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Editors

Editorial

Much of the tension within the sphere of contemporary art is generated by the insularity of the art context, which often prompts artists to be on the lookout for other situations. The museum is too exclusive, the artwork overly framed, the discourse too removed from everyday life. And yet, attempts to liberate artworks from their conditioning often finds them still connected to the art context by a rigid tether. Boris Groys has suggested that in order for art to be shown in public spaces and still maintain its status as art, it must by necessity be more conservative than art shown within institutions, because by forsaking art's traditional context, it bears the burden of having to justify itself through other means.

So maybe this idea that art needs to be liberated from its own specificity should be flipped around: rather than thinking of art as a fixed space that should defer to the real world in order to realize its full potential, it can be important to remember that the real world, with its own models of production and consumption, is itself the fixed space, and that art is the contrivance that provides the exception. The insularity that grants objects, gestures, statements a moment of suspension and a capacity for self-reflexivity is precisely that which protects them from the tugging instrumentality of the everyday.

In a complex game he played with the basic perimeters of artistic practice, Duchamp accepted this tug, and used it as a weapon against art's insularity - just as he used art's insularity as a weapon against everyday objects. In her extensive essay on Duchamp's self-conscious studio practice, **Elena Filipovic** discusses how the artist treated objects in his studio as "objects of contemplation" while also remaining highly skeptical of public exhibitions: "All exhibitions of painting or sculpture make me ill. And I'd rather not be involved in them." And yet when he did participate, he would attempt to absorb the entire exhibition into his own artwork.

In "Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction," **Boris Groys** considers the reemergence of religion as a force that compels and explains the increasingly private, sovereign spaces of contemporary image production and proliferation. Where the Enlightenment introduced ethical, political obligations to the public sphere, we now find a discussion around the spirit to be beneficial for understanding the increasingly sovereign spaces of the internet and digital culture.

In "The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art," **Dieter Roelstraete** questions whether an increasing tendency in art towards a historiographic mode might overemphasize romantic notions that truth lies buried in history. Perhaps an archaeological art of reenactments, reconstructions, and recoveries distracts from the more pressing issues of the present and the future.

In the first of a series of four comics, **Michael Baers** offers a short introduction to his upcoming series of

comics for the journal and reflects upon his current state of exhaustion, quoting Deleuze: “The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible.”

Silvia Kolbowski edits President Obama’s inauguration speech to “remove references to religion, the celebration of militarism, delusions of national power, the phantasmatic projection of enemies, the glorification of the struggles of the poor, the puritanical elevation of suffering, the erasure of difference, etc.”

And **Dieter Lesage** responds to Irit Rogoff and Tom Holert’s recent contributions to this journal on the role of the art academy, addressing the Bologna Process and its influence on art eduction throughout Europe.

——Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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Julieta Aranda is an artist and an editor of *e-flux journal.*

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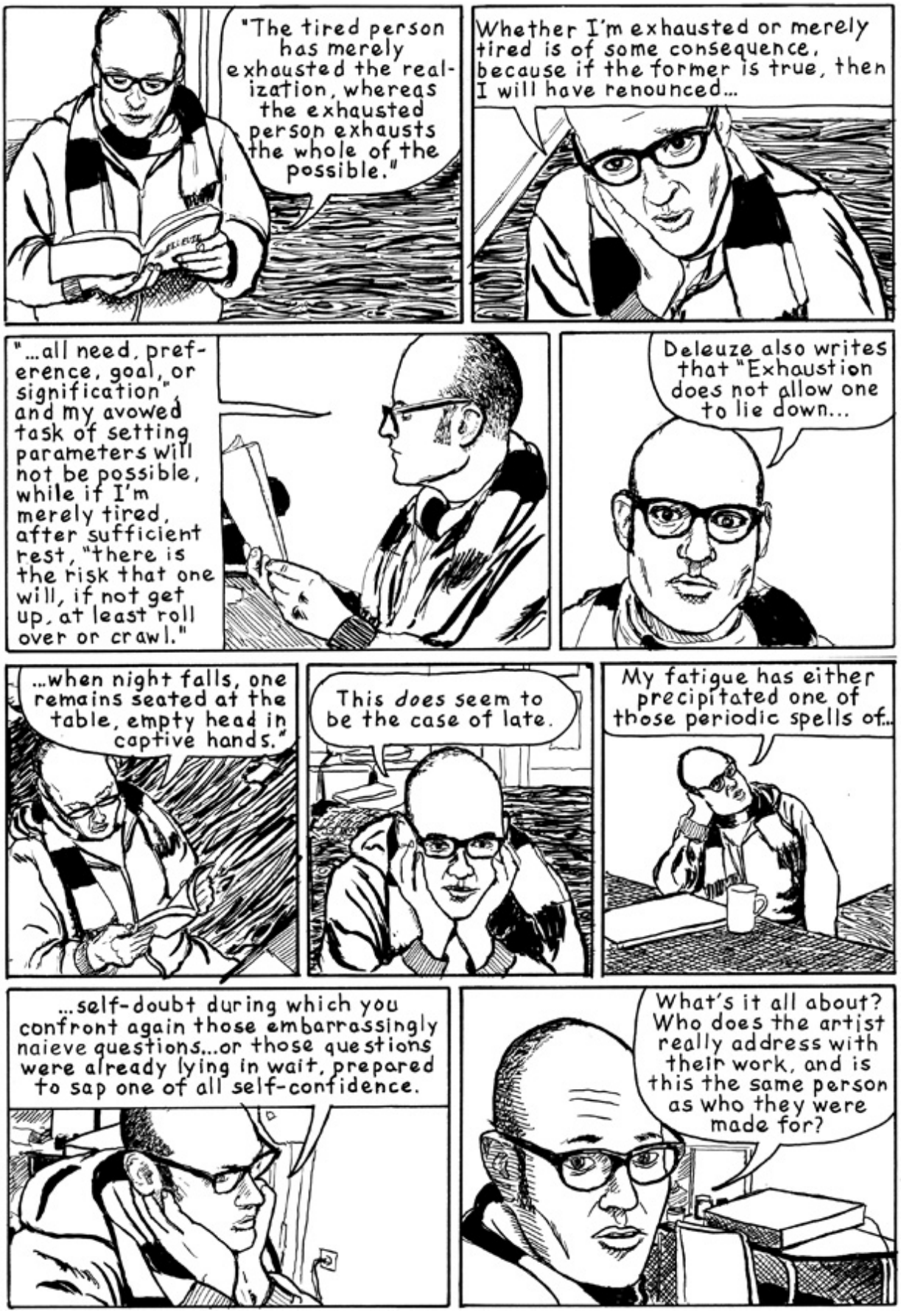
Michael Baers

Concerning Matters to be Left for a Later Date, Part 1 of 4


I'm singin' this borrowed tune
I took from the Rolling Stone
Alone in this empty room
Too wasted to write my own
Oh excuse me. Let me introduce myself: I'm Michael Boers. The editors of this Journal asked if I would make a comic, so here I am.
In this first installment I thought I'd tell you about what I was planning in the next four months, kinda set the parameters.
It's been a cold winter here in Berlin, seasonably cold, which considering the last two winters makes it unseasonably cold. So the cold has been reassuring.
Then yesterday I read an article entitled, "Climate change even worse than predicted". News of this type isn't great motivation for working on this comic.
Which has been hard enough as it is. I've been working a lot lately. I'm exhausted. Or tired. I'm not sure which.
In an attempt to clarify this matter, I've consulted an essay by Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted" where he writes...


"The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible."
Whether I'm exhausted or merely tired is of some consequence, because if the former is true, then I will have renounced...
"...all need, preference, goal, or signification" and my avowed task of setting parameters will not be possible, while if I'm merely tired, after sufficient rest, "there is the risk that one will, if not get up, at least roll over or crawl."
Deleuze also writes that "Exhaustion does not allow one to lie down...
...when night falls, one remains seated at the table, empty head in captive hands."
This *does* seem to be the case of late.
My fatigue has either precipitated one of those periodic spells of...
...self-doubt during which you confront again those embarrassingly naieve questions...or those questions were already lying in wait, prepared to sap one of all self-confidence.
What's it all about? Who does the artist really address with their work, and is this the same person as who they were made for?


And then, what kind of relationship do I maintain with myself when as DW Winnicott has written, ahem...
"The self is not really to be found in what is made out of products of body or mind, however valuable these constructs may be in terms of beauty, skill, and impact.
If the artist...is searching for the self, then it can be said that in all probability there is already some failure for the artist in the field of general creative living."
I can live with failure in the field of general living, but interrogating the purpose of art when there are not only so many worrisome events of a human scale but also profound changes occurring in the environment...
...one turns over senseless and ultimately unanswerable questions like these to no purpose, especially since they make you upset and don't lead to any productive insight.
Further, the formulation itself manages to simultaneously trivialize both art and global catastrophe.
So, perhaps I should go lie down. Later I might find the strength to formulate this introduction, prepare readers for what is to come...when I'm better rested.
By the way, my idea was for this series, was for it to be kinda like a variety show where I invite different "guest stars" to collaborate with me on each month's episode.


These might consist of interviews, skits, micro-documentaries, song-and-dance numbers, and so on.
It's kind of up to my collaborators to propose ideas, you know?
But since the variety show concept is slightly antiquated, I've considered modifying it with a self-reflexive element...
...not a variety show, per se, more of a sit-com about a variety show, with a self-absorbed host, his taciturn-but-lovable co-workers, and zany friends, employing all kinds of clever deconstruction tactics.
Show the show as a show within a show in a show, you know, like *Seinfeld*.
This remains as an aspiration—not to be like *Seinfeld* (perish the thought!)—but to disclose the workings of the work I am making.
In the past I've often employed a similar self-reflexive turn, but now I worry I've exhausted this strategy, and it's become not only indicative of my own narcissism...
...but is actually symptomatic of a more general societal myopia; as if, should I not receive affirmation of my own existence in self-reflexivity's funhouse hall-of-mirrors, something unsettling could creep in.
In fact, I suspect something already has.

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Michael Baers is an artist based in Berlin. He has participated in exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, usually with graphical publications exhibited sculpturally. He frequently collaborates with **Fucking Good Art** and has contributed to many publications including **Chto Delat**, **SUM**, and **Princess Lulu**. An important correlate to his artistic practice is his work as a teacher. He has been a guest instructor in Denmark and Norway, conducting seminars that mix theory and artistic praxis. Currently he is an instructor at Det Fynske Kunstakademi in Denmark. He also occasionally writes catalogue essays, articles, and reviews.

Elena Filipovic

A Museum That is Not

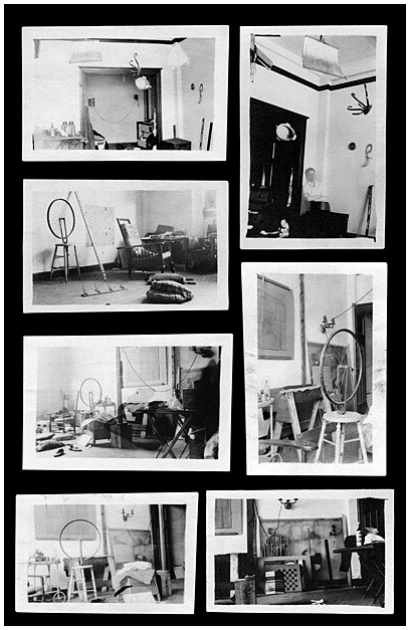
One could say that everything begins and ends in Marcel Duchamp's studio. His first New York studio is perhaps best known from a series of small and grainy photos, some of them out of focus. They were taken sometime between 1916 and 1918 by a certain Henri-Pierre Roché, a good friend of Duchamp. Roché was a writer, not a professional photographer, clearly. He was the same guy who would go on to write *Jules et Jim*, arguably a far better novel than these are photographs. But their aesthetic quality was not really what mattered. Duchamp was attached to those little pictures. He kept them and went back to them years later, working on them and then leaving them out for us like his laundry in the picture. Or like clues in a detective novel.

Henri Pierre Roché, Marcel Duchamp's Studio, c. 1916-18. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp. Courtesy Jean-Jacques Lebel.

There isn't a single photograph among them that shows his studio (which was also his home, in this case) cleaned up. Duchamp's drawers are open, his shoes and pillows are strewn across the floor, dust has collected in the corners. The supposed cold conceptualist, the guy who epilated his entire body because he seemed not to like the unkemptness of body hair (and requested that his partner at the time consider doing the same), the artist of the industrially produced readymades—lives in a pigsty.[1] This is not the first nor will it be the last of many Duchampian paradoxes. Still, Duchamp's sense of housekeeping and the dust that he bred in his apartment is not so much my point as is his arrangement of objects. While he might live with a mess, everything also *has its place*. The small photographs reveal that the shiny porcelain urinal on view is not in the bathroom (although there might be another one there), or even tucked in a corner—it's hung over a doorway. The disorder of the room might appear careless,

except that a urinal simply doesn't get up there by accident. Duchamp's snow shovel is not casually leaning against a wall waiting for use—it is suspended from the ceiling. And his coatrack lies inconveniently and ridiculously in the middle of the room, nailed to the floor. Selected objects in chosen positions.

Remember, this is sometime around 1917, several years after the artist first started to bring everyday objects into his studio. Back then, he had a Paris atelier, which his sister cleaned up when the artist moved to New York, throwing the first readymades into a dustbin, where she innocently thought they belonged.[2] A few years have passed since then and Duchamp is in a new city now. By this point, his utilitarian *things* already have a category name, a genre: "readymade." Sure, Duchamp claimed that he had begun fiddling with them as a "distraction," but already by 1916 he had decided to title each one of them. He had also begun to sign them, and to submit them to public exhibitions (even if that pretty much failed).[3] In short, *he treated them like works of art*, even as he repeatedly denied their artfulness.



Henri Pierre Roché, Marcel Duchamp's Studio, c. 1916-18. Courtesy Jean-Jacques Lebel.

Another indication that Duchamp thought of the readymades as more than mere *things* comes from these photos. The pictures show that these everyday objects are not—cannot be— *useful*. They were carefully arranged, displayed—indeed, *exhibited*—with their utilitarianism left undermined so that they became objects of contemplation and even of laughs, but decidedly not of use. In a way, then, the studio was the readymades' first "exhibition" space. Now, the studio wasn't an institution, but even if not exactly public, it was nevertheless a frequented space in which the objects were shown and could be read as artifacts that *meant* something. It was what Helen Molesworth rightly calls the readymades' "major site of reception."[4] That site of exhibition/reception was a place of annunciation, declaring: *this is not (only) a urinal*. This is the tale the little photos tell.

The studio should not be confused with an art institution, but I mention the latter because such institutions and their legitimizing function are of concern to Duchamp at precisely this moment. His now-famous 1917 submission of a urinal to the "unjuried" Society of Independent Artists Exhibition is refused by its art committee, probably the same year of the studio photos. He signs *Fountain* with the pseudonym "R. Mutt," so most onlookers don't suspect he is behind it, although anyone who paid attention in his studio could easily divine the truth. Most of the world doesn't know a thing about it though, until later.

"I myself will exhibit nothing, in accordance with my principles," Duchamp wrote unequivocally in 1918 to his friend and most fervent collector, Walter Arensberg.[5] The issue was whether or not Duchamp would show any of his own work in the Cubist exhibition that he was attempting to organize in Buenos Aires during his short stay there. The exhibition never materialized. Still, directing his collector-friend from afar, Duchamp added that Arensberg should not loan any of the artist's work for other exhibitions being planned in New York at the time. Later, in a 1925 letter to another patron, Jacques Doucet, Duchamp would again speak of his distaste for exhibitions, saying, "All exhibitions of painting or sculpture make me ill. And I'd rather not be involved in them."[6] Such comments further clarify the artist's involvement with Dreier's ironically titled "corporation" for the first "museum of modern art," the Société Anonyme, Inc.; as Duchamp wrote adamantly to the American patroness in 1929, "I don't want to go back to America to start anything in the way of an 'Art' museum."[7]

Almost from the start, Duchamp maintained a shifting position between interest in and antipathy for institutions of artistic judgment and exhibition: salon, gallery, museum. Of course, there was his early history of salon participation and rejection, but he also served as board member and president of the hanging committee for the Society of Independent Artists exhibition in New York in 1917 (the same one that rejected *Fountain*) and, in that position, proposed hanging the works according to chance, alphabetically, beginning with the first letter selected from a hat. He also had a foundational role in the Société Anonyme, Inc. with Katherine Dreier and Man Ray in the 1920s, and an explicitly curatorial role in Constantin Brancusi's exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in New York in 1933. Exhibitions and the questions of public display were far from unproblematic for Duchamp.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the commercial gallery and the museum would be, with increasing insistence over the

years, important sites of intervention and critique for Duchamp. If the artist's 1917 submission of an inverted urinal to an exhibition or 1919 scribbling of a mustache and *L.H.O.O.Q.* on a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* seemed aimed at the epistemological givens of art, by the late 1930s Duchamp had decidedly turned his attention to the architectural contexts, classificatory systems, institutional protocols, and authoritative doxas of the gallery–museum. This "turn" might thus add another layer to the story of the lapsed painter, obsessive chess-player, frantic note-taker, "precision optician," occasional cross-dresser, and one-time librarian that "left" art-making in 1923, spent the rest of the '20s inventing optical contraptions and, throughout the '30s, seemed to be "vacationing" in his past through various exercises of repetition, reproduction, and collection. For, at a moment when the official spaces for the display of art were hailing themselves as rational, objective, and scientific, and at a moment when it was undeniable that the historical narratives which held up museums also held up belligerent nations, Duchamp's turn toward the idiosyncratic installation of exhibition spaces and his development of his own "portable museum" brought a recasting of the architectural, temporal, and discursive armatures of art and its institutions to the fore of his practice and it did not soon leave.

