid proliferating copies and "poor images," *Passio* opts for uniqueness and authenticity. In the process it illuminates how

conceiving of cinema qua event functions at once as an admission of variability and as the site of a reinscription of authorial control—conditions that might seem opposed but that join together in their shared departure from the standardization and dissemination that characterize the regime of reproduction. Through a consideration of *Passio*, I will suggest that liveness is not simply a quality possessed by a handful of unusual examples but can in fact function as a critical method by which one can approach any moving image work. Reconceiving of cinema as a performing art, I will question whether the moving image is indeed an art of the multiple after all.

## "Why Would I Clone a Child?"

The perceived flood of digital images recasts the meanings attributed to photochemical film and inspires a more general desire for that which resides outside the regime of ubiquity and perpetual availability. Digital forms of reproduction are seen to compromise authenticity, but in so doing, they prompt a renewed investment in this very attribute, just as filmic forms of reproduction did some one hundred years before. Paolo Cherchi Usai has described *Passio* as a film "about the impending crisis in our visual culture," an emergency he sees as tied to the inability to successfully archive the massive quantity of moving images produced in our time.[4] Instead of confronting this issue by repurposing the visual vocabularies and epistemologies of digital visual culture, as many artists have, *Passio* moves in the opposite direction, staking out an experience of cinema that stands as a forceful negation of our habitual encounters with the image.

Made with the participation of eleven film archives around the world, *Passio* is a 35 mm found-footage work projected with a live performance of Arvo Pärt's 1982 passion cantata, *Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secondum Joannem.* The piece requires a solo baritone, a solo tenor, a vocal quartet, and a choir of twelve to fifteen vocalists, accompanied by an organ, violin, cello, and bassoon. Cherchi Usai destroyed the original negative after the creation of seven numbered prints, even making a video that shows him taking to the negative with an axe to prove that the event took place. These prints were then hand-colored, each in a different hue: ruby, violet, indigo, magenta, vermillion, minium, and gold. Six were deposited at film archives around the world; a seventh remains in Cherchi Usai's possession.[5]

Cherchi Usai has explained his use of live music in *Passio* as resulting from the fact that the film "requires a human presence," but the particular choice of a piece that thematizes the last days of Christ—a time of suffering that prepares the way for redemption—also has significant resonances for the medium of film in an age of obsolescence.[6] At the beginning of the seventy-four-minute film a credit appears onscreen: "This is print 7 of 7." At the end another reads, "This film was produced on Eastman Kodak 35mm motion picture film stock and edited with manual equipment." Issued in a limited edition, edited by hand, colored by hand, and accompanied live: all aspects of the film work together to surround it with the singularity of human presence and thereby distance it from forms of reproduction engaged in the proliferation of identical copies that circulate widely. Cherchi Usai returns to techniques of filmmaking used before the automation of color processes and the development of online editing. In this regard one might say he returns to the older within the old: he looks to techniques that are outmoded

even within photochemical filmmaking, itself an anachronism in a digital age.

In *Passio* the access-to-quality ratio is weighted overwhelmingly in favor of the latter. Cherchi Usai rejects the capacity for reproduction that has long been considered a central feature of film and proposes instead that film is a medium of singularity. Cherchi Usai's cultivation of rarity occurs not out of a need to render the work fungible on the art market but instead out of a desire to advance the proposition that photochemical film is aligned with the authenticity, uniqueness, and frailty of the human over and above the mechanical sameness of the machine, that it is an evanescent performative event rather than a repeatable object. The proposition that film must leave behind its machinic deadness in order to be able to confront its finitude, to first be allied with life so as to then be able to die, is borne out in the particular images Cherchi Usai culls from archives worldwide and redeploys in his film. Unlike Bill Morrison's *Decasia* (2002), which is composed of images selected for the aesthetic interest of the decay they manifest, Cherchi Usai chooses images of relatively pristine quality. Their integrity is reinforced by the formal decision to separate them from each other by stretches of black leader to emphasize that they are to be beheld in their uncontaminated purity—something that notably also occurs in Gregory Markopoulos's *Eniaios* (c. 1947–91), the eighty-hour site-specific film cycle that I will discuss in the next chapter.

*Passio*'s images fall into four general categories: depictions of the process of filmmaking and the display of the materials and machinery of film; images of nature; abstract animation; and images of bodies drawn mostly from medical and educational films. Taken together, they can be seen to set forth a series of propositions concerning the status of photochemical film in the digital age. The recurring images of the material basis of photochemical film and the processes involved in its manufacture and use are perhaps *Passio*'s most obvious gesture toward advancing a thesis concerning filmic obsolescence. Near the beginning, when a hand takes a reel of film out of a canister, or later, when emulsion is scratched off of a filmstrip, the claim for the palpable tactility of the film medium is clear. Film not only makes the world visible but is itself visible and tangible to us in a way that computer technologies are not. Images of leaves, waves, and fighting beetles evoke the romantic association of authenticity with nature. A relation of analogy is proposed, whereby film's own status as animate and organic is emphasized through repeated recourse to images of the natural world. These images also summon a consideration of the revelatory power film derives from its indexical dimension, from the fact that its images are produced through a form of direct contact with the world—contact that is lost in computer-generated images and attenuated when digital images are subject to painterly manipulation. Cherchi Usai underlines the automatic analogical causation of the image, putting *Passio* in league with the many other artistic and film-theoretical discourses of the early twenty-first century that focalize discussions of obsolescence through the concept of indexicality.[7] The abstract animation, meanwhile, emphasizes the plasmatic plasticity of the film image, the pure pleasure taken in the motion that endows film with a vivacity unknown to photography. Finally, the many images of frail and anguished bodies once again move into the domain of medium-specific analogy. From the first image of an emaciated body with limbs spread in a star formation, through an examination of scars and seizures, Cherchi Usai proposes a metaphorical equivalence between body and film: a film is, like a body, a mortal and material thing subject to aging

and gradual degradation. Like a body, it will die ([figures 6.1](#) and [6.2](#)).



**FIGURE 6.1**  Still from *Passio* (2006). Courtesy of Paolo Cherchi Usai.
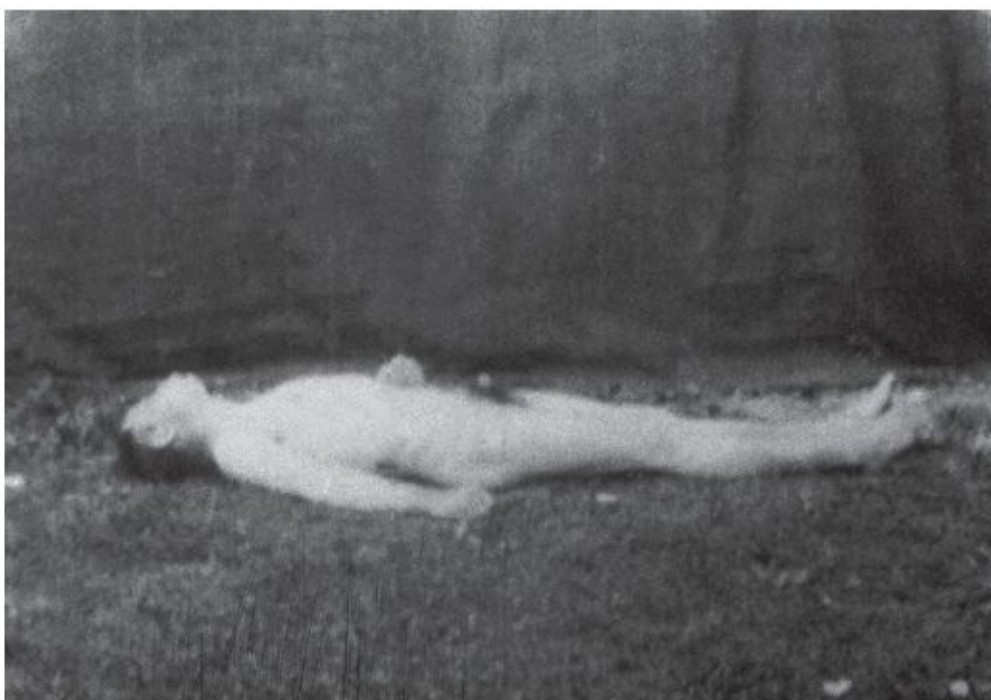


**FIGURE 6.2**  Still from *Passio* (2006). Courtesy of Paolo Cherchi Usai.

Cherchi Usai describes his project very specifically using this corporeal metaphor. When asked why he destroyed the negative and chose to produce only seven copies of the film, he responded, "When a child is born, you don't keep the umbilical cord and you don't keep the placenta. Why would I clone a child?"[8] What does it mean to claim

humanity for film in this way? Or, if not to claim humanity per se, to at least understand the filmic medium as more allied with the human than with the machine, more tied to individual uniqueness than to the identical replications of cloning? As we saw in chapter 1, at the threshold of the twentieth century *An Artist's Dream* and *The Artist's Dilemma* dramatized the tension between artist and machine, definitively locating film on the side of the latter. The reproductive powers of the filmic medium were seen to threaten the livelihood of the artist, to render him obsolete. *Passio* retains the same epistemological framework as the Edison films, working within a firm binary that sees new technology not as a prosthesis of humankind but as a potential threat to the very humanity of the human. In both the Edison shorts and *Passio* one witnesses the same phobia of reproducibility—it is simply that the place of film within this matrix has shifted. As an obsolescent medium film has moved from the side of ubiquity and reproducibility to the side of rarity. Leaving behind the regime of the copy allows film to gain access to the domain it had once opposed: authenticity.

In his landmark "Work of Art" essay Walter Benjamin wrote, "From a photographic plate, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' [*echten*] print makes no sense."[9] Here, as in most of its theorizations, authenticity is set against reproducibility. The assumption is that some form of limited availability is a necessary condition for authenticity; the possibility of a theoretically infinite number of copies casts film and photography into the domain of inauthenticity. Benjamin wrote at a time when there was a reasonable expectation that the capacity for reproduction inherent in photographic media would be actualized without restriction. Today, however, the situation appears rather different: contrary to Benjamin's statement, to ask for an "authentic print" makes very much sense, indeed. To take an extreme position, one might say that "authentic print" is no longer a contradiction in terms but rather a pleonasm, as in an age of analog obsolescence photochemical film is frequently thought of as an authentic original in comparison with a digital copy. The locus of the moving image's inauthenticity has shifted away from the existence of multiple prints and toward the act of transcoding, which is seen by some as a betrayal of the specificity and historicity of analog film. Crucially, photochemical film is not just older than digital video but rarer, too. Although it remains possible in theory to make any number of copies of a film, the capacity to do so is less and less actualized and appears feeble next to that of digital technologies. The reproducibility of film is not just dwarfed by that of electronic media but, in fact, reduced in comparison with the predigital era, as it has become increasingly difficult to source and process stock and to exhibit the finished product. Fewer prints are made, and those that are in existence circulate less freely owing to the decreasing number of exhibition spaces equipped for projection in 16 or 35 mm. Today, to see a film made on film and exhibited on film has taken on the character of a special event, marked out as an encounter with an original.

Whereas Kracauer wrote in 1927 that "the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory,"[10] now the photochemical image is more likely to be aligned with humanity and memory, while the digital image is described using viral metaphors that signal its ability to replicate, as if it possessed an uncontrollable, infectious, and inhuman animus. As W. J. T. Mitchell has noted, one often encounters the notion of a "plague" of digital images, of "self-generating, virulent entities that threaten, not just traditional photography, but

traditional forms of life itself."[11] Such discourses are not new, but persistent echoes of a long-standing unease surrounding new forms of reproduction. Corporeal metaphors and the rhetoric of host and invading pathogen speak of nothing other than the endurance of the nineteenth-century articulation of authenticity as a moral ideal connecting subject to object. The authentic image is spoken of as a body among others, endowed with qualities of subjecthood that bring it into a relationship with the self that is proximate and intimate, as if the two might share in communion. Meanwhile, the inauthentic image is cast as an invading threat, one to guard against lest the body's fragile membranes be penetrated. As a new reservoir of authenticity, photochemical film is now thought to promise a healing form of mimetic transfer to its viewers: the return of a lost wholeness, the escape from a rationalized existence. This situation highlights the need to conceive of "new media" and "old media" as relational categories rather than fixed essences, and signals the extent to which our understandings of media are culturally and discursively determined rather than dictated solely by material or ontological characteristics. As digital media has usurped film's place as the exemplary inauthentic image, the algorithmic image is both feared for its supposed machinic deadness and inorganic calculability as well as prized for its promises of access and circulation—just as film had been some one hundred years before.

*Passio* goes even further than many other works engaging with photochemical film as an obsolescent material by ensuring that its every aspect—editing, coloring, soundtrack—is marked by a human presence and unable to be duplicated by a machine. In so insistently reconfiguring film's relationship to reproducibility, *Passio* rejects the notion that authenticity is an essence and instead understands authenticity as a relational effect. For Benjamin authenticity is always positional, deeply imbricated in the shifting temporalities of old and new media and existing in multiple varieties and intensities. In a footnote to the third version of the "Work of Art" essay he posits the passage of time and the appearance of new technologies of reproduction as central to the production of authenticity where none had existed before: "Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (technological) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and gradating authenticity…. To be sure, a medieval picture of the Madonna at the time it was created could not yet be said to be 'authentic.' It became 'authentic' only during the succeeding centuries, and perhaps most strikingly so during the nineteenth."[12] Authenticity comes into view as an accumulative temporality that breaks with that of the present. Benjamin may have emphasized that the aura of the work of art withers in the age of mechanical reproduction, but as this quote demonstrates, he acknowledged that it simultaneously flourishes as well. Amid a qualitative change in the transportability of images and sounds, authenticity takes form as a criterion of value, elevating selected objects and experiences over and against an ever-shifting ground of debased copies. As Benjamin notes, this happened in a striking manner in the nineteenth century; it has recurred at the dawn of the twenty-first. Photochemical film has shifted from an alliance with reproducibility, circulation, and the machine, to now forge associations with authenticity, rarity, and the human. Like perhaps no other object, *Passio* foregrounds this new understanding of the medium.

## Live Events, Live Bodies

In what might seem like a curious statement to come from a film archivist, Cherchi Usai has said, "Film was never meant to be permanent. Film was born as something ephemeral. I consider film more as a performing art than an art of reproduction."[13] The claim that *Passio*'s images make for the life of film itself—for the medium as having a life cycle, one that is perhaps nearing its end—is buttressed by the work's emphasis on the performative dimension of cinematic projection. Given the limited number of prints and the difficulty and cost of organizing the required musical accompaniment, a screening of *Passio* participates not in the economy of reproduction but rather in the economy of the special event marked by liveness.

In his 1999 book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture,* Philip Auslander speculates, "Any change in the near future is likely to be toward a further diminution of the symbolic capital associated with live events."[14] This, however, does not appear to be the case. In the wake of the digitization of everyday life, there has been a marked increase in the symbolic capital associated with the live event, even while its financial capital may be significantly less than that associated with the economy of reproduction. This has been particularly evident in contemporary art, where a vogue for performance art and other forms of event-based spectacle—such as Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), for which museums around the world staged twenty-four-hour screenings and visitors queued for hours—has arisen precisely in tandem with the explosion of ubiquitous computing. In his discussion of the transformation of the cinematic experience after digitization, Francesco Casetti observes a shift from a culture of film "attendance"—the collective ritual of moviegoing—to one of "performance," a situation in which viewers customize their own viewing experiences, often in a domestic setting.[15] One might appropriate Casetti's vocabulary and move in a slightly different direction to agree that while film "attendance" as a regularized, quotidian activity has indeed waned, film "performance" has gained ground not only as spectators interact with the "frangible" text of home viewing[16] but also as they encounter film events that have perhaps more in common with performances of dance or music than they do with cinematic exhibition as understood in decades past. These are events that puncture the repetitive nature of habit and demarcate a particular duration of time spent in public as somehow exceptional or extraordinary, generally through the incorporation of elements either inassimilable or poorly assimilable to digital delivery. Such events range from avant-garde to mainstream: rare prints, musical accompaniments, filmmaker appearances, shadowcasts, sing-alongs, projector performances, marathon screenings, question-and-answer discussions, and lecture-performances all offer unreproducible experiences that insist on the allure of liveness.

It might seem strange to insist on the live event as standing in opposition to habitual media consumption; after all, contemporary media are in some sense more live than ever before, possessing as they do the numbing urgency of real-time communication. But liveness today is bifurcated. The dominant experience of liveness can be understood as a perpetual now of near-instantaneous access that depends above all on the extreme velocity of data and tends to be characterized by the physical separation of those involved. In reaction to this regime another form of liveness has emerged, one predicated on a desire to withdraw from circulation networks and insist instead on the locatedness and collectivity of an event that will remain largely outside of reproducibility, entering digital circuits of dissemination if at all only through secondary forms of documentation clearly legible as

such. Here one finds the alliance between liveness, authenticity, and performance that is so central to *Passio*.

The very notion of live performance is a retronym, emerging only after the advent of recorded performance. And yet liveness and the rejection of reproduction have come to define the ontology of performance as it is commonly understood. Peggy Phelan has very influentially defined performance as something that "cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations," adding, "to the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology."[17] Performance, however, is always already implicated in the economy of reproduction. The very desire for the ephemerality of the performative event emerges precisely out of pervasive repetition and circulation; what "cannot be saved" becomes a locus of cultural value only when so much can be saved, revisited, repeated. The appeal of live performance stems from its dialectical negation of the cultural dominant. It thus should not be understood as the site of a pure essence that might be compromised by reproduction but rather as something possessing a value that is relationally produced precisely in tandem with reproduction. The operation that supposedly contaminates performance's ontology of presence is in fact its ground.

In this regard it is particularly interesting to consider the status of liveness in relation to a reproducible medium such as film. Initially, "live cinema" might sound like a contradiction in terms. After all, liveness tends to be thought of as a quality of broadcast television and the Internet much more than of cinema; when watching a film, the spectator encounters an already-completed work that exists within an economy of the multiple as a copy without original. But to view cinema solely as a medium of recorded reproducibility is to take an exceedingly narrow view of film history, one that excludes the diverse exhibition practices of early cinema and the avant-garde, to say nothing of the forms of participatory spectatorship proper to cult films such as *Showgirls* (1995), *The Room* (2009), and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Similarly, the rich tradition of expanded cinema performance has often depended on live manipulation of the apparatus, transforming cinema into a performing art.

In a footnote Auslander makes an intriguing proposition regarding how such performative uses of media technologies might successfully respond to the deconstructionist critique of Phelan: "I would like to suggest in passing that in the context of a mediatized, repetitive economy, using the technology of reproduction in ways that defy that economy may be a more significantly oppositional gesture than asserting the value of the live."[18] This is precisely what one encounters in *Passio*, which remains anchored in a medium of the copy while engaging in a multifaceted suppression of the reproducibility of the moving image. Cherchi Usai ensures that each performance of the film will be different and would lose something if an attempt was made to record or otherwise document it. As such, he does not reiterate the untenable claim that the ontology of performance is to be found in pure presence; rather, he demonstrates the tension between iteration and singularity that is at stake in the cinematic event. Film performances such as *Passio* do not posit uniqueness as a pure origin that would then be compromised by a fall into an economy of repetition but instead suggest that singularity is produced precisely out of the difference generated through the repetition of a given notation—which

in this case consists of both the musical notation of Pärt's cantata and the filmic notation of the filmstrip.

This defiance of the economy of repetition from within has important ramifications for Phelan's theory of performance. For Phelan the liveness of performance is derived not simply from the present-tense temporality of the event but from the existential presence of the performer's body and the unavoidable recognition that this body is, like performance itself, ultimately ephemeral. As she writes in *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, "It may well be that theater and performance respond to a psychic need to rehearse for loss, and especially for death."[19] The specificity of the experience of performance involves sharing space and time with these living and dying bodies. The integrality of the body is, to return to Phelan's definition of performance, precisely what "cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations" without undergoing reduction or loss. In *Passio*, as I have noted, mortality is also clearly at stake; however, here this mortality is that of a humanized technology rather than that of the human proper. The presence of the musicians in the auditorium does, of course, allow *Passio* to qualify as performance in Phelan's sense. But given that *Passio*'s recognition of finitude is so clearly tied to film itself more than to the musicians, Cherchi Usai's cinematic event prompts a revision of Phelan's ideas to encompass a situation in which the singularity of performance is located not simply in the frailty of the human body but equally in our encounter with a nonhuman agent once thought to be stable but now acknowledged as precarious—the filmic apparatus.

# An Allographic Art

Film and video may be reproducible media, but, as we are told in *Monsieur Malaussène*, an event doesn't repeat itself. Job's plan for the Unique Film stemmed from his belief that the essence of a film lies in the memory one takes away after a screening rather than in its material existence as filmstrip. This conviction meant that he never saw a film a second time.[20] But according to another logic, one might retain Job's emphasis on cinema as experience rather than object while finding no aversion to viewing a particular film over and over again. This line of thinking departs from Job's own words: cinematic projection is an event, and precisely because an event doesn't repeat itself, each screening will be marked by difference.

When authors release a work to the public, they always relinquish a certain degree of authority. The process of dissemination will unavoidably produce new meanings, as the work undergoes dispersal and drift beyond the author's intention. The author sends the text out into the world, but that text does not necessarily always return to the author. Dissemination is thus fundamentally a production of difference that not only coexists with but *feeds off of* the sameness that results from the machinic production of copies as a major attribute of the economy of reproduction. Certainly, this is a process that can occur with unique works as well, but perhaps not to the same extent as it does with copies that accumulate new and unforeseen meanings throughout the course of their more extensive, less supervised travels. The moving image is especially subject to such drift because of its status as a two-stage form that requires a performative enactment in order to be realized, something that most often takes place in the absence of the author under variable

conditions, with the result that the work as encountered by one viewer may possess significant objective differences from the work as encountered by another.

In the vocabulary of Nelson Goodman, cinema is in this regard an *allographic* art—that is, like music and theater, it is actualized by someone other than the author, by another creative agency acting based on a preset notation. In Goodman's view all that is required to create a successful presentation of an allographic work is "correct spelling."[21] In the case of film this would involve a host of agents both human and nonhuman, including the architecture, the projector, the filmstrip, and the staff of the exhibition venue. To use the wrong lens or matte the screen in the wrong aspect ratio would constitute an orthographic error. But even within a "correct spelling," significant variations will inevitably occur, rendering allographic works particularly open to difference, fluctuation, and modification even as they remain themselves. They are, in other words, non-self-identical from the very start.

Goodman sets allographic forms against *autographic* forms, such as painting, which are realized fully by their makers. This means that even "the most exact duplication of [an autographic work] does not thereby count as genuine" and would be considered a forgery.[22] By contrast, one can copy a script, a musical score, or a film print and remain firmly within the domain of the genuine. Reproducibility is thus at the heart of the allographic/autographic distinction. Crucially, though, it is not a simple matter of aligning the allographic with the multiple and the autographic with the singular. The non-self-identity of the allographic arts guarantees that they, too, possess a relationship to uniqueness, albeit one that differs in character from that of the autographic arts. One might be able to copy a notation without entering into the realm of forgery, but one can never exactly duplicate the performance that results from it. The Unique Film would remain unique even if shown again. Considered in this way—as performance—the moving image ceases to belong solely to the economy of the multiple and begins to manifest an affinity with the singular as well. To insist on the reproducibility of the moving image is to consider it as material rather than as experience. The moment one shifts to a consideration of cinema as event, singularity comes to the fore. As such, those artists and filmmakers who suppress reproducibility in favor of the uniqueness of the event may be understood not simply as suppressing a key attribute of their medium—its ability to circulate—but rather as exploring a different, but no less important, attribute of the moving image: the liveness of the viewer's encounter with it.

To understand cinema as an allographic art is to insist that the work is not found in the filmstrip or digital file alone—this is simply a part of its notation—but rather in what is experienced during the duration of a projection. Critic Ed Halter has put it simply: "Cinema's an event, not an object."[23] Filmmaker Ben Russell took up a similar view in a 2013 top-ten list he compiled for *Senses of Cinema*. Asked to list his best films of the year, Russell instead chose his top-ten "projections," explaining, "My experience of cinema is increasingly tethered to both the physical space and the material transmission of the medium…. Timing is everything, space is the place!"[24] In ceasing to view cinema as object, one opens up what can be thought to be part of the work to a substantial degree. For Russell, for example, the strength of his experience of Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel's *The Last Judgment* (2013) was in part the result of seeing it projected on the ceiling of a former crematorium in Berlin; he felt *Spring Breakers* (2012), meanwhile,

was enhanced by "an audience of screaming Selena Gomez fans" in Paris. In conceiving of the event of projection, one is no longer restricted to the consideration of an inert, autonomous text but rather can begin to ponder all that occurs during the time of exhibition, as well as all that may change from one instantiation to the next. Rick Altman suggested such an approach already in 1992's *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, where he argued that understanding cinema as an event would highlight attributes such as "multiplicity, three-dimensionality, materiality, heterogeneity, intersection, performance, multi-discursivity, instability, mediation, choice, diffusion, and interchange."[25]

This becomes particularly important today, as exhibition situations become increasingly varied and practices of versioning are widespread. If the text ever was an autonomous, stable entity, it isn't anymore. Moreover, this approach provides a greater opportunity to account for the nonstandardized exhibition practices that are long-standing in experimental film and virtually the norm in artists' moving image. Experimental cinema, for instance, has a long tradition of filmmaker attendance at screenings, constituting a form of liveness that may drastically influence a spectator's experience of the work. In 1973 the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh began to publish the "Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet" to "encourage and facilitate the wider use of exhibition and lecture tours."[26] The document listed existing travel plans and institutional contact information, with the hope that filmmakers and institutions could use the information to flesh out their itineraries with further dates. Not only were such engagements an important means by which filmmakers might earn an income,[27] but they served to significantly differentiate experimental film screenings from those of industrial cinema. The presence of the filmmaker demarcates the screening as event and endows the mechanically reproducible medium of film with a human presence, while also providing the filmmaker an opportunity to assert the primacy of his or her own discourse as a means of approaching the work. Conceiving of cinema as event allows one to consider the impact of such in-person appearances on the apprehension of a particular film.

