Chapter 1 – Architectures of Exhibition

Ephémère cinéma, avide d’éternité.
– Dominique Païni

Upon entering Hitchcock et l’art: coïncidences fatales (Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences), the museum visitor encountered twenty-one columns, each presenting a spotlighted vitrine containing a single object resting on red satin. The exhibition, held in 2000-2001 and curated by Guy Cogeval and Dominique Païni for the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Musée des beaux arts, Montréal, showcased the Unica key from Notorious (1946), the bread knife from Blackmail (1929), the lighter from Strangers on a Train (1951), the yellow handbag from Marnie (1964), and other famous Hitchcockian objects. The objects were, as one critic would have it, “gathered together as if for an occult mass.”  

Bernard Hermann’s scores echoed throughout the room so as to augment the air of eerie ethereality accorded to these now auratic objects, so many relics salvaged from the process of filmmaking. Exalted and fetishized, the props were imported into the museum as cultural artifacts of an age past.

Paul Willemen has noted that there is an element of necrophilia present in cinephilia, relating as it does to a particular detail or moment (or, in this case, an object) from a film that is highly cathected and that lives on after the film’s viewing. It is, Willemen notes, “something that is dead, past, but alive in memory.” The twenty-one columns of Hitchcock et l’art functioned as a spatial staging of this blending of desire and mortification, as the “occult mass” of objects in Hitchcock et l’art might just as easily be a funeral mass. The institutional frame of the museum conferred upon these objects the status of senescent artifacts that live on past the films from which they stem. While this cine-necrophilic strategy was represented most forcefully in the room of totem objects, it was operative throughout the exhibition. Cogeval and Païni assembled some three hundred storyboards, props, posters, and production stills, as well as forty clips from Hitchcock’s films, all of which entered the museum as magical fragments, endowed with life and importance due to their status as relics of a Hitchcock production.

The catalogue of *Hitchcock et l’art: coïncidences fatales* specifies that the exhibition made use of three approaches to put forth its interpretation of the filmmaker. The first was documentary, explored through the display of costumes, props, storyboards, and other paraphernalia relating to the production of Hitchcock’s films. The second “invited the visitor of the exhibition to physically relive the internal atmosphere of the films,” something accomplished by grouping the material into evocative thematic clusters such as “Desire and the Double,” “Women,” “Forms, Rhythms,” and “Terrors,” as well as playing soundtrack music from the films throughout the exhibition and reconstructing sets from *Psycho* (1960, the shower) and *The Birds* (1963, the jungle gym). And last of all, the exhibition ventured certain hypotheses concerning influence and aesthetic heritage, forging links between Hitchcock and the Pre-Raphaelites, Weimar Expressionism, Surrealism, and other artistic movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One found correspondences drawn between a publicity still of Tippi Hedren for *The Birds* and Magritte’s *Les eaux profondes* (1941), or between Kim Novak in San Francisco Bay in *Vertigo* (1958) and both Willy Schlobach’s *La morte* (1890) and John Everett Millais’ *Ophelia* (1850-1851).

In the introduction to the exhibition, Païni outlined the curators’ goal: “This exhibition is not meant to be a demonstration or a succession of comparative proofs... It is meant to be a reading, an interpretation...” In short, what was at
stake was less a definitive statement on the director than the self-conscious production of yet another Hitchcock, this one a “Hitchcock of art.”

For Pâni in particular, who organized a similar exhibition about Jean Cocteau (Jean Cocteau: Sur le fils du siècle, Centre Pompidou, 2003), Hitchcock et l’art is a central node within a larger undertaking that locates a contemporary cinemphilia firmly within the museum walls, asserting that space as a site for the monumentalization of film history. At play is a work of valorization that emerges as a present-day parallel to the efforts of the Cahiers du cinéma group in the 1950s to take Hitchcock seriously. Now that his status as auteur has been firmly canonized and this method of approaching films has become second nature in both the academy and popular culture, it is onto the work of establishing him as an artist on par with the best-known painters of the century. This emerges as an effort to counter the ways in which digitization has banalized cinema, broken it down into pieces and destroyed the rituals attached to its exhibition. Just as the insistence on authorship at Cahiers in the 1950s involved not only individual figures such as Hitchcock and Hawks, but also a larger argument about the cultural status of cinema, so too does Hitchcock et l’art make a claim for new conception of the institution through the conduit of Hitchcock.

Describing the hall of objects in the exhibition, Laura Mulvey writes that, “The brilliance of the display was to create the ultimate tribute to, and exposure of, the fetishistic power of the cinema.” And yet, with striking emotion for a theorist who once called for a destruction of cinema’s visual pleasure, she adds, “[E]ven through tears, it was impossible not to remember that nothing looks better than when made from light and shade.”

Mulvey’s description suggests that she was simultaneously moved and dissatisfied by the exhibition. This set of emotions highlights the ways in which the museum has become a space to memorialize cinema but does so at a certain remove from the films themselves, often parceling them out into fragments or representing them via a series of metonymic substitutes. There are myriad tributes and excerpts, but generally speaking – exceptions will be encountered later in this chapter – the museum space is not the location of start-to-finish screenings and nor is it suited to be, with its visitors strolling through its halls at their own pace. The totems of Hitchcock et l’art can never fully stand in for the films from which they stem, but like true fetishes, they compensate for an absence that they in fact reveal through their overperformance of presence.

Hitchcock et l’art is far from the only recent cameo the master of suspense has made within the space of the museum. Whether it is in Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945 (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), Spellbound (Hayward Gallery, 1996), or Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art (Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1999), Hitchcock has become something of an artistic and curatorial obsession.

Exhibitions of this variety come to prominence con-
temporarily with the cinema’s 1995 centennial and must be understood as both participating in and responding to a perceived crisis of the cinematic institution at this time. Passing over into the space of the museum, the cinema becomes an old medium fit for commemoration. And yet, as Mulvey’s tearful dissatisfaction suggests, how laudatory is this commemoration when it takes place through fragmentation and displacement? Hitchcock et l’art appears at first to have little in common with an exhibition like Notorious: Hitchcock and Contemporary Art, which showcased contemporary artists’ engagements with Hitchcock. The former imagines a museum of cinema, while the latter elaborates the cinema of the museum forged by artists such as Douglas Gordon and Stan Douglas. Both, however, share in the transportation of Hitchcock’s films into a new institutional space, the art gallery, and both engage in strategies of fetishization and commemoration that take place through a dismantling of the plenitude of the original film.

The fascination with Hitchcock in the art of the last two decades is evidence of the extent to which this period has witnessed museums embrace cinema like never before. Exhibitions taking cinema as their theme have proliferated and works originally made for the movie theater have been exhibited in galleries. A pressing set of questions emerges from such developments: what precisely is at stake in the contemporary integration of cinema into the museum and in claiming the museum as a space in which to interrogate and exhibit film history? If cinema enters the museum as a respite from the banalization and fragmentation it encounters in a digitizing mass culture, what is one to make of the fact that these are precisely the processes it often encounters within the museum as well? How does this integration produce a new conception of cinema? And how do the specific characteristics of the gallery space change cinematic spectatorship and open a space for a new kind of moving image practice? This chapter will take up these questions by examining the institutional and curatorial strategies of exhibiting cinema within the spaces of art from 1990 onwards. It will probe what is at stake in this cinematic migration from movie theater to gallery, unfolding the issues that arise from the placement of the mass cultural medium of the cinema within a space Brian O’Doherty defines as “expensive” and relying on an “eternity of display” that values timelessness.\textsuperscript{10}

The movie theater and the museum are historically distinct spaces with distinct determinations. Each possesses an architectural, cultural, and ideological specificity that now confronts and mingles with the other. Today, as Francesco Casetti suggests, the question must be not only the Bazinian “What is cinema?” but also the radically anti-essentialist “Where is cinema?”\textsuperscript{11} The cinema has migrated to numerous new exhibition situations, changing these sites by its presence and being changed by them in turn. While discussions of the analogue/digital transition are certainly important in this moment of technological
change, it is imperative to also take account of the increasingly numerous locations of cinema alongside the numerical basis of its new images. Even if the answer to the question “Where is cinema?” is a quick “Everywhere!” the inquiry cannot stop there. While one can speak of a generalization of cinema, its dispersal across various platforms, one must take care to interrogate the multiple specificities of this scattered cinema and question the ramifications of each component of it. Tom Gunning has written that there has been an unfortunate tendency to veer away from “any investigation into the diverse nature of media for fear of being accused of promoting an idealist project.” The challenge, then, is to account for the aggregate nature of media while resisting the lure of idealism by always maintaining an attention to the historical and material specificities of the formations under discussion. Cinema may be everywhere, but everywhere it does not remain the same.