Exhibition Making

At the end of 1937, Paul Eluard and Surrealist leader André Breton invite Duchamp to generate ideas for the International Surrealist Exhibition to be held at the fashionable Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris. Duchamp had contributed works to previous collective Surrealist exhibits, but the artist famous for his detachment never officially belonged to that movement or any other. Still, he agrees to take on the exhibition-designer role, which leads to the first of a series of collaborations with Duchamp as curator/designer of exhibitions that radically reconceive what the space of an art exhibition could look like.[8]

Duchamp's interventions are quite simple, but radical. In his official capacity as "générateur-arbitre," he turns the elegantly appointed eighteenth-century interior into a darkened "grotto," covering the ornate moldings, ceiling, and bank of lights with what he announces as "1,200" suspended coal sacks. He installs an iron brazier in the center of the main hall and hangs artworks on uprooted department store revolving doors. The ceiling undulates, the walls are blackened, and coal dust invariably falls onto the finery of the exhibition's guests.[9]

The coal sacks are what he is perhaps most proud of. In their inversion of interior and exterior, of up and down, the 1,200 sacks (Could there have really been so many? And why that excessive number?) initiate the unsettling of the architecture of the gallery that in turn inspires the other participating artists. The collaborative results are well-known: a faux urban landscape along the entryway

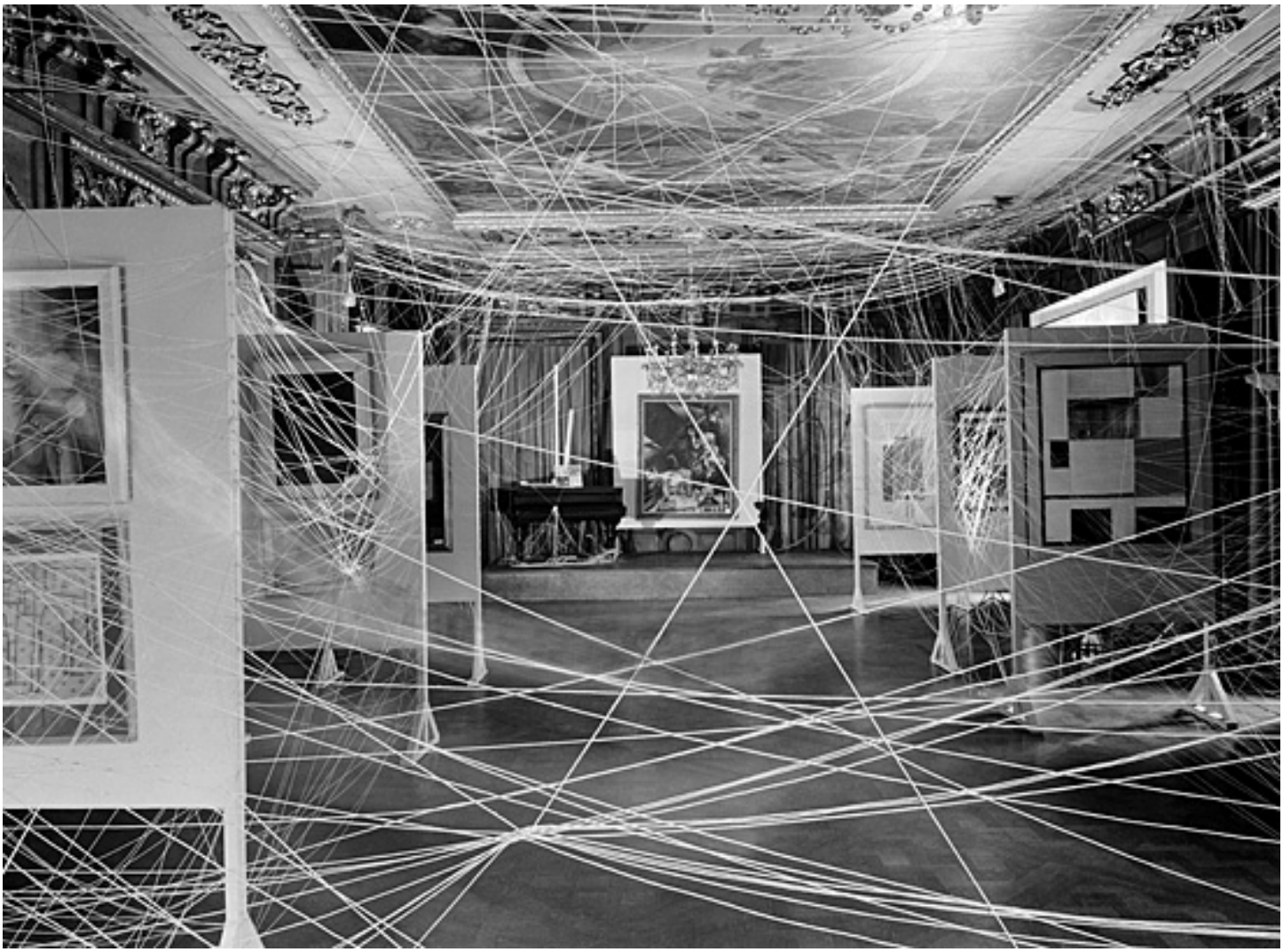
Anonymous, Visitors with flashlights at the 1938 Exposition International du Surréalisme, Paris 1938.

(lined with fictive Parisian street signs and sixteen artistically "dressed" mannequins), a lake and four beds in the main hall, dead leaves and dirt covering the floors, a soundtrack of insane asylum cries and German marching music in the air, a danced simulation of hysteria, Salvador Dalí's snail- and rain-filled taxicab just outside the gallery, and near-obscurity throughout. Perhaps more pointedly even than the Dada or Surrealist exhibitions that preceded it, this exhibition responds to the conventional space and experience of an art exhibition, constructing an elaborate answer to both on an architectural scale.

Just as significant to our understanding of the exhibition is an element that wasn't realized. As Marcel Jean recalls, "Duchamp had thought of installing 'magic eyes' so that the lights would have gone on automatically as soon as the spectator had broken an invisible ray when passing in front of the painting."[10] Duchamp's wish proved unfeasible, but Man Ray adapted the idea for the opening night, turning out the lights and handing out flashlights at the entrance so that visitors could use them to view the artworks "on display." The solution retained much of Duchamp's original intention: the viewers got close to the art, leaning forward to focus their hand-held electric lights—an act in distinct contrast to the notion of "proper distance," disembodied viewing, and the "enlightening" clarity of the traditional museum or gallery. Even in its adapted form, one notes a concern with perception and a continuation of that assault on visual autonomy that so interested Duchamp—from his efforts to contravene retinality to his "precision optics" experiments with motorized optical machines and spinning *Rotoreliefs*. At the newly organized modern museums and display spaces, so in vogue in Paris in the 1930s, the spectator

was choreographed to keep a safe distance, to look disinterestedly, and to forget his or her body. Duchamp, on the other hand, seemed to want to make explicit that vision's condition of possibility is the approach of the body—that vision is decidedly *corporeal*. For Duchamp, the interrogation of the autonomy of vision went hand-in-hand with a rethinking of that site so invested in maintaining it—the Cartesian exhibition space. It is perhaps in the context of his exhibition designs, therefore, that one best understands Duchamp's complex visual exercises and their centrality to his corpus—his persistent preoccupation with visuality questioned not only what and how we see, but, ultimately, what and how institutions of art *make us see*.[11]

Surrealist exhibition in the United States. Titled the "First Papers of Surrealism" after the application papers that most of the émigré artists faced upon entry into the US, the show was held in 1942 at the Whitelaw Reid mansion in New York as a benefit affair for the French Relief Societies. Duchamp devised for it a simple, economic solution to work against the interior's gilded moldings, Italianate ceiling paintings, crystal chandeliers, and other opulent architectural details. Having acquired sixteen miles of ordinary white string for the installation, the artist engaged the help of several friends to erect a criss-crossed webbing (in the end, using only a fraction of his overzealous purchase).[12] The twine traversed the mansion's former drawing rooms, filled for the exhibition with paintings hung on portable display partitions



John Schiff, Installation view of the First Papers of Surrealism exhibition, New York, 1942. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Jacqueline, Paul and Peter Matisse in memory of their mother Alexina Duchamp, Courtesy of Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

Duchamp's experiments with space and display continued when, after the exodus of many of the Surrealists out of Europe during the Second World War, Breton called on him again, this time to install the first international

(paintings being the overwhelming majority of what was on show). The tangled mesh did not cut off vision completely (it was the frustration, not the elimination of

sight that Duchamp desired); nevertheless, the entwinement between and in front of so many of the things "on display" constituted a decided barrier between the spectator and the works of art.[13]

As in the 1938 *Exposition*, what was exhibited in 1942 was in fact a rethinking of viewing in the typical space of exhibition and of the body's implication in that experience, as much as the "art" itself. Several of the artist-participants were disappointed that spectators could not properly see their artworks. That was precisely the point. And it was not the only assault on the senses carried out by "First Papers": for the October 14, 1942, opening, eleven-year-old Carrol Janis showed up on schedule with several of his friends, running around, playing ball, and causing quite a scene at the exhibition. To the visitors' questions and complaints, the children replied as they had been instructed: Marcel Duchamp had asked them to come and play there.

Marcel Duchamp, Boıte-en-valise, 1938-42. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

Portable Museums

Duchamp's role as exhibition prestidigitator in 1938 and 1942 had ephemeral effects. Yet some of the very same concerns found another manifestation—and a multiplied, permanent form—in the Duchampian project that the artist called *De ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rrose Sélavy* (From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy), also known as *La Boîte-en-valise* (The Box in a Valise). Chronologically, the two projects overlapped, with the labor on the albums beginning several years before the 1938 Surrealist exhibition and continuing in the years after. Formally, the chaotic disorientations that characterized the 1938 *Exposition* and the webbed obstruction to vision of the 1942 "First Papers" could not have been more distinct from the unassuming air and seemingly ordered arrangement of the portable cases filled with facsimiles of Duchamp's works. But there was a measure of continuity: Duchamp's contribution to the Surrealist shows responded to the art institution's inviolate and dignified space with an intrusion that exposed and shifted normative notions of display and the aesthetic experience proper to it; so, too, his encased retrospectives continued a reflection on the nature of art and the space of display, in their own way making explicit the terms and conditions of the art institution's overburdened authority.

Following the 1934 publication of the boxed facsimiles of the sketches and notes that document the conceptual development of *Large Glass*, Duchamp conceived another project, this one archival in nature. He wanted to document his lifework, to create an "album" (a "book," he described it several times in letters) of "approximately all the things [he had] produced."[14] By the end of 1935, the silent administrative labor that would be the cornerstone of the project had begun: Duchamp drew up lists of all his artworks and their owners; ordered black-and-white photographs of selected paintings, glass works, objects, and other unclassifiable productions; made cross-continental voyages to examine and record the titles, dates, measurements, and exact color shading of his works in public and private collections; and bought back or borrowed other pieces to make the required detailed notes. For most of the reproductions to be included in the *Boîte*, Duchamp opted for a complex and labor-intensive method of replication called the "pochoir" technique. He rejected the reproduction of works through color photography, in part, it seems, because the burgeoning technology could not yet faithfully reflect the colors of the original. But one suspects that Duchamp may not have employed such a method even if it had proved exact enough. After all, the artist eschewed other more frequently used and expedient processes including offset lithography (which he had used for the *Rotoreliefs*) in favor of the somewhat anachronistic coupling of collotype printing and pochoir coloring (he employed this method most extensively when making the reproductions contained in the *Boîte verte*).

Labor-intensive years passed. Simple mechanical reproduction be damned. As Ecke Bonk makes clear, to speak of the *Boîte* "reproductions," or even of Duchamp's other generic term, "items," hardly conveys the elaborateness of the handwork involved; the process was precise, painstaking, and often required more labor than the originals had.[15] There can be little doubt, this reproductive method as much as its ambivalent result—somewhere between the handcrafted and mechanically reproduced—is crucial to the subversive operation of the *Boîte-en-valise*.

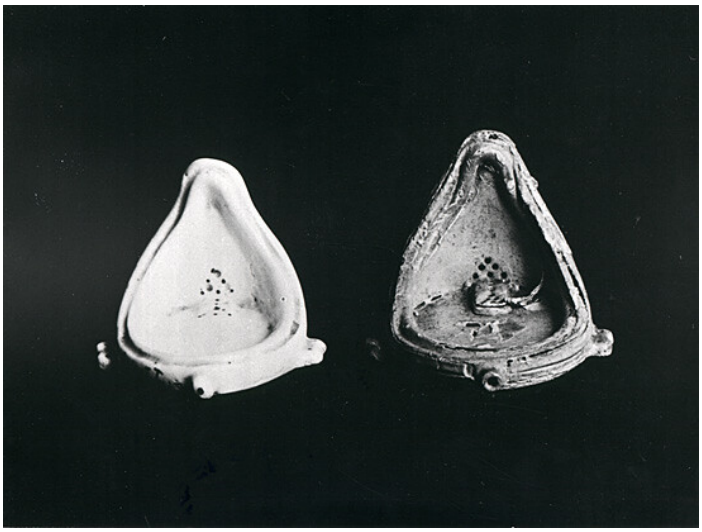
Duchamp selected a total of 69 works to be reproduced and, in keeping with the magnitude of the edition he envisioned, he made as many as 350 copies of each item. He worked undauntedly, with the first few models

completed around the time of his wartime migration to the United States, and a slow but steady trickle of more appearing during the subsequent decades. Although he envisioned an edition of 300 standard copies of the project, Duchamp also conceived of roughly 20 deluxe models (nearly all of these are housed in a brown leather valise), which are distinguished from the standard versions by containing a signed "original" work of art. These deluxe models, destined for friends and select patrons, were the first of the group to be constructed. Emblematizing the centrality of questions of artistic aura, authorship, and authenticity to the project as a whole, these deluxe "originals" and the reproductive process to which they bear witness smack of Duchamp's rejection of both Romantic values and Enlightenment *Progrès*—his turn to a form of creation that relied neither on the mythology of the artist as troubled, inspired genius (he was, after all, "copying"), nor on purely industrial production and ready-made objects (this "copying" was hardly simple, automated, or wholly mechanical). Thus, everywhere in the *Boîte-en-valise*, the aura of the unique work of art is laboriously underscored *and* effaced, elevated *and* ruined, such that, in the end, Duchamp offers a conflicted set of products that self-consciously limn the borders between the hand-crafted and mechanically reproduced, between original and replica, between dated artwork and contemporary interpretation, between auratic object and serial copy.[16]

If the very concept of the work of art and its authenticity is at stake in the *Boîte-en-valise*, so too are the institutions that judge, classify, present, and historicize the work of art as such. The condition of the *Boîte-en-valise* as a presentation case and a site of display confounds the boundaries between contents and context, container and contained. The *Boîte* internalizes (and in doing so it extends the operation of the readymade) the status of the art object in general, acknowledging that the "art-ness" of objects is determined by questions of classification, administration, presentation, and museality. One may even say that Duchamp understood his retrospective project as only having properly *begun* at the moment that it could no longer be the "book" he had once thought it would be, but instead the "museum" he would finally see it as.