In artists' moving image the event-based approach allows for a consideration of the similar phenomena of artists' talks and gallery tours, while also supplying a means of accounting for the fact that the moving image installation possesses no single standardized apparatus; on the contrary, each artist invents his or her own configuration of the apparatus with each work. From a methodological point of view this means that the mode of display can never be taken for granted; scholars must instead take care to combine a consideration of what appears onscreen with *how* that screen appears within a surrounding space, which might include the presence of other artworks or variable architectural components. In the case of *Passio* the event-based approach would allow for a consideration of the impact of the audience's knowledge that they are seeing one of seven prints in existence and the only print in that particular color. It would also allow for an account of changing situations of live accompaniment and—crucially, for reasons that will be elaborated shortly—print condition.

According to Goodman, allographic arts have two distinct types of properties: constitutive properties that form an essential and unchanging part of the work's notation and contingent properties that are subject to variability across that work's various enactments.[28] Considering cinema as event involves conceptualizing where the border between the constitutive and the contingent might be said to lie. It demands a description

of how the work's contingent properties change over time and an account of how they impact its constitutive properties. Though Goodman's discussion suggests a fixed division between the constitutive and the contingent within a given art form, the example of the moving image—with all of the heterogeneous parts that form the *dispositif*—reveals that the designation of these properties can in fact shift from one work to the next. Industrial cinema tends to draw a firm line between the constitutive and the contingent, but in experimental film and artists' moving image the boundary between them can vary tremendously. For some artists, attributes such as the celluloid substrate or a large-scale image are merely contingent factors, meaning that the work can be exhibited on a small, digital screen while remaining "itself." For others, such factors may be deemed absolutely constitutive, with any betrayal of them resulting in a degraded experience in which one sees not the work itself but rather a "viewing copy." As a part of the process of creation, artists and filmmakers legislate which properties of their work will fall into which category—although there is no guarantee that such distinctions will necessarily be respected. In addition to such authorial decisions, spectators also create their own distinctions between these categories, with some espousing what David Denby has termed "platform agnosticism" and others insisting that they have not truly seen the film until they have seen it in its ideal exhibition situation.[29]

Thinking cinema as an allographic art means admitting a lack of authorial control stemming from the centrality of contingent properties to the overall experience of the work, even when all constitutive properties are respected. But conceiving of cinema as event can equally enable a move in the opposite direction. Rather than an admission of heterogeneity and variability, the event can equally become the site of a reinscription of authority. This might occur through the presence of the filmmaker, as noted above, whose discourse could serve as a primary means of interpretation, tamping down the possibility of semiotic dissemination. Though forms of projector performance as practiced by artists such as Sandra Gibson/Luis Recoder, Ken Jacobs, or Bruce McClure place the unforeseeability of the event at the core of the work's meaning and experience, such practices are equally the site of tremendous authorial control, as the artist's presence is in most cases a constitutive property of the work. Or, the event may enable an assertion of authority through the articulation of a conceptual premise key to the work. For example, Melik Ohanian's *Invisible Film* (2005) is a site-specific, screenless projection of *Punishment Park* (1971) that takes place in the California desert where the Peter Watkins film is set. In this case the normally contingent property of the geographical location of a screening is transformed into a constitutive part of the work by the will of the artist. The cinematic event, then, is the locus of both increased self-difference and augmented authorial sovereignty. It is where text dissolves into context and where close to every detail of that context may be made available for specification, effectively recuperating it as part of the text. It sees reproducible media become singular, though in a manner wholly different from the contractually regulated scarcity of the limited edition.

## Cinematic Entropy

Generally speaking, the aim in executing a performance of an allographic art in the age of mechanical reproduction is to create a standardized experience that conforms as closely as

possible to industrial and authorial intentions. In the case of music Jacques Attali has described this as the paradigm of repeating, which he sees as dominating music from roughly 1900 to the present. Attali writes that within this paradigm the goal of public performance is to become a simulacrum of the record.[30] What one encounters here is a quashing of variability, something that has been a keystone of mainstream cinematic exhibition since the 1910s and may be more generally aligned with a Fordist model of production. To put this in Goodman's terms, in this paradigm, although contingent properties will always exist, ideally their impact on the viewer's experience of the work is minimized. Quite differently, in the case of *Passio*, there is no "original" to which any given projection can aspire given how many contingencies are admitted into the performance. Although the degree of authorial control over the work is immense, *Passio* rejects the very notion of repetition and returns instead to what Attali terms the paradigm of representing, something that he sees as governing music between the period of roughly 1500 and 1900. Here, the notation remains constant, but value is generated from the contingencies of the performance, and variability is the norm.[31]

This variability stems in part from the live musical accompaniment and the hand-coloring but, perhaps more importantly, is generated from Cherchi Usai's decision to destroy the film's negative. With only seven numbered prints in existence *Passio* begs comparison to the limited-edition model of distribution that is proper to the art market. But despite sharing with this model a rejection of filmic reproducibility, *Passio* differs from it in a crucial respect. As we saw in the previous chapter, the limited-edition model resolved a problem that had prevented film from being collected by museums: every time a print is projected, it is subject to wear and tear. The editioning model overcomes this obstacle by selling the collector an internegative from which fresh exhibition copies may be made as needed. Through the destruction of its negative *Passio* rejects the desire for pristine prints and the investment in long-term preservation. All that is left are seven copies that will degrade each time they are shown. They are entities that, like bodies, will live, age, and die, inscribing their passage through time on their epidermal surface.

Endowed with a material finitude that the standard administration of the limited edition seeks to deny, the prints of *Passio* will accumulate dust and scratches each time they are shown, performing their own passage into ruin at each screening. To return to Attali's terminology, each projection is not a repetition of an ideal standard but rather a representation of a notation that will necessarily differ from all others. In typical film screenings one hopes for a print in good condition and tries to look past whatever damage may exist if the print happens to be in less than good shape. But in *Passio* something very different occurs: the degradation of the print is not simply noise, which a viewer must look past in order to encounter the work, but an integral part of the work itself, much in the manner of Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1962–64), a reel of blank leader on which dust and scratches accumulate, almost as a cinematic remake of John Cage's *4′33″* (1952). The film print is acknowledged as organic material undergoing a ceaseless process of transformation. Cherchi Usai inscribes the practice of projection into the heart of *Passio*, further affirming that this act is a live and singular performance.

On this count *Passio* once again offers a fascinating comparison to the cycle of decay films that proliferated around the turn of the twenty-first century. André Habib has described films such as *Decasia* and Peter Delpeut's *Lyrical Nitrate* (1991) as partaking in

an "imaginary of the ruin" and locates their condition of possibility in the "patrimonialization" of cinema that reached full force around the 1995 centennial. In these films he discerns "the melancholy or nostalgia for a cinema that is forever lost (destroyed copies, incomplete films, anonymous reels)."[32] The preservative function of cinema vows that it will embalm time and thereby conquer mortality. However, accompanying this impossible promise, this refusal of finitude, is the fragility of the medium and the inevitability of decay. Dust accumulates and the projector scratches; prints are stored under unfavorable conditions, even thrown on garbage heaps. As celluloid rots, so does the archive. The decay films remind their viewer of this archiviolithic pathos by re-presenting fragments of ruination. Yet the resulting film—*Decasia, Lyrical Nitrate*—will then be watched in pristine condition, often in a digital format, not subject to the same organic degradation it depicts from a safe remove. *Passio* engages with the discourse Habib identifies as informing the imaginary of the ruin in cinema, but unlike those films that reprint decayed footage, its ruination occurs precisely as we watch the film, in the event of projection. *Passio*'s decay is not something that happened "then," something that we know better than to allow to happen now, but is offered up live for us to witness.

For Cherchi Usai, despite conforming to a certain cultural imperative, motivations to restore the moving image are alien, if not contrary, to the medium. In his 2001 book, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age*, he writes, "On the contrary, becoming part of the process [of degradation] and accepting it as the working of a natural phenomenon is to recognize the nature of the model image and to cultivate an intelligent awareness that each showing will hasten its demise."[33] The model image is a theoretical fiction that posits the existence of the image at the moment of its creation, that irrecoverable moment in which the referent and the indexical sign would be perfectly united. Once a film has been projected, it becomes subject to physical decay and, writes Cherchi Usai, "thus [gives] birth to the history of cinema."[34] For Cherchi Usai the goal is not to return to this model image; rather, film history can only exist as an account of its degradation. The preservative function of the cinema, so often emphasized in accounts of the medium's ontology, is here haunted by an impulse to destruction that always marches forward, regardless of whatever efforts of restoration are taken to attempt to halt its progress.

By limiting the number of prints and destroying the negative, *Passio* offers a radical acceptance of this entropic economy. It transforms the cinema of decay from a reflection on a process to a true enactment of that process. Time resides in the images of *Passio* more profoundly than most films precisely because it is invited into the image, to pass and change within it. In a query that one might imagine Phelan posing in relation to performance, Cherchi Usai asks, "The real question is, are viewers willing to accept the slow fading to nothing of what they are looking at?"[35] *Passio* brings the spectator face-to-face with this prospect, dramatizing it graphically before our eyes.

## Scars of Damage and Disruption

Despite the fact that authenticity promises an escape from the leveling of experience, we must remember that it also harbors a dangerous return to the purity of origins. Discussions of filmic obsolescence often make use of a theoretical framework drawn from Benjamin's

"Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," where he makes a claim for "the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded'" that allow for a recovery of the utopian dimension present at a technology's birth.[36] In this understanding an engagement with obsolescence is no mere nostalgia but rather an opportunity to engage in media archaeological inquiries that unsettle a narrative of historical progress and refute the capitalist logic of incessant novelty. This framework is very much in line with the notion that the authentic object, vested with inscriptions of time, has the power to disrupt the logic of capitalism by puncturing it with an alien temporality. It neglects, however, the second understanding of authenticity as an inherently elitist, conservative value that rests on a false origin.

For Theodor Adorno authenticity—understood as the Heideggerian *Eigenlichkeit*[37]—is dangerously aligned with an attachment to origins and a mystified retreat into the self as ontological ground that misrecognizes the subject's social constitution.[38] In *The Jargon of Authenticity* he attacks German existentialist philosophers—particularly Heidegger—for marshaling language that is affirmative and redolent of "deep human emotion" but ultimately empty in order to summon religiosity in an increasingly secularized world.[39] For Adorno authenticity offers no alternative to the impoverishment of modern experience but is simply its by-product.

The truly authentic remains elusive; what proliferates is a reified, false authenticity. Adorno's critique of authenticity is thus two-pronged. First, an attachment to the authentic can be allied with a reactionary attachment to origins that may be used to justify both right-wing nationalisms and the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Second, as industrial modernity threw the category of the authentic into crisis, a kind of pseudoauthenticity emerged: a hollowed-out, reified form that is immanent to capitalist production. This spurious authenticity became a fetish, covering over for its real lack. What seizing too simply on the "revolutionary energies of the outmoded" fails to consider is the extent to which the appeal of obsolescent media is also the appeal of this spurious authenticity: it is about the thrill of experiencing something difficult to access, of seeing something that someone else cannot. It is a rearticulation of our culture's obsession with private property by other means. This is not to suggest that all engagements with outmoded devices should be written off but simply to propose that considerations of authenticity and its ambivalent status must be introduced into the theorization of obsolescence to better draw out the complex and contradictory nature of resurrected aura.

This intervention is particularly necessary in relation to *Passio*. Hypothetically, its pristine 35 mm images are not long for this world. Eventually the seven prints will become so damaged that they will no longer be able to be projected, and the work will simply cease to exist. In this sense one might see *Passio* as evading Adorno's critique of authenticity and instead partaking of what he describes as a true authenticity that would index time's passing in all of its violence and entropy, foregrounding those "scars of damage and disruption" discussed in relation to *Struggle in Jerash* (2009) in chapter 4. The central position the degradation of the film print occupies in the conception of *Passio* would seem to align the project very much with this notion. But because of the particular exhibition requirements of the work—35 mm projection of a very rare print, live musical accompaniment—it is unlikely that the prints of *Passio* will be shown often enough to experience the iconoclasm that is present at the conceptual heart of the work. If the small

number of screenings that have taken place since the work's premiere in 2006 is any indication of its future trajectory, *Passio* has a chance at a very long life. Its images will perhaps never be blotchy or scratched but will remain safely protected in the climate-controlled vaults of film archives around the world. In this sense the work does render unto the moving image an authenticity invested in an impossible return to the purity of origins, one that Adorno might very well spurn as nothing other than the emanation of a disintegrating aura. One is confronted with radically different implications depending on whether one approaches *Passio* in terms of its conceptual grounding or from the point of view of its practical existence.

## Hypervisible, Invisible

*Passio* was meant to stage the disintegration of the film print, but in fact it will in all likelihood be preserved in impeccable condition for years to come. In return it will remain largely unseen. In Pennac's *Monsieur Malaussène* the fate of the Unique Film also ends up being slightly different from its original forecast. Before its sole screening has been arranged, the film is stolen by a man eager to see it and angry that he had been left out of the group of the twelve chosen spectators. The thief watches the film, decides he wants to legally own it, and somehow (the novel does not specify) persuades Job to sell its television broadcasting rights. The broadcast of the Unique Film retains the character of an ephemeral, special event but undoes its relationship to exclusivity: rather than being invisible, it becomes hypervisible. One of the book's many characters explains: "It seems that this was Job Bernardin's wish, to make this Unique Film a planetary event…only one projection, but for the entire world."[40] The film appears on all channels at 8:30 P.M. to celebrate the centenary of cinema, or perhaps to mourn the cinema's end. The conclusion of the book finally reveals the contents of the film: it shows a body, the filmmakers' son, alone and naked on a bed throughout his whole life, from his birth, through his return from a World War II concentration camp, to his death at seventy-five years of age. On the soundtrack the boy's mother recounts in voice-over the world-historical events occurring at the time of filming. Here, once again, the ephemerality of performance is tied to the mortality of a human body and a proposal is made concerning the isomorphism of that body and the cinema itself.

Surely, the knowledge that the film would be broadcast only once was part of what led crowds of people to tune in that evening. And this knowledge is also what prompted them to turn on their VCRs. In the face of the singularity of the event (*l'événement*), the broadcast of Job's film became "an entry into repetition" (*un avènement à répétition*),[41] as home viewers produced copies that inhabit the unauthorized distribution circuits of poor images. The desire to cultivate the singularity of the event is born out of an attempt to reject the economy of repetition, but in turn such rarity inspires a desire for precisely what it has denied. Though seemingly opposed, *l'événement* and *l'avènement à répétition* are not so far removed from one another after all. Pennac's imaginary Unique Film cannily recognizes this dialectic, making it a fitting snapshot of today's systems of circulation.

*Passio,* by contrast, is an unavailable film in an age of availability. Even if one travels to view a print on a flatbed, it will be without its live accompaniment. It has deserted the networks of visibility and mobility that constitute contemporary visual culture. Within a

dominant regime of circulation and surveillance, forms of exodus and withdrawal today figure as privileged modes of (non)engagement, with an imperative emerging to evade detection and clog pathways of dissemination. Such strategies have been particularly elaborated by theorists invested in thinking the relations between digital media and the societies of control. As Irving Goh has written, "The imperative to think this 'right to disappear' cannot be more timely today, given the enclosing perfectibility of the politics and architecture of a terrifying twenty-first-century peace and security."[42] Alex Galloway elaborates: "Instead of a politicization of time or space we are witnessing a rise in the politicization of absence—and presence—oriented themes such as invisibility, opacity, and anonymity, or the relationship between identification and legibility, or the tactics of nonexistence and disappearance."[43]

To some degree it is possible to see *Passio*'s purposeful withdrawal from regimes of circulation as participating in this impossible yet necessary task of becoming imperceptible. In dropping out of circulation, Cherchi Usai's investment in old media crosses paths with the vanguard of digital theory. It refuses the imperative for media products to circulate—even in a degraded manner—in order to generate value. What is one to make of this perhaps unexpected alliance of nineteenth-century discourses of authenticity with newer discussions of disappearance and invisibility? Though both sound a call to escape the increasing administration of life by structures of discipline and control, key differences exist: disappearance makes no claim on a bygone past, nor is it marked by any attempt to recuperate a sense of wholeness now lost to the subject. As such, it evades the reactionary aspects of the discourse of authenticity. For artist and theorist Zach Blas the forms of informatic opacity that are central to what he calls "contra-Internet aesthetics" not only offer a critique of the Internet, and propose alternatives to it, but do so within the context of a broader political investment that is intersectional and engaged with turning new technologies to subversive uses.[44] *Passio* clearly does not fall into this paradigm, but it does possess something that many other artworks dealing with these issues lack: while a work such as Hito Steyerl's *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Educational Didactic .MOV File* (2013) may be *about* informatic opacity as Blas theorizes it, the artwork itself remains hypervisible, circulating online and in galleries. There is, then, a contradiction between the relationship to circulation and visibility Steyerl proposes in her work and the ways in which the work itself circulates and becomes visible. By contrast, *Passio* does not thematize the exodus from data networks but rather enacts this condition in its very distribution choices.

There is no doubt that *Passio* remains in key respects inassimilable to the category of works most associated with the recent "politicization of absence." Yet the connection between its suppression of reproducibility and digital tactics of nonexistence and informatic opacity remains important, since it underlines the pervasiveness of fantasies of escape at a time when the grid—of communication, of circulation—is seemingly without end. The attraction to live cinema must be understood in these terms. But as much as it may be seen to effect a rupture with the forms of mediated liveness that pervade contemporary image consumption, breaking with a seeming imposition of reproducible sameness, the notion of cinematic liveness can also be used as the basis for a critical method, offering a template through which to rethink screen experience and reawaken our attention to the small differences and quieter forms of uniqueness that are all around us.

# 7

## A Cinematic Bayreuth

June 29 through July 1, 2012, marked the third set of screenings of Gregory Markopoulos's *Eniaios* (c. 1947–91), an eighty-hour cycle of 16 mm films left completed but unprinted at the time of the filmmaker's death in 1992. The title of the cycle has a double meaning of "unity" and "uniqueness," both of which figure heavily in the project. During the last years of his life Markopoulos revisited his entire oeuvre, recutting selections into this epic work, dividing it into twenty-two orders. He decided that it would be viewed only at a single site: a field called Rayi Spartias in the Peloponnese, some four hours from Athens by car, which he deemed "the Temenos" (figure 7.1). Robert Beavers, filmmaker and Markopoulos's longtime partner, organized screenings of the first three orders of the cycle in 2004. In 2008 the next three orders followed, with the four-year interval necessary to raise the requisite funds to print the films. In 2012, 230 spectators made the trip to watch some ten hours of silent experimental film after sunset, over three nights in an Arcadian field, more than an hour from the nearest ATM. In attendance were filmmakers and artists, scholars and curators, a fair number of locals, and a particularly large contingent from Princeton University. All documentation of the screenings was prohibited, as was the use of cell phones or other light-emitting devices. Some had attended the event before, but many were newcomers. Several attendees confessed to be scarcely familiar with experimental cinema but were drawn to the event for reasons at times not even clear to themselves. For many it would be their first introduction to Markopoulos's work, which has long been very difficult, if not impossible, to see.

An investment in the possibilities of mass distribution runs strongly throughout the history of experimental film, but in the figure of Gregory Markopoulos and his dream of the Temenos, one confronts the inverse. There is perhaps no other figure in the history of cinema who has so ardently refused the medium's possibilities of circulation. For Markopoulos, Celant's "small utopia" of distribution was a dystopia that prompted the invention of a way to assert absolute control over his work and its conditions of exhibition. The screenings at Rayi Spartias figure as a posthumous realization of goals articulated by the filmmaker from the late 1960s onward, the culmination of a decades-long struggle to establish an ideal exhibition context that would reside entirely outside of established infrastructures of experimental film and the art world, both of which he saw as commercialized, insulting, and contaminating. The following pages will chart the filmmaker's willful exodus from distribution circuits in order to safeguard the integrity of his work, something that would be accomplished via a deep investment in site specificity. As in the previous chapter, questions of authenticity and rarity remain very much in play but will here be brought to bear on a limit case that dramatizes the tensions that exist between circulation and authorial control.

▣ ▣ ▣

*Distribution*: it is all sheer gangsterism.

—Gregory Markopoulos, August 30, 1974

Long before the Temenos was a specific site in the Peloponnese, it was a recurring term in Markopoulos's writings that designated a situation of absolutely ideal exhibition, something missing in the present but destined to come in the future. Markopoulos began to use the word in his writing as early as 1969, often in the context of discussions regarding his worsening relation to established forms of distribution. He came across it while reading Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1918), a sweeping book that sought to overturn linear, Eurocentric models of history. Spengler discusses the notion of the Temenos within the context of the nobility and priesthood of ancient Greece: "Throughout the Classical world it was the rule that in the sacred precinct, the Temenos, no one must be born or die. The timeless must not come into contact with time."[1] The Temenos was, then, a place set apart from the profane sphere of quotidian existence and its enslavement to human finitude. The etymology of the word itself inscribes this condition of separateness, deriving from the Greek verb τέμνω, "to cut." This concept provided Markopoulos with a way of articulating his desire to sever his films from the culture that surrounded them, including—or perhaps especially—the experimental film scene of New York City, in which he was a major figure until his departure for Europe in 1967. The Temenos would ensure the absolute protection of the work from contamination by what he saw as the increasing commercialism of the so-called New American Cinema.

As a pure enclosure that stands alone outside the ravages of time, the Temenos may be

understood to be the antithesis of circulation, the latter being a process that brings one's work into contact with diverse exhibition situations and with the work of others. Markopoulos arrived at this utopia only after he had developed a thorough disgust for what he called "the Comedy of Distribution which is the grave situation of the creative film today."[2] The formulation of his "sacred precinct" was preceded by a long and, in some cases, pioneering involvement in virtually all established models for the distribution of experimental film; Markopoulos possessed a strong desire to give his work as much exposure as possible. Throughout much of the 1960s Markopoulos made his films available for rent through the Film-Makers' Cooperative and Cinema 16, but he began to withdraw them from circulation in 1968, a year after he moved to Europe. He began to take selected films out of the co-op in May, before withdrawing all films from the Cinema 16 Film Library (by that time a subsidiary of Grove Press) in November, writing that he was "displeased with the manner in which the films of MARKOPOULOS have been handled."[3] Markopoulos's objections primarily concerned the conditions of film presentation, encompassing both the quality of projection and the programming choices made by exhibitors, but distributors were also blamed for allowing the work to find its way into such situations. He was especially sensitive concerning the placement of his films next to the work of others, believing that "*in grouping an anthology neutralizes* the work of each poet or artist."[4] In place of the mixed program—the model Amos Vogel had adopted exclusively at Cinema 16—the Temenos would guarantee monographic exhibition.

Markopoulos may indeed have been frustrated with the treatment of his films in New York, but there was a very different reason he began to cut ties with distributors there, one that had nothing to do with vexation over the lack of control to which a filmmaker must submit in the rental model: that year, he had signed an exclusive worldwide contract with Dieter Meier in exchange for an annual payment of $4,800 (approximately $32,800.69 in 2015 dollars).[5] Markopoulos was promised five annual payments in return for a ten-year license of his films. Meier, who appears as a subject in Markopoulos's *Political Portraits* (1969) and is best known as the front man of the electronic music group Yello, was a Zürich-based industrialist dabbling in art and filmmaking. He offered Markopoulos an arrangement that was economically preferable to that of the Film-Makers' Cooperative and Cinema 16, which paid their filmmakers a percentage of rental fees but could guarantee no regular income. But this relationship, too, would go sour. When Meier took eight of Markopoulos's films and deposited them for rent with Progressive Art Productions (often known as P.A.P.), a film distribution agency he ran with Karlheinz Hein in Munich, Markopoulos saw the act as extending beyond the terms of their agreement. P.A.P. distributed the work of filmmakers such as Paul Sharits, Malcolm Le Grice, Kurt Kren, and Wilhelm and Birgit Hein, offering prints for rent and for sale. In the 1969 catalogue fifteen pages are devoted to synopses, stills, and a filmography of Markopoulos's work, more space than is accorded to any other filmmaker, save for Otto Muehl, who had seventeen pages. After two years Meier ceased the annual payments and entered into protracted legal action against Markopoulos for breach of contract, arguing the filmmaker was breaking his agreement of exclusivity by allowing his work to be shown without Meier's involvement at places such as Anthology Film Archives. Markopoulos in turn blamed Anthology, claiming that the institution was operating against his wishes by publicly exhibiting prints that had been deposited for archival purposes only.

This initiated a dispute that would ultimately culminate in a 1974 letter to *Variety* in which Markopoulos proclaimed, "I wish it to be known publicly that I dissociate myself from the New American Cinema, and, from Anthology Film Archives."[6] Markopoulos's films have remained out of circulation through a rental-based distributor ever since.