When the movies leave the movie theater and enter the museum, they take up a paradoxical position: they are at once old, supposedly “rescued” from commercial exploitation by their entry into the gallery, and also new, transforming a space that has until recently shut out both technology and mass culture. Cinema appears as an outmoded image-regime in desperate need of the shelter provided by the gallery walls. And yet, the recent predilection for large-scale projected images is an important component of an increasing spectacularization of the museum space. To what extent can the gallery be said to “save” cinema, when the most frequent method of showing films made for the movie theater within the gallery space is in the form of short excerpts installed before a viewer who strolls past? How can the white cube be a site of sanctuary from the determinations of the market when its supposed exclusion from such a realm is more mythic than actual? Dominique Païni has suggested that ephemeral cinema is eager for the eternity that a residence within the space of museum might provide for it. One witnesses this phenomenon in the proliferation of cinema-themed exhibitions and in the memorialization of film history that has occurred with vigor in the last two decades. But this is only half of the story. Cinema may be eager for eternity, but art is just as eager for the entertainment and mass accessibility cinema can provide. Within the rhetoric of the gallery “saving” cinema from obsolescence lays another set of concerns, concerns that are linked to the status of the institutions of art at the beginning of the twenty-first century as yet another branch of the culture industries. As such, it is necessary to interrogate how the ideology of the timeless white cube persists while also giving way to another conception of the museum as a technologized space of spectacle.
The Passages of Cinema

Today, the movies have largely left the movie theater and have scattered all across the cultural field. The prevalence of discussions of digital convergence has led to a marked anxiety over the fate of cinema in such an environment, as well as interrogations into how art might best keep pace with the increasing mediatization of everyday life. This triangulation of art, cinema, and the impact of new media was critically interrogated in the important 1990 exhibition, Passages de l’image. Curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David, and Christine van Assche for the Centre Georges Pompidou, this exhibition announced a watershed in the display of moving images within the gallery. According to its organizers, the exhibition “respond[ed] to the desire to understand what started happening in and among images when it became clear that we could no longer simply speak of the cinema, photography, and painting, since we had reached a point of no return in a crisis of the image, when the very nature of images was brought into question.”

The exhibition undertook a rigorous inquiry into the fate of specific image-regimes at a moment marked by technological convergence and a renegotiation of the museum space after modernism. Closely linked to Bellour’s theoretical concept of the entre-image or “between image,” the exhibition interrogated the hybrid and intermedial forms arising from the “crisis of the image” brought about by the increased presence of video and digital images throughout the 1980s. The exhibition brought cinema, photography, video, and digital media into conversation with one another in a manner that mapped out their mutual contamination and their respective specificities.

Passages de l’image demonstrated that, as Bellour has noted elsewhere, the advent of the digital image does not vitiate medium specificity. Rather, it suggests that “all old images should be interpreted anew on the basis of the enigma that these as yet doubtful images present to us.” Though the organizers admit that these metamorphoses of the image have been well underway since the advent of photography, they become particularly prevalent following the widespread dissemination of computer technologies. The exhibition presented an overview of how these “passages” between discrete media have been interrogated in cinema throughout the twentieth century and how they have now become de rigueur in the work of artists such as Dan Graham, Gary Hill, Thierry Kuntzel, Chris Marker, Michael Snow, Bill Viola, and Jeff Wall. Dan Graham’s Cinema (1981) was the earliest artwork included in the exhibition, with the rest produced between 1987 and 1990. Meanwhile, an accompanying film program included a diverse plethora of works stemming back to 1914. The thesis at work was that cinema – as a melting pot of image, sound, and text – has long negotiated the intermedial tensions that now face contemporary art and that
this very same cinema, which once existed at a remove from the traditional mediums of artistic practice, now increasingly finds itself a part of them.

By pairing vanguard contemporary art with a wide-ranging selection of films, the exhibition insisted on its ability to open up a critical space in which to reconsider the images of the past in a new light, maintaining an investment in history while welcoming the moving image into the gallery. It crossed high and low, seeing a popular film such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988) as having as much to offer to an inquiry into the status of the image as the unshakable austerity of *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955). *Passages de l’image* opened a problematic concerning the tension between the discrete medium and the tendency of both digitization and the increasing technologization of art production to lead to a disintegration of a given medium’s traditional boundaries. The “seventh art” had, in its youth, been at the vanguard of the assault against the value of uniqueness central to the work of art, but was now joining the ranks it once assailed as its conventional appearance was threatened by new media. In this sense, cinema stands poised between traditional artistic media and the informatic age of convergence with which *Passages de l’image* attempted to grapple. It is this unique position – newer than old media, but older than new media – that makes cinema the central focus of *Passages de l’image* and which might begin to account for the appeal it has had in art since 1990. It is a medium that has always espoused an aggregate condition that drew upon other media, high and low, thus providing a model for the new hybrid forms that result from the augmented influences from both mass culture and technology within the realm of fine art practice.\(^{18}\)

The exhibition also signaled that cinema was a loved entity in danger of disappearance. In his review of the exhibition, Antoine de Baecque concludes by taking note of the manner in which *Passages de l’image* was evidence of a transformation taking place in the conception of cinema: “A mystery constructs itself before our eyes: the gift of aura, a way, perhaps, of thinking about the museification of cinema.”\(^{19}\) Though cinema was once the primary agent in the liquidation of aura, for de Baecque, the advent of new technologies and the subsequent integration of film into the space of the museum have now endowed it with the special presence Benjamin once accorded to the unique work of art. In bringing together this becoming-precious of cinema with an acknowledgement of the increasing intermediality brought about by the digitization of images, *Passages de l’image* stands as an early and cogent articulation of the bivalent forces that would govern the relationship between cinema and the gallery in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium. It critically interrogates a double movement: on the one hand, cinema’s integration into the white cube imparts a value of veneration to an endangered institution, commemorating this entity with a palpable nostalgia that might bestow upon it the “gift of aura”; but on the other
hand, the cinema enters the gallery on the horizon of a centripetal motion of convergence that pulls technology, mass media, and art together and into the great mélange of contemporary visual culture.

**Projection and Patrimony**

In the years following *Passages de l’image*, the dispersal of cinema interrogated in the exhibition continued unabated. The existence of Bellour’s *entre-images* was greatly exacerbated when, in the early 1990s, technological innovations in video projection made the technique increasingly attractive for both artists and institutions. These projections were distinctly intermedial, summoning mural painting and billboard advertising, but invoking the cinema most of all. Though John Belton has called digital projection in mainstream theatrical presentation a “false revolution” because it offers “something that is potentially equivalent to the projection of traditional 35mm film,” the widespread adoption of video projection (whether using analogue cathode ray tube projectors or digital liquid crystal diode projectors) in the early 1990s forever changed the possibilities of moving image art.

Video projection technology in fact predates video recording technology and had been employed in isolated cases in the 1960s and 1970s, notably by artists such as Peter Campus and Keith Sonnier. This new medium, however, failed to achieve prevalence prior to the early 1990s. This was due in part to its bulkiness, high cost, unreliability, and low image quality, but crucially, was also due to projection’s tendency to distance the video from its grounding in television and the work of pioneers, like Wolf Vostell and Nam June Paik, who had engaged with the monitor as a sculptural form. For many early video artists, the close link to broadcast media provided video with one of its *raisons d’être*: to contest the monoculture of television through its own means. Even the title of the first major exhibition of video art in the United States – *TV as a Creative Medium*, held at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1971 – speaks to this palpable desire. By the late 1980s, though, video’s attachment to television began to shift. Amidst the increasing popularity of installation art, it began to pull away from the monitor and pursue spatial arrangements with a greater fervor. Particularly evocative of this moment is Gary Hill’s *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* (1991): the artist dismantles the monitor and enlarges the scale of the artwork, while television goes unnamed as a “hard place” and cinema becomes an important reference.
The embrace of video projection is a key factor in the institutional endorsement of the moving image that occurred at this time, a phenomenon exemplified by Documenta 9, in 1992. Curated by Jan Hoet, the exhibition was the biggest, most expensive, and best attended Documenta since 1959. It attracted 609,235 visitors and had a budget of an estimated 19.5 million deutsche marks (about $12.5 million in 1992). The reception of the exhibition was mixed at best: critics called it a “circus,” said it was full of “moody hysterics,” and proclaimed that “more than three-quarters of the work [was] either so-so or downright awful.” Whether the exhibition was good or bad, one thing was certain: installation art—and video installation in particular—played a central role. Bill Viola’s The Arc of Ascent, Bruce Nauman’s Anthro/Socio (Rinde Spinning), Gary Hill’s Tall Ships, and Stan Douglas’ Hors Champs (all 1992) were four of the key installations on display. This was not the first time any of these artists had worked with projection: Viola, Hill, and Nauman had used video projection.
before, while Douglas had used 16mm. But the critical mass of exhibiting them all together in such a high profile venue signaled a significant shift. One critic remarked that “There was a time when the exploration of new technologies led to all kinds of creations that were more or less disorganized and uncertain; all that is finished today.”