This may help elucidate why, in a lengthy undertaking that spanned from 1935 (with his initial work on the reproductions) to 1942 (when the first few deluxe editions were complete), Duchamp repeatedly dated the "beginning" of the *Boîte-en-valise* to 1938.[17] The artist never explained the dating and no one pressed him on it. But, if we know that 1938 is too late to ascribe to the beginning of this retrospective project either in terms of conception or of work on its various reproductions, it does seem to mark the beginning of the conception of the album as a three-dimensional space.

The boxed form that Duchamp had used previously (on a small scale in 1914 and then later, in 1934, for the *Boîte verte*) contained scraps and photographic paper; they were boxes with loose and disordered contents which—however remarkable they were in revamping a notion of "literature" and the book-form—never emerged beyond the two-dimensional. Had Duchamp continued in this manner, he might very well have ended up with a mere loose-leaf collection of paper and celluloid reproductions in a box. (Indeed, by 1937, Duchamp had made a number of reduced-size copies of his paintings and pieces on glass, but he had also reproduced several three-dimensional objects, including the *Bottle drier* and *Why not Sneeze?* in two-dimensional photographic form for use in the album.) However, shortly after his work on the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* in January 1938, Duchamp made a tiny object that arguably signaled a redefined conception of the "album" in his album project.



Marcel Duchamp, Papier maché reproduction and first porcelain cast of the miniature Fountain for the Boıte-en-valise, 1938. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

In the early months of 1938, Duchamp replicated the contours of his store-bought piece of plumbing entitled *Fountain*. More than twenty years after Duchamp's defiant act of "selection," the artist returned to the object for inclusion in his retrospective project. Rather than buying a new urinal and having it photographed as he had done two years prior to represent the lost original *Bottle drier*, and rather than reproducing one of those little Roché photographs that show the original urinal in the New York studio, as he would do a couple years later to represent *Trebuchet*, Duchamp instead (re)made the urinal, turning the memory of the *Fountain*'s curved industrial form into a crude miniature wire and papier-mâché sculpture.[18] The result was, as Roché described it in his diary, "a little masterpiece of humorous sculpture, the color of a boiled shrimp, with little holes that are so absurd yet done with such care."[19] By the summer of 1938, the artist brought the object, absurdity and all, to a ceramicist (one of

several artisans he would employ for the slow and complicated casting project) to make a mold and porcelain casts for inclusion with the two-dimensional reproductions of his artworks.

Duchamp's modeling of the tiny object thus instituted a sculptural act never present in the lavatory-receptacle-turned- *Fountain*. Indeed, this act of sculpting reversed the very questions of authorship, technique, artistic touch, and aura posed by its readymade "original," while paradoxically serving to put these notions even further into doubt. The reproduction of two other reduced-size three-dimensional objects (*Air de Paris* and *Pliant . . . de voyage*) would follow, but the papier-mâché construction of the urinal testified to something quite remarkable: Duchamp could no longer be thinking of his monograph either as anything like a typical "book" or as a simple "boıte" like the others. The reasoning is simple: the introduction of a three-dimensional object to the project entails a three-dimensional space to hold it. Therefore, even if he may not have yet determined the exact nature of the container for his reproduced artworks, in making the tiny sculpted model of the urinal—and, more importantly, in thus returning to the questions of institutionalization that the *Fountain* and its 1917 scandal ineluctably recalled—Duchamp seems to have decided that the container for his reproduced corpus should take on an architectonics of some sort, what would quickly become an *exhibitionary* configuration. And with that simple act, Duchamp effectively inserted *Fountain*—the readymade object that few even knew was by him—into his official oeuvre. More than twenty years after its original rejection and non-exhibition, it finally had an exhibition place—all the better to allow it to eventually enter (and shake) the museum and history.

Describing the *Boîte-en-valise* to James Johnson Sweeney, Duchamp said:

> Instead of painting something new, my aim was to reproduce the paintings and objects I liked and collect them in as small a space as possible. I did not know how to go about it. I first thought of a book, but I did not like the idea. Then it occurred to me that it could be a box in which all my works would be collected and mounted like in a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak.[20]

Art historian Benjamin Buchloh underscores the ways in which the work was true to that description:

> All of the functions of the museum, the social institution that transforms the primary language of art into the secondary language of culture, are minutely contained in Duchamp's case: the valorization of the object, the extraction from context and function, the preservation from decay and the dissemination of its abstracted meaning . . . [With it, Duchamp] also changes the role of the artist as creator to that of the collector and conserver, who is concerned with the placement and transport, the evaluation and institutionalization, the display and maintenance of a work of art.[21]

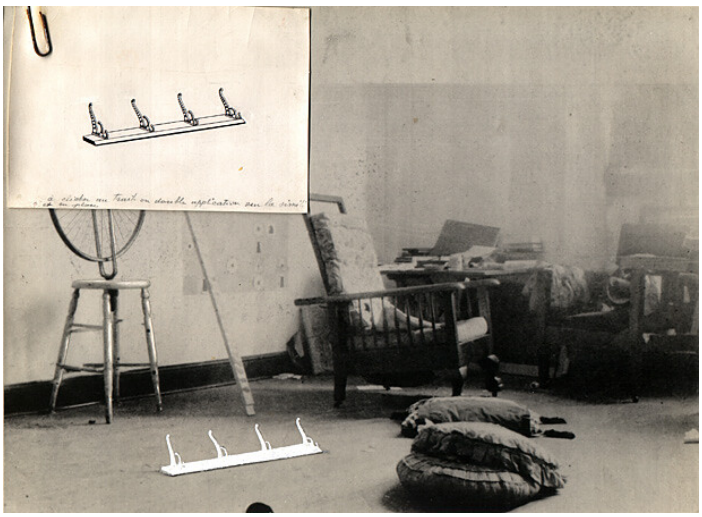
Indeed, the work's retrospective grouping of objects, protective container, standardized labels, and various forms of enframement do suggest, precisely, an effort to invoke a certain museality. Yet, one should not ignore the highly ambivalent character of the *Boîte-en-valise* as a museum, of Duchamp as "conserver," the discontinuities in the stories it tells, and the fragilities in the structure it offers. One must ask what kind of museum, what kind of architecture, and what kind of history Duchamp's so-called museum *actually* presents?

Between "de ou par," Marcel and Rrose, singular and plural, artisanal precision and serial reproduction, original and copy, lie multiple ambiguities, instabilities, and indeterminacies that are hardly accidental. For Duchamp's portable case of tiny wares performs its function precisely in its undecidability as a work "of art" in its own right, and, further, in its to-ing and fro-ing between invoking and refuting museum-ness.

With the *Boîte-en-valise*, Duchamp continues the effort begun in the *Box of 1914,* pushing his questioning of photography in new directions. The *Boîte-en-valise* uses photography for the most seemingly neutral, most inartistic of means: reproduction (in this case, of works of art). Yet, Duchamp's anonymous "documentation" is here most often duplicitous, at once announcing and refusing its role as proof or as truth-bearer. And, given that some of the photographs "represent" artworks that, at the time of the making of the *Boîte*, were no longer extant, photography—and the unreliability that Duchamp builds into it—becomes the perfect tool and emblem for the ungroundedness of the copy.

For Duchamp, reproduction was not ever an affair of practical publicity or dissemination and never a mere mechanical process. Neither was it a simple replica of something but, rather, a displacement—a temporal and perceptional shift. Duchamp's involvement in photography gives the impression of play and lack of seriousness, but in almost every instance, he uses photography (either his own or that of his conspiratorial accomplice, Man Ray) to literalize its deceptive dimension. From the barren landscape suggested by the layer of dust covering the *Large Glass* in Man Ray and Duchamp's collaborative photo *Élevage du poussière* (*Dust Breeding*, 1920) to the numerous images of Duchamp in drag as Rrose Sélavy or Belle Haleine in Man Ray's glossy portraits, the photograph is the recurrent site of contradiction, deception, visual troubling: *what you see is not what you*

see. The *Boîte-en-valise* reproductions based on photographs, in particular, refuse credibility: the image of the *Bottle drier* shows false shadows, images of a hat rack and bicycle wheel are retouched and hardly hide the fact, and the strange plaster-and-photographic representation of *Why Not Sneeze?* stands resolutely between the second and third dimensions. Dissolving distinctions between the real and the illusory, the index and the reconstituted referent, these "items" thus resist fixing the boundaries, properties, and functions of the works on which they are based.



Marcel Duchamp, Manipulated photos of Trébuchet for reproduction in the Boıte-en-valise, 1941. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

In 1940, the artist turned to one of those little photographs of his New York studio. He enlarged the image and completely covered over the object that was the explicit subject of the reproduction: in this case, the ready-made coatrack he had nailed to the floor and entitled *Trebuchet*. After whiting out the object, Duchamp made a line drawing of the coatrack in which he exactly replicated the photographic detail he had covered over in white. Then, through a time-consuming and careful process of hand coloring, collage, and repeat printing, he turned the newly drawn *Trebuchet* into an element of the photographic "document." He later employed variations of this process with the suspended snow shovel, the hat rack, and the bicycle wheel. The result, a new order of the image—neither fully photographic, nor fully documentary, nor fully other—introduced a perceptual slippage that hardly fools anyone, betraying as it does its lack of verisimilitude and uncomfortably declaring its incongruousness.

Why would Duchamp go to so much trouble? Why so meticulously and exactly redraw an element already clearly visible in a photograph? If photography was for so long seen as emulating painting, the father of the readymade effectively reverses this relationship, adding to his museum's contents a hand-drafted element that shuttles between categories and media, between artful facture and documentary evidence. The privileged status of the photograph as guaranteed witness of the actuality of objects or events it represents (a direct transcription of the real) long made the photograph part of a regime of truth. As Duchamp works to undermine truth, he shatters assumptions about both the reality of the photograph and the real in the photograph. The *Boîte*'s reproduction of *Trebuchet* thus reiterates on the level of representation what its participation among the other reproductions produces through its organization: the "portable museum" shows us the fiction of representation in the so-called systems of truth. As with the carefully simulated notes of the *Boîte verte*, the *Boîte-en-valise* reproductions reflexively acknowledge the incapacity—indeed, the impossibility—of the visual to deliver its promise of certainty or authenticity. That the photograph has a central place within Duchamp's museum is no coincidence. The failure of illusion to work in the *Boîte-en-valise*'s photographic/drawn forms tethers photography to a critique of the museum, exposing and upsetting the way in which the museum and history typically construct and present their "evidence."

If the readymade had shown that the artwork and the commodity could meld into near indistinction, Duchamp's production of over 320 copies of his own "museum" suggests that, in his opinion, there was no institution more invested in denying this than the modern museum. For Duchamp, the transformation of art into merchandise is a different program from either the Art Nouveau or even the Bauhaus agenda in which the utilitarian and the aesthetic are to be subsumed. Duchamp's is a gesture without pretense to heroism: there is no claim of bringing art to the masses (whatever Apollinaire joked about his friend's role), no effort to make anything that holds the least bit of functionality, no making beautiful of the everyday. If there is something dysfunctionalizing about the usurping of a real toilet to claim it as a work of art, there is something wantonly reckless in reducing its size, in making it toy-like, and casing it up with other items (typewriter cover, comb, bottle drier . . .) that in the end serve as nothing so much as placeholders for the "real" once-useful things to which they refer. Thus, insofar as the readymade is seen to expose the tensions between the commodity and the art object, between the serial and the collectable, between the ordinary and the exhibition-worthy, the *Boîte* grafts this ambivalence even more emphatically onto the very specific components that make up the museological, including institutional architecture, presentation technologies, chronological sequences, explanatory labels, and so forth. And, the serial multiplications of Duchampian boxes claim that the museum and industry, and the museum and the commodity, have something profoundly in common. The artist's archive is perfectly packaged as a product in a neat box (the most precious examples of which included convenient suitcases with locks and handles), whose purchase is made easy with a

"bulletin of subscription" and whose descriptive inscription ("This box contains 69 items") not only blurs the distinction between art object and luxury product, but also claims for the artist the roles of producer, distributor, curator, architect, salesman, and historian.

There is something decidedly amiss in the *Boîte-en-valise's* curatorial/archival system. The information on labels, the wall text, the exhibition title, the overall organization: Duchamp understood well that this apparatus determines how and what we see. And so he played the museum's game—his way. The grouping of works follows no perceptible logic of chronology, medium, or theme; the selection is unjustified (why those sixty-nine items in particular?); the scale of miniaturization is variable. Yes, the labels accompanying each piece employ a standardized typeface and bear the typical classificatory information (title, technique, size, place and date of production, collection or location), but in Duchamp's hands, this vital aspect of a museum's authoritative narrative is deployed to parody curatorial techniques and question the validity of systems of classification. The information on Duchamp's museum labels refers to the "original" works (extant or not), whose sizes, dates of manufacture, and locations are distinctly at odds with the reduced dimensions and posterior reproduction of the specimens on offer in the *Boîte-en-valise*. Knowledge is unstable; information is contradictory; logic is defied. Duchamp marshals the seemingly empirical nature of the archive and museum—and their various classificatory systems—in order to loosen our grip on knowledge and question what is really possible to know about the ideas or objects before us.

Ultimately, Duchamp meets the museum's desire for precision with irony and approximation, its desire for totality with a fragmentary story, its desire for encyclopedic coverage with "à peu près," its desire for system and order with a volatile taxonomy, its desire for the original with an ensemble of copies, and its desire for linear history with caesura, delay, and ungraspable logic. Whereas monumental armatures and visual primacy, taxonomies, and clear chronologies constitute the foundational givens of the museum, Duchamp orchestrates the destabilization of museal spaces and the reorganization of display logics. He constructs approximate retrospectives of reproductions in unstable structures.

With the *Boîte-en-valise* the artist creates a museum without walls, without a secure location, without "authentic" works of art, that is, a museum with only the most tenuous hold on museum-ness. But, he neither recuperates nor obliterates the museum through his project; rather, he subjects its idea, rules, and operational givens to a series of questions and pressures. And herein lies the core of the artist's multiple self-narratives: through a combination of seeming order and randomness, the original and its reproduction, the museal and the commercial, and the auratic and the ordinary, the *Boîte-en-valise* offers an ambivalent model of the artist as producer and an even more conflicted model of the museum as truth-bearer.

"Can one make works that are not 'of art'?" Duchamp scribbled to himself one day in 1913.[22] And then, quietly, decades later, he hinted at another, not unrelated, set of questions: Can one make a museum that holds works that aren't (works) of art? Can a museum be a work of art? Can one make more than 300 works that are museums? Is a box filled with works of art, then, a museum? Is it a museum if it doesn't have walls? Can one make a museum that is *not?*

A museum that is not. With its tentative structure, Lilliputian dimensions, and wobbly frame, the *Boîte-en-valise* defies the stability and rootedness so typical of the museum; it works against the impenetrable façade and transcendent spaces of the museum as modern temple for heroic works (and what could be less heroic than a miniature, thin, plastic version of the *Large Glass*). The instability of Duchamp's little exhibition armature comes at least in part from the negotiation of its form—an unstable, unbounded structure with a collapsing frame, sliding panels, moveable parts, and an endlessly reconfigured exhibition space—so unlike the static, solid, and stable architecture and terra firma of the museum. To expose the "works," one needs to unfurl the framework; to view them all, one needs to handle the pieces and reorganize the display.

Much of a museum's architecture is precisely in the service of the visual management central to the functioning of the museum-machine. One of the defining functions of the museum, as historian Donald Preziosi has elaborated, is that it "situates all objects within viewing spaces that evoke and elicit a proper viewing stance and distance. Artworks are spaced, arranged, and composed so as to permit the taking up of proper stances: positions for the subject."[23] As if countering this supremely *visual* institution, Duchamp's portable museum cannot be seen outside the performative operation incited in his "museum visitor." The miniaturization of the individual works grounds viewing in bodily experience—in the handling of objects; in the opening and closing of lidded compartments; in the rubbing of fingers across the black creased folders of reproductions; in the sliding and movement of "glass" works; in the invitation to touch the palm-sized urinal, glass ampoule, and typewriter cover. In short, Duchamp inscribes the viewer's body in museum "looking." The *Boîte*'s implicit mobility and manipulability is made even more emphatic (and problematic) when inserted into an actual museum where it becomes, like the rest of a museum's objects, immobilized, protected, and *untouchable*. The *Boîte-en-valise*'s summons to touch thus reveals a set of sustained preoccupations that expose the ocularcentrism of the spaces for public display.