Though often overshadowed by his dramatic gesture of withdrawing from the rental model, Markopoulos's engagement with distribution in the late 1960s was above all pluralistic and opportunistic. He was by no means invested in limiting the circulation of his work at this time. In fact, in January 1972 Markopoulos wrote to Leslie Trumbull at the Film-Makers' Cooperative expressing interest in returning his prints to circulation there but said that "because of a number of stupid uncertainties with the party I have been involved"—presumably Meier, with whom legal proceedings were ongoing—"I dared not."[7] In addition to the rental model Markopoulos also investigated the possibility of television commissions and the sale of prints, first in the form of uneditioned 8 mm reductions and later in the form of high-priced limited editions to be sold through the Gimpel Fils Gallery in London and New York. It was only when all of these initiatives proved fruitless, when the various channels of conventional distribution failed to offer Markopoulos the remuneration, acclaim, and control he desired, that only one alternative remained: the Temenos. It would replace established film archives and cinémathèques, taking up a double mandate of preservation and presentation for the works of Markopoulos and Beavers alone. Ceasing nearly all public presentations of his work, from 1973 onward Markopoulos would continue to complete films but would leave them unprinted and thus unexhibited.

It would be easy to deem the Temenos a matter of self-sufficiency, but in fact something quite different was at stake: Markopoulos was making recourse to one of the oldest ways of sustaining the livelihood of artists, one that has an extensive and underacknowledged role in the history of experimental film—namely, patronage. As early as September 1968 Markopoulos asked:

> Where are the patrons of the New Cinema hiding?…Why do the galleries lack the imagination to sell films through a limited prints sales plan? Where are the New Cinema film collectors? Who will be the first New Cinema film collectors?…The patrons will replace the distributors and the producers. The reward and delight of the patrons of the New Cinema shall be as an individual Joy: the Joy which is as the wonder of Friendship. It is only when this occurs that the film, thus far treated as a fragile and inferior child, will begin to mature. With maturity will come the desire for its proper preservation; its proper care; its proper projection; none of which seems possible today, even in the best (still the poorest) financed of the film cinémathèques.[8]

This statement puts forth a conception of the limited-edition model very different from that operative within the art world today but one that would have a key impact on the way Markopoulos would conduct the rest of his career. Here, the film collector is not someone who purchases a high-priced work out of a desire to exhibit or preserve it or out of speculation that it might accrue value. Rather, the collector is someone who does so as a way of supporting the activity of the filmmaker more generally. Purchasing the film print is simply a small token of a much larger investment in facilitating a creative life. The Temenos project would be supported by patrons who recognized the importance of the work and were willing to offer financial support with few to no strings attached, individuals such as Dr. Athanase Ghertsos, the Greek Honorary Consul in Zürich, whom

Markopoulos met in 1973 and who became a longtime supporter. Throughout the 1970s Markopoulos wrote to countless European aristocrats and important cultural figures, asking if he might make their film portraits. In July 1971 he sought sponsorship from Aristotle Onassis for a "small, but dynamic film archive in Arcadia," and in 1972–73 he approached Otto von Hapsburg and Princess Helen of Greece and Denmark for support.[9] Such patrons would make public exhibition unnecessary for less than ideal audiences, but it was not easy to find individuals who would pledge the level of support Markopoulos demanded, particularly given the relatively marginal status of film vis-à-vis more traditional media of artistic practice. In his self-published 1972 text "The Filmmaker's Perception in Contemplation," Markopoulos summoned this patron to appear: "You who are the munificent benefactor of this Temenos, appear; to all who would destroy the idea of the Temenos reply your great, 'No!' Build the Temenos! Build it in the sacred precinct of the *Peloponnesus* for the *film as film.* And may all who deal in jealousy and opposition fall within the lake of defeat. Appear then munificent benefactor! Appear! I believe in your existence."[10]

As Markopoulos began to turn his attention toward private patronage, he increasingly refused public screenings of his work and intensified his antagonism toward institutional venues of preservation and exhibition. He wrote in 1971, "I would not dream of selling any of my film portraits to museums or to colleges; *they should all be closed*. They are through their machinations destroying all the art of the past; that anything should continue to exist is only the miracle/through the miracle of the few."[11] Yet a few days later, he wrote to the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York to inquire about their film acquisition policies. As much as Markopoulos performed a vitriolic rejection of film institutional contexts, he never entirely gave up on them either, especially if they harbored the possibility of generating much-needed income. He continued to maintain a relationship with the Austrian Film Museum until the end of his life; the institution acquired thirteen films between 1972 and Markopoulos's death in 1992, adding to the four the museum had purchased before the filmmaker began to withdraw from distribution. All were made before his decision to cease printing his films, save for *Prosopographia* (1976), which is specified in the institution's records as unfinished.

As a rule, though, from the early 1970s onward Markopoulos's correspondence with museums and archives rarely led to the acquisition of work, in part because the filmmaker tended to impose conditions of sale that were too difficult to meet. He often specified that he would sell a print only on the condition that it would be for preservation and study purposes only, never to be shown publicly. The Austrian Film Museum prints were acquired with the agreement that they could be shown on the premises of the institution without restriction but could not be loaned to other parties without Markopoulos's written consent.[12] The museum showed these films on a regular basis throughout the 1970s and 1980s, often in the presence of the filmmaker.[13] Relations were more strained with other venues. In 1975, when the Centre Pompidou was under construction, Markopoulos offered to donate the entire collection of the Temenos Film Archive (i.e., his and Beavers's complete works) at laboratory cost if the museum would agree to build a special screening area seating forty spectators, to be used exclusively to display the films of the two artists. If this was not possible, Markopoulos offered the sale of individual films at ten times the

printing cost—something that far exceeded the conventional pricing measure of three times the printing cost. Needless to say, the Pompidou declined both offers; Markopoulos deemed it "a gigantic museum of the worst kind."[14] A year later, John Hanhardt tried to include Markopoulos in his series "A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema," to be held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Markopoulos agreed on two conditions: the films had to be shown as a monographic program, and the Whitney would have to purchase them for what Hanhardt describes as "a cost that practically matched the budget of the entire exhibition."[15] Once again, Markopoulos's specifications were too much for the institution in question, and he was left out of the exhibition, the only artist Hanhardt wanted, but failed, to include.

Through actions such as these Markopoulos went from being one of the most prominent representatives of the New American Cinema in the 1960s to an expatriate filmmaker working under conditions of self-imposed invisibility in the 1970s. As a part of this broader effort to control the reception of his work, he insisted that the chapter about him in the first edition of P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde* (1974) be removed on the publication of the second edition in 1979. But the filmmaker's disappearing act was always meant to be temporary. He continued making films, while self-publishing his writings in limited runs and meticulously cataloguing all his correspondence. Eventually, all outgoing documents were bound in a series of handsome volumes he entitled *Cerberus* after the Greco-Roman mythological creature who guards the entrance to the underworld, as if awaiting future readers.[16] He wrote to newspapers and magazines, requesting offprints of any article in which he might have been mentioned. In relative obscurity Markopoulos was busy preparing the conditions for his future reception, abiding perhaps more fully than any other by the classic avant-garde maxim that a deserving audience will exist only in a time to come.

▶ ▶ ▶

Wemustallriseabovethedailyaffairs

Towardsthegreateventwhichwillbethe

TEMENOS!

Ihavenoideahowitwillbedone;perhaps

throughoutrageousDisbelief.

—Gregory Markopoulos, sign-off of letter to Robert Beavers, May 25, 1971

At the heart of Markopoulos's embrace of his own untimeliness were his plans for the permanent Temenos structure. In his 1970s correspondence Markopoulos refers to the temperature-controlled vault where he and Beavers kept their film materials as "the first Temenos," "the temporary Temenos site," and even simply "the Temenos."[17] But the goal was for the eventual construction of a cinema, a library, and an archive that would preserve the works of both filmmakers for posterity and make them accessible to selected scholars. The screening space was not to be a conventional cinema but rather would resemble a Greek amphitheater and possess multiple screens that Markopoulos imagined might take the form of a circle or a square. He began to develop these ideas already in the late 1960s, as evidenced by the 1968 text "Towards a Constructive Complex in

Projection." Here the filmmaker expresses frustration with prevailing conditions of projection and envisions in their place images projected in a triptych format and reflected off of glass. He also proposes that two copies of a given film might be projected side by side, one forward and the other backward, a format with which he had already experimented in *Twice a Man Twice* (1967).[18] In a 1970 letter to his friend Robert Freeman, Markopoulos further outlined these ideas, this time articulating them specifically in relation to the Temenos:

> I wanted the black glass area to be in the form of an ark and seemingly infinite…the Temenos in the shape of a graded glass of greys, infinite in the shape of an arc; the horizon of day and night. The screens invisibly hung. Surely a gigantic square screen; a circular screen; and Robert, the younger's mirror screen reflecting back onto the audience. I am thinking an orchestration of projection and of screen could be accomplished by somehow dividing the Square screen in a diptych or triptych. The film projected there on [*sic*] would become a diptych or triptych, BUT WITHOUT THE USE OF PRE-PLANNED CONCEPTION IN THE PRINTING THAT IS WITH MATTES. I have even considered that the circle might possibly be bisected for another kind of projection.[19]

In the same letter Markopoulos describes a curtain made of Steuben glass and entrance hallways decorated with "very handsome columns in the Egyptian style" that would be made of granite. He was inspired by the Doge's Palace in Venice, a structure that employs a classical vocabulary of Ionic columns within a Venetian Gothic style.[20] Though never realized and only sketched in the most preliminary fashion, Markopoulos's plan for this screening space should be understood alongside other utopian film-architectural initiatives of the period, including Stan VanDerBeek's *Movie-Drome* (1963–65) and Peter Kubelka's *Invisible Cinema* (1970). Despite the significant differences among these projects, in all three one finds a desire to rethink cinematic exhibition outside of its institutionalized parameters in order to intensify the aesthetic experience of the spectator. All are testimonies to the extent to which the burgeoning experimental cinema involved not simply a rethinking of filmic textuality and aesthetics but of the conditions of reception as well.

Perhaps the most significant artistic precedent for Markopoulos's dream of the Temenos theater was Wagner's Festspielhaus at Bayreuth; indeed, this influence was one that the filmmaker himself identified repeatedly throughout the 1970s. Markopoulos was a Wagner devotee: he visited Bayreuth, read the composer's writings, asked to be put on the mailing list of the Wagner Library, and made a film, *Sorrows* (1969), at the composer's house in Tribschen, Switzerland. In his Temenos cinema Markopoulos envisioned inverting the typical situation in which the spectator gazes upward at the cinematic image to instead have him or her look down on it, as in the ancient Greek theater.[21] This was something he saw as tied to the way the shallow, amphitheatrical space of the Festspielhaus privileged aesthetic experience over the spectator's own relaxation, a practice that stood in stark contrast with "what is being done today with architecture to create comfort, disregard the art involved, and pack them in: Architecture and the Art in the end obliterated."[22] The Festspielhaus—itself a protocinematic space in its deployment of darkness and sensory immersion—included many architectural innovations that drastically altered the viewer's relationship to the spectacle, something also at the heart of Markopoulos's plans for the Temenos.

But even beyond the specific *dispositif* of the custom exhibition space the similarities

between Markopoulos and Wagner run very deep. For both men the task at hand was nothing less than reformulating the conditions of display for their chosen media—film for Markopoulos, theater for Wagner—completely on their own terms and doing so through the production of monumental cycles. Both believed that their art forms had been unfairly overtaken by commercial concerns, and both rallied against mass circulation, displaying a distinctively romantic, antimodern impulse. Both felt an intense connection to Greece, both depended on patronage, and both were deeply invested in unity as an aesthetic principle. They theorized their ambitious projects for decades before they were realized, confronting both financial difficulty and resistance from the surrounding artistic community in the process. Both retreated to isolated locations that required devoted spectators to make a pilgrimage, producing final works meant to be seen only in that location—*Parsifal* for Wagner, *Eniaios* for Markopoulos.

Matthew Wilson Smith has suggested, "The distance between Bayreuth and urbanized Germany, Wagner hoped, would necessitate a pilgrim's progress, one that would prepare the visitor to enter into the mythic space and time that Bayreuth offered."[23] Markopoulos, too, was interested in the imposition of such a distance, but the precise question of where the Temenos structure might be located remained open throughout the 1970s. The filmmaker gravitated to his ancestral home of the Peloponnese, but locations in Switzerland were also considered, including the Rhine Valley resort town of Disentis and the mountain village of Lü in Val Müstair. Markopoulos was concerned that Switzerland lacked the appropriate "Greek Spirit," but a reconnaissance trip to Greece left the filmmaker with the impression that the Greeks "did not have the taste" and "seemed incapable of preserving anything; certainly the terrible task of a film archive."[24] Nonetheless, the idea of locating the structure near Lyssaraia, the village where his father was born and where screenings would be held in the 1980s and from 2004 on, occurred very early (figure 7.2). In July 1969 a small sketch at the bottom of a letter included a provision for a special train to be chartered from Athens to Lyssaraia, which was at the time a seven-to-eight-hour journey by car along a perilously narrow and curving road.[25] In 1971 he isolated two possible sites of great natural beauty near the village: "One site is called, Founta; it is a huge knoll, or little mountain. From the top one sees the surrounding countryside of Arcadia, and far out the sea. The other is closer to the village and is called, the site, Rayi Spartias. It is in a kind of make-believe valley, very long; extensive; spacious."[26] Markopoulos made repeated visits to the village, inquired after the purchase of land, and attempted to raise the necessary funds.

**FIGURE 7.2**   The village of Lyssaraia, Greece, in the 1980s. Courtesy of Daniel Singelenberg and the Eye Film Museum.

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> Many years ago, Markopoulos decided that there was no reason whatsoever to make a film through a producer, nor was there any reason to seek distributuion [*sic*]. For distribution, like reproduction, destroys.
>
> —Temenos III press release, June 1982

Rayi Spartias would become the site of the first Temenos screenings in September 1980, the same year as the death of the filmmaker's father. Preparations began in early 1979, initially with the intention of presenting films in September of that year. This was delayed until 1980 as Markopoulos sought support from private sponsors, including Crédit Suisse, the Phillips Company, and the National Bank of Greece, as well as Greek governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Culture and the Tourism Office. These screenings were to take place outdoors, with all discussion of the custom-built cinema space tabled until "the proper moment."[27] In September 1979 Markopoulos entered into correspondence with Anastasios Sahiotis, the mayor of Tripolis, a larger town in the Peloponnese, closer to Athens and located about a ninety-minute drive from Lyssaraia. This resulted in an initial plan to hold the event at a former shooting range owned by the Tripolis Athletic Club, just outside of town on the road to Olympia. In October a press release went out to the *International Herald Tribune* stating that these "Temenos Film Presentations" were to be annual events attracting an international audience.[28] The release claimed that it would be the first time Markopoulos had shown his work publicly in nearly fifteen years; though this was an overstatement, it was indeed the case that the 1980 event would mark something of a return to public life.

As the date drew nearer, difficulties arose. In late November 1979 Markopoulos deemed Sahiotis a "fraud" and wrote to Beavers that he was encountering "complete ineptness;

and no concern, whatsoever, for what [they were] doing."[29] After initially expressing support, the Ministry of Culture and the Tourism Office declined involvement with the project. Regardless, Markopoulos pressed forward, relying on the support of patrons in Switzerland and Greece, and placed a somewhat cryptic advertisement for the event in the Spring 1980 issue of *Sight and Sound* (figure 7.3). In late March further trouble ensued when the National Gallery in Athens canceled a presentation of selected films by Markopoulos and Beavers that had been planned for April 9 and 10, 1980. Director Dimitris Papastamou expressed concern with the content of *The Illiac Passion* (1967); even though he had not seen it, he apparently read an article in which it was mentioned that the film contained nudity. After Markopoulos received a wire informing him that the screening had been canceled, Papastamou backtracked with an offer of a private screening for forty, but he declined to pay Markopoulos and Beavers's travel to Greece as originally planned. When Papastamou told Markopoulos that the invitations for these screenings would not go out until after the filmmakers arrived in Greece, Markopoulos canceled the event entirely. The episode worked to shore up the filmmaker's conviction about the inhospitable conditions encountered within the institutional context.



**FIGURE 7.3**   Advertisement for the first Temenos screenings in the Spring 1980 issue of *Sight and Sound*. Courtesy of the Temenos Archive.

The canceled screening at the National Gallery plays an important and yet misunderstood role in the development of the Temenos. It has often been taken to be the final blow that led Markopoulos to organize the outdoor screenings at Rayi Spartias.[30] This is not entirely accurate, however; Markopoulos's plans for the outdoor screenings were under way long before his falling out with Papastamou. In fact, Markopoulos understood the cancellation of the National Gallery not as motivation for the Temenos but as

something that put its realization into danger: he wrote that the cancellation threw "a wrench in [the] proposed Peloponnesus TEMENOS ARCHIVE presentation in September," presumably because the springtime screenings in Athens would have served as an ideal way to generate both funds and interest in the event.[31] Markopoulos had also planned for the National Gallery to host a selection of films after they screened at the Temenos, or perhaps to be the site of a "pre-sneak presentation" beforehand, neither of which would be possible after the debacle surrounding *The Illiac Passion*.[32] On April 27, 1980, Markopoulos wrote, "By rights, the *TEMENOS 1980* has collapsed…. Precisely, what next, I do not know. I only know that certain things must be done, must be protected, and, it is in that direction that I am proceeding."[33]

During the summer of 1980 the planned location of the event shifted from the pine grove in Tripolis to the site of Rayi Spartias, located about a thirty-minute walk from Lyssaraia. Because of its proximity to Markopoulos's ancestral village, it had been the filmmaker's preference from the beginning.[34] As late as August 26, 1980, fund-raising efforts for the September presentation continued, with a request of two hundred thousand drachmas sent to the Governor of the Bank of Greece. Despite such last-minute uncertainties the event took place on September 6 and 7, with no admission charged and a printed program featuring four essays in English and Greek. The films screened were not announced in advance, but the first night featured Beavers's *Sotiros* (1976–78) and the second Markopoulos's *Twice a Man* (1963). Accounts of the scale of audience attendance differ: in a document written to help promote the 1981 screenings, Markopoulos reports attracting 250 spectators each evening the previous year; Robert Beavers, meanwhile, remembers a much more modest attendance of local people, a few who had traveled from Athens, and only four or five foreigners; Yorgos Zikogiannis, an attendee, recalls thirty to forty in total.[35]

Markopoulos deemed these screenings a "total success," and plans for the 1981 event began virtually as soon as its first iteration had concluded. In the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Beavers published a long account of the screenings entitled "Lyssaraia: Films in a Mythological Landscape," which extolled the way that "the film and its surroundings breathed together, sharing peace and openness."[36] Screenings at Rayi Spartias were held in late August or early September each year until 1986, always following the same format. The Dutch filmmaker and journalist Daniel Singelenberg made a short film at the 1982 screenings, entitled *Temenos 82* (1982), in which only a handful of adults appear; more numerous are the village children. Though Singelenberg's film does not contain any footage shot at the nighttime screenings—he concentrates instead on the construction of the screen and the surrounding site (figure 7.4), while also offering portraits of the village and one teenage boy—the film suggests that the 1982 event occurred on quite a modest scale. Despite the fact that these open-air presentations scarcely resembled the elaborate architectural creation Markopoulos had envisioned, he was consistently positive about their success. Even without a permanent edifice, the Rayi Spartias screenings answered the imperative of sharing the work outside the institutional structures of distribution and exhibition that might contaminate it. Of the 1982 iteration, for instance, Markopoulos wrote, "Thus, TEMENOS III, far from false culture everywhere. It is the greatest event, apart from Bayreuth."[37]

**FIGURE 7.4**  The construction of the Temenos screen. Courtesy of Daniel Singelenberg and the Eye Film Museum.

Imposing distance from the "false culture" that he saw as contaminating Athens and the rest of Europe was central to Markopoulos, as it had been to Wagner before him. In the ancient world Arcadia was identified with the poetry and music of peasants and shepherds, forms of artistic production that positioned themselves against those of the city. Markopoulos intended for spectators who traveled to the Temenos to experience a form of ritual cleansing by spending time away from the "bad influences" of their quotidian existence in more urban environments.[38] The Temenos was, then, not simply a prophylactic for Markopoulos's films; it was also an attempt to use cinema as a cure for the ills it usually engendered as part of a larger media-industrial complex. In other words, and to use a Greek reference befitting Markopoulos, cinema was a *pharmakon*: poison, remedy, and intoxicant all at once. As he wrote, "The Temenos Spectator either from Greece or Europe becomes, in a sense, healed in this clear, uncontaminated region of Gortynia. Here, the spectator of the Temenos spends his several days in simple pastimes, refreshing himself amongst the absolute hardiness of magical, life-bestowing rocks and pomegranate trees."[39] The therapeutic dimension to the event was concentrated in the film screenings that took place each evening but also extended beyond them to encompass the rest of the time the pilgrims would spend in the area.

Although Markopoulos's initial attraction to the village stemmed from its being his father's birthplace, he was also keen to hold the Temenos screenings there owing to his belief that the area had been the site of an ancient Asclepieion.[40] Asclepius was the god of healing and medicine in ancient Greek religion, to whom temples called Asclepieia were devoted, the most celebrated of which is located at Epidaurus in the eastern Peloponnese. Many Asclepieia featured amphitheatrical spaces of the sort that interested both Markopoulos and Wagner. Pilgrims would often journey great distances to reach these

sites, which tended to be located out of the city, as the Temenos would be. Once there, they would undergo forms of ritual purification before gaining entry to the sanctuary. In the Abaton, the inner chamber, they would enter a state of *enkoimesis,* or incubation, sleeping under the influence of drugs. On waking, any visions the patient had overnight would be reported to a priest, who would interpret them and prescribe the appropriate cure: taking the waters, exercise, diet, or even surgery. At times Asclepius himself would appear to the patient undergoing incubation, who would awake to find him- or herself healed. As P. Adams Sitney notes, Markopoulos acquired and annotated a copy of C. Kerényi's book *Asklepios: Archetypal Image of the Physician's Existence* in 1969 and made copies of a number of other articles on the Asclepius cult.[41]

In line with the Asclepieian tradition the nightly Temenos screenings were to serve as a cinematic form of incubation. They would provide a remedy for the fragmented attention spans, the instrumentalized use of time, the enslavement to the profit motive, and the banalization of the image that Markopoulos saw as overtaking society. Relief would come in the form of a high-definition aesthetic experience occurring fully outside the established regimes of circulation, in harmony with the natural beauty of a landscape deeply infused with mythological significance. High definition is understood here not in the sense of the almost forensic level of detail offered by digital imaging technologies but following Marshall McLuhan's notion that hot media operate in high definition in that they are "well filled with data."[42] The hot medium is a form of exclusion, something that floods the viewer's senses and demands nothing in return. Film was already a hot medium for McLuhan, but here Markopoulos aims to make this hot medium even hotter at a time when media have arguably cooled down overall. He envisioned not a participatory, malleable form that one can engage with as one wishes but rather a filmic event offering a strong, pure, and even contemplative experience of media very different from the distracted interactivity of most contemporary exhibition situations, including the gallery and museum.

The press release for Temenos 1986 specified that it would be the final edition, as Markopoulos and Beavers would now turn their attention to the completion of new films and to "the construction of their visual space, the AMOR, where the work will have its definite seat of presentation."[43] "Amor," an alternate name for Eros, served as the title of a Beavers film from 1980 but was later appropriated as the name of the custom-built cinema that had been discussed in the 1970s. In a 1984 text entitled "Proposal to the Architect of the Temenos," the messianic tone that had marked the plans for the Temenos in the early 1970s persists: "If every year, every first weekend of September, there is a gathering of nearly three hundred Temenos Spectators, these and more will gather far from Gortynia upon another site, in another Time, when the Temenos will have become a reality. It will be a universal Time when the idea Reality will have vanished; the unexpected time."[44] Despite Markopoulos's attachment to Greece in general and Lyssaraia in particular, he planned for the Amor to be built abroad. While he desired for the Temenos to be located in Greece, he feared that the region of Gortynia did not have the infrastructure necessary for the construction and maintenance of the permanent edifice.

"Proposal to the Architect of the Temenos" specifies that the Amor will be built by Hippolytus as portrayed by Euripides, an icon of chastity who is wrongly accused of raping Phaedra, his stepmother, and who dies as a result. Markopoulos had a long-standing

interest in the Hippolytus story, which he had adapted for *Twice a Man*, but here the figure emerges as something of an alter ego. In Euripides's version of the narrative the chaste Hippolytus is fiercely devoted to a single god, Artemis, and will not betray this devotion even if he is persecuted for it; at the end of the play he dies rather than be disloyal. Such a figure exerted a clear appeal for Markopoulos, who imposed a kind of chastity on his films —he ensured that they would not consort with any others—and was singular in his vision of the Temenos site despite feeling misunderstood and unfairly treated by the world of museums, distributors, and cinémathèques. But more practically, the construction of the Amor was to be supported by the Zürich-based Temenos Stiftung, a foundation Markopoulos had established in 1984 as a way to formalize the support of his patrons, particularly Dr. Athanase Ghertsos. The existence of the Stiftung did not, however, foreclose the need to continue to seek additional benefactors: in January 1987 Markopoulos wrote to the Cypriot industrialist Dakis Joannou, well known for his extensive activities as an art collector and in particular his early support of Jeff Koons. Markopoulos sought general financial aid from Joannou but also described his need to fund the construction of the "winged space" of the Amor, including monies for the purchase of land and the hiring of an architect.[45] Joannou declined involvement.

The history of art is dotted with examples of artists who pursue the construction of custom-built spaces for the display of their work. In a 1987 letter Markopoulos—perhaps jealously—mentioned Niki de Saint Phalle's then-in-progress Giardino dei Tarocchi, or Tarot Garden, a sculpture park in Tuscany that the artist worked on for nearly twenty years under the patronage of the Agnelli family.[46] It finally opened in 1998, just four years before her death. One might also reference the Rothko Chapel in Houston, created with the support of Dominique and John de Menil by an artist who, like Markopoulos, was averse to group shows and favored the permanent installation of his work. The monumental interventions into natural sites that mark the ambitious undertakings of land art might also figure as a precedent. But Markopoulos's desire to construct the Amor is virtually unparalleled in film history. Though there are numerous instances in which artists and filmmakers have designed screening spaces, generally the content to be screened within them is left open, and frequently they are not permanent, standalone structures but temporary constructions situated within gallery spaces that may be restaged elsewhere.