Barbara London, a video curator at MoMA, wrote in 1995 that Documenta 9 was a turning point that provided evidence of “the maturity [of] video as an art form.”

Gary Hill had a slightly different take on things: “Last year at Documenta,” he said in 1993, “there were a number of media works, and you could hear critics, curators, museum directors, etc. saying something to the effect of ‘video has finally come of age.’ You just felt like saying, ‘no, video has not finally come of age, you have finally come of age.’”

And yet, a significant change was occurring: the dominant form of presentation was shifting from the monitor to the projector and, as this happened, institutions took increasing interest.
Video’s turn toward a mode of presentation historically aligned with cinema occurred precisely as the latter’s status as a bad object began to wane. As the 1995 centennial approached and cinema’s hegemonic position as cultural dominant was increasingly compromised, a growing chorus of critics, filmmakers, artists, and scholars would sing a requiem for it as loved and lost. It is worth noting that Dominique Païni chooses 1990 as the date that marks the passage of cinema into a new realm, that of patrimony: “Since 1990, after having been the curiosity of the century, the leisure of the century, the art of the century, the culture of the century, cinema becomes the patrimony of the century. Each film is now also a document, testimony, trace, memory.” 

Païni summarizes the implications of this shift quite simply: “This last mutation is one from industry to art.” Mainstream narrative cinema continues to traffic in celebrity and mass culture, but in the meantime, another conception of cinema, one that would be incessantly emphasized by contemporary artists and curators (to say nothing of academic film studies), has arisen. After 1990, the dispersion of cinema throughout culture in general, which Paini sees as taking place from 1968 onwards, dialectically reverses to give way to the rarefaction of cinema that had always existed within it, leading to an interest in its history and its specificity. Spread too thin over the entire cultural field, a more restricted notion of cinema appears. It is a cinema in danger of disappearance, one that spawns rearguard efforts to both remember it and to reassemble it.

Throughout the 1990s, no doubt spurred on the introduction of the DVD in 1995 and the rise of the Internet, this conception of cinema becomes increasingly prevalent. In need of preservation, the sites of this patrimonial cinema become the museum and the cinémathèque more than the commercial movie theater or even the home viewing console. And once inside those walls, Paini writes, “the institution of the museum creates artistic value by imposing the value of agedness and the value of exhibition.” Amidst fears of disappearance, the increased presence of cinema within the gallery can be seen as an attempt to take sanctuary within the privileged and relatively autonomous zone of art. This architectural displacement allows for a kind of retrospective inquiry to emerge, whereby one constantly confronts the question, “What was cinema?” Cinema’s loss of dominance in some ways becomes its gain: within the sphere of contemporary art, a space is opened for a kind of moving image practice that would reflect on the historical institution of cinema, interrogate its present condition, and possibly open pathways into the future. Disregarding the fact that cinema continues to be many things to many people – box office revenues in the United States exceeded $10 billion in 2009 – this strand of artistic and curatorial practice puts forth the space of the gallery as a tomb that would house and embalm a moribund cinema. This can take place in at least two primary ways: first, the gallery can serve as an exhibition venue for the historical products of the cinema,
as exemplified in this chapter’s opening example of the *Hitchcock et l’art* exhibition; and second, it can provide a site for the exhibition of a new cinema that is “purged” or “cleansed” of its associations with the vulgarity of mass culture, a cinema of the museum to be made by artists, one that will be discussed in the that chapters that follow.

While the first is closely aligned with Païni’s notion of cinema attaining a patrimonial value, the second is linked to what Raymond Bellour has termed “saving the image.” Bellour uses this term to designate an operation that might most productively be thought as an attempt to redeem or rescue the image from the vulgarization and profanation it has undergone in the era of mass media proliferation through gallery-based production that would rehabilitate qualities of contemplation and substance. According to this premise, the gallery might become the site of a new kind of cinematic production that would carry on the cinema’s thwarted goals, conserving its mandate if not the specific products of its history. Of course, Bellour’s position rests on a very particular understanding of cinema’s mandate, one that writes out its relation to mass culture in favor of a purified, quasi-autonomous art form. Bellour describes the notion as “the fiction of a cinema saving itself as much as escaping itself, thanks to the metamorphoses to which it is submitted.” Cinematography is able to pursue its goals only through a transubstantiation: through a kind of benediction, profane cinema may be made sacred by its entry into the museum and gallery. Bellour implies that the domain of cinema proper is now beyond hope, lost forever to the vapid spectacle of Hollywood’s media-industrial complex. In its place, the spaces of art will fulfill the lost vocation of the movie theater.

In a similar vein, Thomas Elsaesser has suggested reversing André Bazin’s suggestion that the cinema saved painting by liberating it from its obsession with producing likeness to ask if another art might now be in the process of saving cinema. Discussing Peter Greenaway’s installation work, he writes that the artist is “purging cinema, by confronting it both with itself and its ‘others,’ recalling or insisting on a few conceptual features, in an attempt to rescue it from its self-oblivion by theatrically staging it across painting, sculpture, music, drama, and architecture.” By “purging cinema” of its undesirable attributes, no doubt allied to a vulgar commercialism, and marrying it with high-culture others in order to rescue it, Elsaesser’s understanding of Greenaway recalls Bellour’s notion of “saving the image,” as well as his concept of the *entre-image*, which produces a nonessentialist conception of medium specificity through an engagement with hybrid forms.

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

Black Box/White Cube

The movie theater is a mass cultural space of boisterous entertainment and clandestine eroticism. The anonymous relationality, the darkness, the giganticism of the screen, the imperceptible rhythms of the flicker emanating from the projector – all these elements serve to buttress the powers of the film itself, consolidating the spectator’s attentive fascination and engrossment. The protocols of the gallery space are strikingly different. The light level is higher and the visitor wanders at will, perhaps speaking to a companion. The activity is endowed with a sense of cultural respectability, even erudition, and tends to lack the absorptive capacity of the cinema. The architectural form of the white cube, popularized in the 1920s, is inextricably tied to the ideology of modernism and the desire for an artistic autonomy free of the contaminating tentacles of a mass culture seen as governed primarily by market imperatives. Brian O’Doherty refers to this pristine space as a “survival compound,” suggesting the strictly policed borders it enacts between its inside (the autonomous work of art) and what is outside (the world), while Douglas Crimp has written that, “...the modern epistemology of art is a function of art’s seclusion in the museum, where art was made to appear autonomous, alienated, something apart, referring only to its own internal history and dynamics.”35 The display of art objects within such a setting endows them with an autonomous presence that seems to emanate from within but is in fact a matter of institutional framing. This erasure of historical contingency in favor of the appearance of essence and eternity has a name: myth. Well-spaced and well-lit in an architecture where “[s]ome of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of
esthetics,” the object found within the art gallery is framed by the space around it in such a manner as to radically change the meanings attached to it.\textsuperscript{36}

Accordingly, the exhibition space must not be seen as a mere container, but as a meta-medium to be investigated. It is the means by which art is made visible and knowable to those who consume it. It transmits individual works of art, but also much more: it activates relations between works and endows them with cultural value, it conveys institutional discourses, and it produces a viewing subject. The gallery does not simply serve as a neutral, protective container for the moving image, but produces a new cinematic \textit{dispositif} through its particular discursive and institutional framing and the various practices associated with it. Subject to the ideological determinations of the gallery space, a notion of the history of cinema as possessing a surplus cultural capital comes into visibility. De Baecque calls it “the gift of aura”; Païni names it patrimonial value. When the cinema risks being dissolved into the great data flows of the fiber optic age, it enters the gallery and the museum and takes on a patina of precious rarity.