If, as historians have noted, the artist's aim in his early optical experimentation is "to corporealize the visual," one

might say that it was the gallery and museum that most upheld the disembodied retinal impulse of Modernist painting for Duchamp.[24] The tactile, mobile mode of looking demanded by the *Boîte-en-valise* (like the darkened, disorienting, twine-traversed, or pulsating installations for the Surrealist exhibitions) shatters a Cartesian relationship between body and vision, observer and object and, in so doing, exposes the institutional constructs that condition subjects, organize looking, and manage attention. To seriously consider the *Boîte*, then, is to recognize the way it undermines and redirects the purely visual, the way it insists on the libidinal and corporeal as both *matière* of and point of access to the museum. In its undoing of the symbolic structural frame of the museum, the *Boîte* holds a germ of the project that would preoccupy Duchamp until the end his life.

A Real Museum Exhibition

Duchamp spent the last two decades of his life secretly building an elaborate erotic tableau vivant entitled, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage*, which only became known to the public (and even to many of the artist's closest friends and family) after his death, when the artwork entered the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Arguably one of the twentieth century's most unusual and enigmatic artworks, *Étant donnés '* display in a museum is central to its very functioning.[25]

The viewing experience of it begins *outside* the work, in the *enfilade* of rooms and pictures that precede it and in the approach to the small white space adjoining the main gallery filled with Walter and Louise Arensberg's collection of Duchampian works (and the *Large Glass* which had previously been in Katherine Dreier's collection). One enters a white room, at its end a battered Spanish door with eye-holes that reveal (for those who dare to look) a broken brick wall behind which one spies a diorama of a nearly life-sized naked female body covered in pig skin. She lays atop a layer of dead twigs and holds aloft a gas lamp—all set against a pacific, photorealist background of sky, mountains, waterfall, clouds, and light. The background's vast expanse is a partially hand-painted photomural with fake waterfall light effects (hardly Caspar David Friedrich's sublime), and the nude—a failed, strangely unnatural body—rejects any claims to virtuosity. By deploying the museum's most familiar genres—the idyllic landscape and the reclining nude—but with a mix of hyperrealism and strangeness, pornographic explicitness and utterly un-arousing awkwardness, Duchamp keeps the viewer from being seduced by the very "tableau" that the painterly tradition seems to be inviting us to behold. At the same time, in order to do so, he deploys photography to deceptive ends—one last time—and on a grand scale: what you see is not what you see, indeed.

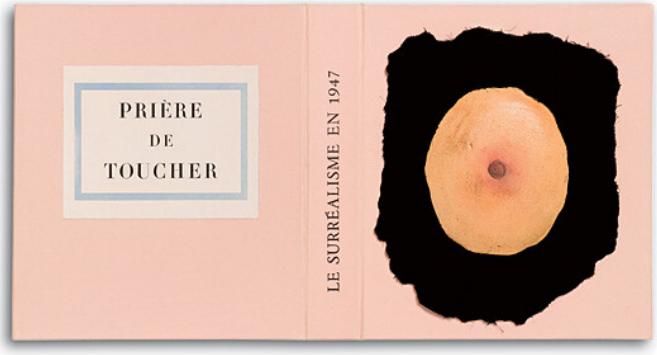
The return to figuration and to a seemingly material (rather than conceptual) production for an artist so critical of the retinal impulse of painting was disappointing—considered an erroneous anomaly—to many of Duchamp's close friends and critics when the installation was first made public. And yet, rather than either an incongruity in his oeuvre or a *return to order,* it might be read as the perfect culmination of a lifetime of persistent concerns and, as such, a biting commentary on the visual and the institutions that implicitly uphold it.

Willy Maywald, Marcel Duchamp's Rain Room at the 1947 Exposition International du Surréalisme, Paris 1947. © 2009 Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna.

Constructed from 1946 to 1966, the installation came on the heels of the long production of the *Boîte-en-valise* and overlapped with Duchamp's work on the design of a number of different display and exhibition spaces. In retrospect, the latter especially seem to serve as testing grounds for the questions he was quietly pursuing: There was his window display for the Gotham Book Mart in 1945, with its half-dressed mannequin with a faucet attached to her leg, a kind of "bride" behind glass purveying running water and already materializing different elements of the *Large Glass* into a three-dimensional tableau. There were his ideas for undulating fabric exhibition walls and a room dripping with water for the 1947 Exposition International du Surréalisme in Paris, which not only slyly portended the "chute d'eau" of *Étant donnés*, but radically refused typical exhibition protocol, falling as it did on an artwork (in this case, none other than *The Impossible*, a sculpture by Maria Martins, Duchamp's lover and major muse for *Étant donnés*). He conceived an enigmatic peephole viewing-device that was built into the wall, entitled *Le Rayon Vert*, quietly pointing to the artist's interest in peeping, illusion, and visual troubling. (The exhibition was also importantly accompanied by foam-breast-lined catalogue covers he designed, requesting that onlookers "Please touch"). There was also his experimentation with

heaving, "breathing," vaginal interior velvet walls for the 1959 Exposition International du Surréalisme around the theme of "Eros," where the labyrinthine, explicitly corporeal interior space of the gallery, lined in pink and green velvet, announced the decided imbrication of eroticism and display. And one could mention still others—each reconfiguring conventional exhibition spaces and the means by which visitors experience the looking central to an exhibition's mission.[26]

Henri Glaeser, Installation view of Exposition International du Surrealism "Eros," Paris, 1959.



Marcel Duchamp, Exhibition catalogue cover "Prière de toucher," designed by Duchamp, 1947.

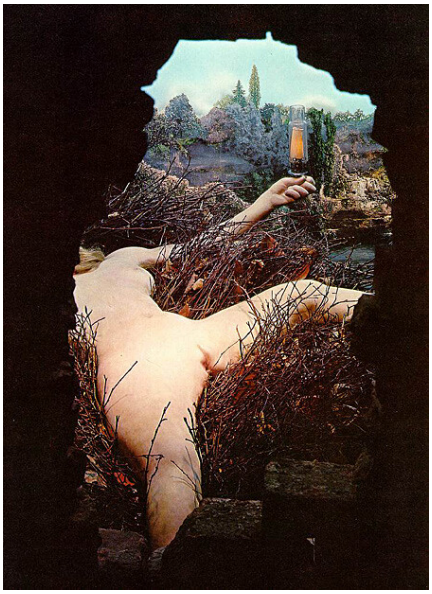
Duchamp's development of *Étant donnés* also overlapped with a less spectacular but no doubt influential task: in the late 1940s, Walter and Louise Arensberg enlisted Duchamp to carry out the negotiations with potential museum spaces to which the couple could entrust their art collection (which included the most substantial existing collection of Duchampian works). The artist met with several museums and finally with the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the display of the extensive collection of art. Letters and sketches sent to the Arensbergs in California so as to help them with their decision-making from afar attest to Duchamp's intimate involvement with the entire process. In 1951 Duchamp drew several sketches that convey the proportions and layout of several possible exhibition galleries in the museum.[27] Measured with precision and drawn to scale, the plans include the famous galleries where the Duchamp works are held to this day, including the small adjacent room, measured and marked as well, in which, unknown to anyone then, *Étant donnés* would be housed just over a decade later (unknown, yes, but it is striking that Duchamp knew this space as well as he did—with an architect's precision—one can't help speculate that in its final years, he worked on his construction with exactly that space in mind). The Arensberg collection was installed in 1954 with Duchamp directing the placement of each of the works—a regular museum curator, you might say.

In the years that followed, Duchamp devised a mind-boggling apparatus to accompany and constitute *Étant donnés* and its resting place in a museum. The experience of the work is entirely circumscribed by the fact that it is in an art museum—no negligible detail—and yet the question is rarely posed amongst critics as to how exactly to read the effort that went into securing its place there. Yet shouldn't we imagine that part of the "oeuvre" that is called *Étant donnés* is the invisible web of legal and administrative aspects that mimics the museum's own constructs in complex ways: the secret sale of the work in the 1960s to trusted friend William Copley and his Cassandra Foundation which would officially "own" the work upon Duchamp's death; the arrangement for the donation of the work from the Cassandra foundation to the Philadelphia Museum of Art immediately after his death (this charitable transfer increasing the chances of the acceptance of this final, provocative installation into the museum that held the majority of his oeuvre); the construction of an elaborate instruction manual for the reassembly of the installation in its final institutional site; and the interdictions on how and when to photograph the work? Thus in 1969, from the grave, Duchamp "curated" one last show. His postmortem delayed-release installation appeared one day in a small dark room of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where it was permanently installed adjacent to the rooms in which he had already set up so many of his pieces.

For nearly fifteen years after it opened to the public, one couldn't simply "see" the *Étant donnés.* It wasn't supposed to exist *as an image*. An official museum decree prevented reproduction by the public and the Philadelphia Museum of Art did not itself release any photos of the piece.[28]

Étant donnés was not itself if it wasn't viewed in person and in its specific museal context—two aspects of the work that are lost in a photographic reproduction. It was important to Duchamp that the work not be reproduced

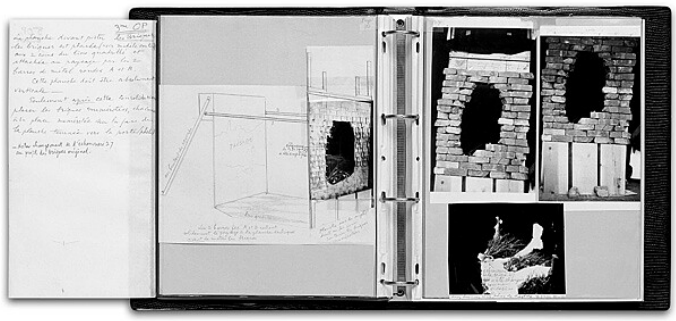
Marcel Duchamp, Door to Etant donnés, 1946-66. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp. Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Marcel Duchamp, Interior view of Etant donnés, 1946-66. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp. Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art.

but he knew this possibility wouldn't last forever, so he left very specific instructions in his manual and built an opening into the structure to allow for the ideal photographic position in the event of the (unavoidable?) necessity of reproduction. Once reproduced, he wanted it to represent as accurately as possible what the spectator actually sees. Duchamp also went to considerable lengths (such as using black velvet to line the back of the Spanish door and cover sides of the structure from the front door to the broken brick wall) to ensure that the viewer would not be able to see in by any other way than the two eye-holes provided. What is at stake is the particular *experience* of *Étant donnés*—an experience untranslatable into a two-dimensional form outside of its architectural and institutional context, and outside of a certain performance on the part of the spectator.

The instruction manual that Duchamp left to the museum in order to ensure the most "approximate" reassembly of the work in its new location tells this story too. A strange artifact-album composed of dozens of pages of handwritten, numbered instructions, and over a hundred pasted, cut, and collaged photographs, it provides considerable evidence for reading Duchamp's project.[29] For the very last page of images in the album, Duchamp paper-clipped a series of photographs in which the camera stands in the place of his and also the imagined spectator's eyes. He framed and reframed the scene, with the splayed female body more or less covered by the bricks, and he added bricks here and there, first penning them in, then adding them to the actual construction. He was experimenting, imagining what it would be like to be a viewer. But if the manual is to aid the museum in its job of reconstruction, why include all of these shots—the incorrectly aligned along with the final views—details, in short, not necessarily useful for the reassembly of the installation? What seems at stake in these final images is not so much the conveyance of information about the scene itself, but the conveyance *to the museum* of his sense of the utter importance of minutely controlling what the viewer would *see*, and how this work would perform that.



Marcel Duchamp, Manual of instructions for Etant donnés, 1946-66. © 2009 Artists Right Society (AGP), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp. Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Looking at the manual, we see what is behind-the-scenes, that fragile architecture Duchamp constructed to be administered and maintained by the museum, but not accessible to sight. The manual shows it: Duchamp cobbled together a bizarrely functional object from

materials at hand, an incredible structure held together with Scotch tape, with clouds made of cotton, dangling electrical wires attached with twist ties, a homemade waterfall-light machine encased in a Peek Freans Biscuit box—in short, nothing like the seamless corners, pristine environment, and stability of the museum. He drew the whole installation for them, with the precision of an amateur architect—sharp, measured lines to show his strange and fragile architecture, all gangly and awkward. What perversity to make the museum attend to it, to make it tiptoe around the hanging wires and crumbling bricks, to fret that a piece of Duchampian tape might come unstuck. Where, after all, does this artwork begin and end? He left that for the museum to mull over.

In perception as in architecture, a threshold marks the point of transition, the passage toward or away from the perceptible, into or out of a place. Architecture, one might say, constructs *and is constructed by* the threshold, a necessary limit that articulates interiority *contra* exteriority. For there can be no architecture without interiority (that would be a monument) and no architecture without exteriority. Considered in these terms, *Étant donnés* follows a decidedly anti-architectural logic, offering an elaborate behind-the-scenes structure whose visible "front" is a weathered, exterior door found *inside* the museum that should logically lead vision *outside* the museum, but instead brings it past a broken brick threshold giving way to an illusionistic idyll, purportedly *outside* but so unconvincing, that it is very clearly *inside*.[30] But inside *what* exactly? A structure of thresholds, *Étant donnés* explores the limit of architecture, the limit of the museum, site-ing itself precisely where the architecturally defined opposition between interior and exterior crumbles.

Étant donnés might have begun with a question that was at the same time a contradiction: how to open up a hole in the museum, a hole that was also a frame for viewing, a hole that was also architecture? *Étant donnés*, so informed by Duchamp's previous installations (of which his studio was the first exhibition space) and the *Boîte en valise* (another, albeit miniature, space of exhibition), defined, with these other works, a lifelong project in manifest opposition to architecture's stabilities—a project to pressure the rational, authoritative space of the museum; a project to visualize the promise and limits of the aesthetic in face of art institutions. But make no mistake, Duchamp was not interested in eradicating the museum. Instead, in multiple gestures, Duchamp evoked and contravened that archetypal structure of modernity, the museum, in order that we begin to see the way it makes us see.

Postscript

I should end here. *Étant donnés* was an end, in many senses of the word. So this will be a postscript of sorts. Duchamp constructed his elaborate secret work over twenty years. The question one might rightly ask is: *How did he do it in secret?* How did he manage for no one to know about the installation and his labor on it? After all, hiding it for twenty years from friends and family is no small undertaking. The answer is that he set up a decoy, another exhibition of sorts. To do so, he rented a second studio. In one studio he was building his gangly nude and her brick house, and in the other, he sat around, receiving friends, guests, groupies, chess mates.[31] He gave interviews there. He told them all that he was doing nothing, that he had given up making art. Of course it wasn't completely true, since, even if one didn't know about the secret project, there were all sorts of objects being "released" in those years: all those book, store window, and exhibition designs—which are hardly "nothing"—many of which in fact point to ideas developed in *Étant donnés*, not to mention the series of erotic objects made directly from the parts or casts of the secret installation, each enigmatic form serving as a key sent out into the world for an as-yet invisible door.

Still, anyone who came to the "public" studio saw no signs of production or artistic activity. And, you see, that too was an exhibition of sorts, since Duchamp could simply have gotten rid of the public studio altogether and received visitors at home. But Duchamp wanted to have, just next door to the secret studio, a public studio in which he could show—literally *exhibit*—that he was *doing nothing.* He fooled them all. When he died, nearly none of them knew about the secret work—not his closest friends, not the interviewers, not even Arturo Schwarz who was just then going to press with *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*.[32]

There, it seems, was Duchamp's last lesson, and yet he had been saying it all along, almost as if he had written it on his studio walls, from nearly his first to his last: *Pay attention. The way things are exhibited matters.*

×

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X

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1
On Duchamp's studio in relation to his readymades, see Helen Molesworth, "Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades," *Art Journal* 57 (1998): 50-61.

2
Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp, 15 January 1916, in *Affectionately Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* , ed. Francis Naumann and Hector Obalk (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 43.

3
Duchamp did try to expose them in a more public manner: there were two readymades that he hung in the umbrella-stand area at the entrance of the Bourgeois gallery in New York in April 1916, which went totally unnoticed and then, a year later, there was the ill-fated submission of *Fountain* to the Society of Independent Artists Exhibition, where it remained completely hidden behind a partition and subsequently lost.

4
Molesworth, "Work Avoidance," 50.

5
Duchamp to Walter Arensberg, 8 November 1918, in *Affectionately Marcel* , 64.

6
Duchamp to Jacques Doucet, 19 October [1925], in *Affectionately Marcel* , 152.

7
Duchamp to Dreier, 11 September 1929, in *Affectionately Marcel* , 170.

8
The 1936 *Exposition Surréaliste d'Objets* , held in the Parisian apartment-gallery of African-artifact dealer Charles Rattan, was an important precedent for the Surrealist movement's thinking about the presentation of art. The 1938 *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* remains, however, the beginning of a striking extension of this concern and the first real Surrealist recasting of the space and architecture of display. Surrealism's ideological concerns influenced the tenor of the displays in which they were involved, thus the treatment of these exhibitions here is by definition partial, focusing as it does mostly on Duchamp's role.