Perhaps the closest approximation to the Amor is to be found in Robert Smithson's unrealized plans to build subterranean cinema spaces, for like the Amor they were imagined as permanent structures with an intrinsic relation to the films exhibited within them. Smithson imagined that *Spiral Jetty* (1970) would be shown in a purpose-built museum close to the Golden Spike National Historic Site in Utah, inside a screening room that the spectator would reach via a spiral staircase; his sketch *Towards the Development of a Cinema Cavern* (1971) plays with a pun on "underground cinema," diagramming a cinema-cave that would show only a film about the construction of the space. But whereas Smithson playfully interrogates site specificity and the dialectics of the site/nonsite, for Markopoulos the Amor was a matter of utmost seriousness. It was not a conceptual wager but something necessary for the protection of the work, which Markopoulos understood as an extension of his very being. Monument and fortress at once, it was not a humorous form of institutional critique, but an act of institution-building, an attempt to beat the museum at its own game.[47]

> But above all, and most important, those who will help me have no inkling who they are or even how they will help me. The reason for this is one of Doubt redoubled by unflinching determination towards the immediate construction of my *Temenos* of the Twenty First Century.
>
> —Gregory Markopoulos, 1971

Markopoulos died from lymphoma in Germany on November 12, 1992, at the age of sixty-four, before he was able to break ground on the Amor. As late as 1998 Beavers spoke of creating a permanent projection space, but to date none exists.[48] In this sense Markopoulos's Temenos is still to come. But his prediction that the Temenos would be accomplished in the twenty-first century has in another sense been fulfilled as a result of Beavers's efforts to print and exhibit *Eniaios,* the monumental cycle of films that Markopoulos left finished but unprinted at his death. Writing in 1993, David Ehrenstein noted that "neither [Markopoulos] nor his works had been written of, save in passing, for well over a decade" and claimed that it didn't "require any special knowledge of either film or politics to regard his self-imposed exile as an enormous mistake."[49] This situation was to change dramatically from the mid-1990s onward, as Beavers began to carefully reintroduce Markopoulos's films into circulation. In 1993 the Austrian Film Museum held a memorial retrospective of seventeen films from its collection. In 1994 Beavers formed Temenos Inc., a nonprofit corporation devoted to preservation and presentation. In 1996 the Whitney Museum of American Art hosted a major retrospective, accompanied by a publication. These events were followed by selected screenings of films completed before 1971 at museums and cinémathèques in North America and Europe. In 2002 Sitney reinstated the chapter on Markopoulos in the third edition of *Visionary Film*. All of this served to galvanize new interest in the filmmaker and to prepare the way for the revival of the open-air Temenos screenings at Rayi Spartias in 2004.

From June 25 to June 27, 2004, some two hundred people gathered to see the first three orders of *Eniaios,* the long-form film Markopoulos intended to exhibit solely at the Temenos. A twenty-foot screen was erected, with red beanbag chairs set out in front to provide comfortable seating for the reclining spectators. Like the earlier events, these screenings were free of charge and came with handsomely printed programs including writings by Markopoulos in English and Greek. But the twenty-first-century iteration of the Temenos is distinct from the screenings held from 1980 to 1986 in two key respects. First, whereas the 1980s screenings featured films by both Markopoulos and Beavers, shown on separate evenings to preserve the insistence on monographic presentation, the quadrennial screenings that commenced in 2004 are devoted to Markopoulos alone. And second, they are dedicated to the ongoing premiere of *Eniaios* and include no other films.

Austere and difficult even by the standards of experimental cinema, *Eniaios* consists of twenty-two orders of between three and five hours each, amounting to a duration of some eighty hours. It is constructed predominantly of rhythms of black and clear leader, with occasional flashes of imagery drawn from Markopoulos's body of work. It shares with Paolo Cherchi Usai's *Passio* (2006) the desire to separate images from one another by stretches of leader, but unlike *Passio,* which asks its viewer to marvel at the miracle of cinematic movement as the earliest spectators supposedly once did, none of the

representational images of the orders of *Eniaios* printed to date lasts more than a fleeting moment. As Rebekah Rutkoff notes, "Decomposition is a dominant theme: not in the sense of total dematerialization or loss of form, but in the breakdown into conventional units of perception into ever smaller parts."[50] Beyond decomposition, withholding emerges as perhaps the central aesthetic strategy of the work, as the mere appearance of an image becomes a revelatory gift. The plenitude of movement so central to the visual pleasure of cinema is refused in favor of a resolute concentration on the stillness of the photogram—a part of Markopoulos's philosophy of *film as film*. Markopoulos enacts an almost violent suppression of his own images, one that is compounded by reports that the original negatives were destroyed upon integration into *Eniaios*. But alongside this sensation of negation—indeed, through it—one discovers something very different: a total recalibration of one's own vision and one's relation to filmic movement.[51]

*Eniaios* was meant to serve as a grand summa of Markopoulos's career. As early as 1974 Markopoulos expressed a desire to compose what he called a "complete order" of his work that would be exhibited in his custom-built space.[52] Markopoulos turned to this immense and ambitious project in earnest after the Temenos screenings ended in 1986, beginning in April 1987 the extensive task of reediting his life's work. Throughout the remainder of the decade his desire to raise funds for the Amor was matched, if not superseded, by the need to secure financing to allow for the printing of the cycle. Fearing interference, Markopoulos insisted that none of the orders would be shown until the cycle was "completed in its noble entirety, and finally printed."[53] The cycle form was firmly established in experimental film by the early 1970s, with works such as Stan Brakhage's *Dog Star Man* (1961–64) and his 8 mm *Songs* (1964–69, revised 1979–87) or Hollis Frampton's *Hapax Legomena* (1971–72) and the unfinished *Magellan* (1972–84) standing as only a few of the most prominent examples. But given Markopoulos's antagonistic relationship to standard distribution structures, his embrace of long-form filmmaking is weighted with significance not present in Brakhage and Frampton's deployment of the cycle format. After all, *Dog Star Man*, the *Songs*, and *Hapax Legomena* are constructed of quasi-autonomous short films that are easily and often shown outside of their place within the cycle. The same cannot be said for *Eniaios*. The conventions of film distribution and film duration are deeply intertwined, with industrial cinema privileging the feature-length format and experimental cinema the short. By insisting on the basic unit of his cycle as the three-to-five-hour order, Markopoulos rejects them both and performs his fundamental incompatibility with established infrastructures.

The Amor was first envisioned as a screening space that would exhibit the entirety of Markopoulos and Beavers's output; in other words it would show many films that had already had lives beyond its walls, however limited they might have been. In creating a film expressly for exhibition in the Temenos, Markopoulos builds into the very conception of the work the conditions that he had imposed on his preexisting output from the early 1970s on: total confinement. In his 1989 text "Images in the New Media" Vilém Flusser outlines a historical trajectory that sees the image as moving from absolute locatedness (the Lascaux caves), through increased transportability (paintings on wood panels), to a telos of "disembodied images, 'pure' surfaces." Flusser writes, "Photographs and films are transitional phenomena somewhere between framed canvases and disembodied images. There is, however, one unambiguous tendency: images will become progressively more

portable and addressees will become even more immobile."[54] The contemporary era has seen photographs and films lean more to the "disembodied images" that followed them than back to the canvases that preceded them, as digital forms of reproducibility have enabled unprecedented forms of image mobility. *Eniaios* reverses this by insisting on an inextricable connection to its exhibition context precisely at a time when images are able to circulate more promiscuously than ever, placing the burden of movement on its spectator. This chimes very much with what Francesco Casetti calls the "cinema of adhesion," a tendency that has emerged in the wake of the dispersal of cinema across multiple formats and exhibition situations. Casetti, who describes it as a cinema invested in "enhanc[ing] its appeal to the senses to include the spectator in the depicted world better," looks to digital 3-D as one site at which it may be discerned.[55] This indeed provides a persuasive way of accounting for certain tendencies in mainstream cinema, but one can also see this "cinema of adhesion" as occurring in experimental film as well, perhaps nowhere more strongly than the Temenos. In both cases the cinema asserts itself as a unique *dispositif* able to provide an intense aesthetic experience. But at the Temenos there is no plotline and no sound, no absorption in an onscreen world, but instead a keen attention to the locational specificity of exhibition.

Markopoulos did not make *Eniaios* specifically for exhibition at Rayi Spartias but rather for the Temenos, a concept that possesses multiple articulations, as the preceding pages have shown. The Temenos can refer to Rayi Spartias insofar as this site constitutes its fullest realization to date, but it can also refer to the future potentiality of the Amor. Nonetheless, it remains possible to consider *Eniaios* as a site-specific film insofar as its conditions of exhibition are elaborated in detail by the filmmaker and restricted to a single conceptual, if not physical, location.[56] The notion of site-specific filmmaking would seem to go against one of the inherent qualities of the medium—its circulatory reproducibility—but in fact it has a history, however limited, within the experimental film tradition, where it has often been deployed within practices deeply invested in thinking through cinematic specificity. In addition to the Smithson projects mentioned above, one might note William Raban's *2′45″* (1972) or Morgan Fisher's *Screening Room* (1968–), both of which must be remade anew each time they are shown in a new location. These two films record the history of their own production: they are filmed and exhibited in the same space, purposefully confusing the material actuality of the screening and the illusionist virtuality of the represented image. In these cases one has ventured into the domain of the iterative singularity of film performance, a predominantly temporal paradigm. Markopoulos's plans for *Eniaios*, by contrast, are by no means tied to the production of difference through repetition. On the contrary, as a timeless space in which "no one must be born or die," the Temenos is marked by a fierce denial of ephemerality. As with his dream of a custom-designed exhibition space, in the production of *Eniaios* as a site-specific cycle, Markopoulos stands alone in film history.

Site specificity is a spatial paradigm, but in the case of the screenings of *Eniaios* at the Temenos, the temporal category of the event remains central. One can visit Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969), a sculptural intervention in the Nevada landscape, on any day of the year, with no particular moment better than any other. By contrast, *Eniaios* is accessible for only three days every four years, and even then what is made available is roughly one-eighth of the work.[57] The cooperation of different forms of rarity—seeing the

only print, of a film never shown before, at the only place it is meant to be shown—endows the Temenos screenings with a special aura. Like the pilgrims who journeyed to visit the ancient Asclepieia, most of the spectators who have attended the post-2004 screenings travel a considerable distance to reach the Temenos. As Lucy Reynolds has noted, "It could be argued that Markopoulos's epic film project, and uncompromising film experience, evokes the figure of the penitent inherent in the notion of pilgrim, where the discomforts of the journey are part of an atonement, and where endurance is rewarded with revelation and epiphany."[58] In the mid-1980s a new road to Lyssaraia was built, cutting the journey time in half and substantially ameliorating driving conditions, but it is still a trek. The list of attendees of the 2012 event shows representatives from sixteen countries, journeying to a location far from an international airport. The withholding that is so central to the formal operations of *Eniaios* is thus also central to the work's exhibition context, which relies on rarity and a deliberate gesture of removal. *Eniaios* engages in a denial of the moving image's ability to circulate across exhibition situations, insisting instead that its spectators make the journey to encounter it within an environment to which it is inextricably connected (figure 7.5). It becomes impossible to delineate where text ends and context begins, as the entirety of the experience—even the time between screenings—contributes to the overall significance and experience of the work. *Eniaios* is inseparable not simply from its site but also from the event that surrounds it, which can include swimming in the Ionian Sea, dinners of hyperlocal lamb and wine, passionate arguments over the cultlike mythology of Markopoulos and the state of experimental film, and living without Internet access for a few days. *Eniaios* may not be a generous work, but the Temenos is a profoundly generous event, partaking of a gift economy in a time and place of austerity measures. Admission was free, accommodation was cheap (in 2012, fifteen Euros a night based on double occupancy), and buses running to and from Athens were donated. In so many ways it stands as a time and space of exception, fulfilling the promise of its name as a space set apart.



**FIGURE 7.5**   The Temenos screen in the landscape. Courtesy of Yorgos Zikogiannis.

In a talk given on the last day of the 2012 screenings on the terrace of the main hotel in Loutra, the village where the majority of attendees stayed, Robert Beavers said that the Temenos gives "a moment of strength outside the pressures" of institutions and finances. But so, too, does it provide a moment outside the hegemonic forms of circulation that govern digital visual culture. Though *Eniaios* is in some sense a throwback to the era of grand modernist projects that have now long been mostly abandoned (even though coming later to film than to the other arts), there is nonetheless something absolutely contemporary about post-2004 screenings and the particular intervention they make into questions of medium specificity and distribution. Exhibiting 16 mm film at great difficulty and expense, these events are necessarily engaged with discourses of obsolescence in a way that one might assume would not have applied to *Eniaios* at the time of its making. But Markopoulos's writings reveal a sharp awareness of the problems of format-shifting and image mobility initiated by the advent of video. In 1971's "A Supreme Art in a Dark Age," he wrote that "the use of film as video" left him "overcome with disgust."[59] Markopoulos was, then, formulating the dream of the Temenos in concert with an awareness of the way that technological change would exacerbate the ill treatment of film that he saw as already occurring in the late 1960s. That said, the significance of and attraction to the post-2004 screenings can only be fully understood by taking account of the position of negation they take up in relation to current conditions. In an update of the patronage model for the digital age, 174 backers donated $24,000 to fund the 2012 event via Kickstarter; one wonders if the interest would have been so great had the Internet's saturation of culture not prompted a serious reinvestment in authenticity.

At the 2012 screenings many attendees spoke of the next edition in 2016. On the last day Beavers, however, was reluctant to make any promises for future screenings. "It's better," he said, "to know that things are fragile." Despite continuing to exist in a state of financial precarity, the Temenos does show signs of growing strength. The 2016 screenings took place from June 30 to July 3, with demand for the event so great that a waiting list was already in place by early April. While Markopoulos's early films remain outside of any distribution agency, they do circulate in a controlled manner through the activities of Beavers and the Temenos Archive. This, along with the growing reputation of the Rayi Spartias screenings, has contributed to increased interest in the filmmaker. During Markopoulos's lifetime his decision to withdraw his films from circulation led to a state of near-invisibility. But posthumously, and in light of the vast changes in the circulation of experimental film in the twenty-first century, this rejection of reproducibility and image mobility has led to the formation of a cultic mystique around the work that has newly consolidated the unique and central place Markopoulos occupies in the history of avant-garde cinema. Markopoulos definitively rejected what he called "the Comedy of Distribution"; for him, it had long ceased to be funny. But if, to follow Lord Byron, comedies end in marriage and tragedies end in death, Markopoulos's relationship to distribution turned out to be a comedy indeed: the filmmaker's final project met no tragic end but lives on, married to the site that he chose for it.

# 8

# Transmission, from the Movie-Drome to Vdrome

> The transmission of art exhibitions by television is the beginning of an era when the public will be taught to appreciate great works of art, seeing them in their homes.
>
> —E. Robb, BBC internal report, May 10, 1933

On February 16, 2013, www.vdrome.org came online. The site proposed something simple but novel: to serve as a portal for the transmission of a single moving image work for a limited period of time, usually ten days. Affiliated with the Milan-based art magazine *Mousse*, the site is run by a team of four curators: Eduoardo Bonaspetti, Jens Hoffmann, Andrea Lissoni, and Filipa Ramos. The team's first selection was Sven Augustijnen's *Spectres* (2011), a feature-length essay film about the colonial history of the Belgian Congo. Though *Spectres* had been screened at a number of film festivals and art venues, it was unavailable publicly on any format for home viewing prior to its appearance on Vdrome and reverted to this state afterward. But for a seven-day tenure it streamed in high definition through a minimalist, advertisement-free interface, accompanied by a text by Jean-Pierre Rehm. Since this initial offering, Vdrome has continued to make available a curated selection of works by very prominent artists that are otherwise of restricted availability, one at a time and always prefaced by a piece of writing, whether a text by a critic or an interview with the artist. Participating artists include John Akomfrah, Ed Atkins, Camille Henrot, Simon Starling, and Wu Tsang, among others. Very notably, a high proportion of artists shown on Vdrome are represented by commercial galleries and distribute their work as limited editions.

At first glance one might assume Vdrome's most appropriate precedent to be UbuWeb, the site that did more than any other to establish the presence of experimental film and artists' moving image on the Internet, albeit without the permission of the artists involved. Or, given its emphasis on artist authorization, one might examine it within the context of the forays into online distribution made by traditional distributors such as Electronic Arts Intermix, LUX, or Canyon Cinema. But given how central the limited window of availability is to the functioning of the site, it is better seen as a digital reiteration of a form of distribution with a much longer history: a live transmission that leaves no material trace for the spectator. This paradigm, historically associated with broadcast television, asserts mass dissemination as a central goal, but it tempers this widespread availability through an accompanying temporal limitation that preserves some degree of scarcity. On the one hand, a site such as Vdrome is the contemporary inheritor of the 1960s' dream of finding a place for the transmission of art on television. But on the other hand, the shift from television to the Internet—from broadcasting to narrowcasting—creates crucial differences between Vdrome and its televisual precursors, notably with regard to the question of remuneration and the likelihood of reaching nonspecialist audiences.

Vdrome's embrace of a model relying simultaneously on widespread access and temporally induced scarcity is of special interest because of the way in which it negotiates the dialectic of rarity and reproducibility that has so shaped the distribution of artists' moving image. Like Philippe Parreno's *Precognition* (2012), which I discussed in my introduction, it refuses to come down resolutely on one side of the binary or the other. This book began with the propositions that images have never been as free and as controlled as they are today and that the circulation of artists' moving image occurs increasingly across multiple models and platforms. Like perhaps no other contemporary distribution initiative, Vdrome is exemplary of this state of affairs, as it carefully balances Celant's "small utopia" of dissemination and more practical realities of moral rights and market imperatives, all while pointing to the complex ecology of distribution models that exists in contemporary artists' moving image.

## On the Air

The name Vdrome is derived not from David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983) but rather from Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome. Writing in the Spring 1966 issue of *Film Culture*, VanDerBeek understood expanded cinema as not only involving nontraditional deployments of the apparatus beyond the movie theater (as the term is so often used today) but as a new form of world communication in which the moving image would become an educational tool taking the form of "'an experience machine' or a 'culture-intercom.'"[1] Echoing the notions of film as a universal visual language that proliferated at the turn of the twentieth century,[2] VanDerBeek imagined a communication network partaking of a "new world language," one whose reception centers would be localized in what he termed "Movie-Dromes." The Movie-Drome is today most often thought of as an architectural structure, a dome onto which a heterogeneous array of slides and 16 mm films would be projected for spectators lying on the ground. But in VanDerBeek's theorization of the project in "'Culture: Intercom' and Expanded Cinema," equally key were its transmission and reception capabilities: the plan was to construct multiple, interlinked Movie-Dromes that would function as "image libraries," receiving satellite transmissions from a "world wide library source" in order to then "program a feedback presentation to the local community that lived near the center." VanDerBeek envisioned this to be two-way communication, what he termed "intra-communitronics."[3]

The call to disrupt the unidirectional flow of distribution with the bidirectional exchange of communication was frequently sounded in the 1960s as part of a critical project invested in disrupting the monoculture of television, often implicitly drawing on Bertolt Brecht's 1932 text "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication," which had imagined a similar transformation in radio.[4] The history of artists' engagements with television broadcasting is rich and diverse, extending far beyond the scope of this study, but of special interest here are instances in which television offered the possibility of serving as a distribution channel.[5] Television had provided a secondary market for film exhibition virtually from its very beginnings, with stations often buying up the rights to low-budget productions as a cost-efficient way to fill airtime. Though an increased prevalence of home viewing on nonfilmic formats is often held up as characteristic of spectatorship in the digital era, it is worth recalling the very long history of this practice.

In 1950, for instance, the WATV station in Newark, New Jersey, was on air seventy-seven hours a week, showing movies—none of which came from the major studios, which did not yet sell to television—for 70 percent of that time.[6] Yet broadcasting was never explored as a viable way of circulating films by artists until the late 1960s, when two key factors led to the first initiatives to broadcast artists' film and video. First, the period was marked by a widespread desire to, as Harald Szeemann famously put it in 1969, "break down the 'triangle within which art operates'—the studio, gallery, museum."[7] Television provided a new way to distribute work and a new way to exhibit it. It exploded the abhorred enclosure of the studio/gallery/museum triangle in favor of a diffuse network of communication. Second, whereas television had been a rather foreign entity to experimental film, the situation was markedly different for video art. In the memorable words of David Antin, television was "video's frightful parent"—something that brought artists' engagements with the new medium into closer technological and institutional proximity to broadcasting than experimental filmmakers had been before them.[8]

A handful of landmark broadcasts of film and video art took place in the late 1960s, roughly contemporaneous with VanDerBeek's dream of the Movie-Drome. Aldo Tambellini and Otto Piene's *Black Gate Cologne* (1968)—often referred to as the first videotape made by artists for exhibition on public television—was a happening staged in the studios of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk and then mixed with additional material for broadcast. As we saw in chapter 5, Gerry Schum's Fernsehgalerie (1969–70) figured as a significant step toward the possibility of using television as a way to allow art to reach a broad public. As Schum wrote in the proposal for the broadcast that would become *Identifications* (1970), "Television, through the medium of film and particularly through its communication system, seems destined to play a role in the fine arts which corresponds to the function of the rotary press and book publishing for literature and the record for music."[9] In the United States such experimentation was less common because of the immediately commercial nature of television, but significant activity did occur, particularly at Boston's WGBH, which broadcast a series of artists' tapes as a program entitled *The Medium Is the Medium* on March 23, 1969. Unlike disruptions of televisual flow—Keith Arnatt's *Self Burial* (1969), David Hall's *TV Pieces* (1971), or Chris Burden's *TV Commercials* (1973–77), among others—such projects do not seek to function as interruptions or derailments of regular programming, nor do they necessarily take up the institution of television as an object of critique. Rather, they seek to work within the broadcasting model, to use it as a revenue stream and distribution channel.

While the late 1960s constitutes perhaps the most fertile period of such engagements, they by no means end there. In 1974 *Video: The New Wave* was PBS's first national broadcast of video art. *Screening Room*, a program hosted by Robert Gardner on Boston's channel 5, an ABC affiliate, ran from 1972 to 1981. Over some one hundred episodes, a wide range of independent and experimental filmmakers were paid to appear on television to present and discuss their work, including many associated with the American avant-garde, such as Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton. Particularly notable for the length of its run and its position on commercial television, the ninety-minute program aired at midnight, prompting Gardner to introduce a 1977 episode featuring Peter Hutton with the greeting, "Welcome to another *Screening Room*, Boston's answer to the insomniac and, incidentally perhaps, to the kinds of films that are usually shown on television." While

*Screening Room* was not primarily geared toward the use of television as a film distribution medium, instead foregrounding conversations with filmmakers, it did include numerous short films and film excerpts accompanied by filmmaker commentaries. In this regard it provided a means of mass dissemination for what had long been an important site of discursive framing for experimental cinema—the filmmaker's presence at screenings to introduce his or her work and participate in question-and-answer periods—but shifted the balance between screening and discussion markedly toward the latter. Stan Brakhage's 1973 appearance on the program began with a screening of the seven-second *Eye Myth* (1967), followed immediately by Gardner reading the opening passage of the filmmaker's text "Metaphors on Vision." After a brief discussion, Brakhage shows a version of the film in which each hand-painted frame is held for twelve seconds, while he describes in voice-over his notion of "closed-eye vision." *Eye Myth* is shown three more times at increasing speeds, accompanied by intermittent commentary, with the final iteration at normal speed. Though not identified as such on the program, this is Brakhage's *Eye Myth Educational* (1972), shown with a gap between its first and second iterations.

This episode also includes full versions of *Desistfilm* (1954), *The Wonder Ring* (1955), *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959), *Mothlight* (1963), *Blue Moses* (1962), *The Machine of Eden* (1970), and *The Wold Shadow* (1972), all presented without voice-over commentary but discussed at length before and after their presentation. When Gardner notes that the station asked to review *Window Water Baby Moving* carefully before agreeing to air it, Brakhage responds that it is "wonderful" that it will be able to be shown and that he "knew it would happen someday." After the screening, he states, "My god, it's wonderful it can finally be shown on television. I'm so happy about that because I feel the film is useful to people in a very important and crucial area. It's such a pleasure that they have a wider possible use of it." Brakhage then continues on to a discussion of changing legal definitions of obscenity and cultural mores around the visibility of the film's subject matter (childbirth) since the time of its production. Statements such as these both historicize the film and point to Brakhage's interest in reaching nonspecialist publics, using the discursive frame of the television program to provide insight and context for experimental work. After showing *Mothlight*, Brakhage attempts to explain the principle of the film by holding up a strip of *Eye Myth* to the camera. He describes the process of attaching moth wings to the film strip, which is seen in close-up. Near the end of the program, Brakhage rather strangely attempts to demonstrate the phenomenon of closed-eye vision using video effects to alter the color of the image and to superimpose a grid over it. *Screening Room* thus combined film exhibition with a pedagogical function well suited to the implications of televisual distribution. Scott MacDonald notes that the program had an estimated average audience of some 250,000 people, mostly students.[10] While some certainly would have a preexisting knowledge of experimental film, for many the goals and methods of a figure such as Brakhage would be unfamiliar, making the program's hybrid format particularly effective in generating interest and appreciation.