Despite the prevalence of a commemorative attitude towards cinema, the tremendous institutional endorsement of the moving image that has occurred over the past two decades has not simply been a matter of benevolent concern for an aging medium. Rather, the gallery occupies a paradoxical position: it is the “security compound” that might best “save” cinema by memorializing the products of its history and/or by sponsoring its new, high culture variants. And yet, it is but another site to which the shattered cinema has travelled, participating in the dissolution of its specificity and trafficking in the same kind of profanation that it experiences so often in culture at large. When museums display the historical products of cinema, most of which were produced for exhibition in a movie theater, the very criticisms film purists level against the inferiority of the home-viewing experience often hold true: there is a frequent lack of material specificity, a preponderance of spectatorial inattention, a distortion of image scale, and unfavorable viewing conditions. But unlike the home-viewing industry, which at some level acknowledges its secondary status vis-à-vis theatrical exhibition, the museum has historically been the institutional space where one encounters original artworks in the best conditions possible. When a museum exhibits a digital clip of \textit{Psycho}, for example, it is betraying its historical mission and asserting new priorities. For an institution apparently entrusted with a mandate to safeguard cinema, more often one encounters a dilution based on principles of excerption, format shifting, and distracted spectatorship that speaks to concerns very other than providing shelter.

In his curatorial statement for the film program of Documenta 12 in 2007, Alexander Horwath wrote that all ninety-six films being exhibited would be shown in the movie theater rather than in the gallery spaces. One might think that such a choice would go without saying, but it is in fact a rather unusual
occurrence in a major international art exhibition. Of the movie theater, Howarth wrote, “This format and space are based on the physical and technical characteristics of the medium. They allow film to be perceived on a specific level of intensity to which it owes its historical success.”37 Horwath’s vehement opposition to exhibiting works made for the movie theater within the gallery is a minority position, at least within a contemporary art context. Today, it is an exceedingly common experience to walk into major art institutions and find digital copies of clips and short films playing on loop.

In Kerry Brougher’s Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945, held at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art in 1996, one encountered over two hundred cinema-themed works on display. These works spanned across media and included films by figures such as Luis Buñuel, Alfred Hitchcock, Peter Kubelka, Fritz Lang, Paul Sharits, and Orson Welles, shown on monitors primarily in the form of short excerpts. In an exhibition that purported to celebrate the role of cinema in postwar art, one might have expected the film image to be treated with a greater degree of respect. Even when film and video is the sole focus of the exhibition and works are shown on loop in their entirety, as was the case in the monographic exhibition Kenneth Anger at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, in 2009, too often the museum fails to provide a hospitable environment for sustained viewing. In Spring 2010, Béla Tarr’s seven-and-a-half hour Sátántangó (1994) was shown at the Galerie Andreas Huber in Vienna. Approving of the choice to exhibit the film in a gallery space, one critic wrote, “...[V]isitors could come and go as they pleased. There were no expectations to stay to the end, and walking out early wasn’t the insult it is at the cinema.”38 Such a flippant attitude regarding the exhibition of cinema is by no means atypical of art criticism. At best, such exhibitions expose works to new audiences and to new contexts of understanding. But at worst, they make choices that present the historical products of cinema under unfavorable circumstances, diluting their potency and misunderstanding their objectives. In their rush to adopt new ways to commemorate the cinema as old, museums and galleries have often neglected to consider that their actions may be inflicting more harm than good.

Perhaps the most monumental example of a lack of concern for the integrity of the work is to be found in the installation of Berlin Alexanderplatz (1980) curated by Klaus Biesenbach for Kunst-Werke and P.S.1 in 2007. Here, each episode of Fassbinder’s fourteen-part miniseries was installed in its own small room, facing onto a central courtyard familiar from the domestic architecture of Berlin’s Mitte neighborhood, where the miniseries takes place. As such, the visitor has a choice of strolling through this hinterhof to see all episodes projected at once, or to take a seat in one of the small rooms to watch an episode played on loop. While one admission to the exhibition was valid for as many return trips
as the visitor pleased, the likelihood of viewing the entire 894 minutes of the series is highly unlikely, to say the least, while sound bleeding from other projections made concentrated viewing difficult. Along with these episodes, the installation included an audio recording of Fassbinder speaking about the project, stills, preparatory sketches, and excerpted scenes displayed on video monitors in another room. Despite the reverential tenor of the exhibition, Biesenbach’s installation of BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ did more to dilute Fassbinder’s masterful epic narrative into a series of images to be consumed in a glance by a strolling gallery-goer than it contributed to a serious understanding of the work. At the risk of oversimplification, one might venture that BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ gains nothing from such an exhibition, while K-W and P.S.1 cash in on the legacy of Fassbinder and his much-acclaimed miniseries. Fidelity to the work takes backseat to considerations of how to make its presentation as eye grabbing as possible. The first step was to eliminate durational commitment; the second was to situate it within a lively mise-en-scène.

The New Blockbusters

The roots of an undertaking like the exhibition of Berlin Alexanderplatz go back to the 1970s and the emergence of what has become known, borrowing from the language of cinema, as the “blockbuster exhibition.” 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. In 1998’s Beyond the Brillo Box, Arthur Danto remarked upon the evolution of a new kind of museum that associates the consumption of art with that of food or the purchasing of souvenirs. Already in 1990, Rosalind Krauss predicted that this “late capitalist museum” will begin to have more in common with Disneyland than with its previous incarnation:

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

The breathtaking experience of large-scale video installations such as Matthew Barney’s Cremaster Cycle (1994-2002) cannot be far behind. In this new museum, the projected image provides a monumental, relatively cheap way of delivering exhibitions with vast appeal. It can fill the large, cavernous spaces of newly renovated museums and offer audiences an immersive experience.

Confined to a monitor, video could do nothing of the sort. The image on the monitor remains contained and possessable, of a manageable scale that neither overwhelms nor dwarfs. Even when marshalling forms of collective address, the monitor tends to be viewed by a single individual, or a few at best. Its history is one of private image consumption, often in a domestic setting, and it retains something of that context even when exhibited in public. It is of an obstinate materiality, a piece of furniture that remains distinct from the surrounding architecture. By contrast, the projected image is, quite simply, a public image. The word “projection” comes from the Latin proiectio, “to throw,” evoking the way in which the image thrown away from its source, past the spectator and beyond. The projected image escapes attempts at possession. It operates on a potentially massive scale that has historically been the domain of cinema. The image has the ability to meld seamlessly with the architecture that serves as its support, dissolving interior volumes and opening on to an illusory world. And crucially, it allows the video image to claim space within the gallery itself.
This kind of large-scale public image was particularly appealing to art institutions and major international exhibitions in the 1990s. Half of the 1,240 art museums in the United States were less than twenty-five years old in 1999, with many of them devoted purely to modern and contemporary art. The last quarter of the twentieth century saw the emergence of something of a museum industry, with a huge number of openings and expansions. Through the 1990s and into the 2000s, biennials, triennials, and quadrennials proliferated around the globe. Meanwhile, as Internet connections popped up in every home, visual culture was undergoing a shift the likes of which it had not experienced since the birth of cinema. Spectacular architectural commissions such as Frank Gehry’s Bilbao Guggenheim (a part of a veritable franchise) and the American Association of Museums’ think tank initiative, the Center for the Future of Museums, both testify in very different ways to the museum’s desire to (post)modernize and embrace the dynamism of the digital age. Cinema, once perceived as a disorganizing threat, could now be summoned to maintain relevance and accessibility, as its presence fulfills the new museum’s need for entertainment and exhilaration. Video art no longer had to be difficult or, for that matter, confined to a monitor. Instead, it would be cinematic: gigantic and (relatively) entertaining. The history of cinema – that of narrative and experimental film alike – could be ransacked to provide a vast array of cheaply available works that would deliver a maximum visual impact. Thus, the very possibility of cinema’s acceptance within this rarefied milieu depends on the very motions of cultural and technological convergence it resists when it purports to save cinema: namely, an increasing infiltration of art by mass culture, technology, and spectacle. An interesting relationship emerges: from the side of cinema, art proffers eternity but most often delivers fragmentation; from the side of art, cinema offers an upbeat contemporaneity that appeals to all.