9
Among these are the three who provide the most thorough descriptions of the event by its participants: Georges Hugnet "L'exposition Internationale du Surréalisme," *Preuves* 91 (September 1958): 38-47; Marcel Jean, with the collaboration of Arpad Mezei, *Histoire de la peinture surréaliste* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 280-89; and Man Ray, *Autoportrait* , trans. Anne Guérin (Paris: Editions Robert Laffort, 1964), 205-6; 243-44.

10
Jean, *Histoire*, 281-82.

11
Whereas someone like Robert Delaunay grounded his color researches in the precise exploration of the scientific laws of Hermann von Helmholz or the writings of Michel-Eugène Chevreul and his "Law of the Simultaneous Contrast of Colors," Duchamp's sensory explorations – even in their most seemingly (mockingly) scientific moments – were more about looking in its dense ideological, institutional, psychological, and physico-erotic dimensions, aspects largely ignored by his artist-contemporaries. In her sustained work on Duchamp's optic games, Rosalind Krauss has, extending the analysis of Jean-François Lyotard, underlined the ways in which the artist's vision experiments and optical illusions work to "corporealize the visual," offering themselves as counters to those very notions of good form and pure opticality central to aesthetic Modernism. See, in particular, Krauss, "The Im/pulse To See," in *Vision and Visuality* , ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 51-75; and Kraus, "The Blink of an Eye," in *The States of 'Theory'* : History, Art, and Critical Discourse, ed. David Carroll (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 175-199. See also Lyotard, *Les TR ANSformateurs DUchamp* (Paris: Galilée, 1977).

12
Duchamp speaks about the exhibition preparation, the string purchase, and the spontaneous combustion of the first webbing of string in his interview with Harriet, Sidney, and Carroll Janis, 1953. Typescript, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Duchamp Archives; and see also: Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 86.

13
One might read the exhibition's particular orchestration of vision and the positioning of the visitor as an instance of Duchamp's ongoing exploration of perception and the manipulation of looking, brought to spectator culmination in his final artwork, *Étant donnés*.

14
Duchamp to Katherine Dreier, 5 March 1935, in *Affectionately Marcel* , 197.

15
No understanding of Duchamp's monographic project is complete without recourse to Ecke Bonk's exacting and invaluable study. Bonk, *The Box in the Valise* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

16
For a discussion of the way this interest traverses Duchamp's entire oeuvre, see Francis Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999).

17
In the first monograph on the artist, Duchamp and Robert Lebel list two places and two dates for the *Boîte-en-valise*: 1938 (Paris) and 1941-42 (New York); cf. Lebel, Sur Marcel Duchamp (Paris: Trianon, 1959), item no. 173. Likewise, in his interview with Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp dates the *Boîte-en-valise* "from 1938 to '42," Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* , 79. This dating is repeated in the catalogue for Duchamp's first American retrospective in Pasadena in 1963 (entitled "By or of Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy," like the Duchampian work on which the exhibition was in part modeled), and has become the standard dating in most Duchamp studies since.

18
For reproduction in the *Boîte-en-valise* , Duchamp included Man Ray's photograph of the second store-bought bottle drier (1936), which was subsequently lost, as the first had been (and as was the case with so many of the quotidian objects-cum-readymades). Duchamp did, in fact, have both the famous Steiglitz photograph and the photograph of the urinal dangling from his studio doorframe in his possession during his preparation of the *Boîte* .

19
H.P.Roché, from the letters and unpublished documents housed in the Roché archive of the Carlton Lake Collection in the Harry Ransom Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin. Cited in Bonk, *Box*, 204.

20
"A Conversation with Marcel Duchamp," filmed interview with James Johnson Sweeney, conducted in the Arensberg rooms at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1955. Cited in Dawn Ades, *Marcel Duchamp's Travelling Box* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982), 3.

21
Benjamin Buchloh, "The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers," in *Museums by Artists*, ed. A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 45.

22
From the notes assembled in *À l'i nfinitif* (The White Box), reprinted in *Duchamp du signe*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 105.

23
Donald Preziosi discusses the optical impulse of the museum in "Brain of the Earth's Body," in *Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork* , ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 107.

24
Krauss, "Im/pulse," 60.

25
A forthcoming major exhibition, the first ever, about *Étant donnés* curated by Michael Taylor at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (August-November 2009) promises to reveal hitherto unknown material, studies, and related pieces for an artwork that has, perhaps aptly given its origins, remained shrouded in a certain amount of silence and secrecy since its inauguration.

26
While I suggest here that the exhibitions should be considered vital sources of influence and preparation for Duchamp's production of *things* (whether the *Boîte-en-valise* or *Étant donnés*), I want to in no way futher art history's too common tendency to privilege object production over ephemeral installations. I don't believe that tangible objects were the endpoint of Duchamp's

thinking about the artwork and instead want to insist on his exhibition-making as an artistic practice in itself which, not surprisingly, catalyzed shifts in his thinking about the potential form and meaning of objects, and vice versa.

27
For a discussion of Duchamp's relationship to the Arensbergs, see Naomi Sawelson-Gorse's "Hollywood Conversations: Duchamp and the Arensbergs," in *West Coast Duchamp*, ed. Bonnie Clearwater (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1991), 25-45.

28
The agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Museum stipulates that "within or adjoining [the] Museum's collections of works by Marcel Duchamp, in a setting especially designed for the purpose of housing the same... For a period of fifteen years from this date, [the] Museum will not permit any copy of or reproduction of *Étant donnés* to be made, by photography or otherwise, excepting only pictures of the door behind which said object of art is being installed." See "Agreement between the Cassandra Foundation and the Philadelphia Museum of Art," located at the Philadelphia Museum and reproduced in Mason Klein, *The Phenomenology of the Self: Marcel Duchamp's Étant donnés* (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994), appendix.

29
Duchamp actually composed two instruction manuals, an earlier one that was seemingly a rehearsal or preparation for the later version (which the Philadelphia Museum of Art reproduced in facsimile in 1987). This double, concerted effort is remarkable, suggesting how important it was for Duchamp that the museum understand not only exactly how to reinstall the piece, but also that the museum understand that it was being *directed* by the artist – so that it is not only the eventual visitor, forced to lean and peep in order to see, but also the museum itself, that must perform as the artist prescripted (Art history will one day come to recognize the manual as an artwork in its own right, in line with Duchamp's various boxes of scribbled notes).

30
Craig Adcock once said of *Étant donnés* that it "has no exterior. It has only an interior. from which you look at another interior." Adcock, *Definitely Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* , ed. Thierry de Duve (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1991), 342.

31
André Gervais traces Duchamp's various moves and shifting studio spaces during the construction of the massive installation in his "Détails d'Etant donnés" *Les Cahiers du Mnam* , n. 75 (spring 2001): 82-97.

32
The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp , ed. Arturo Schwarz (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1969).

Boris Groys

Religion in the Age of Digital Reproduction

The general consensus of the contemporary mass media is that the return of religion has emerged as the most important factor in global politics and culture today. Now, those who currently refer to a revival of religion clearly do not mean anything like the second coming of the Messiah or the appearance of new gods and prophets. What they are referring to rather is that religious attitudes have moved from culturally marginal zones into the mainstream. If this is the case, and statistics would seem to corroborate the claim, the question then arises as to what may have caused religious attitudes to become mainstream.

The survival and dissemination of opinions on the global information market is regulated by a law formulated by Charles Darwin, namely, the survival of the fittest. Those opinions that best adapt to the conditions under which they are disseminated will, as a matter of course, have the best odds of becoming mainstream. Today's opinions market, however, is clearly characterized by reproduction, repetition, and tautology. The widespread understanding of contemporary civilization holds that, over the course of the modern age, theology has been replaced by philosophy, an orientation toward the past by an orientation toward the future, traditional teachings by subjective evidence, fidelity to origins by innovation, and so on. In fact, however, the modern age has not been the age in which the sacred has been abolished but rather the age of its dissemination in profane space, its democratization, its globalization. Ritual, repetition, and reproduction were hitherto matters of religion; they were practiced in isolated, sacred places. In the modern age, ritual, repetition, and reproduction have become the fate of the entire world, of the entire culture. Everything reproduces itself—capital, commodities, technology, and art. Ultimately, even progress is reproductive; it consists in a constantly repeated destruction of everything that cannot be reproduced quickly and effectively. Under such conditions it should come as no surprise that religion—in all its various manifestations—has become increasingly successful. Religion operates through media channels that are, from the outset, products of the extension and secularization of traditional religious practices. Let us now turn to an investigation of some of the aspects of this extension and secularization that seem especially relevant to the survival and success of religions in the contemporary world.

1. The Internet and the Freedom of Faith

The regime under which religion—any religion—functions in contemporary Western secular democratic societies is freedom of faith. Freedom of faith means that all are free to believe what they choose to believe and that all are free to organize their personal and private lives according to these beliefs. At the same time, however, this also means that the imposition of one's own faith on others in public life and state institutions, including atheism as a form of faith, cannot be tolerated. The significance of the

IRWIN, Corpse of Art, 2003–2004. Mixed media installation (wood, textile, wax, hair, vase, flowers). Courtesy Galerija Gregor Podnar, Berlin / Ljubljana. Photo: Jesko Hirschfeld, 2007.

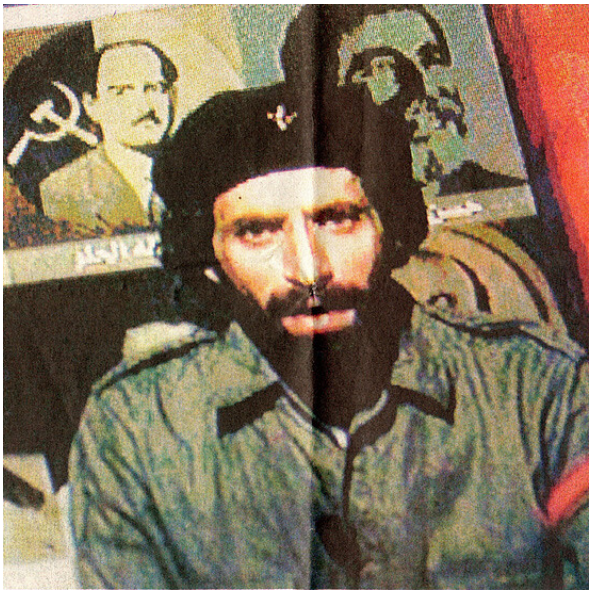
Enlightenment was not so much that it resulted in the complete disappearance of religion, but that religion became a matter of private choice, which then resulted in the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere. In the contemporary world, religion has become a matter of private taste, functioning in much the same way as do art and design. Naturally, this is not to suggest that religion is precluded in public discussion. However, the place of religion in relation to public discussion is reminiscent of the place of art as outlined by Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Judgment*: religion may be publicly discussed, but such a discussion cannot result in any conclusion that would become obligatory, either for the participants of this discussion or for society as a whole. Commitment to one religious faith or another is a matter of sovereign, private choice that cannot be dictated by any public authority—including any democratically legitimized authority. Even more importantly, such a decision—as in the case of art—need not be publicly argued and legitimized, but rather publicly accepted without further discussion. The legitimacy of personal faith is based not on the degree of its power of persuasion, but on the sovereign right of the individual to be committed to this faith.

In this respect, freedom of faith is fundamentally different from, let's say, the kind of freedom represented in scientific research. In the context of a scientific discussion every opinion can be argued for or against, but each opinion must also be substantiated by certain facts and verified according to fixed rules. Every participant in such a discussion is undoubtedly free—at least theoretically—to formulate his or her position and to argue in its favor. However, one may not insist on a scientific opinion that is not subject to justification, and that would contravene all proof and evidence to the contrary, without introducing any argument that would otherwise make one's position plausible and persuasive to others. Such unyielding resistance to the obvious, such blindness toward the facts, to logic and common sense, would be regarded as bordering on the insane. If someone were to refer to his sovereign right to insist on a certain scientific opinion without being able to legitimize this insistence by rational argument, he or she would be excluded from the scientific community.

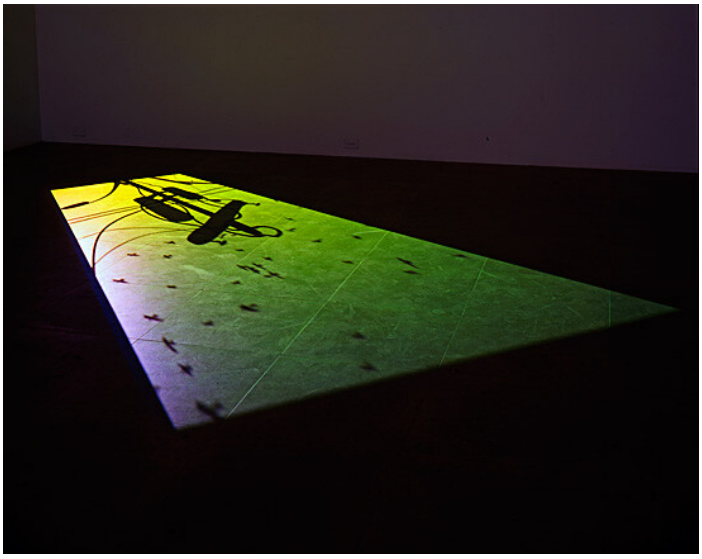
What this means is that our contemporary, Western notion of freedom is deeply ambiguous. In fact, discourse on freedom always pivots on two radical types of freedom: an unconditional freedom of faith, that sovereign freedom permitting us to make personal choices beyond all public explanation and justification, and the conditional, institutional freedom of scientific opinion, which depends on the subject's ability to justify and legitimize this opinion in accordance with pre-determined, publicly established rules. Thus, it is easy to show that our notion of democratic, free society is also ambiguous. The contemporary notion of political freedom can be interpreted in part as sovereign, in part as institutional: in part as the sovereign freedom of political commitment, and in part as the institutional freedom of political discussion. But whatever may be said about the contemporary global political field in general, one thing remains certain: this field is becoming increasingly influenced, or even defined, by the Internet as the primary medium of global communication. And the Internet favors private, unconditional, sovereign freedom over scientific, conditional, institutional freedom.

In an earlier age of mass media—newspapers, radio or TV—the only possible assurance of freedom of opinion was an institutionally guaranteed free access to this media. Any discussion revolving around freedom of opinion, therefore, centered on the politics of representation, on the question as to who and what should be included, and who and what should be excluded from standard news coverage and public political discussion. Today, all are free to create their own websites without the need for discussion and legitimization. Freedom of opinion, as practiced on the Internet, functions as the sovereign freedom of private commitment: neither as the institutional freedom of rational discussion, nor as the politics of representation, inclusion and exclusion. What we experience today is the immense privatization of public media space through the Internet: a private conversation between MySpace (www.myspace.com) and YouTube (www.youtube.com) today substitutes for the public discussion of the previous age. The slogan of the previous age was, The private is political, whereas the true slogan of the Internet is, The political is private.

Obviously, this new configuration of the media field favors religion over science, and sovereign religious politics over institutionalized secular politics. The Internet is the space



Rabih Mroué, On Three Posters. Reflections on a Video Performance, 2006. Video (color, sound), 18 min. Courtesy Sfeir-Semler Gallery. Photo: Lina Gheibeh.



Paul Chan, 1st Light, 2005. Digital video projection (color, no sound), 14 min., loop. Courtesy Greene Naftali Gallery, New York. Photo: Jean Vong.

in which it is possible for contemporary, aggressive religious movements to install their propaganda material and to act globally—without recourse to any institution for representation, or application to any authority for their recognition. The Internet provides these movements with the means to operate beyond any discursively obtained legitimacy and with full sovereignty. In this sense, the contemporary return of religion can be seen as the return of sovereign freedom after many decades or even centuries of the dominance of institutional freedom.

Accordingly, the surge in religion may also be directly connected to the growing, sovereign freedom of private consumption and capital investment on a global scale. Both are dependent on the Internet and other digital communications media that transgress the borders of national democratic institutions. In any case, both practices—religious and economic—presuppose the functioning of the media universe as an arena for private, sovereign acts and decisions. There is, moreover, one further significant similarity between capital investment and religious commitment: both operate through language, though, at the same time, beyond language—where language is understood as the means of (self-)explanation, justification, and legitimization.