In the United Kingdom the 1980s and early 1990s stand as a key moment in the broadcasting of experimental work. During this period Channel 4—created in 1982 with a mandate of experimentation, innovation, and creativity—gave commissions to many artists and exhibited a significant body of work originally made for a theatrical context. Anthology programs such as *The Eleventh Hour* (1982–88) and *Midnight Underground*

(1993, 1997) were produced in the Independent Film and Video Department by deputy commissioning editor Rod Stoneman.[11] Like *Screening Room* they were shown in the late-night time slots suggested by their titles, a placement Stoneman evocatively described as the "tundra of the schedule."[12] These programs offered not only a regular outlet for experimentation, but also a revenue stream to artists and to the independent film workshops active in Britain at the time. Between 1981 and 1990 the Independent Film and Video Department was allotted some £50 million, both to pay licensing fees and to fund production, in some cases facilitating the production of now-classic works such as the Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs* (1986).[13] For showing work on *Midnight Underground*, artists received a fee of £125 per minute.[14]

A large part of what drew many artists to working with television was its capacity for dissemination to a wide public. But it was this same attribute of the medium that led to the failure of an initiative like the Fernsehgalerie and the significantly decreased presence of experimental film and video on Channel 4 from the early 1990s onward. The programs were deemed to lack the broad appeal desired by broadcasters keen to attract the maximum number of viewers. Here one can discern the double edge of television's political efficacy: its utopian potential lay in its ability to reach mass audiences, but this very same capability made stations anxious to capitalize on it—even in countries such as West Germany and the United Kingdom, which at these respective moments still clung to some notion of television as a public good. Schum refused to accompany the Fernsehgalerie broadcasts by any form of narration that might contextualize what was being seen, whether in the form of voice-over or in brief introductions prefacing each piece. This posed a major problem for those at the station and led to the termination of the project. As Ursula Wevers described the reception of the Fernsehgalerie broadcasts, "The main argument put forth by the television people was that our work was incomprehensible to the public, and that we wanted to confront an audience wholly unprepared by explanatory statements with things which it did not understand, and which evoked a certain amount of aggression."[15]

Like *Screening Room*, *Midnight Underground* took a very different tack (figures 8.1 and 8.2). It attempted to confront the need for popular accessibility head-on and went to great lengths to emphasize the relationships between the avant-garde and the mainstream. In a document entitled "Notes for a Rationale," David Curtis, who worked as a consultant on the series and was centrally responsible for its creation, described it as intended to be "punchy, energetic and high impact. It would aim at a younger audience, introducing a range of lively experimental work to a new generation."[16] The show's credit sequence comprised brightly colored visuals reminiscent of the early station IDs of MTV. Programs were organized thematically according to topics that might spark interest: sexuality, London, surrealism. Throughout, *Midnight Underground* retreated from the notion of experimental film as a distinct area of practice, placing it instead in direct relationship to more recognizable forms of cinematic production. For example, in his introduction to the show's premiere episode on September 6, 1993, presenter Benjamin Wooley began: "Welcome to *Midnight Underground*, welcome to the dark side of the screen. It's from here that for the next eight weeks we shall be taking the last tube into the cinematic unknown, into the underground film movement that's acted as mainstream cinema's laboratory and incubator and provided an occasional home for such talents as Martin

Scorsese, Derek Jarman, Kenneth Anger, and Sally Potter."
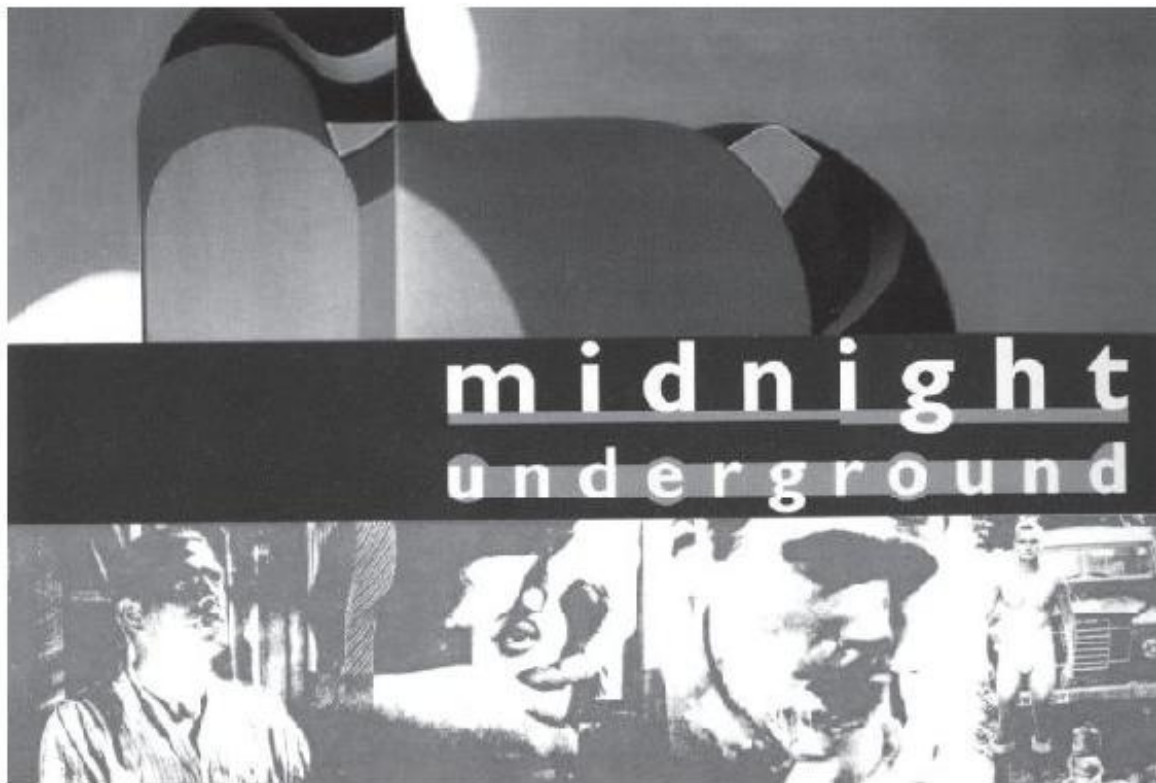


**FIGURE 8.1**  *Midnight Underground* promotional postcard, recto. Courtesy of Channel Four Television Corporation.



**FIGURE 8.2**  *Midnight Underground* promotional postcard, verso. Courtesy of Channel Four Television Corporation.

This drive for accessibility occurred not only in the inclusion of work by figures

perhaps most recognizable to a nonspecialist audience—Scorsese, Jarman, the Quay Brothers—but also through recourse to more familiar genres. "Music for the Eye and Ear" (broadcast September 13, 1993) was said to compile "avant-garde music videos," and "Little Stabs at Happiness" (broadcast October 4, 1993) was described as a set of "avant-garde home movies." Wooley offered brief introductions to each film, supplying background information, explaining the filmmakers' aims, and commenting on techniques used.

The notion that experimental film might serve as an "incubator" for the mainstream is one that would no doubt rankle many with an investment in this area of practice. Although it is easy to read *Midnight Underground*'s framing of its material as pandering to the need to get and keep an audience, it is worth noting that such gestures never compromised the viewing experience; on the contrary, for a viewer new to experimental cinema, they might enhance it. At its core *Midnight Underground* provided a way for virtually the entire population of the United Kingdom to have direct access to a range of high-quality works that were the product of careful selection.[17] Roughly 139,000 people tuned in each week—and this is when one calculates the average viewership after excluding the "New Sexualities" episode (broadcast September 20, 1993), which, for perhaps obvious reasons, attracted a whopping 644,000 viewers.[18] Though these numbers remain small when compared to the norms of television broadcasting, together with *Screening Room* they represent perhaps the largest audiences in the history of experimental film.

These programs not only brought these works to greater numbers of people than would otherwise encounter them; it also brought them to new kinds of audiences who would perhaps not have the opportunity to see them in a cinematic setting. Here, the notion of widespread access through broadcasting joins with the related concept of accessibility, understood as the pedagogical facilitation of increased engagement for nonspecialist viewers. As Michael Zryd has noted, teaching experimental film in the university classroom can be challenging given that students come to the material with less foreknowledge than they do with more conventional forms of filmmaking, making the presentation of at least some introductory material an often-useful means of bringing about a productive encounter.[19] This rings even more true for the heterogeneous audience of television. The mixed format of programs such as *Screening Room* and *Midnight Underground* drew on preexisting televisual conventions—from talk shows and music video programs, respectively—to provide an extensive discursive armature for experimental film. Although the coming of high-speed Internet would reignite the dream of mass transmission, this pedagogical function would largely be a casualty of this technological shift.

## "Are the Networks Dinosaurs?"

This question was asked already in 1982 by the television trade journal *Channels*.[20] Today, the fragmentation of the television audience has become so exacerbated that it is relatively uncontroversial to deem the era of broadcasting definitively over. Although the eye networks are still around, they have been crowded out by the countless specialty channels of digital cable with their narrowcast, niche content, to say nothing of the impact of the Internet. One might think that this structural shift would help to create more space for the

transmission of artists' moving image on television, but in fact the opposite has occurred. After all, these specialty channels cater to so many carefully defined consumer demographics and still rely on advertising, all within a much more competitive marketplace; meanwhile, funding for public television has been steadily eroded. At Channel 4 the period of *Midnight Underground* was something of the end of a golden age. Changes outlined in the 1990 Broadcasting Act went into effect on January 1, 1993, after which time the station became responsible for the sale of its own advertising, thus throwing it into a more competitive marketplace. Having to worry about advertisers meant having to worry about ratings, which ultimately resulted in the transformation of the station into the entity it is today.[21] As John Wyver, whose company Illuminations had been involved with the development and production of *Midnight Underground*, has written, the idea of art on television "today has no place in the schedules of mainstream broadcast or even digital channels."[22] Though *Midnight Underground* returned for a second, somewhat differently formatted, season in 1997,[23] today it is nearly unimaginable that a comparable program would ever air regularly on British television.

The dream of mass broadcasting once pursued through initiatives like the Fernsehgalerie and *Midnight Underground* has not died, however. Just as major media producers have transformed the ways they package and disseminate content now that it can be streamed on the Web, so, too, have those involved in the circulation of artists' moving image reconsidered their distribution strategies in light of this new technological capability. Engagements with transmission have shifted media forms to reemerge online— though not without significant mutations, particularly with regard to the disintegration of the ideal of a shared public sphere. As Maeve Connolly has noted, "television's status as a public form is highly contested," not only because of the great variations that exist in televisual practices across geopolitical and historical contexts but also because of the frequent claim that commercial television contributes to a "privatization of culture."[24] Nonetheless, television broadcasting—in both its state-run and commercial incarnations— represents a horizon of public experience that provides a site for a possible imagining of collectivity. Whereas the cinema before it had achieved this through the physical copresence of its viewers, television does so through liveness. Whether its programming is prerecorded or not, television sutures together a disparate viewing public through a recognition of media consumption in a shared temporality. Moreover, there is a true openness to the public addressed by programs like *Screening Room* and *Midnight Underground*. While zapping through channels, anyone might stumble upon these programs, and their discursive framing occurs with this in mind. They have a distinct pedagogical function and include contextual material aimed at opening the work to a viewer who might be unfamiliar with the specialized vocabularies and viewing protocols of experimental film. With the shift from the broadcast networks of television to the fiber-optic networks of the Internet, the understanding of the public changes significantly. Though Vdrome, for instance, is hypothetically available to anyone with an Internet connection, its audience is largely self-selecting. The site has a wider geographical reach than broadcast television—the bulk of viewers access the site from IP addresses in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy, with strong representation also coming from Canada and other Western European countries—yet ultimately these dispersed viewers form a more homogeneous public than those who might have tuned in to *Midnight Underground*. Vdrome does not advertise outside of *Mousse*, its parent publication, and its

curators understand their audience as stemming primarily from the contemporary art world.

Vdrome was formed after a theatrical screening series that Lissoni sought to organize in partnership with *Mousse* failed to get off of the ground owing to a lack of financial support. Bonaspetti suggested that they pursue an online venture instead because of the significantly lower opportunity cost. The site would provide a way of making available works that had an extremely limited circulation, whether because they were shown exclusively in festivals or in specific exhibition contexts, such as commercial gallery shows or biennials. In significant respects Vdrome positions itself in response to the prevailing practices of exhibiting work online. Notably, the site rejects any possibility of functioning as a pseudoarchive like UbuWeb. As Ramos put it, "The digitalization of things from the past triggered this passion for old films, old documents, old materials, which were shown online and were discovered or rediscovered online. We were clear that we did not want to insert ourselves in that logic, but that we wanted to show things that were being made in that moment."[25] This has meant that, with few exceptions, Vdrome shows works that have been produced within the last five years but are coming to the end of their distribution lives, having completed a run on the festival circuit or having appeared in gallery exhibitions. Particularly popular works include Ryan Trecartin's *Center Jenny* (2013, shown October 30–November 8, 2013), Camille Henrot's *The Strife of Love in a Dream* (2011, shown September 1–10, 2014), and Pierre Huyghe's *The Host and the Cloud* (2010, shown December 24–31, 2014), which together average 3,583 views each. In a strange echo of Stan Brakhage's 8 mm reduction prints of *Lovemaking* (1967) and the sky-high ratings for the "New Sexualities" episode of *Midnight Underground,* far and away the most viewed work, with 31,600 plays, is Lawrence Weiner's second foray into hard-core pornography, *Water in Milk Exists* (2008, shown June 19–28, 2013).

It is striking that works vanish after their ten-day exhibition, a period Lissoni describes as inspired by being roughly the same as the amount of time an independent film would play in an art cinema in Italy; this duration allows people to watch the film at their leisure while still maintaining a sense of urgency.[26] In this cultivation of ephemerality one witnesses a departure from frequent characterizations of the Internet as archiving content in perpetuity and as a domain of endless choice. Though the works exhibited on Vdrome may not be said to be live in the sense of being broadcast in real time, they nonetheless possess a feeling of liveness as a result of the temporal restriction that surrounds them. The decision to enforce this delimited viewing window stemmed from the very practical necessity of gaining artists' agreement to appear on the site. When the project began, there was initially some worry that artists would be reluctant to participate in such an undertaking, but after some investigation the response turned out to be generally positive. While a handful of artists declined invitations to exhibit their work on the site, most of those approached have been willing, even enthusiastic, to do so—primarily because of the reassurance that their work would be available for a limited time only. The site provides a way of exploiting the distribution possibilities of digital technologies without transgressing the attachments to rarity and control that continue to prevail within the art system. "If we had an archive," Ramos said, "80 percent of the works we've shown, we could not have shown. People would not agree to give them to us."[27] One such artist is Ben Rivers, whose film *Slow Action* (2011) was shown March 11–20, 2013. For Rivers

this limited period of availability was important in mitigating the possibility that the work would be consumed in a distracted manner. As he put it, "We are inundated with choice on the Internet—simplicity helps get your attention."[28] Yet the channeling of attention remains an issue: out of the American visitors to the site, only roughly half played the video, while the average session duration across all visitors is two minutes, twenty seconds—a short time given the site's general policy of showing works at least fifteen minutes long.[29]

## Distribution Ecologies

A second issue confronting Vdrome is the lack of artist compensation. Unlike *Midnight Underground,* the Fernsehgalerie, and more recent initiatives like LUXplayer and the Canyon Cinema and Film-Makers' Cooperative collaborations with Fandor, the site does not pay screening fees. Arguably, this lack of direct remuneration does not foreclose the possibility of generating value for those that distribute their works through the site. One might claim that this free exposure creates good publicity for the artists and endows them with the endorsement of the curatorial team. This, in turn, might help the artist's chances in other distribution avenues, such as obtaining commercial gallery representation, being accepted into a film festival, or being taken on by a distribution agency. In this regard it is worth noting the extent and strength of the ties that exist between the Vdrome curatorial team and the established structures of distribution, exhibition, and promotion of artists' moving image. Its four curators each have strong institutional pedigrees: Bonaspetti is the publisher of *Mousse*; Hoffmann was from 2007 to 2012 the director of the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco and is now deputy director of New York's Jewish Museum; Lissoni was curator at Milan's HangarBicocca from 2011 to 2014 and is currently senior curator of film and international art at Tate Modern; Ramos is an independent curator and writer and, since 2014, the editor-in-chief of e-flux's *Art Agenda*. Hoffmann also holds an appointment as senior curator-at-large at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, where Vdrome has been given a permanent offline home: whichever work is showing on the site also shows as a projection in a designated space at the museum. Thus, though exhibiting work on Vdrome may not supply an artist with financial capital, the cultural capital accrued can be substantial.

This close connection to powerful offline institutions also holds true for two other similar online ventures showing a curated selection of work for a limited time. Carroll/Fletcher Onscreen (http://carrollfletcheronscreen.com) is run by the London-based commercial gallery Carroll/Fletcher according to a model quite similar to that of Vdrome, showcasing a single work for a limited duration (often two weeks), with no monetary payment to the artist. Notably, while the website specifies that the platform is meant to "complement the program of exhibitions" in the gallery's London space, the videos shown on the site tend not to be by artists represented by Carroll/Fletcher. They are, however, specified as endorsed by an "international advisory panel" of professionals in the field, once again taming the unwieldiness of online exhibition by endowing it with a trusted imprimatur. Gallerist Steve Carroll emphasizes that although artists are not paid for exhibiting work on the platform, the arrangement may be understood as an exchange of prestige that recognizes financial capital as but one type of capital in circulation.[30]

Nevertheless, given the tremendous precarity experienced by many working artists, and as advocacy groups such as W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy) are lobbying to regulate the paying of fees to artists by nonprofit institutions, the lack of direct remuneration on these online platforms must be underlined.

Sponsored by *Kaleidoscope*, a Milan-based art magazine, Kaleidoscope Videoclub (http://kaleidoscope.media/videoclub/) consists of online programs assembled according to various criteria, such as theme, artist, or affiliation with a major exhibition. Whereas Vdrome has editorial autonomy from *Mousse*, much of the content of the Kaleidoscope Videoclub is programmed to sync with the print publication, even though there is no link from the homepage of the magazine to that of the screening platform. For instance, a program entitled *#VOICEOVER* was conceived as an extension of a multiarticle theme in issue 20 (Winter 2013–14), devoted to exploring the role of the voice in contemporary artists' moving image; *#FRANCESCOVEZZOLI* was a monographic program of videos by the artist that coincided with a survey article on his work appearing in the same issue. As of June 2015 both of these programs remained online, joined by *#BIM2014*, a program of five films drawn from the 2014 edition of the Biennale of Moving Images, held in Geneva and curated by Andrea Bellini, the director of the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, in collaboration with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Yann Chateigné. To coincide with the magazine's Fall 2015 issue, which took up the theme of "art and sex," two further programs were added: *#CAPITAL*, a monographic survey of the work of Charlie White and *#COCKSANDCUNTS*, a group program of artists discussed in the issue, curated by Francesca Gavin. As the hashtag titles indicate, Kaleidoscope Videoclub explicitly positions itself as an attempt to take advantage of the expanded field of publication and dissemination made possible through digital technologies, but it does so very much in conjunction with old media infrastructures and power brokers. As the website states, "Contents are uploaded on a regular basis, disseminated through the social media, and occasionally accompanied by screening events at KALEIDOSCOPE's project space in Milan and other international partner venues—pursuing our idea that the magazine is an open platform which can exist in print, online, and live."[31]

All three of these curated online platforms are thus deeply dependent on social and cultural capital stemming from traditional sources, whether a print publication, curatorial reputation, or affiliation with a commercial gallery. They signal the extent to which online distribution does not necessarily upset existing hierarchies but in fact depends greatly on them while pushing ever-so-gently on their long-standing obsessions with rarity and authorial control. Put differently, such initiatives are emphatically not representative of any aim to make use of the Internet to revolutionize the distribution of artists' moving image. They by no means seek to usurp the position of established forms of distribution (such as the limited-edition model) but are conceived as supplementary channels that will work in tandem with them. This situation points to a key attribute of the contemporary distribution landscape: increasingly, artists do not choose one sole channel through which their work will travel but rather engage creatively with a combination of different distribution mechanisms depending on personal preferences, economic imperatives, and the aesthetic or conceptual needs of a particular work. In artists' moving image one cannot take the configuration of the apparatus for granted; rather, each artist must determine the configuration of screen(s) and viewer anew with each work. One might say that the same

is true of distribution: while the rental model of the cooperatives had been the dominant model for the distribution of film and video art for decades, the twenty-first century has been marked by an increasingly complex ecology in which diverse attitudes toward reproducibility compete and coexist. This engagement with multiple channels is not new. To offer only one example, *Land Art* and *Identifications* both enjoyed further circulation in prominent exhibitions after being broadcast on television.[32] Schum issued both programs in unlimited editions priced at DM1,500[33] and went on to issue a selection of the individual pieces included in them as limited editions through the videogalerie Schum.[34] It is undeniable, however, that the twenty-first century has expanded the possibilities available to artists, presenting them with an unprecedented array of choices concerning the pathways their works may take to reach audiences. A single film may be shown on Vdrome, deposited for rent with an agency like LUX, editioned by a commercial gallery, and circulated as a bootleg.

There are standard ways of navigating this distribution ecology—making the work available exclusively as an edition or depositing it for rent with a distributor—and then there are more idiosyncratic ways of engaging with distribution, such as Philippe Parreno's *Precognition* (2012) or Paolo Cherchi Usai's *Passio* (2006). Despite the fact that a tremendous diversity of distribution choices exists, one thing remains clear as a generalizable tendency: the moving image may have entered art as a part of Celant's "small utopia"—endowed with the democratizing promise of the multiple that emerges after uniqueness can no longer be assumed as the default condition of the work of art—but over time it has developed a substantial affiliation with the economy of scarcity it once contested. While digitization has afforded new opportunities for widespread dissemination, the art system's persistent attachment to authenticity and control has resulted in the suppression of reproducibility in various ways, out of multiple motivations. As the example of Vdrome demonstrates, the promise of transmission has not withered entirely but is now carefully negotiated and tends to be embraced only on the condition that it does not jeopardize more restricted forms of circulation. This indicates a persistent attachment to uniqueness and to authenticity, both as a market standard and moral value.

Despite the moving image's firm alliance with authenticity, however, it is easier than ever before to gain access to artists' moving image and experimental film, particularly through the vibrant informal economies of circulation that flourish online. The relative purity of the utopian impulse may be gone, but in its place has emerged a forceful dialectic of rarity and reproducibility in which images are both more free and more controlled than ever. This book has explored this push-and-pull in order to throw into relief the ambivalence of both rarity and reproducibility alike. After uniqueness, the desire for a recuperated rarity can be nothing more than a dissimulated form of commodity fetishism, but so, too, can it ensure that works will be seen as they were intended. In a climate of unprecedented circulation, it can potentially offer a needed respite from the ever-accelerating cycles of image consumption and image abjection that mark digital visual culture. Reproducibility, meanwhile, continues to offer the possibility of democratization and access, but it can equally lead to violations of moral rights and distracted engagements with images deemed disposable. More than a century has passed since the advent of cinema contributed to definitively pushing art beyond the domain of uniqueness, yet the copy remains more than ever before both promise and threat, situated at the very heart of

the material, economic, aesthetic, and conceptual specificities of the moving image as an art form.

# <u>Notes</u>

## Introduction: Copy Rites

1.  Raymond Bellour, *La querelle des dispositifs: Cinéma—installations, expositions* (Paris: POL, 2012), 14.

2.  See Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," *NECSUS* 2 (Autumn 2012), www.necsus-ejms.org/the-relocation-of-cinema/; and Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

3.  Geoffrey Batchen, "Dissemination," *Still Searching,* September 15, 2012, http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/09/1-dissemination/. See also Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 101–33; and Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Third Version)," trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 251–83.

4.  This book was produced in collaboration with Kevin Begos Jr. and Dennis Ashbaugh. It included a poem by Gibson issued on a 3.5-inch floppy disc that used encryption to be readable only once and a physical book treated with chemicals that would cause the ink to fade after exposure to light. For more on the project—including an emulation of the poem from the original floppy disk—see http://agrippa.english.ucsb.edu.

5.  This was Parreno's second time working with the format. In 2005, for an exhibition at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York City, he placed DVD-Ds of *The Boy from Mars* (2003) on a bookshelf for viewers to take home.

6.  See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature,* ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 261.

7.  See Rosalind Krauss, "Originality as Repetition: Introduction," *October* 37 (Summer 1986): 35–40.

8.  Ibid., 36.

9.  See, e.g., Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

10.  See Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 2.

11.  Giorgio Agamben, *"What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41 (Agamben's emphasis).

12.  Jörg Heiser, "Good Circulation," *Frieze* 90 (April 2005), www.frieze.com/issue/article/good-circulation.

13.  "The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group," *The Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Praeger, 1970), 81–82. First published in *Film Culture*, no. 22–23 (Summer 1961).

14.  Robert Nelson, "Open Letter to Film-Makers," *Canyon Cinemanews*, July 1967, n.p.

15.  Lori Zippay, "Round Table: Distribution After Digitization," *Moving Image Review and Art Journal* 3, no. 1 (2014): 77.

16.  Felicia R. Lee, "Filmmakers' Co-operative Says Future Is in Doubt," *New York Times*, February 17, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/02/18/movies/canyon-cinema-filmmakers-cooperative-sees-grim-future.html.

17.  For details see Larry Rohter, "Avant-Garde Film Group Gets New Home, Cheap," *New York Times*, May 28, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/05/28/movies/28film.html. Cohen initially agreed to a lease term of five years, but this has since been extended.

18.  See Larry Jordan, "Survival in the Independent–Non-Commercial–Avant-Garde–Experimental–Personal–

Expressionistic Film Market of 1979," in *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor,* ed. Scott MacDonald (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 329–38.