The mobilization of the history of cinema as an instrument of mass appeal at the expense of the integrity of the individual work is evident in Le Mouvement des images, a thematically curated exhibition held in Paris at the Centre Georges Pompidou in the summer of 2006. The exhibition was a creative re-hang of the permanent collections of the Musée nationale d’art moderne. One reviewer called it “an ambitious cast of thousands extravaganza.” The exhibition took up cinema as a thematic framework through which to examine twentieth-century art, grouping its inquiry into four sections: unwinding, projection, narrative, and montage. The exhibition design focused on a central corridor of thirteen digital projections of works by Marcel Broodthaers, Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Bruce Nauman, and others, which confronted the viewer in rapid succession to produce a dazzling and disorienting experience. Philippe-Alain Michaud, the exhibition’s curator, justified the potentially distracted viewing the installation might elicit by invoking a resurrection of the
flâneur that he saw as disappearing with “the theatricalization of cinema”: “It suffices to pass in front of [these works] for a few moments...What we see in this biased way, in a manner very unconscious and fugitive, is different but not less interesting.”45 Some of these works were indeed videos made to be shown on loop in a gallery setting, but on monitors; many of them were made on celluloid for start-to-finish viewing. No attention was given to the change of format and/or exhibition situation, let alone the fact that the work was installed in a crowded manner in a transitory space.

Bruno Racine, president of the Pompidou from 2002 to 2007, wrote that the exhibition “offers a rereading of both twentieth century art and the art of today from the viewpoint of film; its self-appointed aim is to show how the ‘seventh art’ now irreversibly conditions our experience of both artworks and images.”46 Rather than conceiving of cinema as a historically specific set of institutions and practices to be investigated, here cinema is a heuristic used to look at a century of art, reduced to several transhistorical principles also found in other media. Alexander Horwath described the catalogue’s rhetoric as “send[ing] shivers down [his] spine” and stated that the exhibition is evidence that
this critical idea of exploding cinema or expanding cinema in the 1960s and 1970s has now turned into another connotation of the word “expansion.” Now it’s about expanding with cinema. By that, I mean museums and the museum structure using moving imagery as a part of their shopping mall.

No longer does one confront the singular image of the title of Passages de l’image, which maintained a concern for the specificity of a particular image regime in tension with the homogenizing thrusts of convergence. Now one confronts the plurality of images in movement. While such thematic curation can sometimes facilitate drawing interesting connections between dissimilar artworks, in Le Mouvement des images, the governing principle, patently suggested by the title, is one of nonspecific circulation, in which images travel with an ecstatic mobility that escapes any sense of historical determination.

Michaud has said that, “Today, the cinematic exceeds the dispositif of exhibiting images in projection rooms, which is a part of a theatrical heritage: it appears from now on as a manner of conceiving of and exhibiting images.” The sense of the “cinematic” – a rather curious adjective-turned-noun – put forth by this exhibition is something of a spectacular catchall, a purely idealist notion freed of historical and material determinations. It is meant to infuse the halls of the Pompidou with the excitement of a shopping arcade – or, in the words of Jean Baudrillard, a supermarket. When the Pompidou was opened in 1982, he named the transformation of public culture he was witnessing the “Beaubourg effect”: functioning according to a model of “cultural fission and political deterrence,” Baudrillard saw there “a supermarketing of culture which operates at the same level as the supermarketing of merchandise.”

Le Mouvement des images supremely fulfils this function, using cinema as its primary tactic.

To the credit of the Centre Pompidou, Le Mouvement des images did not constitute the institution’s sole engagement with the moving image in the summer of 2006. Overlapping with a portion of the exhibition was an installation that offered a diametrically opposed way of engaging with cinema in a museum context, Jean-Luc Godard’s Voyage(s) en utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: À la recherche d’un théorème perdu (Voyage(s) in Utopia, JLG, 1946-2006: In Search of a Lost Theorem). It is in a very different context that Serge Daney has spoken of “Godardian pedagogy,” but perhaps unsurprisingly, Godard has something to teach on this front as well. Though episodes of Godard’s monumental Histoire(s) du cinéma (1988-1998) had been installed at Documenta 10 (1997) and he had, with Anne-Marie Miéville, been commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art to produce a documentary about that institution entitled The Old Place (1998), this project marked the first time that the filmmaker produced a work expressly for an installation context. Godard had long interrogated the role of the museum, so it came as little surprise that the exhibition
took up the vicissitudes of cinema’s integration into such a space, standing as a foil to the many easy yet problematic transplantations of recent years.

Jean-Luc Godard, **Voyage(s) en utopie, JLG, 1946-2006: À la recherche d’un théorème perdu (2006).**

The exhibition stemmed from a project abandoned in February 2006, **Collage(s) de France, archéologie du cinéma d’après JLG,** which had itself been borne of the Collège de France’s rejection of Godard’s proposal to teach a seminar there according to the methodology of **Histoire(s).** A sign greeting the visitor at the entryway to the exhibition made this clear:

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

Rumor had it that Godard took to the sign with a permanent marker the day of the opening to put “technical and financial” *sous rature.* The numerous maquettes encountered alerted the viewer to the original objectives of Godard’s
“utopian travels,” giving a dollhouse hint of what the nine rooms of his exhibited archaeology of cinema might have looked like.\textsuperscript{53}

In place of this aborted exhibition, Godard made three rooms titled “Today,” “Yesterday,” and “The Day Before Yesterday” into something of a garbage dump of culture. The space looked as if it were still in the process of installation. Unused video monitors lay stacked in a corner, while elsewhere wires hung exposed and a clip of a “No Trespassing” sign from \textit{Citizen Kane} (1941) impeded the viewer from obtaining a clear view of a video screening behind a metal fence. The rooms were transformed into a sort of necropolis of cinema, with a proliferation of small, LCD screens showing Bresson, Ray, and Rossellini like so many gravestones. Stripped of its monumentality and place in the public sphere, the big screen appeared small scale, in an “exploded apartment” complete with an unmade bed.\textsuperscript{54} A small train shuttled between two spaces, making its way through a hole that seemed to have been haphazardly punched through the gallery wall. Was it a return to the playfulness of childhood, to the innocence of lost origins, to the 1895 screening of the Lumières? Did it look back at a mechanical age from the maelstrom of the electronic or reference the deportations and mass death of the last century?

Scale was a governing problem of the entire exhibition, recurring in the miniature maquettes, the tiny LCD screens, and the toy train. As an aberration of normal scale, the miniature is aligned with the interior, the possessable, and with a negation of the flux of time. As Susan Stewart has written, the miniature is “a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination.”\textsuperscript{55} While there is sense that the gigantic never fails to escape one’s grasp, thus linking it to the sublimity of expanses only partially apprehendable, the miniature reduces the normal scale of an object to something precious, knowable, and tamed. Throughout the exhibition, the multiple instances of miniaturization signalled the destruction of public culture in the name of private property and acquirable goods. The presence of the tiny screens of private digital image consumption reflected specifically on the current state of the cinema, but also served as a node within a larger set of concerns about the fate of the public sphere.

Perhaps what was most telling in this respect was the room entitled “Today”, into which the toy locomotive tellingly did not travel. The only room to contain no films by Godard, it was a space that entertained Ridley Scott’s \textit{Black Hawk Down} (2001) as a metonymic stand-in for the obscenity of Hollywood alongside pornography, simulcast television (ESPN and TF\textsubscript{1}), and clippings from interior design magazines in a makeshift kitchen. Described by James Quandt as a “domestic hell,” it was this space that most fiercely indicted the contemporary intersection of consumerism, the media, and neoliberal privatization.\textsuperscript{56} Here, the glittering surface of the commodity emitted a blinding glare that transformed
one’s perception of all objects it encountered. This, of course, included the histories of art and cinema, both of which were banished to the anterior rooms of “Yesterday” and “The Day Before Yesterday.” For Godard, the collective history that lies buried within them becomes impossible in the war, porn, and merchandise of “Today.”