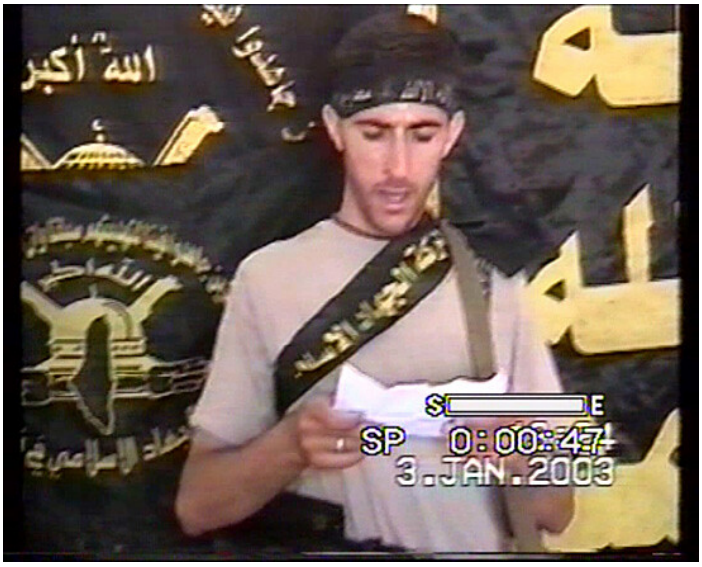
2. Religious Ritual and Mechanical Reproduction

Religion is often understood to be a certain set of opinions, associated with whether contraception should be permitted or whether women should wear headscarves. I would argue, however, that religion—any religion—is not a set of opinions but primarily a set of rituals, and that the religious ritual refers to a state in which there is a lack of opinions, a state of opinionlessness—a-doxa—for it refers to the will of the gods or of God ultimately concealed from the opinions of mortals. Religious language is the language of repetition, not because its subjects insist on any specific truth they wish to repeatedly assert and communicate. Here, the language is embedded in ritual. And ritual is a re-enactment of the revelation of a truth ultimately impossible to communicate. Repetition of a certain religious ritual celebrates the encounter with such an incommunicable truth, the acceptance of this truth, being answerable to God's love and maintaining devotion to the mystery of revelation. Religious discourse praises God, and praises God in such a way as is supposed to please God. Religious discourse operates not in the opposition between truth and error, as scientific discourse does, but in the opposition between devotion and blasphemy.

The ritual, as such, is neither true, nor false. In this sense it marks the zero point of freedom of opinion, that is, freedom from any kind of opinion, from the obligation to have an opinion. Religious ritual can be repeated, abandoned, or modified—but not legitimized, criticized, or refuted. Accordingly, the fundamentalist is a person who insists not so much on a certain set of opinions as on certain rituals not being abandoned or modified, and being faithfully and correctly reproduced. The true fundamentalist does not care about fidelity to the truth, but about the correctness of a ritual, not about the theoretical, or rather, theological interpretations of the faith, but about the material form of religion.

Now, if we consider those religious movements especially active today we observe that they are predominantly fundamentalist movements. Traditionally, we tend to

distinguish between two kinds of repetition: (1) repetition of the spirit and in spirit, that is, repetition of the true, inner essence of a religious message, and (2) repetition of the external form of a religious ritual. The opposition between these two types of repetition—between living spirit and dead letter—informs all Western discourse on religion. The first kind of repetition is almost always regarded as true repetition, as the authentic, "inner" continuation of a religious tradition—the continuation that presupposes the possibility of a rupture with the merely external, conventional, historically accidental form of this tradition, or even requires such a rupture. According to this spiritualist interpretation of the religious tradition, the inner, spiritual fidelity to the essence of a religious message gives to a believer the right to adapt the external, material form of this message to the changing historical milieus and contexts without betraying the inner truth of this message. A religious tradition capable of transforming and adapting itself to changing circumstances without losing its inner, essential identity is usually praised as a living, spiritually powerful tradition capable of maintaining its vitality and historical relevance. On the other hand, "superficial" adherence to the mere letter, to the external form of religion, to the "empty" ritual is, as a rule, regarded as symptomatic of the fact that the religion in question lacks vitality, and even as a betrayal of the inner truth of this tradition by the purely mechanical reproduction of its external, dead form. Now, this is precisely what fundamentalism is, namely, the insistence on the letter as opposed to the spirit.



Joshua Simon, Shahids, 2003–2008. Video collage (colour, sound), 20 min., loop. Courtesy Joshua Simon.

It is for this reason that religious fundamentalism has always possessed a revolutionary dimension: while breaking with the politics of spirit, that is, with the politics of reform, flexibility, and adaptation to the zeitgeist, it goes on to substitute for this politics of spirit the violent politics of the letter. Thus, contemporary religious fundamentalism may be regarded as the most radical product of the European Enlightenment and the materialist view of the world. Religious fundamentalism is religion after the death of the spirit, after the loss of spirituality. Should the spirit perish, all that remains is the letter, the material form, the ritual as event in the material world. In other words, difference in the material form of religion can no longer be compensated by identity in spirit. A rupture with the external form of the ritual cannot be compensated by the inner, spiritual fidelity to the religious truth. A material difference is now just a difference—there is no essence, no being and no meaning underlying such a formal difference at a deeper level. In this sense, fundamentalist religious movements are religions after deconstruction. If meaning, sense, and intention cannot be stabilized, the only possibility for authentic repetition is literal repetition, mechanical reproduction—beyond any opinion, meaning, sense, and intention. Islam would be an especially good case in point. While notoriously forbidding the production of images, it does not forbid the re-production and the use of already existing images—especially in the case of so-called "mechanically produced" images, such as photography or film. While it has meanwhile become banal to say that Islam is not modern, it is obviously post-modern.

In his book *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze speaks of literal repetition as being radically artificial and, in this sense, as being in conflict with everything natural, living, changing, and developing, including natural law and moral law.[1] Hence, practicing literal repetition can be seen as initiating a rupture in the continuity of life. In his remarks on the philosophy of history, Walter Benjamin also describes the genuine revolution as a break with the continuity of historical evolution, as a literal repetition of the past in the midst of the present. He also refers to capitalism as a new kind of religion reduced to ritual and so devoid of any theology.[2] Literal repetition, however, is not only a revolution effectuated by capital or against it; that is, it is not only an act of violence against the flow of historical change, and even against life as such. Literal repetition may also be seen as a way toward personal self-sacralization and immortality—immortality of the subject ready to submit him- or herself to such a repetition.

It is no mere accident that the working class has performed the repetitive, alienated, one might say, ritual work in the context of modern industrial civilization, sacralized, in certain ways, by the socialist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whereas an intellectual or an artist—as embodiments of the creative spirit of change—remained profane precisely because of their inability to repeat and to reproduce. Nietzsche had already made reference to literal repetition—the eternal return of the same—as being the only possible way to think immortality after the death of spirit, of God. Here, the difference between the repetitiveness of religious ritual

and the literal reproduction of the world of appearances disappears. One might say that religious ritual is the prototype of the mechanical reproduction that dominated Western culture during the modern period, and which, to a certain degree, continues to dominate the contemporary world. What this suggests is that mechanical reproduction might, in its turn, be understood as a religious ritual. It is for this reason that fundamentalist religious movements have become so successful in our time, for they combine religious ritual with mechanical reproduction.

For Walter Benjamin, of course, mechanical reproduction entails the loss of aura, the loss of religious experience, which he understands as the experience of uniqueness.[3] He describes the religious experience as, one might say, a unique spiritual experience. In this respect, his evocation of the experience of being enchanted by an Italian landscape as an example of an authentic experience (of happiness, fullness, and the intensity of life) lost in the reproduction process is particularly characteristic. But, one might argue, true religious experience is actually the experience of death rather than the experience of life—the experience of death in the midst of life. Hence, precisely because mechanical reproduction may be understood as the lifeless repetition of the dead image, it can also be interpreted as a source of the truly religious experience. In fact, it is precisely the loss of aura that represents the most radical religious experience under the conditions of modernity, since it is in this way that a human being discovers the mechanical, machine-like, repetitive, reproductive and, one might even say, dead aspect of his own existence.

3. The Digitalized Religion

However, as mentioned above, the new religious movements operate primarily through the Internet, by means of digital rather than mechanical reproduction. During the last decades video has become the chosen medium of contemporary religious propaganda and is distributed through different TV channels, the Internet, commercial video stores, etc. This is especially so in the case of the most recent, active, and even aggressive religious movements. The phenomenon of suicide-bomber confession videos and many other kinds of video production reflecting the mentality of radical Islam have meanwhile become familiar to us. On the other hand, the new evangelical movements also operate with the same medium of video. If one asks those responsible for public relations in these movements to provide information, one is initially sent videos. This use of the video as the major medium of self-presentation among different religious movements is a relatively new phenomenon. Traditionally, the standard medium was a script, a book, a painted image or sculpture. The question then arises as to what constitutes the difference between mechanical and digital reproduction and how this difference affects the fate of religion in our age.

At this point, I would argue that the use of video as the principle medium by contemporary religious movements is intrinsic to the message of these movements. Neither is it external to the understanding of the religious as such, which underlies this use. This is not to suggest, following Marshall McLuhan, that here the medium is the message; rather, I would argue that the message has become the medium—a certain religious message has become the digital code.

Boris Groys, Medium Religion, 2006. Video lecture (color, sound), 25 min., loop. Courtesy Boris Groys.

Digital images have the propensity to generate, to multiply, and to distribute themselves almost anonymously through the open fields of contemporary communication. The origin of these messages is difficult, or even impossible, to locate, much like the origin of divine, religious messages. At the same time, digitalization seems to guarantee a literal reproduction of a text or an image more effectively than any other known technique. Naturally, it is not so much the digital image itself as the image file, the digital data which remains identical through the process of its reproduction and distribution. However, the image file is not an image—the image file is invisible. The digital image is an effect of the visualization of the invisible image file, of the invisible digital data. Only the protagonists of the movie *The Matrix* (1999) were able to see the image files, the digital code as such. The average spectator, however, does not have the magic pill that would allow him or her, like the protagonists of *The Matrix*, to enter the invisible space otherwise concealed behind the digital image for the purposes of directly confronting the digital data itself. And such a spectator is not in command of the technique that would enable him or her to transfer the digital data directly into the brain and to experience it in the mode of pure, non-visualizable suffering (as was able the protagonist of another movie, *Johnny Mnemonic*). (Actually, pure suffering is, as we know, the most

adequate experience of the invisible.) Digital data should be visualized, should become an image that can be seen. Here we have a situation wherein the perennial spirit/matter dichotomy is reinterpreted as a dichotomy between digital file and its visualization, or "immaterial information" and "material" image, including visible text. In more theological terms: the digital file functions as an angel—as an invisible messenger transmitting a divine command. But a human being remains external to this message, to this command, and thus condemned to contemplate only its visual effects. We are confronted here with the transposition of a divine/human dichotomy from a metaphysical to a technical level—a transposition that, as Martin Heidegger would argue, is only possible by virtue of this dichotomy being implicitly technical from the outset.[4]

By extension, a digital image that can be seen cannot be merely exhibited or copied (as an analogue image can) but always only staged or performed. Here, the image begins to function like a piece of music, whose score, as is generally known, is not identical to the piece—the score being not audible, but silent. For the music to resound, it has to be performed. One could argue that digitalization turns visual arts into performing arts. To perform something, however, means to interpret it, betray it, destroy it. Every performance is an interpretation and every interpretation is a misuse. The situation is especially difficult in the case of an invisible original: if the original is visible it can be compared to a copy—so the copy can be corrected and the feeling of distortion reduced. But if the original is invisible no such comparison is possible—any visualization remains uncertain in its relationship to the original; or one could even say that every such performance itself becomes an original.

Moreover, today information technology is in a state of perpetual change—hardware, software, simply everything. For this reason alone, the image is transformed with each act of visualization that uses a different and new technology. Today's technology is conceived in terms of generations—we speak of computer generations, of generations of photographic and video equipment. But where generations are involved, so also are generational conflicts, Oedipal struggles. Anyone attempting to transfer his or her old text or image files to new software experiences the power of the Oedipus complex over current technology—much data is destroyed, evaporating into the void. The biological metaphor says it all: it is not only life that is notorious for this, but technology as well, which, supposedly in opposition to nature, has now become the medium of non-identical reproduction. Benjamin's central assumption in his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"—namely, that an advanced technology can guarantee the material identity between original and copy—was not borne out by later technological developments.[5] Real technological development went in the opposite direction—toward a diversification of the conditions under which a copy is produced and

Sang-Kyoon Noh, Twin Jesus Christs, 2001. Sequins on polyester resin and fiberglass, 267 x 265 x 78 cm. Courtesy Sang-Kyoon Noh. Photo: Eun-Kyung Yeom.

distributed and, accordingly, the diversification of the resulting visual images. Were technology to guarantee the visual identity between the different visualizations of the same data, they would still remain non-identical due to the changing social contexts of their appearances.

The act of visualizing invisible digital data is thus analogous to the appearance of the invisible inside the topography of the visible world (in biblical terms, signs and wonders) that generate the religious rituals. In this respect, the digital image functions like a Byzantine icon—as a visible representation of invisible digital data. The digital code seems to guarantee the identity of different images that function as visualizations of this code. The identity is established here not at the level of spirit, essence or meaning, but on the material and technical level. Thus, it is in this way that the promise of literal repetition seems to acquire a solid foundation—the digital file is, after all, supposed to be something more material and tangible than invisible God. However, the digital file does remain invisible, hidden. What this signifies is that its self-identity remains a matter of belief. Indeed, we are compelled to believe that each act of visualization of certain digital data amounts to a revelation of the same data, much as we are obliged to believe that every performance of a certain religious ritual refers to the same invisible God. And this means that opinion about what is identical and what is different, or about what is original and what is copy, is an act of belief, an effect of a sovereign decision that cannot be fully justified empirically or logically.

Digital video substitutes the guarantees of spiritual immortality allegedly waiting for us beyond this world with

the technical guarantees of potentially eternal repetition inside this world—a repetition that becomes a form of immortality because of its ability to interrupt the flow of historical time. It is this new prospect of materialist, technically guaranteed immortality that the new religious movements de facto offer their adepts—beyond the metaphysical uncertainties of their theological past. Placing human actions in a loop, both practices—ritual and video—realize the Nietzschean promise of a new immortality: the eternal return of the same. However, this new technical guarantee remains a matter of belief and sovereign decision. To recognize two different images as copies of the same image or as visualizations of the same digital file means to value immortality over originality. To recognize them as different would be to prefer originality in time to the prospect of immortality. Both decisions are necessarily sovereign—and both are acts of faith.

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1
Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* , trans. Paul Patton (London: Contimuum, [1968] 2004).

2
Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essay and Reflections* , ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. H. Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 261ff.

3
Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," ibid., 221ff.

4
Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London: Continuum, 2006), 151-155.

5
See Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

Silvia Kolbowski

Two in One

The following is President Obama's inaugural speech, edited to remove references to religion, the celebration of militarism, delusions of national power, the phantasmatic projection of enemies, the glorification of the struggles of the poor, the puritanical elevation of suffering, the erasure of difference, etc.

*****

My fellow citizens:

I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbears, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land — a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.

On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics.

We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted — for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things — some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path toward prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life.

For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sanh.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions — that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act — not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. And all this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions — who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done; what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage.

What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them — that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply. The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works — whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account — to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day — because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched, but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control — and that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on our ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart — not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. And so to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: Know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort — even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and

former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet. We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus — and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West — know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us today, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet, at this moment — a moment that will define a generation — it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — hard work and honesty, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

This is the source of our confidence — the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed — why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world ... that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive ... that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

America. In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

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Silvia Kolbowski is an artist based in New York. Her scope of address includes the ethics and politics of history, culture, and the unconscious. Her most recent project, a video and photo work entitled *After Hiroshima*

Mon Amour (2008), opened as a solo exhibition at LAXArt in Los Angeles in September 2008, and will open in a one-person exhibition in January 2009, entitled *Nothing and Everything*, at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal. She is on the advisory board of the journal *October* and teaches in the CCC program at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel, Geneva.