19.   See Jonathan Walley, "Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde," in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader,* ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Afterall and Tate, 2008), 182–99; on the increasingly blurred line between the two see Erika Balsom, "Brakhage's Sour Grapes, or Notes on Experimental Cinema in the Art World," *Moving Image Review and Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 13–25.

20.   As curator Chrissie Iles put it, following the embrace of large-scale projection, "the use of the word *video* as a defining term for a particular area of contemporary art now no longer appears to be either necessary or relevant." Chrissie Iles, "Issues in the New Cinematic Aesthetic in Video," *Saving the Image: Art After Film,* ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2003), 140.

21.   Formed out of the merger of the London Filmmakers' Co-operative, London Video Arts, and the Lux Centre in 2002, LUX had a strong motivation to adopt a non-medium-specific category from its very foundation. The organization describes itself as "an international arts agency for the support and promotion of artists' moving image practice and the ideas that surround it" but emphasizes the inclusivity of this category: "The particular focus of LUX is visual arts–based moving image work, a definition which includes experimental film, video art, installation art, performance art, personal documentary, essay films and animation and is inclusive both in terms of context and critical discourse." See "About LUX," http://lux.org.uk/about/about-lux.

22.   Sheryl Mousley, the department's senior curator, elaborates: "The transition toward moving image away from the specific formats of film and video represents the movement of artists and filmmakers to work across a variety of media. Walker Moving Image is responsive to these developments, and to presenting works across different platforms, in the context of our cinema, in our galleries, and online." See "Walker Art Center Announces Shift to Moving Image with Launch of Moving Image Commissions and Walker Mediatheque," press release, May 28, 2015, www.walkerart.org/press/browse/press-releases/2015/walker-art-center-announces-shift-to-moving-i.

23.   Roger Beebe, "On 'Artists' Cinema' and 'Moving-Image Art,'" *Brooklyn Rail,* July 15, 2014, www.brooklynrail.org/2014/07/criticspage/on-artists-cinema-and-moving-image-art.

24.   Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, foreword to *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image,* by Julia Knight and Peter Thomas (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2012), 9.

25.   Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: Palgrave/BFI, 2012), 6.

26.   See, e.g., Scott MacDonald, ed., *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Scott MacDonald, ed., *Cinema 16: Documents Towards a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Michael Zryd, "The Academy and the Avant-Garde: A Relationship of Dependence and Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 2 (2006): 17–42; Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2012); and Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919–1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

27.   Tess Takahashi, "Experimental Screens in the 1960s and 1970s: The Site of Community," *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 2 (2012): 167.

28.   Ibid.

29.   Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 11.

30.   Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone, 1996), 257.

## 1. The Promise and Threat of Reproducibility

1.   Thomas Elsaesser, "Entre savoir et croire: Le dispositif cinématographique après le cinéma," trans. Franck le Gac, in *Ciné-dispositifs: Spectacles, cinéma, télévision, littérature,* ed. François Albera and Maria Tortajada (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 2011), 43 (translation mine).

2.   Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (London: A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), 42 (Young's emphasis).

3.   Dickens describes Bob Cratchit as "not a man of strong imagination," and Bartleby is described as "motionless." After the narrator discovers the clerk sleeps in his office, he exclaims, "His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible!" For an extended discussion of the figure of the copyist in nineteenth-century fiction and an inventory of appearances see Rima Shore, "Scrivener Fiction: The Copyist and His Craft in Nineteenth-Century Fiction" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1980).

4.   See Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

5.   Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005), 37–38.

6.   Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 103 (Benjamin's emphasis).

7.   Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 100. Boltanski and Chiapello make a similar point concerning the life of the nineteenth-century artist as a wellspring of authenticity: "it was not compartmentalized but succeeded in unifying all the facets of the same existence, and gearing it towards the completion of an oeuvre and the uniqueness of its creator." Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 472n5.

8.   Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 126–27.

9.   Geoffrey Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 25.

10.   James Elkins, "From Original to Copy and Back Again," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 33, no. 2 (1993): 114–15.

11.   As Rosalind Krauss has written, "avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth." Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 6.

12.   Elkins, "From Original to Copy," 114.

13.   Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1859: The Modern Public and Photography," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (London: Open University, 1982), 20.

14.   Ibid., 21, 20.

15.   Ibid., 21.

16.   "Protestation émanée des grands artistes contre toute assimilation de la photographie à l'art," in *La photographie en France: Textes et controverses, une anthologie, 1816–1871*, ed. André Rouillé (Paris: Éditions Macula, 1989), 399 (translation mine).

17.   Ricciotto Canudo, "The Birth of a Sixth Art," trans. Ben Gibson, in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939: Volume One, 1907–1929*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 61–62.

18.   Of course, the longer history of art reveals that such a division of labor in the creation of images was by no means initiated by the cinema. What is important to note here, however, is the extent to which the cinema figures as a rupture with the nineteenth-century ideal of artistic creation, which was far from the workshop model of earlier centuries.

19.   In *The Black Imp*, for example, a man at an inn is menaced by the titular creature, who—identified with the magic of cinema itself—uses his abilities to turn one chair into thirteen identical replicas that disappear and reappear at his will, terrorizing the weary traveler.

20.   Lynda Nead, "The Artist's Studio: The Affair of Art and Film," in *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 24.

21.   Fredric Jameson, *Signature of the Visible* (London: Routledge, 1992), 158–59.

22.   Nead, "The Artist's Studio," 25.

23.   Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 112.

24.   Germano Celant, "The Small Utopia," in *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata*, ed. Germano Celant (Venice:

Fondazione Prada, 2012), 15–29; Maria Gough, "The Art of Production," in *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata*, ed. Germano Celant (Venice: Fondazione Prada, 2012), 31.

25. Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 37.

26. Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, "Un attentat contre la reproductibilité de l'œuvre d'art," in *Écrits* (Paris: Independencia, 2012), 112. Nicolas Rey has made a similar gesture with his 16 mm film *Autrement, la Molussie* (2012), which consists of nine reels of film to be played in a random order determined before the start of each projection.

27. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16.

28. Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema, 1959–1971* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 127.

29. Jonas Mekas, 1992 lecture at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Quoted in Dan Childs, "The Works of Jonas Mekas: Distillation of Life," *One + One: Filmmakers Journal*, January 27, 2011, http://oneplusonefilmmakersjournal.tumblr.com/post/2958446874/the-works-of-jonas-mekas-distillation-of-life.

30. It is unclear whether a particular event led Wieland to choose this date for the perfection and demonstration of this machine; the sketch is undated and January 19, 1964, might refer to the date of its composition. Perhaps the most important avant-garde film event happening in New York (where Wieland lived at the time) on this date would have been the premiere run of Andy Warhol's *Sleep*, which began two days earlier, on January 17, 1964, at the Gramercy Arts Theater and continued for four nights as a benefit screening for the Film-Makers' Cooperative. But Warhol's model of authorship is far from the romantic notion of the "old master" that Wieland satirizes here, making him an unlikely inspiration for Wieland's drawing.

31. Benjamin, "The Work of Art…(Second Version)," 110.

32. Paul Valéry, *Aesthetics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon, 1964), 225.

33. Jonas Mekas, "Brief Glimpses of Beauty," *C International Photo Magazine*, no. 15 (2010): 15.

34. Henry Jenkins, "If It Doesn't Spread, It's Dead (Part One): Media Viruses and Memes," February 11, 2009, http://henryjenkins.org/2009/02/if_it_doesnt_spread_its_dead_p.html.

35. Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux journal* 10 (November 2009), www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.

36. On this practice, and the impact of photography on it, see Lionel Bentley, "Art and the Making of Modern Copyright Law," in *Dear Images: Art, Culture, and Copyright*, ed. Daniel McClean and Karsten Schubert (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts and Ridinghouse, 2002), 331–51. See also Susan Lambert, *The Image Multiplied: Five Centuries of Printed Reproductions of Paintings and Drawings* (New York: Abaris, 1987), 147–72.

37. Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image."

38. Benjamin, "The Work of Art…(Second Version)," 104–5.

39. David Joselit has written that "one of the most insidious aspects of Benjamin's influence is the enduring assumption that mechanical reproduction constitutes an absolute loss." While this assumption does indeed endure, to target Benjamin as the source of such attitudes is to engage in a severe misreading of his canonical "Work of Art" essay. See David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 13, 15.

40. Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image."

41. Ibid.

42. Rolfe Winkler, "YouTube: 1 Billion Viewers, No Profit," *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2015, www.wsj.com/articles/viewers-dont-add-up-to-profit-for-youtube-1424897967.

43. Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image."

44. Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," trans. Julianne Burton, *Jump Cut*, no. 20 (1979): 24.

45. See, e.g., Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 121.

46.  Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: Why the "Real" Things We Seek Don't Make Us Happy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 126.

47.  See "Cartoons from the May 25, 2015 Issue," *New Yorker*, www.newyorker.com/cartoons/issue-cartoons/cartoons-from-the-may-25-2015-issue.

48.  James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), 1 (Gilmore and Pines's emphasis).

49.  Ibid., 14.

50.  See Paul Goldstein, *Copyright's Highway: The Law and Lore of Copyright from Gutenberg to the Celestial Jukebox* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

51.  Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: How the Shift from Ownership to Access Is Transforming Modern Life* (New York: Penguin, 2001).

52.  See Dave Lee, "Vinyl Sales Hit 18-Year High," *BBC News*, November 27, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-30216638; and Ethan Smith, "Music Downloads Plummet in U.S., but Sales of Vinyl Records and Streaming Surge," *Wall Street Journal*, January 1, 2015, www.wsj.com/articles/music-downloads-plummet-in-u-s-but-sales-of-vinyl-records-and-streaming-surge-1420092579.

53.  The Alamo Drafthouse Rolling Roadshow Tour's tagline is "Famous Movies in Famous Places." This annual summer tour, begun in 2004, organizes special screenings of films in the locations where they are set. For example, in 2006 *The Shining* (1980) was presented at the Stanley Hotel in Colorado, and *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979) was presented at the San Francisco Bay Area prison.

54.  As Adorno put it, the concept of genuineness [*Echtheit*] "is always linked with social legitimism. All ruling strata claim to be the oldest settlers, autochthonous." Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 155.

55.  Ibid.

56.  B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

57.  Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (2004): 52.

## 2. 8 mm and the "Blessings of Books and Records"

1.  See Ben Singer, "Early Home Film and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope," *Film History* 2, no.1 (1988): 37–69.

2.  Alexandra Stewart, "Time Travel with Pathé Baby: The Small-Gauge Film Collection as Historical Archive," *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 353. Stewart provides a detailed case study of the 9.5 mm home-viewing format Pathé Baby, which was the predominant domestic format in the European context during this period.

3.  Haidee Wasson, "Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment! 16mm and Cinema's Domestication in the 1920s," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 6.

4.  An interest in these expanded contexts of exhibition has been a key feature of recent scholarship in film studies, as evidenced by the "Other Cinemas" theme of the 2012 International Screen Studies Conference in Glasgow and the 2011 anthology *Useful Cinema*, ed. Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

5.  Passing references to 8 mm reduction prints may be found in P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 209; J. Hoberman, "Homemade Movies: Towards a National History of Narrow Gauge," in *Home Made Movies: Twenty Years of 8mm and Super-8 Films*, ed. J. Hoberman (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1981), 3; and Kathy Geritz, "I Came into an 8mm World," in *Big as Life: An American History of 8mm Films*, ed. Steve Anker (San Francisco: San Francisco Cinematheque, 1998), 41–42.

6.  Shirley Clarke, Edward Harrison, Bill Kenly, Elodie Osborn, Amos Vogel, and John Adams, "The Expensive Art: A Discussion of Film Distribution and Exhibition in the U.S.," *Film Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1960): 19.

7.  Ernest Callenbach, "The State of 8," *Film Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1966): 36.

8.  "8mm Sound Film Picture Industry Boon," *Science News-Letter* 79, no. 20 (1961): 315.

9.  "Eight-mm Magnetic Sound," *Journal of University Film Producers Association* 13, no. 2 (1961): 14.

10. Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema, 1959–1971* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 135.

11. See Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue, no. 2 (1963): 27.

12. Jonas Mekas, "A Letter to Film-Makers (More Exactly, to the Members of the Film-Makers' Cooperative)," May 18, 1966, 3, Archives of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

13. Currency conversion using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index inflation calculator, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

14. Jonas Mekas to members of Film-Makers' Cooperative, May 10, 1967, 3–4, Archives of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

15. In his text "8 mill." Brakhage writes, "Mid-60s some 16mm (Viewer, re-winds, etc.) was stolen. Insurance (contracted a decade earlier) wouldn't replace it, wouldn't buy more than a week's groceries for the family. On the way to the grocery store I passed a photo-shop window displaying a used set of Reg. 8mm equipment plus several rolls of film. The price was exactly what I carried in my pocket…. Friends fed us that week, as often before." Stan Brakhage, "8 mill.," draft manuscript, 1, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 42, folder 21. Ken Jacobs, too, turned to 8 mm following the theft of his camera. See Michele Pierson, "Introduction: Ken Jacobs—A Half-Century of Cinema," in *Optic Antics: The Cinema of Ken Jacobs*, ed. Michele Pierson, David E. James, and Paul Arthur (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.

16. Sitney, *Visionary Film,* 209.

17. Initially, Brakhage did rent the *Songs* through the Film-Makers' Cooperative, but he decided to cease rentals in 1968 because of high sales and a conviction that the works were best suited for home viewing.

18. Despite later working in 8 mm on the *Songs*, Brakhage wrote in a letter to Mekas that "I have borrowed some equipment, taken some films, etc.; and I have come to the conclusion that…it is still best to shoot in 16mm and reduce to 8mm. The control, in all respects, is better, the final 8mm prints better, etc." Stan Brakhage to Jonas Mekas, June 20, 1963, 1, Archives of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

19. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 36.

20. Despite this characterization of the audience as a group of strangers, it is necessary to recall the importance of public avant-garde screenings as social spaces in which networks of personal and professional relationships were formed. Though the home context might have been valued for small-scale, intimate engagement, it would potentially suffer the loss of this component of theatrical exhibition and resemble more the atomized spectator of television.

21. Letter from Stan Brakhage to Edith Zorno, mid-June 1967, 2, Grove Press Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

22. Bruce Conner, "1963 Application for a Ford Foundation Grant in Film Making," 2. Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MSS 2000/50 c, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

23. Brakhage to Zorno, 2.

24. In 1965 a reporter for *The Nation* wrote that John Palmer and Gerard Malanga informed him (while Warhol was on the telephone) of some films-in-progress, including 8 mm loops of "*Living Portrait Boxes*," a.k.a. the screen tests, "which might sell for $1,000 or $1,500 each." See Howard Junker, "Andy Warhol, Movie Maker," *Nation*, February 22, 1965, 206–7.

25. Gregory Markopoulos to Grove Press, February 7, 1968, *Cerberus*, vol. 5, n.p. Temenos Archive, Uster. For more on the *Cerberus* collection see chapter 7, esp. note 16.

26. All figures for the sales of 8 mm copies of Brakhage's films stem from royalty statements issued to him by Grove Press. Grove Press Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

27. Currency conversion using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index inflation calculator, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

28.  Alexandre Astruc, "Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo," in *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, ed. Timothy Corrigan (New York: Prentice Hall, 1999), 159.

29.  Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired*, October 1, 2004, www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html. Anderson later developed this article into a book entitled *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).

30.  For a rebuttal of Anderson's thesis of the long tail that claims that the importance of best sellers is not diminishing but rather increasing, see Anita Elberse, *Blockbusters: Why Big Hits—and Big Risks—Are the Future of the Entertainment Business* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2014).

31.  Astruc, "Birth of a New Avant-Garde," 159.

32.  Eric Schaefer, "Plain Brown Wrapper: Adult Films for the Home Market, 1930–1969," in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 215.

33.  "Grove Press Films on Sexual Behaviour," pamphlet, n.d., James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 47, folder 1.

34.  The phrase "frenzy of the visible" comes from Jean-Louis Comolli by way of Linda Williams's *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

35.  Ara Osterweil, "Flesh Cinema: The Corporeal Avant-Garde, 1959–1979" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005), 50.

36.  In *Film as a Subversive Art* Amos Vogel describes *Psychomontage* as an "attempt to induce erotic response in the audience by carefully chosen visual stimuli and juxtapositions (aimed at both conscious and unconscious). Phallic symbols and open orifices, a tongue licking an orange, an unexpected finger entering the frame: almost any object or act, no matter how innocuous, the Kronhausens show, can be made to appear erotic, and reveals our predisposition towards 'shaping' visual evidence for purposes of erotic gratification." To show this, the Kronhausens make use of scientific footage of insects and flowers, missiles taking off (repeating Bruce Conner's gag from A MOVIE [1958]), and other such metaphors. See Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974), 229–30.

37.  Schaefer, "Plain Brown Wrapper," 216.

38.  Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the "Evergreen Review," and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 196, 142.

39.  *Evergreen Club News* 3, no. 5, undated, n.p., Grove Press Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

40.  The "Grove Press Films on Sexual Behavior" pamphlet describes *Everready* as "one of the only blue cartoons ever made. A humorous play on the consequences of a recurrent male fantasy coming true. Made circa 1926 by professional animators."

41.  Glass, *Counterculture Colophon*, 175.

42.  Film-Maker's Cooperative Report 1, no. 3, March 20, 1970, Archives of Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

43.  Clipping circulated by Jonas Mekas to the Board Members of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, January 26, 1970, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 25, folder 6. The article in question was Ivan Berger, "Video Tape: This Year Won't Quite Be 'Next Year,'" *Saturday Review*, January 31, 1970, 78, 82.

44.  Minutes of March 1970 directors' meeting, Archives of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

45.  Film-Maker's Cooperative Report 1, no. 3, March 20, 1970; and Film-Maker's Cooperative Report 1, no. 4, April 13, 1970, Archives of the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York City.

46.  Bruce Conner, "From Bruce Conner, 902 Corbett Ave., SF," *Canyon Cinemanews*, January 15–February 16, 1968, 2.

47.  Ibid.

48.  "HOME LIBRARY PRINTS in 8mm," *Canyon Cinemanews*, April 15–May 15, 1968, n.p.

49. Bruce Conner to Stan Brakhage, March 23, 1972, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 9, folder 1; and Bruce Conner to "Standard Brakhage," March 18, 1978, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 9, folder 2.

50. Bruce Conner, untitled letter dated February 23, 1981, *Canyon Cinemanews*, 1981, 107.

51. Anderson, "The Long Tail."

52. "Cops Raid Homo Films Again," *Variety*, March 18, 1964, 5.

53. Mekas mentions "the current 'clean up' of the city for the World's Fair" in "On Law, Morality, and Censorship." See Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 133. Such troubles were not, however, restricted to New York; in March 1964 Mike Getz was found guilty of obscenity charges in Los Angeles for screening Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1963).

54. Janet Staiger, "Finding Community in the Early 1960s: Underground Cinema and Sexual Politics," in *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s*, ed. Hilary Radner and Moya Luckett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 39.

55. Stan Brakhage to William F. Buckley, October 1970, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 41, folder 14; Calvin Tomkins, "All Pockets Open," *New Yorker*, January 6, 1973, 31.

56. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 127.

57. Quoted in Raymond J. Haberski Jr., *Freedom to Offend: How New York Remade Movie Culture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 31.

58. Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 122–23. Randall does not supply an exact date for this data, but the surrounding discussion indicates that the information is likely for the period from 1960 to 1965.

59. Ibid., 123. Currency conversion using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index inflation calculator, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

60. Mekas, *Movie Journal*, 135.

61. In 1975 Genet said, "I made [the film] in order to sell copies to particular people, since in parallel I also sold the limited editions of my books." Jean Genet, quoted in Jane Giles, *The Cinema of Jean Genet: "Un chant d'amour"* (London: BFI, 1991), 28.

62. Albert Goldman, "The Old Smut Peddler," *Life*, August 29, 1969, 50.

63. Ibid., 49.

64. On May 19, 1969, Mekas wrote a letter to the Motion Pictures editor at the *New York Times* requesting a correction: "The screening of Stan Brakhage's film 'Love Making' was cancelled by the Gallery of Modern Art not because there actually was a scene of child molesting in it; it was cancelled only because the Gallery thought that there was such a scene in the film. In actuality, the scene which is in discussion is a simple and beautiful scene of children playing in a room and jumping up and down on a bed." Jonas Mekas to *New York Times* Motion Picture Editor, May 19, 1969, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 25, folder 6.

65. Dudley Andrew, "Film and Society: Public Rituals and Private Space," *East-West Film Journal* 1, no. 1 (1986): 20–21.

66. Stan Brakhage to Luis Buñuel, March 26, 1974, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 41, folder 15.

67. Barbara Klinger has noted that most films draw a 2 percent repeat audience but that some blockbusters draw up to 20 percent of spectators back for a second viewing, most of whom are teenagers and young adults. See Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 135.

68. Geoff Dyer vividly evokes this condition in *Zona*, his book on Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979). Dyer describes desperately wanting to see the film again after his first viewing but being forced to wait until it was next playing in a cinema:

    I liked the way that my visits to the Zone were at the mercy of cinema schedules and festival programs. In London or in any other city where I happened to be living I always looked through *Time Out* or *Pariscope* or the *Village Voice* in the hope that *Stalker* would be playing. If it was showing somewhere, then seeing it became a priority, an

event that gave shape to the surrounding week. Like this, the Zone retained its specialness, its removal from the everyday (of which it remained, at the same time, a part). Getting there was always a little expedition, a cinematic pilgrimage. (Geoff Dyer, *Zona* [Edinburgh: Canongate, 2012], 143)

69. Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable Text," trans. Ben Brewster, *Screen* 13, no. 3 (1975): 19–28.

70. Vinzenz Hediger, "'You Haven't Seen It Until You've Seen It Twice': Film Spectatorship and the Discipline of Repeat Viewing," *Cinema & Cie* 5 (Fall 2004): 26.

71. Peter Kubelka, *Schwechater*, New American Cinema Group / Film-Makers' Coop, http://film-makerscoop.com/rentals-sales/search-results?fmc_filmid=2162.

72. See Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of Non-theatrical Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 114–15.

73. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 55; and Raymond Bellour, "The Pensive Spectator," trans. Lynne Kirby, *Wide Angle* 9, no. 1 (1987): 6–10.

74. Stan Brakhage, 1968 lecture at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, audio recording in James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder.

75. James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 43, folders 6, 14–15; box 44, folders 1–3; box 45, folder 12.

76. Somewhat humorously, though perhaps earnestly as well, Jeffrey Sconce has written that it takes precisely four viewings to transform *Showgirls* (1995) "from one of Hollywood's most notorious flops to absolute transcendence, four screenings to cross the line from stupid to clever." Jeffrey Sconce, "I Have Grown Weary of Your Tiresome Cinema," *Film Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2003): 44.

77. John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 75 (Mullarkey's emphasis).

78. Stan Brakhage to Jonas Mekas, mid-December 1967, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 33, folder 11.

79. Kristen Alfaro, "Access and the Experimental Film: New Technologies and Anthology Film Archives' Institutionalization of the Avant-Garde," *Moving Image* 12, no. 1 (2012): 56.

80. P. Adams Sitney to Lenny Lipton, December 30, 1968, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 33, folder 11 (Sitney's emphasis).

81. The other twenty to thirty programs were to be devoted to explorations of films that might be added to the Essential Cinema collection. P. Adams Sitney, email correspondence with the author, April 4, 2015.

82. P. Adams Sitney to "Bruce," January 2, 1969, James Stanley Brakhage Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, box 33, folder 11.

83. The author was presumably unaware of Brakhage's success with Grove, or perhaps he was falling back on a distinction between "filmmaker" and "visual artist." See Hunter Drohojowska, "The Visual Music of Bill Viola: A Video Artist's Work Finally Hits the Home Market," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 2, 1986, B5.

84. Women Make Movies, for instance, currently charges $495 for a DVD sale of Trinh T. Minh-ha's feature-length *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (1989).

85. Stan Brakhage to Frances Novgroder, July 2, 1982, Grove Press Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.

86. "The Karagarga Manifesto," https://karagarga.in/manifesto.php.

87. One copy is 1.42GB; the other is 422MB.

88. Comment #314339 from diallelus, January 28, 2009, https://karagarga.in/details.php?id=66037.

89. Julieta Aranda, "An Exercise in Distribution," *E-Flux Video Rental Catalogue*, ed. Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda (New York: E-Flux and Revolver, 2005), 5.

90. Ibid.

91. For more information see http://coletivofiledepeixe.com/piratao/.

92.    Anthology Committee, "Anthology Film Archives," *Filmmakers Newsletter*, February 1972, quoted in Sky Sitney, "The Search for the Invisible Cinema," *Grey Room* 19 (Spring 2005): 103.

93.    Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux journal* 10 (November 2009), www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.

## 3. Bootlegging Experimental Film

1.    Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on "The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,"* ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 38–55.

2.    Josiah McElheny, quoted in Louise Neri and Josiah McElheny, "A Prism," in *Josiah McElheny*, ed. Louise Neri and Josiah McElheny (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2010), 8–9.

3.    Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 4–5, 21.

4.    The remaining three curators were Iain Boyd White, an art historian; Lesley Jackson, a design historian; and Karl Boyd, one-half of the electronic music duo Underworld.

5.    UbuWeb, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.ubu.com/resources/faq.html.

6.    Kenneth Goldsmith has referred to the site as "an archive of the avant-garde." Critics and institutions have also used this phrase. See Danny Birchell, "The Avant-Garde Archive Online," *Film Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2009): 12–14; and Canadian Centre for Architecture press release, "The CCA Presents Groundbreaking and Experimental Films in the Exhibition *Intermission: Films from a Heroic Future*," November 18, 2009, www.cca.qc.ca/cca.media/files/9234/8219/Intermission_Press_release.pdf.