Thus, the entirety of VOYAGE(s) EN UTOPIE was marked by the definitional tragedy of utopia: it can be no place, it is doomed to fail. However, the infamous difficulties involved in mounting the exhibition – including Godard’s reported refusal to speak to Païni, the exhibition’s commissioner – were not the only locus of failure in VOYAGE(s) EN UTOPIE. Antoine de Baecque made this clear in his review of the exhibition for Libération: “Godard’s exhibition is a catastrophe, but the artist is proud of it because this undoing [défaite] of art was at the very heart of his project.”

A podium discussion regarding the relationship between cinema and the museum at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 2007 took as its title the question, “Does the Museum Fail?” Here, Godard provided a firm answer: yes, it does, and how. For VOYAGE(s) was not a failed exhibition, but an exhibition about failure – about the failure of Godard’s COLLAGE(s) DE FRANCE concept, but also about the failure of the fine arts to adequately grapple with the cinema and all of its implications, and the failure of both of these entities in contemporary culture. The relationship figured here between cinema, mass culture, and the museum by no means fits with the notion that the gallery might shelter or “save” cinema. Rather, cinema and art appear as so much detritus of a fallen regime.

Godard firmly asserts the place of cinema amongst the fine arts – something the filmmaker has been intent on exploring through his entire career, from the presence of Élie Faure in the bathtub of PIERROT LE FOU (1965) through the tableaux of PASSION (1982) and beyond – not by advocating for its integration into the museum, but rather by situating both on the same debased plane. He patiently denies the white cube’s mythic timelessness, abiding instead by a statement he and Miéville made in THE OLD PLACE: “Art is not sheltered from time, it is the place where time resides.”

This is to refuse the spurious eternity conferred upon art by its institutional frame and instead to see it as constantly in dialogue with the contingencies of culture at large and as a privileged site where the movements of history become visible. It is this understanding of the relationship between art, cinema, the museum, and history that VOYAGE(s) EN UTOPIE took as its central concern.

Unlike BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ – AN EXHIBITION and LE MOUVEMENT DES IMAGES, which attempted to commemorate cinema and infuse it with a new life suited to the contemporary media environment, Godard exploited the gallery’s very inability to safeguard cinema. All the rhetoric of art’s ability to shelter cinema deflates here, as Godard emphasized that the crisis of the black box is equally
the crisis of the white cube – for both institutions are implicated in the predicament of what happens to the public culture of the twentieth century within the digital mobility of the twenty-first. Rejecting the notion of an “expensive” space of precious objects, Godard turned the halls of the Pompidou into a massive rubbish pile, with cinema and painting alike consigned to the heap. This suggests not only a profound cynicism concerning the contemporary status of the museum, but also a very different relationship between art and the moving image, one that proposes that the notion of the gallery as “saving” cinema is just another mystification of the echo chamber of the white cube – an institution that itself is in desperate need of help.

While certainly the spaces of art continue to cultivate the modernist values of autonomy, expense, and preciousness O’Doherty describes in Inside the White Cube, over the last two decades, the walls of the museum have been forced to become more permeable to grapple with the accelerated mobility of images and with the changing status of the institution in culture at large. Godard’s exhibition is both representative of this trend – that a major museum would invite a filmmaker to produce such an exhibition in the 1980s is virtually unthinkable – and also a response to some of the problems it poses. Godard’s transformation of the museum space into a theater of mass spectacle and consumption enacted on a hyperbolic level that institution’s contemporary crisis.

The Myth of Activity

Though the autonomy of the white cube may be mythic, myths endure. Throughout the critical literature concerning the subject position created by moving image installations, one frequently finds a comparison between the “passive” spectator of the movie theater and the “active” spectator of the gallery. The assumption here is that the movie theater constitutes a space of ideological regression, whilst the gallery is a clear-sighted realm exempt from such mystification. Cinematic spectatorship functions as a kind of straw man against which the inherent critical value of gallery spectatorship is asserted. The movie theater is a space of disciplinary confinement; the gallery is a space of freedom.

It is true that the film spectator sits immobile in the red velvet seat, whereas the gallery spectator wanders through space. And indeed, the notion that cinematic spectatorship is passive does have a significant place in the history of film theory. In the 1970s, figures such as Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry linked the darkness of the theater, the immobility of the spectator, and the hypertrophy of vision at the expense of decreased motor capacity to a regressive state that enables identificatory processes and sets up a transcendental subjec-
tion position, shot through with idealism. Without discounting the importance of such canonical accounts, it is necessary to acknowledge the great body of work that has taken place since the publication of these seminal texts, as well as the immense changes that have occurred within the institution of cinema.

In contemporary discourses concerning the status of the spectator of the moving image installation, the notion that the cinema spectator is passive while the gallery spectator is inherently active rests on a spurious mapping of passive/active binaries onto this architectural difference, as if to conflate physical stasis with regressive mystification and physical ambulation with criticality – a claim that holds true on neither end. The obsessive return to the denigration of the movie theater emerges as a tellingly symptomatic repression. The positing of a strict determinism between the architecture of exhibition and a critical spectator disallows any questioning into the ideological determinations of the gallery space since the gallery is de jure a space of demystification.

The oversimplified model of gallery spectatorship mythifies both cinematic spectatorship and the exercise of power into ahistorical constants, ignoring their status as historical contingencies that change over time. As Gilles Deleuze has shown, a system of control based in principles of mobility and circulation has superseded discipline and its reliance on confinement as the contemporary diagram of power. We have moved from a centralized exercise of power to a highly flexible and fragmented form of power linked to data flows and an abolition of interior/exterior distinctions. This diagram of power is marked by a generalized crisis in the enclosures that marked disciplinary power, and the museum is no exception: in recent decades the institution has become increasingly permeable and malleable in an effort to maintain relevance. It has begun to value flexibility and mobility rather than permanence and stasis. In this paradigm, to circulate and participate are by no means activities of resistance, but in fact precisely what is demanded of us in the experience economy.

How, then, might one conceive of the spectator of moving image installations, if not in opposition to the supposed passivity of the movie theater spectator? Giuliana Bruno has likened, rather than contrasted, the cinema and gallery spectators, suggesting that there is a “reversible process” at work between the two since both involve a “haptic path” undertaken by the spectator. Bruno is right to emphasize that there is a mobility, however figurative, associated with the film spectatorship, despite the physical stasis of its spectator. However, collapsing the “haptic path” of the film spectator with the literal perambulation of the gallery-goer fails to diagnose the fact that these modes of spectatorship produce markedly different experiences of spatiality, temporality, and the work of art itself. In *Le temps exposé*, Paini associates the roaming gallery viewer with the Baudelairean flâneur due to his or her desultory movement through space, an archetype that Michaud also embraces. In a footnote, Paini defines the verb flâ-
ner as: “walking without goal, by chance; using one’s time without profit according to Le Littré. Le Robert evokes abandonment to the sensation of the moment,” something that Païni notes is crucial to the experience of contemporary moving image installations.

Certainly, this is the principle at play amidst the forty screens of Kutluğ Ataman’s Küba (2005). The installation relies on the mobility of its viewer to weave together a complex fabric out of the many voices of residents of an area of southern Istanbul that serves as a refuge for a diverse group of people united only by their need and/or desire to live outside of state control to the greatest degree possible. Each screen displays an interview with a Küba resident, with a single armchair placed in front of it for the viewer to occupy. As the viewer moves through the space from interview to interview, armchair to armchair, he or she engages in an activity of mapping. This trajectory analogizes the work’s desire to chart a geography that the artist has described as less of an actual area and more a “state of mind – rebellious, lawless, cohesive.” Individual narratives are pieced together into a variable portrait that maintains a tension be-
tween the component parts that come together in the formation of collectivity. The work allows each spectator to construct his or her own trajectory at his or her own pace. The mobility of the viewer here allows for new temporalities and new forms of narrative that simply would not be possible within the traditional space of cinema.