Dieter Lesage

The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts

A Biennial plans to take the form of an art school on Cyprus and ends up as a series of seminars in Berlin. An artistic director of Documenta tosses up the word *Bildung* and one hundred magazines try to catch it. Uninteresting art fairs actually organize interesting public debates. According to Tom Holert, "Within the art world today, the discursive formats of the extended library-cum-seminar-cum-workshop-cum-symposium-cum-exhibition have become preeminent modes of address and forms of knowledge production."[1] While "education" has become, as Mai Abu ElDahab noted on the occasion of the announcement of the plans for the 2006 Manifesta Biennial 6 on Cyprus, "the buzz word in the art world," and it is possible, as Irit Rogoff did more recently, to speak of an "educational turn in curating," it seems to be much less fashionable to go into too much detail about institutions of art education as such.[2] In observations such as these the stress is placed on expanding the notion of the academy, rather than on deepening the concept of the academy stricto sensu. Their aim appears to be to include as many art institutions as possible within the field of expanded academia, rather than to define the specific role of the art academy as such. Very often, the academic turn seems to be a way to turn *away* from the academy: indeed, if the art field becomes an academic one, then what an academy has to offer can also be found elsewhere, at other institutions and self-organized initiatives constituting the field of expanded academia. The suggestion seems clear: we don't need the academy.

Although there certainly are some notable exceptions, many participants in the debates on education and the arts, even if they aren't necessarily hostile towards the art academy as an institution, clearly shy away from discussing the particularities of higher art education.[3] One of these particularities, insofar as Europe is concerned, is the way in which art academies are involved in the so-called Bologna Process, which is supposed to lead to the establishment of a European Higher Education Area in 2010, which should, in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy, contribute to the establishment of the European Union as the world's biggest knowledge economy starting next year. In these debates, "Bologna" is at most allowed to play the role of annoying background music to their high-spirited essays: they almost never confront the detailed characteristics and implications of the Bologna Process as such. The motto that governs their statements seems to be: "Bologna is bad, so let's not talk about it any further." Thus, while rightly refusing the (art) academy the monopoly on (art) education, one conveniently allows oneself not to think about the (art) academy altogether. This doesn't mean that there aren't any relevant discussions going on within (art) academies, on the contrary. But many of the high-profile voices in the contemporary debates on education and the arts aren't going to tell you what these internal discussions are about, even if occasionally they may be very well positioned to do so. Therefore I set myself the task of talking about a few things that some of my esteemed colleagues seem rather reluctant to talk about.

At art academies in many of the forty-six European countries participating today in the Bologna Process, the doctorate in the arts has become the subject of heated discussions.[4] First of all, there is the existential question many people ask: Why should there be a doctorate in the arts, rather than nothing? Weren't we happy without it? It is no secret that many people see neither the socio-economic necessity nor the artistic relevance of a doctorate in the arts. There is fierce opposition to it from people within higher arts education, universities, and the arts field—at least in so far as it still makes sense to draw a clear-cut distinction between higher arts education, universities, and the arts. Indeed, among many other things, the Bologna Process could be described as a deconstruction of the old demarcations between precisely these three sectors. In any event, from various positions within these sectors in the process of deconstruction that is called Bologna, voices are heard opposing the doctorate in the arts. Against these voices—whether coming from the grumpy old folks who prefer to continue to live in a world that no longer exists and cling to the character of institutions as they once knew them, or from the jumpy young ones who already live in a world yet to come and fly at the character of institutions which they believe they know are no longer useful—I would like to fiercely defend the doctorate in the arts.

A defense of *the* doctorate in the arts is an institutional condition of possibility for *the* defense of *a* doctorate in the arts. *A* doctorate in the arts will always be defended according to a certain concept of *the* doctorate in the arts, laid out in rules that have previously been defended within the responsible university or faculty board or council. As a matter of fact, the latter kind of defense might turn out to be as exhausting as the defense of a doctorate as such. It will continue to demand a good deal of struggle in order to establish that the doctorate in the arts meets artistic—rather than merely academic—requirements and expectations. In this respect, strange as it may seem, many of today's strongest opponents of the doctorate in the arts are more trustworthy allies in the struggle for an artistically meaningful doctorate in the arts than some of those who count themselves among its most outspoken and enthusiastic proponents. The way in which some people today defend the concept of a doctorate in the arts is utterly unconvincing and probably part of the reason for the strong opposition to it.

Those opposing the doctorate in the arts are indeed so outspoken, one may wonder how *the idea* of a doctorate in the arts came up in the first place. A reminder of a few crucial steps in the Bologna Process may be helpful in understanding the idea's emergence in continental Europe. The Bologna Process was launched with the Bologna Declaration on June 19, 1999.[5] Now, all countries participating in the Bologna Process are supposed to do so of their own accord. Unlike an Intergovernmental Treaty, the Bologna Declaration is not a legally binding document. European sanctions are not what drives the whole process, but rather what some have called "international peer pressure." With the 1999 Bologna Declaration, the then twenty-nine participating countries committed themselves, but were not formally obliged to the:

Jill Magid, Evidence Locker, 2004. Installation view in A Portrait of the Artist as a Researcher 2.0, Beursschouwburg, Brussels, 2008. Photo: Tiziana Penna

- Adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries;

- Establishment of a *system of credits* - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility.

- Promotion of *mobility* by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement . . .

- Promotion of *European co-operation in quality assurance* with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;

• Promotion of the *necessary European dimensions in higher education*, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.[6]

Ina Wudtke, A Portrait of the Artist as a Worker (rmx.), 2006 (middle), Dieter Lesage, Output, 2006 (left) & Herman Asselberghs, Repérages, 2006 (right). Installation view in ACADEMY. Learning from Art, MuHKA, Antwerp, 2006. Photo: MuHKA Antwerp

However, it appears that the Bologna Process, insofar as it created instruments of comparison between study courses across an expanded Europe, also created instruments that purport to show in an objective way that study course X in country A doesn't have the same value as study course Y in country B. Indeed, an instrument of comparison may show the incomparability as much as the comparability of its subjects. Just because they have instruments of comparison at their disposal doesn't necessarily mean that countries have become more eager to accept equivalences between diplomas. Whereas in the past the acceptance of equivalences between diplomas was based on general criteria such as the number of study years, criteria for comparison today tend to be so sophisticated and bureaucratic that there might always be a reason why study course X in country A is not quite the same as study course Y in country B.

This belongs to the standard anti-Bologna rhetoric of expanded academia to say that the Bologna Process leads to the homogenization of European education. In reality, however, the Bologna Process is implemented in very different ways. One could claim that the Bologna Process is basically about setting up devices that allow for comparison between national or regional educational systems only to discover how different these systems are. As a result, the Bologna Process gave rise to very elaborate discourses on the multiple differences between national or regional educational systems, and on the singularity of particular educational systems. The discourse on the supposed singularity of the German *Meisterschule*—regarded as highly successful as it is, and entirely incompatible with the (partly imaginary) characteristics of the Bologna Process—grew together with the Bologna Process discourse and explains the success of the German art academies in their resistance against the Bologna Process.[7] So far, the Bologna Process has proved more successful at showing all the differences between educational systems in its expanded version of Europe (which includes forty-six European countries, not only the twenty-seven member states of the EU) than at homogenizing them.[8]

In the early years of the Bologna Process, the primary interest lay with the introduction of the bachelor and master cycles, rather than the doctoral degree.[9] It was only with the meeting of the Bologna Follow-Up Group in Berlin in 2003 that the third cycle leading to the doctorate became a priority. Two years later, in Bergen in 2005, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education affirmed that: three to four years is the normal workload of the third cycle; the advancement of knowledge through original research is at the core of doctoral training; doctoral programs should promote interdisciplinary training and develop so-called transferable skills in order to meet labor-market needs; the outcomes-based-approach framework for qualifications should also be applied to doctoral-level qualifications; and so forth. In London in 2007, the Minister responsible for Higher Education in the forty-six countries now involved in the Bologna Process invited the European University Association to work on "transparent access arrangements, supervision and assessment procedures, the development of transferable skills and ways of enhancing employability." In response to this demand, the European University Association established in 2008 a Council for Doctoral Education.[10] Thus the idea of the doctorate in the arts emerged with the growing focus of the Bologna Process on the third cycle.

Although academics involved in the establishment of the rules for the doctorate in the arts did pay attention to the demand that the new doctorate should respect the specificity of an artistic education—to the extent that they accepted the idea that artists present a portfolio of their work as a doctorate—most of them fiercely defended the idea that a doctorate in the arts would be inconceivable without a written supplement. As a result, the format of the new doctorate often requires both an artistic portfolio and a "written supplement." The insistence of academics on the obligation to produce a written supplement appears to demonstrate a lack of confidence, either in the capacity of the arts to speak in a meaningful, complex, and critical way in a medium of their choosing, or in their own capacity to make sound judgments on the meaning, complexity and critical potency of artistic output as such. What might happen now is that, because it complies with the

long-standing format of the doctorate, juries will base their assessments primarily on a reading of the written supplement, as if it were the doctorate itself, at the same time being tempted to consider the artistic portfolio as merely its supplementary illustration.

to fail to recognize the artist as an artist. An artist who wants to obtain a doctorate in the arts should be given the academic freedom to choose his or her own medium. Even then it would still be possible that he or she chooses text as the most appropriate medium for his or her artistic purposes. Therefore, one should be prepared for the

Symposium The Researcher, The Artist, Her Portfolio and Its Supplement, 14 March 2008, Beursschouwburg, Brussels, 2008. Photo: Tiziana Penna

Contrary to this, the evaluation of a doctorate in the arts should focus on the capacity of the doctoral student to speak in the medium of his or her choice. And if this medium is film, or video, or painting, or sculpture, or sound, or "new," or if the doctoral student wants to mix media, it will obviously require from a jury ways of reading, interpretation, and discussion other than those required by an academic text. To impose a medium on the artist is

moment when a writer will present a novel in fulfillment of the primary requirement for a doctorate. According to the currently prevailing format of the doctorate in the arts, however, the writer would be asked to supplement his novel with another text, a written supplement. Would anyone seriously want this? What should that written supplement say?

While the Bologna Process facilitated the recognition of "artistic research" as a fundamental task of art academies—a task which many of them were already performing "before Bologna"—universities and academies are now struggling both with the concept of artistic research itself and with the question of how to assess the output of artistic research. This is a very complex discussion, one with which universities can occasionally appear impatient. At the same time, universities generally don't have accepted answers to the question of how to assess the output of scientific research either. Sometimes universities seem to be torn between, on the one hand, their own academic uncertainties, and, on the other, the leadership role that policy makers bestowed on them within the academicized process of higher arts education. When universities tell academies, for instance, that the unquestioned norm in academic evaluation is "double-blind peer review," this contradicts the fact that, within the scientific community itself, this norm has been under attack for many years, and that a number of high-profile scientific journals, such as the *British Medical Journal*, have made the decision (motivated by scientific studies) to abandon blind peer review in favor of open review, in which the name of the referee is known to the author of the article under review.[11] Today, it seems a scientifically proven fact that the quality of open review is as good as that of blind review.[12]

When universities tell academies that citation analysis provides an objective criterion to measure research output, they are again, deliberately or not, concealing the fact that citation analysis is considered by many in the scientific community to be a very flawed procedure for measuring research output. In fact, ever since Eugene Garfield published the first *Science Citation Index*, in 1964, it has been a very controversial instrument, its possible misuses being recognized from the very beginning by leading scientists, such as Nobel Prize winner Joshua Lederberg. Lederberg, while promoting it as a tool for research, fiercely rejected it as a tool for measuring research output.[13] Not only are all known citation indexes far from complete, they are also horribly biased in favor of articles and against books. To that one might add that the *Science Citation Index* and the other citation indexes are products sold by Thomson, a media corporation which also owns many academic journals. To me, this sounds very much like a conflict of interest. Nevertheless, many research managers continue to consider citation analysis, based on the use of Thomson's citation indexes (which enjoy an absolute commercial monopoly), as a useful tool for measuring research output. In discussions between universities and academies, it is often suggested that academies should invent "analogous" tools for measuring artistic research output. And thus it happens that some people are beginning to dream of an Art Citation Index, while others are talking about the need to classify artistic venues in the same way as academic journals are classified according to their "impact factor." It might not now be long before somebody invents the new science of "artometrics."

The Bologna Declaration as such does not constitute an absolute evil for education, but the institutional and political struggles to impose certain of its interpretations do present many dangers, of which most people working at art academies are very well aware. The good news is that, due to what many people working and studying at academies experience (with good reason) as harassment by the Bologna Process, the academy is also in the process of reinventing itself. The pressure in the field of expanded academia, in which many other types of institutions are readily offered as alternatives to the overregulated field of higher arts education, certainly plays a key role too in this process of reinventing the academy.[14] Some academies are successfully reinventing themselves through the cooptation of people who made their career outside the academy, as writers, critics, curators, artists, and so forth. It may seem in blatant contradiction with the academicization process of European higher (arts) education that is the Bologna Process, but it isn't. If the Ministers responsible for Higher Education would like their academies to become or stay competitive within a field of expanded academia, in which there are many attractive alternative models of education, one should endow academies with enough autonomy to position themselves strategically within this field. The big frustration of many academies all over Europe today is their lack of autonomy, which doesn't allow them to make the decisions considered necessary by those trying to manage them. Meanwhile, the argument for autonomy is splendidly made by those academies in Europe that have been able to maintain or even augment their autonomy, such as the impressive Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.[15] At art academies of this scale, there is enough critical mass to allow them to stand confidently next to their big sister the university, rather than becoming a department within it. Even more, they've become universities themselves.

Today, the academy is asking not to be considered as the only legitimate place of art education, but as a credible partner within this endeavor. The time of academy-bashing is over. Indeed, the academy is back, almost. It's absolutely fine to situate yourself outside the academy. But one shouldn't hesitate to play a role within an academy, as many former outsiders today do quite successfully. It is my bet that the art academy is going to be *the* defining innovative institution within the art field in the next twenty years, much more so than museums, galleries, biennials, whatever. There might even come a time when museums of contemporary arts will be run as the exhibition facilities of nearby academies, just as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich today runs Monte Verità as a conference facility. If museums of contemporary arts desire to belong to the field of expanded academia, as indeed they seem to, this scenario makes perfect sense. And maybe one day we will be quite accustomed to the fact that a solo exhibition in a museum of contemporary arts can't be anything but the presentation of a...doctorate in the arts.

Lecture by Douglas Irving Repetto, 13 July 2007, in A Portrait of the Artist as a Researcher, freiraum/quartier21, Vienna, 2007. Photo: Dieter Lesage

X

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1
Tom Holert, "Art in the Knowledge-based Polis," *e-flux journal* , no.3 (February 2009), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68537/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/ .

2
See Mai Abu ElDahab, "On How to Fall With Grace – Or Fall Flat on Your Face," in *Notes for an Art School* , ed. Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle, and Florian Waldvogel (Amsterdam: International Foundation Manifesta; Nicosia: Manifesta 6, 2006), 7; Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *e-flux journal* , no. 0 (November 2008), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/ .

3
Among the most notable exceptions of voices that are of critical importance to the art world and (nevertheless) don't shy away from talking about the (boring) Bologna Process are authors such as Beatrice von Bismarck, Diedrich Diederichsen, and Stephan Dillemuth. See, e.g., Beatrice von Bismarck, "Game within the Fame: Institution, Institutionalisation and Art Education," in *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* , ed. Nina Möntmann (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 124-131; Diedrich Diederichsen, "The Academy as an Exception: Artistic Research and the Doctorate in the Arts," in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Researcher: The Academy and the Bologna Process* , ed. Dieter Lesage and Kathrin Busch (Antwerp: MuHKA, 2007), 66-71; Stephan Dillemuth, "The Academy and the Corporate Public," ibid., 72-75.

4
In order to be accepted as a participating country in the Bologna Process, nation states don't have to be a Member state of the European Union. According to the Berlin Communiqué of September 19, 2003, all European countries that signed the European Cultural Convention, accept the basic premises of the Bologna Declaration, and strive to implement the Process at the national level, can become participating countries in the Bologna Process. The current number of countries participating in the Bologna Process is forty-six. San Marino and Monaco, two more countries that signed the European Cultural Convention, are not participating in the Bologna Process for lack of higher education institutions.

5
Many of the most distinguished among those who speak and write so much about education and the arts do not seem aware that there is no such thing as a "Bologna Accord." Indeed, there is a fundamental difference between an Accord and a Declaration. Today, you and I could make a solemn declaration that one day we would like to sign an Accord. In that case we would have a Declaration, but not yet an Accord. Or, rather, it could be that yesterday we signed a little Accord stipulating that today we would make this solemn Declaration. And once we reach the final Accord we can make it known to the world in a joint Declaration. But once we have a final Accord, we don't need the spectacle of a joint Declaration for the Accord to be valid, unless it is explicitly stated in the Accord that it is invalid without the spectacle of a Declaration.