7.    For example, Goldsmith writes, "Many people assume that the web—and its riches—will always be there waiting for you. It won't. Don't bookmark. Download. Hard drives are cheap. Fill them up with everything you think you might need to consult, watch, read, listen to, or cite in the future." Kenneth Goldsmith, "Why I Don't Trust the Cloud," April 27, 2012, *Harriet: A Poetry Blog*, www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2012/04/why-i-dont-trust-the-cloud/.

8.    Wolfgang Ernst, "Discontinuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multimedia Space?" in *Digital Memory and the Archive*, ed. Jussi Parikka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 122, 140.

9.    André Malraux, *Le musée imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

10.    See Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, "The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original Through Its Facsimiles," in *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 287.

11.    Christiane Moatti, "*Les voix du silence*: Notice," in André Malraux, *Écrits sur l'art I (Œuvres complètes, IV)*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 1327 (translation mine).

12.    These extremely high-definition images allow the user to experience the artwork with a greater proximity than is often possible in real life. Successive double-clicks on Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night* (1889) allow the user to zoom close enough to see the tiny cracks in the impasto. The gigapixel image of Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884–86) is composed of a mosaic of 702 photographs of the painting, creating an image precise enough to reveal the very grain of the canvas. For more information see Wailin Wong, "Google Art Project Launches Tuesday at Art Institute of Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, April 3, 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-04-03/entertainment/ct-ent-0403-google-art-project-20120403_1_art-institute-google-art-project-edward-hopper-s-nighthawks.

13.    Richard Barbrook, "The Hi-Tech Gift Economy" (1998), www.imaginaryfutures.net/2007/04/19/the-hi-tech-gift-economy-by-richard-barbrook/.

14.    UbuWeb, "About UbuWeb," www.ubu.com/resources/index.html.

15.    Tiziana Terranova, for example, has rightfully noted that Barbrook overemphasizes the autonomy and radicalism of the online gift economy because he fails to "remember that the gift economy, as part of a larger digital economy, is itself an important force within the reproduction of the labor force in late capitalism as a whole" and overlooks the centrality of free labor "to the creation of value in the digital economies." Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 63, vol. 18, no. 2 (2000): 36.

16.     Kenneth Goldsmith, "UbuWeb at 15 Years: An Overview," *Harriet: A Poetry Blog,* April 26, 2011, www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/ubuweb-at-15-years-an-overview/.

17.     Napster was a peer-to-peer service enabling the sharing of MP3 files that began operation in June 1999 and became immensely popular, boasting eighty million users at its peak. Though online music stores had existed before this—notably www.ritmoteca.com, begun in 1998—and though many major record labels attempted to launch their own services during the heyday of Napster, it would not be until the debut of Apple's iTunes Music Store in April 2003 that authorized downloads became a major channel for the distribution of music. See Michael Gowan, "Requiem for Napster," *PC World,* May 18, 2002, www.pcworld.idg.com.au/article/22380/requiem_napster/.

18.     UbuWeb, "About UbuWeb Film & Video," www.ubu.com/film/.

19.     The archive of Frameworks is available at www.hi-beam.net/fw.html.

20.     UbuWeb, "Frequently Asked Questions," http://ubuweb.com/resources/faq.html.

21.     @ubuweb Twitter account, February 9, 2013.

22.     Jane Gaines, "Early Cinema's Heyday of Copying: The Too Many Copies of *L'arroseur arrosé (The Waterer Watered),*" *Cultural Studies* 20, nos. 2–3 (March–May 2006): 231.

23.     Birchell, "The Avant-Garde Archive Online," 14.

24.     Kenneth Goldsmith, "An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community," October 18, 2010, www.ubu.com/resources/frameworks.html.

25.     Habda Rashid, assistant curator at the Whitechapel, wrote that what was exhibited on the prismatic structures was "not a film program as such: they provided the basis for Josiah's reconfigured projections onto his sculptures. These projections as well as their reception differ considerably from the films they were inspired by. It was important to Josiah to emphasise this difference and acknowledge (and embrace) the very distortions that a process like personal selection and a fragmented view thereof introduces to concepts of history." Email correspondence with the author, September 24, 2012.

26.     At www.ubu.com/film/gidal.html, Peter Gidal is thanked for giving the site credit to host his films. The films are accompanied by the note, "This UbuWeb resource is presented in collaboration with Lux."

27.     See World Intellectual Property Organization, "Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works," www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/trtdocs_wo001.html#P123_20726. The provisions of the Berne Convention are enforced according to the legislation of the country where protection is claimed. The strength of the moral rights tradition varies by country, being strongest in France and weakest in the United States, where copyright tends to be conceived as a transferable commodity. Since 1990, the United States has ensured the right to integrity for artists in the form of the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA), but this act expressly excludes moving image works. Peter Decherney has detailed the fight for moral rights protections in Hollywood, specifically surrounding the repackaging of films for television and the loss of directorial control during postproduction, to show that the matter tends to be resolved as many industry copyright disputes were: by in-house, contractual regulation. The case of avant-garde cinema in the United States is particularly interesting in this respect because it is neither protected by VARA, nor is it subject to the kinds of contractual regulation developed by the Hollywood studios. In the United Kingdom the protection of moral rights dates to the 1988 Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act. See Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 108–54.

28.     Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Economies of Film Distribution* (London: Palgrave/BFI, 2012), 79.

29.     Simon Stokes, "Copyright, Art, and Digitisation: European and U.K. Perspectives," in *Dear Images: Art, Copyright, and Culture,* ed. Daniel McClean and Karsten Schubert (London: Ridinghouse and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2002), 137.

30.     John Perry Barlow, "The Economy of Ideas," *Wired,* March 1, 1994, www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.03/economy.ideas.html.

31.     Rick Prelinger, "Re: The Politics of the Bootleg," email post to Frameworks listserv, June 10, 2008, www.hi-beam.net/fw/fw37/0638.html.

32.     UbuWeb's partnership with Electronic Arts Intermix allows the site to host videos by individuals such as Ryan Trecartin and Ken Jacobs with permission. In Goldsmith's letter to the Frameworks community he conceives of

the split between those artists who are interested in making their work available on UbuWeb and those who are not as a generational divide: "a younger generation is starting to see that works must take a variety of forms and distributive methods, which happen at the same time without cancelling each other out." The pairing, however, of Trecartin and Jacobs—the former born in 1981, the latter in 1933—clearly demonstrates that the issue is not purely generational. See Goldsmith, "An Open Letter."

33.   Philip Sherburne has suggested that rather than *dematerialization,* a more appropriate term to use in relation to digital files would be *micromaterialization,* since such files do retain a material existence, however invisible to our eyes it may be. See Philip Sherburne, "Digital DJing App That Pulls You In," *Grooves* (2003): 46; quoted in Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 194.

34.   Arild Fetveit, "Convergence by Means of Globalized Remediation," *Northern Lights* 5 (2007): 60.

35.   Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *differences* 18, no. 1 (2007): 131.

36.   Ibid., 143.

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

38.   On this transformation of the role of the curator see Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

39.   Martha Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace* (London: Continuum, 2012), 114.

40.   Maeve Connolly, "Temporality, Sociality, Publicness: Cinema as Art Project," *Afterall* 29 (Spring 2012): 5.

41.   Bernard Kops, *Grandchildren and Other Poems* (London: Hearing Eye, 2000); repr. in *Josiah McElheny: The Past Was a Mirage I'd Left Far Behind,* ed. Daniel F. Hermann (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012), 12–13.

42.   Goldsmith, "An Open Letter."

43.   It is worth noting that Fandor treats Canyon and the FMC as single artists, leaving the institution to distribute the royalties among its participating filmmakers.

44.   Of the rental fees, 10 percent goes to the service provider, Vimeo on Demand, while the other 40 percent goes back to LUX.

45.   Six artists—Uri Aran, Moyra Davey, Shahryar Nashat, Seth Price, James Richards, and Leslie Thornton—have been commissioned to produce work in response to three artists in the Walker's Ruben/Benson Moving Image Collection: Marcel Broodthaers, Bruce Conner, and Derek Jarman. These works were accessible online from June 1, 2015, to May 31, 2016, but have since been removed from online access.

## 4. Copyright and the Commons

1.   David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 103.

2.   Ibid., 3 (Joselit's emphasis).

3.   For a thorough discussion of these developments see Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and How It Threatens Creativity,* 2nd ed. (New York: NYU Press, 2003). For a text focusing specifically on the moving image see Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), esp. 201–42.

4.   John Perry Barlow, "The Economy of Ideas," *Wired,* March 1, 1994, www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.03/economy.ideas.html.

5.   Martha Buskirk, "Commodification as Censor: Copyrights and Fair Use," *October* 60 (Spring 1992): 84.

6.   Daniel McClean, "Who Owns Images?" *Frieze* (April 2015), www.frieze.com/issue/article/who-owns-images/.

7.   One notable exception here is Chris Moukarbel's *World Trade Center 2006* (2006), which was the subject of a lawsuit by Paramount Pictures concerning the use of the screenplay of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006).

8.    Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction—Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002), 35.

9.    See Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (New York: Routledge, 2014); and William Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).

10.    Christian Marclay, quoted in Daniel Zalewski, "The Hours," *New Yorker*, March 12, 2012, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/12/the-hours-daniel-zalewski.

11.    Richard Misek, "Trespassing Hollywood: Property, Space, and the 'Appropriation Film,'" *October* 153 (Summer 2015): 143.

12.    Eli Horwatt, "A Taxonomy of Digital Remixing: Contemporary Found Footage Practice on the Internet," in *Cultural Borrowings: Appropriation, Reworking, Transformation,* ed. Iain Robert Smith (Nottingham: Scope, 2009), 77.

13.    There are, of course, significant precedents for the appropriation of an entire film, including René Viénet's *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (*La dialectique peut-elle casser des briques?* [1973]); Ken Jacobs's *Perfect Film* (1985); Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993); and William E. Jones's *Tearoom* (1962/2007).

14.    This list is available online at the website of The Royal Film Commission—Jordan, www.film.jo/?q=node/297.

15.    Adnan Madanat, "The First Film and National Identity," trans. Habib Mousa, http://jordnianfilms.blogspot.com/2007/11/defending-our-pioneers-struggle-in.html. Originally published in *al-Rai*, November 23, 2007, and available online: http://web.archive.org/web/20101019124929/http://jordnianfilms.blogspot.com/2007/11/defending-our-pioneers-struggle-in.html.

16.    Giorgio Bertellini and Jacqueline Reich, "DVD Supplements: A Commentary on Commentaries," *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 3 (Spring 2009): 103.

17.    Brookey and Westerfelhaus's case study is the DVD release of David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999), which the authors demonstrate directs viewers away from the film's homoerotic subtext by "us[ing] denial, dismissal, and distraction to undermine the validity of a homosexual interpretation." Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, "Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 1 (2002): 23, 30.

18.    Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux journal* 10 (November 2009), www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.

19.    Ben White, interview by the author, November 21, 2012.

20.    Creative Commons describes this license: "This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work even for commercial purposes, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms. This license is often compared to 'copyleft' free and open source software licenses. All new works based on yours will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use. This is the license used by Wikipedia, and is recommended for materials that would benefit from incorporating content from Wikipedia and similarly licensed projects." See http://creativecommons.org/licenses/.

21.    Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: Palgrave/BFI, 2012), 69.

22.    Barbara Klinger, "Contraband Cinema: Piracy, *Titanic*, and Central Asia," *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2 (2010): 107.

23.    Eileen Simpson, interview by the author, November 21, 2012. At the time of this writing one Jordanian dinar was equivalent to $1.41.

24.    Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image."

25.    Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 24–25.

26.    Ibid., 135.

27.    Lessig has written that the augmented reach of copyright will result in an intellectual property regime in which "any balance between public and private will thus be lost. The private domain will swallow the public domain. And the

cultivation of culture and creativity will then be dictated by those who claim to own it." Lawrence Lessig, "The Public Domain," *Foreign Policy*, October 20, 2009, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2005/08/30/the_public_domain.

28. For more on orphaned works see www.copyright.gov/orphan/; and the Duke University Center for the Study of the Public Domain's orphaned works site: http://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/orphanworks.html.

29. "1997 USTR Annual 301 Review," April 30, 1997, www.keionline.org/ustr/1997special301.

30. "1999 USTR Annual 301 Review," April 30, 1999, www.keionline.org/ustr/1999special301.

31. As Andrew Currah notes, the United States has successfully included such provisions in bilateral free trade agreements with not only Jordan but also Singapore, Chile, Morocco, Australia, CAFTA, Bahrain, and Oman. See Andrew Currah, "Hollywood, the Internet, and the World: A Geography of Disruptive Innovation," *Industry and Innovation* 14, no. 4 (2007): 367. The United States has included copyright term extension provisions in free trade agreements with Australia and South Korea.

32. Elizabeth al-Dajani, "Comment: Post Saddam Restructuring of Intellectual Property Rights in Iraq Through a Case Study of Current Intellectual Property Practices in Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan," *John Marshall Law School Review of Intellectual Property Law* 6, no. 2 (2007): 266.

33. Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema*, 71.

34. Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 1.

35. Rosalind Galt, *The New European Cinema: Redrawing the Map* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 27.

36. Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 241.

37. Catherine Russell, quoted in "Round Table: Documentary, Ethnography, and the Avant-Garde," *Moving Image Review and Art Journal* 2, no. 1 (2013): 87.

38. Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, "The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original Through Its Facsimiles," in *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 286.

39. Joselit, *After Art*, 94.

40. Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 9–10.

41. Martin Jay, "Taking on the Stigma of Inauthenticity: Adorno's Critique of Genuineness," *New German Critique* 97 (Winter 2006): 26.

42. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004), 29.

## 5. The Limited Edition

1. Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (Boston: MFA, 2003), 68.

2. Ibid., 168.

3. A letter from Joella Levy, Julien's wife, to Paul Vanderbilt, dated April 18, 1932, reads, "We do give performances of short Avant-garde Amateur movies in the Gallery, they are all on 16mm film, and we do rent them and sell copies." Joella Levy lists *Ballet mécanique* (1923–24), *L'étoile de mer* (1928), *Le château d'If* by Man Ray (which one presumes is *Les mystères du Château de Dé* [1929]), *Spirale* by Marcel Duchamp (presumably *Anemic Cinema* [1926]), and *Sportfilm* by V. Albrecht Blum (presumably Albrecht V. Blum, possibly *Querdurch den Sport* [1929]). She quotes a rental fee of $10 for *Ballet mécanique* but writes that "for the others we have to arrange a price as we've never rented before." According to Marie Difilippantonio of the Jean and Julien Levy Foundation, this is the sole extant reference to the sale of films as art objects.

4. Steven Watson, "Julien Levy: Exhibitionist and Harvard Modernist," in *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, ed. Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 86.

5. See Ingrid Schaffner, "Alchemy of the Gallery," in *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, ed. Ingrid

Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 22–23.

6. On Levy's difficulties in selling photographs see Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery,* 59, 68–69.

7. For a discussion of the sale of uneditioned film prints see Paolo Cherchi Usai, "La cineteca di Babele," in *Storia del cinema mondiale: Teorie, strumenti, memorie,* vol. 5, ed. Gian Piero Brunetta (Bologna: Einaudi, 2001), 967–69.

8. The artist's proof—often abbreviated "AP"—is a term that comes from printmaking. It originally designated a print made to test quality but has since come to refer to copies retained by the artist that exist outside of the numbered edition and are generally not for sale. They do, however, sometimes appear on the secondary market, where they can attract higher prices than the numbered edition.

9. Edward Lewine, "Art That Has to Sleep in the Garage," *New York Times,* June 26, 2005, www.nytimes.com/2005/06/26/arts/design/26lewi.html.

10. For example, when Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 2* (1999) was sold on November 14, 2007, at Sotheby's, New York, for $571,000, the DVD came inside a case made of leather and acrylic, with a custom vitrine for display. It is also important to note that even when no ancillary materials are included as a part of the edition, they are often produced. Some artists sell video stills, while others produce photographic series in conjunction with a moving image work. In many cases these works may generate more income than the videos themselves. As Noah Horowitz has remarked, "it is widely acknowledged that artists and galleries often use installations (video or otherwise) as loss-leaders, not unlike the fashion business, which undertakes similarly loss-making but ultimately brand-elevating exercises." See Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 57.

11. Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture,* trans. Nicholas Grindell (Berlin: Sternberg, 2009), 9.

12. Exceptions include Graw's *High Price* and Horowitz's *Art of the Deal.* In the domain of cinema studies the body of scholarship that would fall under such a heading is far too large and diverse to cite here. Of particular relevance, however, are Lucas Hilderbrand's *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Haidee Wasson's *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Many discussions of the economics of circulation in experimental film take place in informal channels—such as the Frameworks email listserv, which has been a site of lively debate over the issue of the limited edition in recent years—but even here, the issue remains underexplored.

13. Edwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 44.

14. Michel Melot, *The Impressionist Print,* trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 85.

15. Élisabeth Lebon, *Dictionnaire des fondeurs de bronze d'art: France, 1890–1950* (Perth, Australia: Marjon, 2003), 56 (translation mine).

16. Ibid., 57.

17. Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 153.

18. Melot, *The Impressionist Print,* 85.

19. Ibid., 86.

20. Ibid., 89.

21. Michel Melot, "La notion de l'originalité et son importance dans la définition des objets d'art," *Sociologie de l'art, colloque international, Marseille 13–14 juin 1985,* ed. Raymonde Moulin (Paris: Documentation française, 1986), 195 (translation mine).

22. Phillip Dennis Cate, "Prints Abound: Paris in the 1890s," in *Prints Abound: Paris in the 1890s,* ed. Phillip Dennis Cate, Gale B. Murray, and Richard Thomson (London: Lund Humphries and National Gallery of Art, 2000), 18.

23. Krauss, *Originality of the Avant-Garde,* 162 (Krauss's emphasis).

24. Jean Chatelain, "An Original in Sculpture," in *Rodin Rediscovered,* ed. Albert E. Elsen (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981), 278.

25.  Lebon, *Dictionnaire*, 67.

26.  Bruce Conner to Charles Alan, April 1957, in Alan Gallery Records at the Archives of American Art; repr. in Kevin Hatch, *Looking for Bruce Conner* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 118. I have rendered titles of Conner's films in all capitals and without italics, as the artist wished. In an undated memo Conner states this preference: "Full Capital Letters…are like signage on walls, monuments, objects and are like objects in themselves…. They have an architectural structure. Similar to newspaper headlines, true titles, imperative or direct phrasing such as HELP, STOP, FREE: TAKE ONE." See "PLATES 'Etc.': Some Notes to the Reader," in *Bruce Conner: It's All True*, ed. Rudolf Frieling and Gary Garrels (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 13.

27.  Bruce Conner, "1963 Application for a Ford Foundation Grant in Film Making," 2. Bruce Conner Papers, BANC MSS 2000/50 c, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

28.  In 2006–7, the last year of data available in Scott MacDonald's *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of An Independent Film Distributor*, Canyon made $11,225 from film sales, $6,860 from video sales, and $112,395 from rentals. See Scott MacDonald, "Appendix 2: Canyon Cinema's Gross Rentals and Sales, from 1966 until 2006–2007," in *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 433.

29.  Currently, the New York Film-Makers Cooperative returns 60 percent of rental income to the artist; Canyon Cinema and LUX return 50 percent.

30.  Currency conversion according to United States Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index inflation calculator, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

31.  Raymonde Moulin, "La genèse de la rareté artistique," *Ethnologie française* 8 (1978): 248.

32.  Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 117.

33.  See Martha Buskirk, "Certifiable," in *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art*, ed. Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf (Amsterdam: Roma, 2011), 99.

34.  "Interview with David Claerbout," *Independent Media Arts Preservation Resource Guide*, www.eai.org/resourceguide/preservation/installation/interview_claerbout.html.

35.  Gregory Markopoulos to Alice Burkhardt, August 20, 1968, *Cerberus*, vol. 8. All volumes of *Cerberus* are unpaginated and located at the Temenos Archive, Uster, Switzerland.

36.  Gregory Markopoulos to Stan Brakhage, October 2, 1969, *Cerberus*, vol. 9.

37.  Wilhelm Hein and Birgit Hein, *W + B Hein: Dokumente 1967–1985, Fotos, Briefe, Texte* (Frankfurt: Deutsche Filmmuseum, 1985), 35.

38.  "Films for Sale," ICA *Eventsheet*, September 1969, n.p., Tate Archives, London.

39.  Hein and Hein, *W + B Hein*, 35, 37 (translation mine, the Heins' emphasis).

40.  Nigel Gosling, "The Mingling of the Media," *Observer*, February 2, 1969, 26.

41.  Currency conversion using the Bank of England's inflation calculator, www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/inflation/calculator/flash/default.aspx.

42.  Gregory Markopoulos, "Proposals Towards a Mutual Agreement of Sale," March 3, 1969, *Cerberus*, vol. 9.

43.  Grace Glueck, "Does Marlborough Tell Gimpel?" *New York Times*, March 23, 1969, D28.

44.  Birgit Hein, email correspondence with the author, June 18, 2015.

45.  René Gimpel, interview by the author, March 11, 2014.

46.  Paolo Cardazzo to Gregory Markopoulos, August 13, 1971, Temenos Archive, Uster, Switzerland.

47.  Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Beavers, December 12, 1971, *Cerberus*, vol. 17; Gregory Markopoulos to editorial department of *Das Kunstwerk*, December 17, 1971, *Cerberus*, vol. 17.

48.  Gerry Schum, "Introduction to the Broadcast: Fernsehgalerie Berlin Gerry Schum," in *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, videogalerie Schum*, ed. Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, and Ursula Wevers (Ghent and Düsseldorf: Snoeck and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004), 67.

49. Ursula Wevers, "Love Work Fernsehgalerie," in *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, videogalerie Schum*, ed. Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, and Ursula Wevers (Ghent and Düsseldorf: Snoeck and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004), 31.

50. "Video Tappa Gerry Schum: Interview with Gerry Schum in the magazine *Data* (Milan), March 1972," in *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, videogalerie Schum*, ed. Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, and Ursula Wevers (Ghent and Düsseldorf: Snoeck and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004), 297.

51. Converted to 1971 U.S. Dollars, the unlimited editions would be priced between $144 and $230.40, the Beuys at $2,822.40, and the Gilbert and George at $1,382.40. Conversion calculated at a rate of 0.288 marks to the dollar as per the 1971 average interbank exchange rate given at www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates. This price list is reprinted in Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, and Ursula Wevers, eds., *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, videogalerie Schum* (Ghent and Düsseldorf: Snoeck and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004), 288.

52. Ian White, "Who Is Not the Author? Gerry Schum and the Established Order," in *Afterthought: New Writing on Conceptual Art*, ed. Mike Sperlinger (London: Rachmaninoff's, 2005), 69.

53. "Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films, Inc." *Art-Rite* 7 (Autumn 1974): 21.

54. Castelli-Sonnabend numbered its copies by assigning each a letter of the alphabet. While most tapes didn't make it past D, Serra's *Television Delivers People* goes up to copy UU, his *Hand Catching Lead* (1968) to EE, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) to FF, Jonas's *Vertical Roll* to AAA, and William Wegman's *Selected Works: Reel #4* (1972–73) to PP. These listings include all copies sold, available for rental, lost, and destroyed as a result of wear. All information on Castelli-Sonnabend is courtesy of Leo Castelli Gallery records, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.

55. Volume 1, number 1 of the Castelli-Sonnabend catalogue shows nine videos offered as limited editions of twenty: Vito Acconci's *Full Circle* (1973), *Stages* (1973), *Theme Song* (1973), and *Walk-Over* (1973); Christian Boltanski's *Life Is Gay, Life Is Sad* (1974) and (*Some) Memories of Youth* (1974); Joan Jonas's *Merlo* (1974); Richard Landry's *Terri Split* (1974); and Charlemagne Palestine's *Body Music* (1973–74). Simone Forti's *Untitled* was offered as an edition of one hundred, priced at $470.

56. In 2015 dollars this would equate to $56,765.13 in outstanding bills and $116,322.24 owed to artists.

57. Some film prints went to Anthology Film Archives and the Film-Makers' Cooperative; some films and videos were returned to the artists; and works by artists represented by the Leo Castelli Gallery continued to be available for sale and rent from Castelli.

58. David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London: BFI, 2007), 20.

59. These include *Senators in Bondage* (edition of thirteen, 1976) and *Matelots et Menottes* (edition of twelve, 1977). The buyers were apparently collectors of limited-edition books, mostly erotica. There is some doubt about whether these films were ever made; for further details see Erika Balsom, "Searching for *Senators* and *Sailors*: The Limited Editions of Kenneth Anger," *Little Joe* 5 (2015): 63–71. For Anger's account of these films see Acéphale, "Kenneth Anger—Welcome to the Pleasure Dome," *Necronomicon* 4 (2001): 55–58.

60. Larry Jordan, "Survival in the Independent–Non-Commercial–Avant-Garde–Experimental–Personal–Expressionistic Film Market of 1979," originally published in *Cinemanews* 79, no. 2/3/4 (1979); repr. in *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 337.

61. Ibid., 334 (Jordan's emphasis).

62. Ibid., 338.

63. These works were *Heaven and Earth*, *Threshold*, and *What Is Not That Which Is* (all 1992). Viola had previously issued some works in large editions, such as *Hatsu Yume (First Dream)* (1981), which was offered in a signed and stamped edition of 350.

64. Horowitz, *Art of the Deal*, 44.

65. Jack Valenti, quoted in Amy Harmon, "Black Hawk Download: Moving Beyond Music, Pirates Use New Tools to Turn the Net into an Illicit Video Club," *New York Times*, January 17, 2002, www.nytimes.com/2002/01/17/technology/black-hawk-download-moving-beyond-music-pirates-use-new-tools-turn-net-into.html.