This mobility, however, should by no means be conceived of as necessarily oppositional or as a mark of the spectator’s autonomy from structures of power. Kate Mondloch has rightly emphasized that in many video installations, “the active participation element of these works clearly constitutes a constricted request or demand,” something that may be aligned with a noncoercive power mechanism.67 Contrary to the productive wanderings of the spectator of Kūba, the movement of the gallery visitor can take him or her from one work to another to another to another in an endless parade of objects to be consumed. Particularly when images confront one another in a crowded array, such as in the central avenue of projections in Le Mouvement des images, they lose their status as distinct artworks and instead become ambient décor. The most that one can ask is to be allowed the time and space to engage in a sustained consideration of a work if one wishes, something that is not always possible when both artworks and people compete for space within the museum. The difference from the spectator of the movie theater is, then, far greater than a simple question of mobility versus stasis; in fact, what is at stake is the spectator’s relationship to time and attention.68 As Volker Pantenburg has noted, shifting the focus from mobility to attention allows the latter to come into focus as a key term for thinking through the conjunction of cinema and museum, one that is “positioned at the threshold between two economic fields: the economics of attention and the ‘real’ economics of money, real estate, and financial resources.”69

While Bellour agrees that subject position imagined by the moving image installation is very different than that of the classical cinema, he points out that Païni’s likening of this viewer to a flâneur is a weak comparison since “there would need to be a real crowd for that, and the street is not the Salon.” Bellour goes on to acknowledge the difficulty of conceptualizing this gallery-based spectator, stating, “As random and often uncertain as it is, in the situation of a semi-spectacle inferred by the museum, the work fixates that which one could call its visitor – but there is no right word with which to grasp this dissolved, fragmented, shaken, intermittent spectator.”70 Certainly, the spaces of contemporary art are far from the jostling crown of a modernizing metropolis. Nonetheless, Païni’s conception of the flâneur does hit on an essential aspect of the experience of viewing moving images in a gallery: a likeness to window-shopping. In the work of Baudelaire and Benjamin after him, the flâneur is aligned with strolling through the Paris arcades and experiencing the phantasmagoria of the modernizing city in an intoxicated haze. In the spaces of contemporary
art, images are offered up for passing consumption in a manner that mimics strolling through the arcades and gazing at merchandise.

Philippe-Alain Michaud valorized the experience of the *flâneur* in his discussion of the mode of spectatorship elicited by the central avenue of projections in *Le Mouvement des images*, when in fact this distracted viewing at times merely mimics the perceptual regime of mass culture. Like so many of Benjamin’s archetypes, *flâneurie* is marked by a profound ambivalence: on the one hand, “The idleness of the *flâneur* is a demonstration against the division of labour,” but, as Anne Friedberg has suggested, “The *flâneur* becomes an easy prototype for the consumer.” If one is to employ the archetype of the *flâneur* to understand the spectatorship of moving images in the gallery, it is necessary to keep in play the Janus face of the concept. It invokes both associations of spectatorial mobility and of the consumption of goods. This is not lost on Païni, who writes that, “Flânerie arises from this sort of deception in regard to images that simultaneously offer themselves up spectacularly while receding semantically, according to the model of objects of consumption in shop windows that attract aesthetically but economically remain unavailable.”

Bellour’s “intermittent spectator” flickers in and out of attention to these seductive images. At times, this distracted, mobile apprehension of images might allow the viewer to forge interesting connections, but at others it offers an experience of simple accumulation wherein eminently disposable moving images provide a kind of video wallpaper for a stroll through a technological wonderland. While the concept of the *flâneur* has been invoked so frequently and loosely within the discipline of film studies so as to render it little more than a petrified cliche, its affinities with commodification, spectacle, and the inattentive mobile consumption of images render it perhaps more apposite to the mobile spectator of the museum than it ever was to the immobile cinema spectator. But if it is to retain any heuristic value at all, it is imperative to keep in mind the fundamental ambivalence of the figure of the *flâneur* and to resist a simple equation of mobility with either criticality or freedom.

While some important accounts of film spectatorship have been deployed primarily at the level of the apparatus, it has historically been important to also interrogate how the formal construction of a work functions to secure a certain spectatorial position. In accounts that privilege the space of the gallery as necessarily guaranteeing a form of critical spectatorship, this creation of a spectatorial subject position through textual mechanisms is entirely neglected. When one compares the difference in the modes of spectatorship elicited by a classical Hollywood film such as *Gilda* (1946) and work like Nam Jun Paik’s *Zen for Film* (1962-1964), for example, one is comparing much more than the difference between a seated and a mobile spectator. Accounts of spectator positioning in classical Hollywood cinema, for example, have emphasized how devices such
as the shot/reverse shot or the eyeline match work to foster identification and create a stable and safe position for the spectator to occupy. While such structures occasionally find their way into moving image installations, it is clear that no such coherent formal system exists therein to be theorized after the manner of 1970s film theorists such as Laura Mulvey or Stephen Heath, a fact that surely contributes to Bellour’s characterization of this spectator as “dissolved, fragmented, shaken, intermittent.”

Nonetheless, one might suggest that instead of the techniques of suture found in classical Hollywood, certain moving image installations favor immersive spectacle, overwhelming the viewer through large-scale projections of a high sensory intensity – an argument that could also be made of the contemporary postclassical blockbuster. Artists such as Matthew Barney, Pipilotti Rist, and Bill Viola make use of extravagant visuals, high production values, and a maximalist aesthetic of visual hypersaturation and bombast that unsettlingly mirrors the spurious production of affect and sensation by the image commodities of advanced capitalism. Rather than luring the viewer into emotional identification and narrative absorption as a Steven Spielberg film might, they engage in the parade of surfaces proper to a perfume advertisement. To conclude, it is necessary to signal the important relationships between such works and a museum structure that is ever searching for exhibitions that will possess a wide appeal.

**Media at MoMA**

Though the Museum of Modern Art espouses notably conservative curatorial policies with regard to the display of moving images in its permanent collection exhibitions, since its foundation in 2006 under the curatorship of Klaus Biesenbach, the Department of Media and Performance has delivered large-scale spectacular commissions by Doug Aitken (*Sleepwalkers, 2007*) and Pipilotti Rist (*Pour Your Body Out [7352 Cubic Meters], 2008*) that meld MTV aesthetics with sensory intensity and broad appeal. Such prominent installations testify to the extent to which the moving image has been recruited as part of the ongoing becoming-entertainment of art that conceives of the museum-going experience as exhilarating, fun, and devoid of antagonism. Hal Foster has noted that the admirable “attempts to open up cultural history through old media” – something that will be explored extensively in the next chapter – have been “overwhelmed by the institutional attention given to ‘new media,’” in particular the “technophilic extravaganzas” of recent video installation. Foster is critical of the institutional endorsement of such works for their accessibility, entertainment value, and sensory rush. He decries the false immediacy achieved by
this variety of practice because it “aestheticizes, or ‘artifies,’ an already familiar experience – the mind-blowing intensities produced by media culture at large”; it engages in a kind of “cultic reenchantment” that mythologizes technology as spiritual experience.75 Despite their differences, Sleepwalkers and Pour Your Body Out both engage in a kind of euphoria of surfaces that Siegfried Kracauer saw as characterizing the Berlin picture palaces of the 1920s: “[t]hey raise distraction to the level of culture,” offering a panacea for lack that is “articulated only in terms of the same surface sphere that imposed the lack in the first place.”77 One of the primary mass cultural – and eminently ideological – functions of cinema here finds itself displaced and rearticulated in the twenty-first century museum with a startling lack of criticality.

Doug Aitken, Sleepwalkers (2007).

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

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

Much has been made of Aitken’s interest in fragmented, non-linear narrative: the artist has published a book of interviews entitled Broken Screen: 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative, in which he discusses his conviction that nonlinearity and fragmentation are “truer to reality,” closer to the “hurricane of modern life.” Meanwhile, curator Peter Eleey asserts that “the multipart configuration...of Sleepwalkers blows apart the one-point perspective automatically set up by the camera, along with its correlative relationship between vision and power, buttressing its democratic spirit.” However, as important recent scholarship has shown, the demolition of centralized power does not necessarily lead to democratization, for power continues to exist after decentralization, just in different configurations. Within the society of control, decentralization is the norm and the imperative is to be mobile, thus tempering any assertion that perambulation through multiscreen environments might constitute a democratic freedom. With regard to the subject position created by such a regime, Deleuze writes, “...the man of control is undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network.” How else to describe Aitken’s Sleepwalkers? For Deleuze and for many new media theorists writing in his wake, this is how power now operates, necessitating attempts to exploit the network’s weak nodes and agitate from within it. But when it comes to Sleepwalkers, one finds nothing of the sort; instead, the installation brings the viewer a jubilant celebration of the false freedoms of neoliberalism.