6
My emphasis. For the full text of the Bologna Declaration, go to https://web.archive.org/web/20090327030015/http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf .

7
See Karin Stempel, "Zum Stand der Dinge," in *Who is afraid of master of arts?* , ed. Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste, Annette Hollywood, and Barbara Wille (Berlin: Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste. 2007), 23-32.

8
See Ulf Wuggenig, "Art Schools, Universities and the Bologna Process," in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Researcher: The Academy and the Bologna Process* , 142-148.

9
The information which follows is also to be found on the official Web site 2007-2009 of the Bologna Secretariat, which is maintained by the Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community of Belgium. See https://web.archive.org/web/20090530003132/http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/ .

10
See the EUA-CDE Web site, https://web.archive.org/web/20090821191038/http://www.eua.be/events/eua-council-for-doctoral-education/ .

11
On the motivation behind the *British Medical Journal* 's change in editorial policy, see Richard Smith, "Opening up *BMJ* peer review: A beginning that should lead to complete transparency," *British Medical Journal* 318 (January 2, 1999): 4-5.

12
Sandra Goldbeck-Wood, "Evidence on peer review – scientific quality control or smokescreen?," ibid., 44-45. On this issue, see also Susan Van Rooyen, Fiona Godlee, Stephan Evans, Nick Black, and Richard Smith, "Effect of open peer review on quality of reviews and on reviewers' recommendations: a randomised trial," ibid., 23-27.

13
On the history of the *Science Citation Index* and of scientometrics, see Pail Wouters, *The Citation Culture* (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 1999).

14
For a very interesting description of the relationship between the academy and expanded academia, see Jan Verwoert, "School's Out !-?," in *Notes for an Art School* , 56-63.

15
See Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, "Lernen für die Kunst von Heute. Masterpläne und Realitäten in Wien," in *Who is afraid of master of arts?* , 85-93.

Dieter Roelstraete

The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art

> He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.
>
> —Walter Benjamin[1]

[*Preliminary admonition: there is no disgrace in seeking to define either the essence or the attributes of art. For…*]

…art is, or at least *can* be, many things at many different points in time and space. Throughout its history—which is either long or short, depending on the definition agreed upon—it has assumed many different roles and been called upon to defend an equal number of different causes. Or, alternately—and this has turned out to be a much more appealing and rewarding tactic for most of the past century—it has been called upon to attack, question, and criticize any number of states of affairs. In the messianic sense of a "calling" or κλησις—a call to either change or preserve, for those are the only real options open to the messianic—we might locate both the roots of art's historical contribution to the hallowed tradition of critique and the practice of critical thought, as well as its share in the business of shaping the future—preferably (and presumably) a different future from the one that we knowingly envision from the vantage point of "today."

In the present moment, however, it appears that a number of artists seek to define art first and foremost in the thickness of its relationship to *history*. More and more frequently, art finds itself *looking back*, both at its own past (a very popular approach right now, as well as big business), and at "the" past in general. A steadily growing number of contemporary art practices engage not only in storytelling, but more specifically in history-telling. The retrospective, historiographic mode—a methodological complex that includes the historical account, the archive, the document, the act of excavating and unearthing, the memorial, the art of reconstruction and reenactment, the testimony—has become both the mandate ("content") and the tone ("form") favored by a growing number of artists (as well as critics and curators) of varying ages and backgrounds.[2] They either make artworks that want to remember, or at least to turn back the tide of forgetfulness, or they make art *about* remembering and forgetting: we can call this the "meta-historical mode," an important aspect of much artwork that assumes a *curatorial* character. With the quasi-romantic idea of history's presumed remoteness (or its darkness) invariably quite crucial to the investigative undertaking at hand, these artists delve into archives and historical collections of all stripes (this is where the magical formula of "artistic research" makes its appearance) and plunge

into the abysmal darkness of history's most remote corners. They reenact—yet another mode of historicizing and storytelling much favored by artists growing up in a culture of accelerated oblivion—reconstruct, and recover. Happy to honor their calling, these artists seek out the facts and fictions of the past that have mostly been glossed over in the more official channels of historiography, such as the "History Channel" itself.[3] They invariably side with both the downtrodden and the forgotten, reveal traces long feared gone, revive technologies long thought (or actually rendered) obsolete, bring the unjustly killed back to (some form of) life, and generally seek to restore justice to anyone or anything that has fallen prey to the blinding forward march of History with a capital, monolithic "H"—that most evil of variations on the Hegelian master narrative.

The reasons for this oftentimes melancholy (and potentially *reactionary*) retreat into the retrospective mode of historiography are manifold, and are of course closely related to the current crisis of history both as an intellectual discipline and as an academic field of enquiry. After all, art's obsession with the past, however recently lived, effectively closes it off from other, possibly more pressing obligations, namely that of imagining the future, of imagining the world otherwise ("differently"). Our culture's quasi-pathological systemic infatuation with both the New and the Now ("youth") has effectively made forgetting and forgetfulness into one of the central features of our contemporary condition, and the teaching of history in schools around the globalized world has suffered accordingly.

[*This diagnosis of a "crisis of history" may strike the informed reader as unnecessarily alarmist and overblown: indeed, even the most cursory glance at the groaning bookshelves in the "History" section of one's local culture mall—or its counterpart on Amazon.com—seems to suggest the opposite to be true. True, there* is *plenty of historiography out there, but it is of a very problematic, myopic kind that seems to* add *to the cultural pathology of forgetting rather than fight against it. It is a type of writing that prefers to hone in on objects (the smaller, the more mundane, and the less significant, the better) rather than people, the grand societal structures that harness them, or the events that befall them and/or help bring those structures into being. Virtually every little "thing" has become the subject of its own (strictly "cultural") history of late, from the pencil to the zipper, the cod, the porcelain toilet bowl, the stiletto, the potato, or the bowler hat. It does not require too great an imaginative effort to discern the miserable political implications of this obsession with detail, novelty, and the quaint exoticism of the everyday (best summed up by the dubious dictum "small is beautiful"). Indeed, it seems sufficiently clear that the relative success story of this myopic micro-historiography, with its programmatic suspicion of all forms of grand historicization, is related both to today's general state of post-ideological fatigue as well as to the political evacuation (or de-politicization) of academia, of which the "crisis of history" is precisely such an alarming, potent symptom.*]

Roy Arden, Versace, 2006. Archival pigment print, 25 x 21 inches.

In this sense, art has doubtlessly come to the rescue, if not of history itself, then surely of its telling: it is there to "remember" when all else urges us to "forget" and simply look forward—primarily to new products and consumerist fantasies—or, worse still, inward. Indeed, this new mode of discursive art production boasts an imposing critical pedigree, a long history of resistance and refusal: the eminent hallmarks, as we know, of true vanguardism.

One geopolitical region whose recent (and rewardingly traumatic) history has become especially prominent with art's turn towards history-telling and historicizing (its turn away from both the present and the future), is post-communist Central and Eastern Europe—the preferred archeological digging site (if only metaphorically) of many well-read artists whose work has come of age in the broader context of the globalized art market of the last decade and a half. Ironically enough, the region's triumph was wholly determined by the demise of the system of state socialism that so many of us now seek to memorialize.

[*It is perhaps unnecessary to add here that the majority of these amateur archeologists hail from the "West," where there may still exist certain pockets of nostalgia for the ideological clarity, among other things, of the Cold War era, when Central and Eastern Europe could be imagined as something radically "different," belonging to "another" political world entirely—hence also its quasi-inexhaustible appeal to critical art: art that is committed to "making a*

Jeff Wall, Fieldwork. Excavation of the floor of a dwelling in the former Sto:lo nation village, Greenwood Island, Hope, B.C., August, 2003, Anthony Graesch, Dept. of Anthropology, University of California at Los Angeles, working with Riley Lewis of the Sto:lo band, 2003. Transparency in lightbox, 219.5 x 283.5 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

difference." Obviously, a similar type of nostalgia is also felt by a younger generation of artists from the former Eastern Bloc—but differently so, and the generational shift is of crucial importance here.[4]]

In their cultivation of the retrospective and/or historiographic mode, many contemporary art practices inevitably also seek to secure the blessing (in disguise) of History proper: in an art world that seems wholly dominated by the inflationary valuations of the market and its corollary, the fashion industry ("here today, gone tomorrow," or, "that's *so* 2008"), time, literally rendered as the subject of the art in question, easily proves to be a much more trustworthy arbiter of quality than mere taste or success. Hence the pervasive interest of so many younger artists and curators in the very notion of anachronism or obsolescence and related "technologies of time": think of Super 8 mm and 16 mm film, think of the Kodak slide carousel, think of antiquated, museum-of-natural-history-style vitrines meant to convey a sense of the *naturalization* of history, or of time proper. Perhaps many artists use these tried-and-tested methods of history as a *science*, or as a mere material force (the archival mode ranks foremost among these methods), in hopes that some of its aristocratic sheen will rub off on their own products or projects, or otherwise inscribe them and their work in the great book of post-History . . .

One of the ways in which this historiographic "turn" has manifested itself lately is through a literalized amateur archeology of the recent past: digging. Archeology's way of the shovel has long been a powerful metaphor for the various endeavors that both spring from the human mind and seek to map the depths of, among other things, itself.

Goshka Macuga, When Was Modernism, 2008. Mixed media, installation at Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MuHKA). Courtesy the artist, Kate MacGarry and MuHKA

Perhaps the most famous example of this would be psychoanalysis (or "depth psychology"), in which the object of its archaeological scrutiny *is* the human mind. Throughout a history that stretches far beyond the work of, say, Robert Smithson, Haim Steinbach, or Mark Dion, psychoanalysis has long been a source of fascination and inspiration for the arts. Certainly, one could conceive of an exhibition consisting solely of artistic images of excavation sites, of "art about archeology." The truth claims of art often quote rather literally and liberally from the lingua franca of archeology: artists often refer to their work as a labor of meticulous "excavation," unearthing buried treasures and revealing the ravages of time in the process; works of art are construed as shards, fragments (the Benjaminian ciphers of a revelatory truth), traces preserved in sediments of fossilized meaning. Depth delivers artistic truth: that which we dig up (the past) in some way or other must be more "real" and therefore also more "true" than all that has come to accumulate afterwards to form the present. This also says something about why we think the present is so hard to explain.

Likewise, the scrupulous archeological ethic of unending patience and monastic devotion to detail—seamlessly mirrored in its preferred optic, that of the clinical close-up—is, in spirit, close to the obsessive labor or "science" of art-making that often requires plodding through hours, days, and weeks of menial rubble-and-manure-shoveling before something that may (or may not) resemble a work of art emerges. Michelangelo's sculptures of dying slaves wresting themselves free from the marble in which the artist "found" them captive continue to provide what is perhaps the archeological paradigm's most gripping image.[5] Furthermore, there can also be no archeology without *display*—the modern culture of museum display (if not of the museum itself) is as much "produced" by the archeologist's desire to exhibit his or her findings as it is by the artist's confused desire to communicate his or hers. After all, the logical conclusion of all excavatory activity is the encasing of History's earthen testimony within a beautiful, exquisitely lit, amply labeled glass box—an apt description, indeed, of much artistic and meta-artistic or curatorial activity of the last decade and a half.[6] Finally (and most importantly, perhaps), art and archeology also share a profound understanding—and one might say that they are on account of this almost "naturally" inclined to a *Marxist epistemology*—of the primacy of the *material* in all culture, the overwhelming importance of mere "matter" and "stuff" in any attempt to grasp and truly read the cluttered fabric of the world. The archaeologist's commitment is to earth and dirt, hoping that it will one day yield the truth of historical time; the artist's commitment is to the crude facts of his or her working material (no matter how "virtual" or, indeed, *immaterial* this may be), which is equally resistant to one-dimensional signification and making-sense, equally prone to entropy—yet likewise implicated in a logic of truth-production.

Mark Dion, The Birds of Antwerp, 1993. Mixed media, installation at Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MuHKA).

In this critical Bataillean sense of a "base materialism"—a materialism from which all traces of formalist idealization have been evacuated—both art and archeology are also *work*—hard and dirty work, certain to remind us of our bodily involvement *in* the world. The archeological imaginary in art produces not so much an *optics* as it does a *haptics*—it invites us, forces us to intently scratch the surface (of the earth, of time, of the *world*) rather than merely marvel at it in dandified detachment. By thus intensifying our bodily bondage to a world that, like our

bodies themselves, is made up first and foremost of matter, the alignment of art and archeology compensates for the one tragic flaw that clearly cripples the purported critical claims and impact of the current "historiographic turn" in art: its inability to grasp or even look at the present, much less to *excavate the future*.

X

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1
Walter Benjamin, "Excavation and Memory," in *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2, 1931–1934* , ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 576. Benjamin continues: "Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation. That is to say, they yield those images that, severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights." In the words of Peter Osborne, "Benjamin's prose breeds commentary like vaccine in a lab," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 88 (1998), http://web.archive.org/web/20070102053023/http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2188&editorial_id=10292 .

2
Mark Godfrey's much-discussed essay "The Artist as Historian," published in *October* 120 (2007), has become a local landmark of sorts. In it Godfrey states that "historical research and representation appear central to contemporary art. There are an increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research" (142–143). He then goes on to focus on the work of one artist-as-historian in particular, Matthew Buckingham, forgoing the opportunity to offer the reader an explanation, no matter how speculative or tentative, as to *why* historical research and representation in general have become so central to contemporary art (again). Furthermore, as the work of a *historian* does not necessarily coincide with that of a *historiographer* , the job description that I would suggest is more accurate with regard to contemporary art practice: the act of "writing" (or, more broadly, *narrating*) adds a key distinction here.

3
This analogy prompts the memory of a similar televisual metaphor: when asked about the socio-political import of hip-hop, Public Enemy's charismatic frontman Chuck D famously called the genre "the CNN of Black America," in that it also provides its (supposedly marginalized) constituency with informal, unofficial history lessons and alternative views of mainstream "news"—or any fact of world history that may have fallen by the wayside in a process of ideological homogenization. Likewise, it has sometimes been said that many of the last decade's most important mega-exhibitions (biennials, documentas, Manifestas— *not* art fairs) at times came to resemble documentary film festivals where the likes of Discovery Channel, the History Channel and the National Geographic Channel come to exchange their wares, making the art world look like something akin to a BBC World program of politically disenchanted aesthetes and TV-hating intellectuals.

4
The historiographic turn in "post-socialist" European art specifically is the subject, among other things, of Charity Scribner's aptly titled *Requiem for Communism* , published by MIT in 2003. An exhaustive list of practitioners from post-socialist "Eastern" Europe who self-reflexively mine this particular field would be hard to compile; however, such a list would definitely have to include the names of Chto Delat, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Marysa Lewandowska & Chris Cummings, Goshka Macuga, David Maljković, Deimantas Narkevicius, Paulina Olowska, and to a certain extent also Anri Sala and Nedko Solakov. Artists from the "West" who have consistently devoted their attention to the intricate meshwork of some of these histories include Gerard Byrne, Tacita Dean, Laura Horelli, Joachim Koester, Susanne Kriemann, Sophie Nys, Hito Steyerl, Luc Tuymans, and many more.

5
Michelangelo's statement with regard to the slave figures, that he was "liberating them from imprisonment in the marble," also recalls the famous motto that guided his near-contemporary Albrecht Dürer: "Truly art is firmly fixed in Nature. He who can extract her thence, he alone has her." We could easily replace Dürer's idealized, quasi-divine Nature in this last quote with Culture, History, or Time in order to paint a fairly accurate picture of the thinking that goes on behind (or, better still, *underneath*) much historiographic-art production today: this strand of contemporary art is as much a business of *extraction* as it is one of *excavation*.

6
A great many artists have been "mining the museum" in recent years, and their interest in museological displays and genealogical frameworks certainly belongs to the broader thrust of the historiographic turn in contemporary art: Fred Wilson coined the geological formula, Louise Lawler and Mark Dion did some exploratory groundwork (quite literally, in the latter's case), while Carol Bove, Goshka Macuga, Josephine Meckseper, Jean-Luc Moulène and Christopher Williams rank among the micro-genre's better-known contemporary practitioners. Many of the artists working in this field of a critical museology have a complicated relationship with the habitus of institutional critique, to which it is obviously indebted; they certainly "long for" the museum much more strongly and directly than the first generation of institutional critics would ever allow themselves to. In the speleological imaginary of "mining the museum"—note the sexual undertones of this metaphor—the museum has become an *object of desire* as much as an object of critique, a cavity as much as an excavation site.