66. Rose Lord, quoted in Paul Young, "Black Box White Cube," *Art + Auction*, February 2008,

www.artinfo.com/news/story/26655/black-box-white-cube/.

67.  See Deborah Sontag and Robin Pogrebin, "Some Object as Museum Shows Its Trustee's Art," *New York Times*, November 10, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/11/11/arts/design/11museum.html.

68.  See Peter C. Jones, "High Times and Misdemeanors," *Aperture* 124 (Summer 1991): 68–70.

69.  The *Treasures of Tutankhamen* exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976 is frequently cited as the beginning of a trend in museum exhibition to favor the guaranteed box office revenues provided by accessible material and a well-stocked gift shop.

70.  Dominique Païni posits 1990 as the year that signals a change in the conception of cinema from one tied to mass culture to something that possesses a patrimonial value. The transformation is, he writes, "one from industry to art." It is also a time that sees a generalized waning of direct political investment on the part of many video artists. See Dominique Païni, *Le temps exposé: Le cinéma de la salle au musée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002), 26.

71.  David Galloway, "Documenta 9: The Bottom Line," *Art in America*, September 1993, 55.

72.  Dan Cameron, "The Hassle in Kassel," *Artforum*, September 1992, 86.

73.  For a full list of collections of Tate and the Whitney and the dates of acquisition see Horowitz, *Art of the Deal*, 218–56.

74.  Eamon sees the market crash account as too New York–centric, especially given that the key figures in early 1990s video are not "New York painters turned video artists" but come from other parts of the world, such as Canada (Stan Douglas), Scotland (Douglas Gordon), and Switzerland (Pipilotti Rist). Christopher Eamon, interview with the author, March 8, 2011.

75.  On Rosler's opposition to the limited edition on the grounds that it reduces access, see Ilana Stanger, "Interviews with Visual Artists: Martha Rosler," New York Foundation for the Arts Business of Art Articles, https://web.archive.org/web/20131007101402/http://www.nyfa.org/level4.asp?id=120&fid=1&sid=51&tid=167.

76.  As Cynthia Chris has noted, the advancement of this art historical narrative conflates both media art and media activism—overlapping but distinct areas of practice—and neglects to consider the real persistence of activist video into the present. See Cynthia Chris, "Video Art: Stayin' Alive," *Afterimage* 25, no. 7 (2000): 10.

77.  Pierre Huyghe, quoted in Greg Allen, "When Fans of Pricey Video Art Can Get It for Free," *New York Times*, August 17, 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/08/17/arts/art-architecture-when-fans-of-pricey-video-art-can-get-it-free.html.

78.  Dieter Daniels, "Video/Art/Market," in *40yearsvideoart.de, Part 1. Digital Heritage: Video Art in Germany from 1963 Until the Present*, ed. Rudolf Frieling and Wulf Herzogenrath (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 46.

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

80.  "Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art," *October* 103 (Spring 2006): 95.

81.  For an account of the relationship between the 1926 and 2012 versions of *Raumlichtkunst* see Gregory Zinman, "Man Out of Time: Oskar Fischinger and the Renewed Relevance of *Raumlichtkunst*," *Moving Image Source*, August 22, 2012, www.movingimagesource.us/articles/man-out-of-time-20120822.

82.  The films are *Respectable Creates* (1950–66), *Overstimulated* (1959–63), *Scotch Tape* (1959–62), *Flaming Creatures* (1962–63), *Normal Love* (1963–65), *Yellow Sequence* (1963–65), *Jungle Island* (1967), *No President* (1967–70), *I Was a Male Yvonne DeCarlo* (1967–70s), *Song for Rent* (1969), and *Hot Air Specialist* (1980).

83.  This piece was marketed as a reconstruction of a version shown at the Brussels World Fair and the Palais de Chaillot in Paris in 1958 but includes a soundtrack consisting of Electric Light Orchestra's *Eldorado* (1974), which Anger had used in the film's 1978 version. For Anger's account of the 1958 screenings see Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 5: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 33–34.

84.  Zinman, "Man Out of Time."

85.  The 2002 DVD *2000 B.C.: Eight 16mm Films by Bruce Conner, 1964–1981* includes MEA CULPA (1981), BREAKAWAY (1966), VIVIAN (1964), THE WHITE ROSE (1967), MARILYN TIMES FIVE (1968–73), REPORT (1967), TAKE THE 5:10 TO DREAMLAND (1976), and VALSE TRISTE (1977). The 2003 DVD *Two*

*Films by Bruce Conner* includes CROSSROADS (1976) and both versions of LOOKING FOR MUSHROOMS (1959–67).

86. For an account of the CROSSROADS restoration see Ross Lipman, "Conservation at a Crossroads," *Artforum,* October 2013, https://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201308&id=43121.

87. Michelle Silva, interview with the author, August 19, 2015.

88. The restoration and digitization processes involved in many retroactively editioned works also pose important questions of historicity and authenticity in a very different register, but given that these questions are raised by restoration in general and are not specifically tied to the practice of editioning, they are beyond the scope of this chapter. For a discussion of such issues see Enrico Camporesi, "Bill Brand: Archive Instinct," *Moving Image Review and Art Journal* 3, no. 1 (2014): 83–93.

89. For an extensive account of the photography market's hierarchy of print categories see Nathalie Moureau and Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux, "La construction du marché des tirages photographiques," *Études photographiques*, no. 22 (September 2008): http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/1005.

90. At the time of this writing, the ®™ark website has been taken offline. As of August 4, 2015, the site for "liberated videos," located at www.rtmark.com/2995repository.html, stated "this page is continuously updated with new 'liberated' art videos made available for download or streaming," but the only two listed were Barney's *Cremaster 5,* with a price listed of $25,000, and Lucy Gunning's *Climbing Around in My Room* (1993), with a price listed of $4,000. The links to both videos were broken.

91. Sven Lütticken, "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images," *e-flux journal* 8 (September 2009), www.e-flux.com/journal/view/75.

92. Ibid.

93. Marina Isola, "An Uncertain Market for Video Art," *New York Times,* February 15, 1998, www.nytimes.com/1998/02/15/arts/an-uncertain-market-for-video-art.html.

94. Benjamin Cook, interview with the author, November 29, 2010.

95. Ibid.

96. Larry Jordan, interview with the author, December 10, 2010.

97. This practice of raising the price of the edition as it sells out is an established convention.

98. This project was initiated in 2003 as a collaboration among the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the New Art Trust; and the Tate Modern. For more information, see www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/mediamatters/.

## 6. The Event of Projection

1. Daniel Pennac, *Monsieur Malaussène* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 80 (Pennac's emphasis; translation mine).

2. Sehgal's insistence that his work have no printed supplement extends even to documents regarding its sale; his editioned performances are sold via oral contract in the presence of a notary. For the canonical account of performance as grounded in an ontology of disappearance see Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146–66.

3. Of course, it certainly happens that such works are sometimes exhibited without fulfilling such conditions. The films of Frampton's unfinished *Magellan* cycle (1972–84), for example, have often been shown but never according to the calendar that the filmmaker set out for them.

4. *Passio* pressbook, 5.

5. The following is a list of locations of the seven prints: Hong Kong Film Archive; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra; Cinemateca Brasileira, São Paulo, Brazil; Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona del Friuli, Italy; Svenska Filminstitutet, Stockholm, Sweden; the sixth was acquired by Martin Scorsese for his personal collection and is now at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York; the seventh will remain in Cherchi Usai's possession during his lifetime, after which it will be donated to a museum. My research is based on a consultation of the minium print at George Eastman House.

6. Paolo Cherchi Usai, interview by the author, June 17, 2013.

7. For an account of this tendency see Tess Takahashi, "After the Death of Film: Writing the Natural World in the Digital Age," *Visible Language* 42, no. 1 (2008): 44–69.

8. Cherchi Usai, interview.

9. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 106.

10. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 58.

11. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Realism and the Digital Image," in *Travels in Intermedia(lity): ReBlurring the Boundaries*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2012), 57.

12. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Third Version)," trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 271.

13. Paolo Cherchi Usai, quoted in Jake Coyle, "No Theaters, No DVD Release for *Passio*," *USA Today*, April 27, 2007, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/music/2007-04-27-3172645775_x.htm.

14. Auslander's argument rests on an equation of symbolic capital with that which occupies the position of cultural dominant at a given time. This position overlooks the fact that in many cases it is precisely that which is *not* dominant—that which is rare or unusual—that is endowed with increased symbolic value. See Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 187.

15. See Francesco Casetti, "Back to the Motherland: The Film Theater in the Postmedia Age," *Screen* 51, no. 1 (2011): 6.

16. Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 187.

17. Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance," 146.

18. Auslander, *Liveness*, 47n30.

19. Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

20. Pennac, *Monsieur Malaussène*, 315.

21. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to the Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1976), 117. The relationship of cinema to Goodman's terminology becomes substantially more complicated if one questions the status of the multiple prints produced from a negative or internegative understood as an "original." For the sake of the present discussion I will use Goodman's terminology only to discuss the relationship between the film print as notation and the projection as performance.

22. Ibid., 113.

23. Ed Halter, quoted in Dennis Lim, "Choosing Cinematheque over Cineplex," *New York Times*, September 2, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/movies/microcinemas-pack-a-special-mission-in-a-small-space.html.

24. Ben Russell, "2013 World Poll—Part 3," *Senses of Cinema* 69 (December 2013): http://sensesofcinema.com/2014/issue-69-december-2013/2013-world-poll-part-3-2/#25.

25. Rick Altman, "General Introduction: Cinema as Event," in *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

26. "Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet," Film Section, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute (March 1977). Thank you to Amanda Donnan at the Carnegie Museum of Art for making this document available to me. For the first few years the Travel Sheet was published every two or three months, but thereafter it became monthly.

27. *The Independent Film Community: A Report on the Status of Independent Film in the United States*, published in November 1977, specifies personal appearances as one of the three income streams for avant-garde filmmakers, alongside film rentals and the sale of uneditioned prints. The report states that at that time a filmmaker could expect to be paid anywhere from $100 to $1,000 for appearing with his or her work, with fees being higher on the

East Coast than on the West Coast. See Peter Feinstein, ed., *The Independent Film Community: A Report on the Status of Independent Film in the United States* (New York: Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services, 1977), 39.

28. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 121.

29. David Denby, "Big Pictures," *New Yorker*, January 8, 2007, www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2007/01/08/070108crat_atlarge_denby.

30. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 85.

31. Ibid., 57–58.

32. André Habib, "Ruin, Archive, and the Time of Cinema: Peter Delpeut's *Lyrical Nitrate*," *SubStance* 35, no. 2 (2006): 121, 122. See also André Habib, *L'attrait de la ruine* (Brussels: Éditions Yellow Now, 2011).

33. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London, BFI, 2001), 67.

34. Ibid., 39.

35. Ibid., 109.

36. See Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings: Volume Two, Part One: 1927–1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 207–21.

37. As Martin Jay notes, *Eigenlichkeit* is used more frequently in German than *Authentizität* and carries with it a very different yet equally relevant etymology from the word "authenticity," since *eigen* translates as "to own" or "to possess." *Eigenlichkeit* also differs from *Echtheit*, the word Benjamin uses in his discussions of authenticity in "The Work of Art." *Echtheit* comes from a *niederdeutsch* term, *echact*, which means "to follow the law," signaling a link between *echt* and *recht*. See Martin Jay, "Taking on the Stigma of Inauthenticity: Adorno's Critique of Genuineness," *New German Critique* 97 (Winter 2006): 17.

38. As noted in chapter one, in *Minima Moralia* Adorno makes clear the connection between the notion of authenticity as it is deployed in the work of a philosopher like Heidegger and ideas of racial or ethnic purity: the concept "dwells [on] the notion of the supremacy of the original over the derived. This notion, however, is always linked with social legitimism. All ruling strata claim to be the oldest settlers, autochthonous." Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 155.

39. Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 6. For Adorno this marshaling of theological language enabled a form of domination conducive to fascism. Though he finds the roots of this jargon in the Weimar era, it proliferates after the Second World War, when National Socialist ideology became unfashionable. He scathingly and sarcastically writes, "One can trust anyone who babbles this jargon; people wear it in their buttonholes, in place of the currently disreputable party badge" (19–20).

40. Pennac, *Monsieur Malaussène*, 568–69.

41. Ibid., 573.

42. Irving Goh, "Prolegomenon to a Right to Disappear," *Cultural Politics* 2, no. 1 (2006): 99–100.

43. Alexander Galloway, "Black Box, Black Bloc," in *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2011), 246–47.

44. Zach Blas, "Contra-Internet Aesthetics," in *You Are Here: Art After the Internet*, ed. Omar Kholeif (Manchester: Cornerhouse and SPACE, 2014), 90, 96.

## 7. A Cinematic Bayreuth

1. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 337.

2. Gregory Markopoulos, "S.O.S. for the Friends of Markopoulos Everywhere," May 17, 1975, *Cerberus*,

vol. 24.

3. Gregory Markopoulos to Edith Zornow, November 13, 1968, *Cerberus*, vol. 9.

4. Gregory Markopoulos to Alice Burkhardt, August 7, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 19. In a conversation with me on March 11, 2014, René Gimpel recalled Markopoulos refusing to allow his work to be shown on the same program as certain other filmmakers at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1969.

5. Currency conversion according to United States Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index inflation calculator, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

6. Gregory Markopoulos, "Gregory Markopoulos Dissociates Himself from Film Archives," *Variety*, June 5, 1974, 7.

7. Gregory Markopoulos to Leslie Trumbull, January 8, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 17.

8. Gregory Markopoulos, "Sto Palikari," *Supervisuell* 3 (1968), n.p.; repr. in Mark Webber, ed., *Film as Film: The Collected Writings of Gregory J. Markopoulos* (London: Visible Press, 2014), 50–52.

9. Gregory Markopoulos to Aristotle Onassis, July 22, 1971, *Cerberus*, vol. 16.

10. Gregory Markopoulos, *Boustrophedon* (Rome: Temenos, 1977), 64 (Markopoulos's emphasis); repr. in Webber, *Film as Film*, 358.

11. Gregory Markopoulos to Alicia, May 10, 1971, *Cerberus*, vol. 15.

12. These prints continue to be managed under the same agreement: they cannot be shown off the premises of the Austrian Film Museum without written permission from Robert Beavers.

13. Between 1972 and Markopoulos's death in 1992, the Austrian Film Museum showed his films on five occasions in his presence. In 1972 and 1973 films by Beavers and Markopoulos appeared on the same program; in 1977, 1980, and 1983 Markopoulos received monographic screenings, with Beavers showing his films on a consecutive evening. Three further events including Markopoulos's work took place without him at the Austrian Film Museum during his lifetime: in February 1974 *Ming Green* (1966) was shown in the institution's tenth-anniversary marathon of films from the collection; in May 1974 he received five monographic screenings and a sixth shared with Robert Beavers in the series "Hauptwerke des American Independent Cinema"; and in 1989 the institution's twenty-fifth anniversary program included a program shared with Beavers. In March 1993 the museum mounted a major memorial retrospective in which it showed all eighteen films by Markopoulos in its collection.

14. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, March 12, 1975, *Cerberus*, vol. 24. The Centre Pompidou did go on to acquire two films in 1977: *Gammelion* (1968) and *The Illiac Passion* (1964–67).

15. John Hanhardt, "A Temperate Vision: The Films of Gregory J. Markopoulos," in *Gregory Markopoulos: Mythic Themes, Portraiture, and Films of Place* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 10.

16. At present, the materials collected in *Cerberus* are the only part of Markopoulos's correspondence open to researchers in the Temenos Archive. Incoming correspondence is included with the filmmaker's diaries in the fifty-two volumes of *Ein Eidelweiss*, which remain private, leading to a situation in which scholars are largely left to reconstruct the events of the filmmaker's life and career primarily according to his own account of them.

17. See, e.g., Gregory Markopoulos to Leslie Trumbull, October 2, 1974, *Cerberus*, vol. 23; Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Beavers, July 4, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 19; and Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, April 29, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 18.

18. Gregory Markopoulos, *Chaos Phaos II* (Florence: Temenos, 1971), 125; repr. in Webber, *Film as Film*, 54–55.

19. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, December 2, 1970, *Cerberus*, vol. 14.

20. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, October 5, 1973, *Cerberus*, vol. 21.

21. Gregory Markopoulos to Carter H. Manny Jr., trustee of the Graham Foundation, August 6, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 19.

22. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, August 8, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 19.

23. Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 25.

24. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, May 1, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 18; Gregory Markopoulos to Robert

Freeman, August 8, 1972, *Cerberus*, vol. 19.

25. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, July 3, 1969, *Cerberus*, vol. 11.

26. Gregory Markopoulos to Leslie Trumbull, January 15, 1971, *Cerberus*, vol. 14.

27. Gregory Markopoulos to Crédit Suisse, April 11, 1980, *Cerberus*, vol. 26.

28. Gregory Markopoulos to *International Herald Tribune*, October 5, 1979, *Cerberus*, vol. 25.

29. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Beavers, November 30, 1979, *Cerberus*, vol. 25.

30. See, e.g., Rebekah Rutkoff, "Chaos Phaos: Markopoulos and Cinematic Withholding," *World Picture* 10 (Spring 2015), [www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_10/Rutkoff_10.html](www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_10/Rutkoff_10.html); and Mark Webber, introduction to *Film as Film: The Collected Writings of Gregory J. Markopoulos* (London: Visible Press, 2014), 11.

31. Gregory Markopoulos to Nigel Gosling, March 27, 1980, *Cerberus*, vol. 26.

32. Gregory Markopoulos to Demetrios G. Ninias, Greek Minister of Culture, October 9, 1979, *Cerberus*, vol. 25; Gregory Markopoulos to Anna, February 7, 1980, *Cerberus*, vol. 25.

33. Gregory Markopoulos to Patrick, April 27, 1980, *Cerberus*, vol. 25.

34. Gregory Markopoulos, "Plan of Work," undated (circa October 1979), *Cerberus*, vol. 25.

35. Gregory Markopoulos, "Plan of Work—Temenos Presentations 1981," May 1981, *Cerberus*, vol. 26; Robert Beavers, email to the author, May 19, 2015; Yorgos Zikogiannis, email to the author, June 22, 2015.

36. Robert Beavers, "Lyssaraia: Filme in mythologischer Landschaft," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 19, 1980, 65 (translation mine).

37. Gregory Markopoulos, press release to *Athens News*, September 6, 1982, *Cerberus*, vol. 27.

38. Gregory Markopoulos to George Spentzas, November 18, 1980, *Cerberus*, vol. 26.

39. Gregory Markopoulos, Temenos 1984 press release, undated (circa summer 1984), *Cerberus*, vol. 28.

40. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, May 7, 1978, *Cerberus*, vol. 25. Markopoulos also added that Rayi Spartias is rumored to be a site of buried treasure and was used as a secret headquarters by Theodoros Kolokotronis during his fight for Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century.

41. See P. Adams Sitney, *The Cinema of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 221.

42. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2003), 39.

43. Gregory Markopoulos, Temenos 1986 press release, August 6, 1986, *Cerberus*, vol. 29.

44. Gregory Markopoulos, "Proposal to the Architect of the Temenos," March 17, 1984, *Cerberus*, vol. 28.

45. Gregory Markopoulos to Dakis Joannou, January 7, 1987, *Cerberus*, vol. 29.

46. Gregory Markopoulos to Constantine A. Antonopoulos, June 23, 1987, *Cerberus*, vol. 29.

47. P. Adams Sitney's speculation that the Temenos developed in dialectical opposition to Anthology Film Archives in this regard is particularly apposite. See Sitney, *The Cinema of Poetry*, 218.

48. Tony Pipolo, "An Interview with Robert Beavers," *Millennium Film Journal* 32–33 (Fall 1998): 33.

49. David Ehrenstein, "The Markopoulos Affair," *Film Comment* 29, no. 4 (1993): 59, 62.

50. Rutkoff, "Chaos Phaos."

51. For detailed textual analyses of *Eniaios*, see Sitney, *The Cinema of Poetry*, 215–49; and Richard Suchenski, "Utopian Romanticism and the Poetics of Scale: Modernist Explorations of the Cinematic Long Form" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012), 134–88. In line with the subject of this book my focus here will be largely restricted to questions of circulation and the cycle's position in relation to the concept of the Temenos.

52. Gregory Markopoulos to Robert Freeman, August 7, 1974, *Cerberus*, vol. 23.

53. Gregory Markopoulos, "For the Purpose," September 23, 1989, *Cerberus*, vol. 23.

54.   Vilém Flusser, "Images in the New Media," in *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 70.

55.   Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words of the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 11.

56.   Despite this intention the confinement of *Eniaios* to the Temenos is not absolute; Beavers has authorized a handful of screenings of sections of the work in other institutional locations, including the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Museum of the Moving Image, both located in New York.

57.   This assumes that roughly ten hours will be screened over the course of the three days, as has been the case at the post-2004 screenings thus far.

58.   Lucy Reynolds, "Wayward Canyons and Sacred Spaces: New Forms of Cinephilia in Artists' Moving Image," *Millennium Film Journal* 59 (Spring 2014): 75.

59.   Gregory Markopoulos, *Boustrophedon* (Rome: Temenos, 1977), 42–43; repr. in Webber, *Film as Film*, 58.

## 8. Transmission, from the Movie-Drome to Vdrome

1.   Stan VanDerBeek, "'Culture: Intercom' and Expanded Cinema: A Proposal and Manifesto," *Film Culture* 40 (Spring 1966): 16.

2.   On this concept see Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 76–79.

3.   VanDerBeek, "'Culture: Intercom' and Expanded Cinema," 17.

4.   Bertolt Brecht, "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication," trans. John Willet, in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 53–55.

5.   For an overview of American artists' engagements with television from the late 1960s to the 1980s see Kathy Rae Huffman, "Video Art: What's TV Got to Do with It?" in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. David Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York and San Francisco: Aperture and Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), 81–90.

6.   Val Adams, "Where Old TV Films Come From: Prices for Yesterday's Pictures Cover Wide Range," *New York Times*, June 11, 1950, 105.

7.   Harald Szeemann, "Zur Ausstellung," in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (Berne: Kunsthalle Berne, 1969), n.p.

8.   David Antin, "Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium," in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 149. Antin's text was first published in *Artforum* in December 1975 as "Television: Video's Frightful Parent."

9.   Gerry Schum, "TV Project Fernsehgalerie, Television Exhibition II: ARTSCAPES," *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, videogalerie schum*, ed. Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, and Ursula Wevers (Ghent and Düsseldorf: Snoeck and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004), 149.

10.   Scott MacDonald, *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary: The Cambridge Turn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 87.

11.   For a thorough examination of *The Eleventh Hour* see Hannah Andrews, "On the Grey Box: Broadcasting Experimental Film and Video on Channel 4's *The Eleventh Hour*," *Visual Culture in Britain* 12, no. 2 (2011): 203–18.

12.   Rod Stoneman, "Sins of Commission," *Screen* 33, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 140.

13.   Ibid., 127.

14.   "Midnight Underground Film Club," July 7, 1993, internal planning document. *Midnight Underground* file, British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection, Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design, London.

15.   Ursula Wevers, "The Television Gallery and How It Failed," in *Gerry Schum* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1979), 78.

16.  David Curtis, "Midnight Underground: Notes Toward a Rationale," n.p., *Midnight Underground* file, British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection, Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design, London.

17.  It is worth noting that 99.4 percent of the UK population had access to Channel 4 by 1988. United Kingdom Independent Television Commission notes, "Channel 4," June 2003, www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/itc_publications/itc_notes/view_note79.html.

18.  Rachel Keene, "Welcome to the Dark Side of the Screen: *Midnight Underground* and Channel 4's Funding of Experimental Film and Video in The 1990s," paper presented at a meeting of the Southern Broadcasting History Group, University of Portsmouth, April 2012, http://media.bufvc.ac.uk/c4pp/extras/conferences_papers/papers_pdf/SBHG_Keene.pdf.

19.  Michael Zryd, "Avant-Garde Films: Teaching *Wavelength,*" *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 1 (2007): 110.

20.  Les Brown, "Are the Networks Dinosaurs?" *Channels,* June-July 1982, 26–29.

21.  Prior to this time Channel 4's advertising was sold by ITV. Channel 4 received a fixed amount of revenue from this sale, reducing the network's dependence on large audience numbers.

22.  John Wyver, "TV Against TV: Video Art on Television," in *Film and Video Art,* ed. Stuart Comer (London: Tate, 2009), 124.

23.  The 1997 season featured all new work rather than the historical selections of 1993.

24.  Maeve Connolly, *TV Museum: Contemporary Art and the Age of Television* (Bristol: Intellect, 2014), 16–17.

25.  Filipa Ramos, interview by the author, August 1, 2014.

26.  Andrea Lissoni, interview by the author, August 1, 2014.

27.  Ramos, interview.

28.  Ben Rivers, email correspondence with the author, August 12, 2014.

29.  Between February 16, 2013, and June 10, 2015, there were 45,883 US-based visitors to the site and 21,219 US-based plays. Statistic courtesy of Filipa Ramos.

30.  Steve Carroll, email correspondence with the author, June 28, 2015.

31.  Kaleidoscope Videoclub, "About," http://kaleidoscope.media/videoclub/about/.

32.  *Land Art* was included in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, and in *Information* (1970) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Identifications* was shown as an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1973. Both broadcasts were included in Sonsbeek '71 (1971) and the seventh Paris Biennial (1971).

33.  These were withdrawn from sale in 1971 since video versions had not been authorized by the artists and gallerists involved.

34.  For instance, Gilbert and George's *The Nature of Our Looking* (1970) and Joseph Beuys's *Filz–TV* (1970) were issued as limited editions.

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