Sleepwalkers was the first major commission of the MoMA’s Department of Media. The exhibition’s press release made clear the extent to which increased accessibility was a major goal: “A project like this creates a very different dia-
logue with the public, who we hope will be inspired to think about art in relation to the city itself, and to the larger urban experience...SLEEPWALKERS will be easily accessible to a broad and diverse audience of New Yorkers and visitors to the city, who can engage directly with an artwork in a vital and unexpected context. View ing SLEEPWALKERS did not require museum admission, but essentially functioned as a video billboard advertisement for the MoMA, perhaps luring people who would not normally visit the museum back with the promise of more seductive images of the SLEEPWALKERS variety to be found on the inside, accessible for the twenty-dollar admission. With the phantasmagoria of Times Square less than ten blocks away, it is almost as if the MoMA decided to voluntarily participate in the city ordinance governing the zone immediately to its southwest: buildings must display illuminated commercial advertising.

Meanwhile, in the same press release, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg explicitly linked the installation to an expected increase in tourism revenue. With high production values and a large crew, such work lends to the museum space a much-desired injection of hip entertainment, of seductive, glittering image commodities for consumption. The work devastatingly fulfills Guy Debord’s definition of spectacle: “capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”

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

The sixteen-minute video loop engages cycles of fertility and decay through formal strategies of extreme magnification, colorization, and slow motion. The lava-lamp aesthetics of oozing hues are achieved by digitally enhanced color that endows the images with visual qualities of painting or animation; hardly out of place, for example, is a green strawberry with blue seeds floating in pink water. There are extreme close-ups on female body parts, fields of tulips, and flower petals stuffed up a woman’s nose; then earthworms, rotting fruit, bare
feet in close-up walking across dark, moist soil. A woman traipses across a field and bathes in a lake, sometimes exchanging positions with a warthog that follows the same path. The three projections can display three distinct images, sometimes two of them will mirror each other along a corner axis, and other times the three projections merge into one. They flow into one another and across the walls with a fluid continuity. Anders Guggisberg’s ambient indie rock soundtrack echoes through the space and bleeds into the surrounding galleries, with the ritornello of a hummed melody burrowing into one’s brain even after leaving the atrium.


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

Pour Your Body Out clearly points to the contemporary transformations of the museum, as the institution mutates from a graveyard repository of stodgy relics to a pulsing site of visceral intensity competing for tourist dollars. Rist, like Aitken, works on the very architecture of the museum space, dissolving its masses in an immersive experience that tenderly envelops the viewer. Critic Jerry Saltz’s enthusiastic review of the installation linked this transformation of the museum to gender. In an article entitled “MoMA’s Sex Change,” he writes, “The atrium of this bastion of masculinism becomes a womb, and the museum itself a woman. In an abstract way, Rist makes the institution ovulate... This is museum as hallucination, opium den, Lotus Land, cubbyhole, and pleasure dome. Call it Trance Central station.”88 Similarly, the New York Times noted that Pour Your Body Out was “arguably the first project to humanize – and feminize – the atrium.”89 These accounts attach a politics of gender to Rist’s intervention into the museum space and signal its departure from a conception of contemporary art as inaccessible to or aggressive towards the public and instead align it with a nurturing and caretaking femininity. Femininity is indeed a recurring concern throughout the artist’s work, but this so-called feminization of the museum in no way intervenes into the institution’s collections or its politics, it in no way confronts the gendering of art and/or the museum, nor does it understand sex and gender as discursive terrains inscribed with power relations.90

Instead, this techno-pastoral brings femininity back to a mute nature in a joyous exaltation of technologized perception that avoids any possibility of antagonism. Conflicts between subject, nature, and technology are sublated in a myth of togetherness and mutual enrichment. She is one with the changing of the seasons, the recurring cycles of renewal and rot. If Pour Your Body Out is to be conceived as a feminist intervention at all, it is a feminism already defeated by its disturbing anchorage in an extra-discursive conception of the body that equates woman with nature. As the cushy colors and squishy, magnified breasts come together to coat the white cube in washes of pink, one has to question if Pour Your Body Out is doing anything more than reinforcing the very binaries that have served to largely exclude women artists from institutions such as the MoMA in the first place, while simultaneously neutralizing any ability that space might have to offer an alternative to the image-saturation of mass culture by simply rendering it gigantic and by hyberbolizing it – and delighting in that hyperbole.
Dorothy Spears offers a position on the installation significantly different from that of Saltz:

The video-and-sound environments of Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist are easy on the eyes and ears – making them an excellent balm for today’s world-weary culture travelers. And if the same can be said for the lobby of a W Hotel or a Bliss spa, this is certainly no coincidence... Rist’s tantalizing installations speak the universal language of pleasure to an audience weaned on Ambien, electronic billboards and echoing, white-washed spaces.91

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

Sleepwalkers and Pour Your Body Out indicate the extent to which the contemporary integration of cinema into the museum must be seen not only as a matter of protecting or commemorating an endangered institution, but also of mobilizing its accessibility and entertainment values in order to attract audiences. Given such a state of affairs, it is important that one maintains a healthy scepticism about what Pantenburg has called “emancipation theories” of the spectatorial position put forth by new moving image installations.92 Such theories see components such as a mobile spectator and a multiplicity of viewpoints as inherently democratic, thus failing to recognize the redistribution of power in a contemporary society in which centralized disciplinary power is no longer the dominant diagram. They also overlook the ways in which the moving image has functioned as a central component of an increasing spectacularization of the museum space that brings it into a closer proximity to mass culture than ever before. Curator Roger Buergel has likened the administration of power in the gallery space to a Foucaultian concept of governmentality, wherein
the apparent permissiveness of neoliberalism masks power structures that are now internalized rather than forcibly administered through enclosure and segmentation, as they were within the regime of disciplinary power: “The ethical concept of redefining individual behaviour follows the ethics of neoliberal politics: individual choice, autonomous acting, governance of your own fate, self-initiative and self-determined living. The museum seems to be designed to provide this framework.” Buergel emphasizes that though the spectator may be “liberated” from the physical enclosure – such as that experienced in the movie theater – this is not an escape from power.

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

These actions are already underway. One can, for example, identify moving image work that embraces the antispectacular, cultivating an interest in the obsolete and discarded forms that constitute the dialectical other of capitalism’s focus on the incessant production of novelty. Artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, and Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij – all of whom will be discussed in the next chapter – fall under such a heading. Though they might seem to be diametrically opposed to spectacular culture, they in fact agitate from within it by mining its detritus. It is also possible to find instances in which artists embrace spectacle so as to turn against it, or at least ambivalently hold it up for view. In this vein, remaking old movies into new narratives in order to question the relationships between subjectivity and spectacular culture will be the focus of chapter three. While it is sure that there can be no outside, the need persists to find weak links in the network, or as Bernadette Corporation puts it in their video Be Corpse (2006), to look for “new energy coming from dead things.” This complicates an understanding of the deployment of the spectacular in art from an inherently negative force to a terrain to be negotiated from within. Though strikingly different, both of these tendencies are exemplary of
how cinema’s status as an old medium may be used to intervene in the problematic of spectacle and contemporary aesthetics.

But to conclude this examination of the “where” of cinema in contemporary art, it is perhaps most important to emphasize that the dispersion of cinema across the entire cultural field happens in an uneven and disjunctive manner, leading to the coexistence of incompatible postulates and unlikely bedfellows. Convergence is not a totalizing force. Instead, one witnesses an erratic flow that allows for the cinema to appear at once as an old medium in need of safekeeping and as a harbinger of mass culture within the museum. In both instances, it becomes clear that any understanding of the status of the image within the museum must be considered in tandem with the status of the image outside the museum. The scalar intensity of the projected image has forever transformed the white cube just as miniature screens proliferate in pockets and purses everywhere. Likewise, the walls of the white cube transform our understanding of the projected image, that entity which has long been a source of simultaneous fascination and superstition. Caught between old and new, senescence and spectacle – and thereby disrupting any understanding of media as a linear chronology of progress – cinema finds its place within contemporary art. Building from this framework, the following chapters will move to the level of individual artworks and aesthetic practices, examining how particular examples function within the institutional determinations outlined here – in some cases corroborating them, in others contesting them fiercely.